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Dear Readers and Fellow Africa Enthusiasts,

The Sahel – Arabic for "shore" or "edge" – is a 6,000-kilometre-long, belt-like transition zone that hugs the southern rim of the Sahara and grades into the savannahs of tropical Africa. Running from Senegal on the Atlantic coast to Sudan and Eritrea on the Red Sea, touching around a dozen countries; politically speaking, the UN recognises ten core states (Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria) as Sahel by its United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), but in reality its ecological and cultural reach extends farther east. Home to some 400 million people, the Sahel is both the world's largest semi-desert and a corridor of extraordinary human and biological diversity. Millennia-old trade routes, empires such as Songhai and Kanem-Bornu, and today's mosaic of nomadic pastoralists, subsistence farmers and growing cities all testify to its role as Africa's great meeting ground, geographically, culturally and economically.

This frontier dynamism, however, is tested on multiple fronts. Climate change is shortening rainy seasons, pushing the ecological zone 50–200 kilometres south, and intensifying droughts and flash floods that erode soils and spark farmer–herder conflicts over ever-scarcer water and pasture as well as escalate the already challenging situation of internally displaced persons. Layered onto this environmental squeeze are (military) coups, trans-Sahelian jihadist networks that have turned the region – once secondary to the Middle East – a safe haven and breeding ground for international terrorist organisations, while well-organised banditry and trafficking routes further undermine state authority and fuel mass displacement. Yet the Sahel is also rich: in uranium, gold, oil and, above all, in resilient social systems where hospitality is a survival strategy and community networks hold firm against shocks, from Covid-19 border closures to collapsing commodity prices and failing or non-existent social services. Harnessing this resilience while tackling systemic threats is no easy task, but it is vital, not only for regional stability, but for global priorities ranging from peace and security to climate resilience, food- and water-security, managed migration, and the wider sustainable-development agenda.

The aim of this thematic issue of the Journal of Central and Eastern European African Studies is to provide a guide for a better understanding of this complex Sahel region.

The first part of the issue deals with larger areas of the Sahel or the region in general. It opens with Economic Regionalism Reversed? France-West Africa Relationship and the Challenge of Eco-Currency Integration by Babayo Sule and Seroala Tsoeu-Ntokoane, exploring France's historical and contemporary economic influence in West Africa, particularly focusing on how its involvement affects the regional integration efforts around the proposed Eco currency. The authors argue that West Africa must assert diplomatic independence from France to achieve genuine economic regionalism.

In Legitimacy, Regionalism, and Efficacy: Algeria's Role in Modern West African Security Dilemmas, Meriem Naïli and Sophia R. Wittemyer analyse Algeria's diplomatic strategies regarding the Polisario Front in Western Sahara and Niger's junta government following the 2023 coup. The article

emphasizes Algeria's adherence to non-intervention and Pan-African solidarity, asserting that these principles help promote regional legitimacy and stability.

David Vogel's and Katalin Horváth's paper, Neo-colonialism, Violence, and the EU's Approach to Peace Operations in Africa critically examines the European Union's peacekeeping strategies in Africa, through the lens of neo-colonialism. It highlights how geopolitical self-interests and limited operational mandates constrain the effectiveness of EU missions, especially in the Central African Republic, leading to fragmented outcomes amidst growing anti-Western sentiment.

Ita Bonner's Climate-related Security Risks in the Sahel investigates how climate change acts as a threat multiplier in the Sahel region, exacerbating vulnerabilities and fuelling the rise of extremist groups such as Boko Haram. The paper highlights the connections between environmental degradation, resource scarcity, farmer-herder conflicts, and extremist recruitment, calling for integrated environmental and peacebuilding policies.

In Refugee Crossroads in Africa, Béla Szilágyi discusses the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Chad, emphasizing the impact of refugee influxes from Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Cameroon. The research outlines sustainable humanitarian interventions and developmental projects by Hungarian Baptist Aid, illustrating the necessity of combined refugee assistance and capacity-building in the local healthcare and education sectors.

Türkiye's Contribution to Modernization of Africa's Security and Defence Autonomy details Türkiye's evolving role in African security, particularly through technological exports and capacity-building initiatives. Using Libya and Somalia as case studies, the paper argues that Türkiye's unique diplomatic approach and security investments significantly enhance regional stability and defence autonomy, distinguishing its strategy from traditional global powers.

In the second half of the issue, individual countries are analysed by the authors. In Déby's Chad: The Death of President Déby and the Resurgence of Another, Ketil Fred Hansen provides an analysis of Chad's political transition following the death of President Idriss Déby Itno. The study critically assesses the rise and consolidation of power by his son, Mahamat Idriss Déby, examining methods of repression, strategic alliances, and the suppression of opposition voices, highlighting persistent authoritarian dynamics.

Nation Building and Intelligence Reforms Debacle in Transitional Democracies by Ngboawaji Daniel Nte evaluates the challenges of intelligence reform and nation-building in post-colonial Nigeria. The author identifies colonial legacies and institutional weaknesses as major obstacles to establishing an effective intelligence system, critical for Nigeria's security and democratic stability.

Revisiting Press Freedom in Nigeria: The Buhari Years (2015-2023) explores press freedom under the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. It critically assesses how Buhari's governance influenced media freedoms, detailing the political, legal, and operational pressures faced by journalists. The article underscores that the restrictive media environment has significantly impacted Nigeria's democratic consolidation.

Finally, Banditry and its Implications on Food Security in Northwest Nigeria: A Reflection on the Roles of the State investigates the destructive impact of banditry on agricultural production and food security. It critiques the Nigerian government's ineffective and inconsistent responses, stressing that without coordinated security measures, Nigeria's ability to meet Sustainable Development Goals relating to poverty and hunger is severely compromised.

The Sahel issue concludes with two incisive reviews that spotlight recent scholarship on African security and governance dealing with the region. Insurgency, Terrorism, and Counterterrorism in Africa (edited by George Klay Kieh Jr. & Kelechi A. Kalu) is assessed by Richárd Schneider, who praises the volume's interdisciplinary case-study approach and its call to tackle jihadist violence by addressing the social injustices that let extremism take root. Complementing this is Samuel Fury Childs Daly's Soldier's Paradise: Militarism in Africa after Empire, reviewed by Miklós Szakali, who commends Daly's document-based history of Nigerian (and wider post-colonial) militarism for revealing how successive military regimes, lacking civilian state-building experience, turned discipline into ideology and inadvertently alienated the very populations they sought to unify. Together, the reviews underscore the continuing interplay of insurgency, counterterrorism, and militarism in shaping Africa's contemporary political landscape.

With this being said, we wish our readers a rewarding exploration of the articles in this thematic Sahel issue.

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Journal of Central and Eastern European African Studies

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Economic Regionalism Reversed? France-West Africa Relationship and the Challenge of Eco-Currency Integration[1]

Babayo Sule[2], Seroala Tsoeu-Ntokoane[3]

Abstract:

Economic regionalism is a 21st century attempt to facilitate trade partnerships, bilateral agreements and the facilitation of the free movement of goods and people between neighbouring countries on the continent. Several geopolitical regions have formed economic alliances in Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia for mutual economic benefit. West Africa is one of the regions that made early efforts at economic cooperation following the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975. Economic integration in West Africa is being driven by the proposal of the West African heads of state and government to introduce a common currency called Eco' in 2020. However, this gigantic project is being thwarted, interrupted and blocked by France under the pretext of conditionality, which is keeping the leading country, Nigeria, from the project. This study examines how the economic relations between France and the West African states affect the proposal to introduce a common currency and how this setback will affect economic regionalism in the zone. A historical and contemporary political economy method was used for the study. The data was collected from documented sources and analysed using content analysis. The study finds that France's close relations with and tight control over francophone countries constitute a new form of imperialism that prevents independent decision-making on economic cooperation in the region. The economies of West African countries will thus remain dependent on France, which is not conducive to independent economic growth and development. The study therefore suggests that West African heads of state must develop the will to diplomatically break away from excessive French control in order to enable strong economic cohesion for self-reliance and regional economic cohesion.

Introduction

West Africa, a sub-African continent with fifteen member countries, is an interesting area of study for several reasons. Most of the states in this African zone are mineral and resource rich countries, but they are politically unstable, economically volatile and socio-culturally prone to negative life indicators. West Africa is home to numerous states that have established an extraordinarily advanced pre-colonial political and economic system that sets them apart from other societies (Ajayi & Crowder, 1972). These include the Benin Kingdom, the Oyo Empire, the Hausa Kingdom and the Borno Empire in Nigeria, the Akan, Ashanti and Akamu in Ghana, the Songhai Empire in Mali and several other significant kingdoms that succeeded in creating exceptional socio-economic and political systems that are repeatedly referenced in African history (Mabogunje, 1972).

West Africa came into contact with the outside world through various processes and phases, including ancient trade activities with the Middle East via the trans-Saharan route, contact with religious missionaries from the Middle East and Europe, slave trade, imperialism and formal colonisation by European industrial nations and later political freedom (Mabogunje, 1972). West Africa is considered one of the success stories of economic and security regionalism in the 21st century. The countries, led by Nigeria, founded the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS/CEDEAO). The aim of the regional organisation was to facilitate and promote the free movement of goods and services with fewer problems, economic cooperation and regional hegemony (Ukaigwe, 2016). But the huge security problems in some member states such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and others led to the formation of the military wing of the organisation, ECOMOG (Herpolsheimer, 2021).

The West African states were colonised by Great Britain and France. France secured indisputable control over its colonies in West Africa after early contacts and later after official territorialisation and deterritorialisation at the Berlin Conference in 1884–85 (Ginio, 2006). While Britain pursued an approach of Indirect Rule, France opted for complete assimilation. Britain allowed the natives to govern themselves in the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. In granting political independence, Britain ceded absolute power to its former colonies, retaining only a cultural reunification under the Commonwealth of Nations and opting for a minimalist or reductionist presence in the former colonies that allowed for full emancipation (McNamara, 1989). Francophone countries in West Africa, however, have had a different experience. In essence, France continued to exercise excessive control and undue influence over its colonies. In short, France refused to accept the reality that its former West African colonies were now at least politically free, but continued to colonise them by indirectly controlling their monetary transactions and finances, mining and owning their mineral resources, and politically determining the direction of these former colonies (Bloom, 2008).

The relationship between France and West Africa is an expression of an asymmetrical political economy in which the former continues to exploit the latter. It is expected that the emergence of economic regionalism within ECOWAS in 1975 and security co-operation will reduce the impact of the French presence in West Africa. As demonstrated

by the functioning economic and political cooperation within the framework of the European Union, ECOWAS is convinced that it will soon achieve the same feat (Francis, 2017). However, the constant control of mining resources, the use of the CFA and other control measures hinder successful economic integration in West Africa. Anglophone countries are free and willing to pursue regional integration, but the total control of Francophone countries hinders this endeavour (Oloruntoba, 2016). In recent years, West African countries have embarked on a process of monetary integration by adopting a single currency, the 'Eco, similar to the Euro in Europe. Unfortunately, France, dissatisfied and sensing that the introduction of a common currency in West Africa would be a setback to its financial interests, thwarted the process.

This raises the critical question of the nature of ECOWAS and the future of regional integration in West Africa under the continued and uncontrolled grabbing of France's former colonies, which make up ten of the fifteen ECOWAS members. The stalemate in efforts to introduce a common currency has implications for the economies of West African states. This means that the USD will continue to serve as a means of foreign exchange in a fluctuating economic environment, while France will continue to oppress the former colonies and expand colonisation by other means. It is surmised that this is the key reason why the mineral endowed states of West Africa remain poor despite possessing expensive and valuable metals and stones such as uranium, oil, gold, manganese, iron ore, copper, plutonium and several others. This paper critically examines the relationship between France and West Africa, focusing on the recent impact of France's role in rejecting the proposed introduction of a common currency (Eco) and how this phenomenon affects or reverses regional integration in West Africa. The paper draws on documented sources to compile the data. The data obtained were discussed and interpreted using content analysis, with an emphasis on historical and contemporary analysis of political economy approach.

The paper contributes to the discourses on the historical and political economy of the West African sub-region, Africa and the studies of developing countries. By linking past and present, a future is projected through the prism of the impact of regional integration efforts. It should be clear that the dialectic of Africa's political economy is altered and disrupted by the external forces of imperialism, capitalism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. However, one aspect that is not sufficiently analysed is how regional integration efforts are continuously influenced by past and present experiences. Using the example of France, one of the major colonial powers that exploited Africa, this study uniquely explains how the ECOWAS sub-region is economically disempowered through the apparatus of political instruments. While Europe is an excellent example of successful regional integration both economically and politically, the same members that endeavoured to achieve this feat are now thwarting its replication in the ECOWAS sub-region. The study will further enrich the literature on African political economy by showing how and why France's contact with West Africa continuously stifles economic development in the region. The recommendations will provide policy makers with insightful practical examples of ways out of the dilemma so that West Africa can not

only harmonise its relations with France and other countries of the world but also experience mutual respect and benefit in the course of the relationship. The paper is divided into an introduction that sets the background, West Africa, the background and the study of France in West Africa; Challenges of Post-Colonial African Political Economy, an analysis of ECOWAS and the challenge of economic integration in West Africa; current relations between France and West Africa; the Eco-movement and France's response; and a conclusion.

West Africa: A Background

France's presence and influence in West Africa can be better understood by considering West Africa's historical antecedents. West Africa did not come into contact with France by chance, nor was France the first external contact. West Africa already had a high degree of well-organised political and economic systems before the beginning of external relations. Rodney (1972) notes that even before the first contacts with the imperialists, Africa was already forming a strong socio-economic and political system with lasting legacies. West Africa emerged from a long history of human movements, invasions, displacements, migrations, marriages and relationships between the various peoples of the region (Mabogunje, 1972). West Africa is characterised by extensive eastern belts that contrast sharply with the north in the south. The region covers 50 to 250 degrees north latitude and 170 degrees west to 150 degrees east longitude (Mabogunje, 1972). West Africa covers 2.4 million square miles of forests and grasslands, dry deserts and shrubs and herbs interspersed with oceans, rivers, streams, lakes and sandy deserts in the Sahel (Mabogunje, 1972). Mabogunje (1972: 33) argues that West Africa is dominated by "Africans with slight admixture of members of the Caucasian ethnic group". Some of these Africans are the Malinke, the Bambara, the Mossi, the Songhai, the Hausa and the Kanuri. The other group are the Tukulor, the Wolof and the Serer, known as the Senegambia or Fulani group, and the Songhai in Mali (Mabogunje, 1972). The forest dwellers consist of the Niger-Congo group of the Ibo, the Edo, the Yoruba, the Nupe, the Fon and the Ashanti. Further west live the Kru, the Kpelle, the Temne and the Mende (Mabogunje, 1972).

In the prehistory of West Africa, there is ample evidence of civilisation and the active progress and development of mankind from prehistoric times through the Stone Age to the Iron Age, as shown by recently discovered scientific archaeological finds (Shaw, 1972). States and stateless societies flourished in West Africa. Examples of stateless societies are the Igbo in Eastern Nigeria, the Tiv in Central Nigeria and some of the Liberian and Cross River or Niger Delta groups in Nigeria (Horton, 1972). Many states such as Borno, Hausa, Songhai, Akan, Akamu, Benin and Oyo have been shown to have had centralised and efficient political structures and administrative systems for many centuries (Ajayi & Crowder, 1972). Dahomey is considered (Monroe, 2014) to be another centralised West African state that had a significant impact on the Transatlantic Slave Trade and legal trade along the coast for many centuries. The legacy of the pre-colonial decentralised states still haunts the current political arrangement, which requires

a decisive change that considers the culture and legacy of pre-colonial structures as observed in Senegal (Wilfahrt, 2022).

In religious terms, West Africa has internal traditional religious practises mainly characterised by witchcraft mythologies, voodoo, myths, superstitions, shrines and other traditional practises. In the 10th century AD, Islam entered West Africa through the Trans-Saharan Trade when Arab merchants from North Africa introduced Islam through the medium of trade (Obeng, 2006). Islam gained acceptance and popularity in West Africa as many rulers in Songhai, Borno and Hausaland embraced the faith, made it official in their palaces and made pilgrimages to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, where international diplomacy was established with the Middle East, North Africa and later Ottoman Turkey (Kane, 2016). Christianity came to West Africa through missionary activities dating back to the 13th century, but it could not gain a foothold because the missionaries were ostracised by the mosquitoes. In the fourteenth century, another attempt was made, but the missionaries failed to secure access because health was endangered, and security was threatened. Thus, as Nkrumah (1965) noted, missionisation and colonialism arrived in Africa simultaneously. Christianity took hold in Africa when colonisation began, or rather, missionary activities shortly preceded official colonisation.

France in West Africa

The most accurate and reliable early history of French contact with West Africa is the period of the slave trade. It spanned the period of the 17th century, when slave raiding and slave trading attracted Europeans to West Africa, among whom France emerged as a major player. The French slave buyers established their stations along the African coast, which consisted of Goree, Senegal, El Mina, Ghana, Ouidah and Benin (McNamara, 1989). The Transatlantic Slave Trade continued for almost two centuries until the advent of the industrial revolution and the tendency towards legal trade outlawed the phenomenon in the first half of the nineteenth century (Kelin, 1998). The trading posts near Dakar, Senegal, were the main centre for French slave collection and transport. This dates to 1638, when the French and the Senegalese, through the agents of the Compagnie Normande, a chartered company established under the policy laid down by Louis XII's first minister, Cardinal Richelieu, entered into a trading collaboration that brought the first French ownership and control of some influence in West Africa (McNamara, 1989).

However, France did not have an easy time penetrating West Africa, as many would have us believe. From 1688 to 1817, the French presence in Senegal was attacked three times by Britain when it came to control of slave supplies and areas of trade influence (McNamara, 1989). Immediately after the abolition of the slave trade, the French declared the territories of Senegal a colony to trade there and exercise direct political control. In the colony of Senegal, France pursued a policy of assimilation (McNamara, 1989). Under General Faidherbe, who was appointed governor of Senegal in 1854, France succeeded in building an empire in West Africa. He began an aggressive

expansion of the French colony in West Africa, starting with Senegal, where he increased French influence in the country. General Faidherbe opened trade routes into the interior, linking the upper Niger basin with French-controlled ports on the coast (McNamara, 1989). By the 1880s, France had achieved the status of building a mega-empire in West Africa, stretching from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Congo River. The greatest expansion was towards Gabon and Congo, where the French naval squadrons established a base on the adjacent Central African shores. The expansion gradually continued as far as Dahomey (Republic of Benin) in 1861 and the Ivory Coast in 1893 (McNamara, 1989).

France's main colonial measures are "assimilation" and "association" These terms have strongly influenced relations between France and its colonies even in the post-colonial period, to the extent that the former French colonies have continued to be colonised by other means. This is in stark contrast to what was achieved in the British colonies in West Africa, where a system of "Indirect Rule" was introduced that defines the additional measure of freedom of Anglophone West African states in the contemporary period (Miles, 1994). The term assimilation refers to the state of complete indoctrination and absorption into the French way of life and culture. Essentially, the people in the colonies were acculturated as French through absorption. The system of assimilation worked very well in West Africa, but met with fierce resistance in North Africa, particularly in Algeria, where Fanon (1972:1) argues that the French "introduced colonialism by force, imposed it by force, and it was countered successfully only with greater spontaneous violence". The attempt to assimilate the Algerian people backfired and led to violence on the part of the colonised, who were traumatised by the excessive brutality of the French (Kalman, 2013). Ake (1981) sees the phenomenon of colonialism as a truncating historical and cultural distortion and a political and economic stagnation that negatively altered the evolutionary destiny of Africa.

French economic policy in West Africa was characterised by stagnation, exploitation and an asymmetrical relationship between the metropole and the satellite that favoured the former over the latter. For example, when the energetic colonial minister Albert Sarraut initiated an integrated economic development plan for the provision of infrastructure in 1921, the National Assembly voted in favour of the plan but refused to approve it and provide the funds for the project (McNamara, 1989). Instead, the colonies were taxed in order to promote the growth and development of France and to rebuild the destroyed economy of the interwar period. In 1927, French West Africa, the AOF contributed a large sum of 19.4 million francs to the French budget (McNamara, 1989). Moreover, after the Second World War, France made its West African colonies the most important suppliers of raw materials for French industry and a protected market for French industrial goods and services. This view was aptly echoed by Rodney (1972), who emphasised that African states were developed in the pre-colonial era, used to develop Europe, and later underdeveloped and stagnated by the same Europe. The French themselves did not mince their words when it came to revealing their motives for their presence in Africa. Nkrumah (1965:7) reports on the

French colonial secretary in West Africa, Jules Ferry, who affirmed that France was in Africa for "three reasons": raw materials, cheap labour and an open market for the goods produced in France".

French religious policy was not only segregating, but also brutal and restrictive. Most of the French colonies in West Africa were deeply rooted in Islam for many centuries before contact with France. The French attitude towards Islam was extremely negative. The first step the French took against Islam in Senegal was to hire secular teachers from France to teach secular education to young Muslims (Harrison, 1988). The French lived in constant fear of Islam throughout their stay in West Africa and devised various measures to suppress the application of Islamic law and jurisprudence, some of which were successful and some of which were not (Harrison, 1988). The reason for these fears was the power of powerful religious scholars such as Alhaji Umar in Senegal and Abdulqadir in Algeria, who the French believed would shake their authority in the West African colonies (Harrison,1988). According to Harrison (1988), the French attitude towards Islam remained hostile and oppressive until the years of political independence in the 1960s.

On the military front, the French maintained a strategic recruitment and training programme for the black West African army, which fought side by side with the French under the L'Armee'd Afrique and gave France a decisive victory in the Franco-Prussian War and World War II (Clayton, 1988). Many West African black armies were recruited by the French in their thousands and integrated into the main French forces to fight French imperial and colonial interests (Keller, 2018). In fact, the French military organisations during the colonial period could be divided into four groups: Armee Metropolitaine, L'Armee'd Afrique, Troupes Coloniale and Troupes de Marine. The Troupes Coloniales were deployed to subjugate and overpower the colonies, but they were later supplemented by the black armies recruited from the controlled colonies. L'Armee'd Afrique helped French troops to victory on many war fronts in the 1940s and 1950s (Clayton, 1988).

Challenges of Post-Colonial African Political Economy

The first information showing how precarious the African postcolonial political economy is was extrapolated by Nkrumah (1965). In his analysis, Nkrumah (1965) raised awareness among Africans that the interface between Africa and the colonizers left little room for a future independent Africa. A pioneer among Ghanaian Presidents, he recognized this in the installed economic system, which was outward-looking, exploitative, superficially controlled by the former colonies and designed to favour the confinement of African states to the production and supply of raw materials to Europe, while Europe maintained a superior trade advantage. According to Ake (1981), post-colonial Africa was structured in the same way it was structured during the colonial political economy. This, according to Ake (1981), is the dialectic of global political economy through imperialism, capitalism and colonialism, and neo-colonialism have altered and truncated the evolutionary destiny of Africa by creating classes, institutions,

processes and structures subservient to global capitalism. During colonialism, the European exploiters, in search of an open market, raw materials and cheap labour, integrated the African economy into the metropoles for convenience and for their continued exploitation (Nkrumah, 1970). This, as Nkrumah (1970:7) stated, was unequivocally expressed by the French Colonial Secretary Jules Ferry.

Relations between post-colonial African states and Europe were characterised by underdevelopment. Rodney (1972) believed Africa was behind the development of Europe, while Europe was responsible for the underdevelopment of Africa. But how is this possible? This was due to a long-term commitment of unequal trade and domination. Frank (1989) explains that the developing post-colonial economies (including Africa) could not compete with their rich counterparts because they were underdeveloped, even though both may have been undeveloped before the contact that characterised asymmetric relations. This, according to Frank (1989), was because the economies and politics of African states in the post-independence period were taken over by the former colonies in what Fanon (1972) described as a total usurpation of African economies, politics, identity, culture and values. As blacks, their character and economy were Europeanised and Africans lost their identity. This is further explained by Hoogvelt (1997) who notes that the economy and politics of post-colonial Africa are comfortably dominated by Europe and America in relationships that ensure that Africa's mining industry and mineral resources remain undervalued, controlled and exploited by European industry. The Africa in the equation only produces raw materials it does not control, even takes products it does not want, gives up its products for foreign ones and lets its economy go bust.

To further exacerbate Africa's dominance and maintain a firm grip on its economy and politics, Ake (1996) states that the non-functioning democracy imposed on Africa was unworkable. It merely serves to install Europeans' stooges and proxies in the respective African economies to facilitate the comfortable exploitation of African resources. As Fanon (1972) noted, France is the most devastating case of all, as it ambitiously continues to oppress its former colonies and keep them under tight political and economic control. Africa's politico-economic nemesis is exacerbated by the new scramble in Africa with the entry of new players and emerging economies seeking to grab their share of Africa's spoils. The new powerful economies of China, India, Russia and other similar members continue to push into Africa to gain access to valuable mineral resources and stones for their industrial development. African leaders are supported with foreign funding for electoral victory to influence their economic policies, which are constantly subservient to the interests of foreign powers (Carmody, 2017). As Beckman (1982) and Oloruntoba & Falola (2020) noted, the contemporary African political economy belongs more to predatory captors in Europe and other parts of the world than Africa itself.

Based on the above structures, African states found themselves in a repeated process of entrapment that made escape insurmountable. Debt traps and ominous economic pills such as Structural Adjustment Programme and constant neoliberal packages ensured

that Africa remained forever indebted to Europe and the West, economic development continued to be stalled, and Africa's economy was subjected to sabotage and servitude (Büscher, 2015). This was achieved by Western-trained so-called technocrats from the West taking control of African politics. Once they took power, they were accountable to the masters who installed them and not to the African people they ruled (Langan, 2018). Moreover, crises are being fomented in places that are very rich in minerals, such as Congo, Sudan, Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, the Republic of Niger and some other African countries (Crawford & Botchwey, 2018). The conflict entrepreneurs who are believed to come from the same Europe. In this scenario, Africa's political economy is surrendered completely to European control. The explanations discussed in this section have to do with why Africa fails to adopt sound domestic economic policies, including regional integration.

ECOWAS and the Challenge of Economic Integration in West Africa

ECOWAS was established in 1975 under the Protocol of West African Co-operation and Movement to Remove Barriers to Free Trade in the Region. It has fifteen member countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo, ECOWAS covers a total area of 1.98 million square kilometres, 424.34 million people, a total GDP of $760.56 billion (0.76%) of the world economy and an estimated annual export of $146.75 billion in 2022 (World Data, 2023). The ECOWAS states possessed expensive minerals and precious metals, including oil, gold, iron ore deposits, manganese, uranium, coal and others. In terms of agriculture, the region has cocoa, rubber, timber, arable land for the cultivation of food and cash crops such as rice, maize, millet, wheat, sorghum, soya beans, cotton, cowpea and livestock such as camels, cattle, sheep, goats and various other ruminant and non-ruminant mammals and birds (World Data, 2023).

ECOWAS was one of the earliest efforts at regional economic integration in Africa and the world. The main objective of the organisation is to promote trade cooperation and harmony, strengthen the bloc to achieve regional hegemony status in global trade negotiations, facilitate the movement of goods and services among member states and adopt a common protocol for security and political stability through institutionalisation of democratisation. ECOWAS established its free trade area in 1990 and adopted a common external tariff in January 2015 (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2023). However, ECOWAS has not achieved its goal of regional economic integration as expected but has made enormous progress in the area of security in West Africa and even as far as Central Africa. The outbreak of civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone led to a paradigm shift from economic to security regionalism in West Africa, where a military wing of ECOWAS, ECOMOG, was formed (Dauda, 2011). ECOMOG succeeded in suppressing the violence in Liberia and Sierra Leone and restoring order in West Africa. In addition to West Africa, ECOWAS also intervened in other security crises in Africa with the help of ECOMOG, including in Congo, Sudan, the Central African Republic and other places (Herpolsheimer, 2021).

ECOWAS failed to realise economic regionalism due to several factors. One of them is the weak economic outlook. All member countries are still important producers and exporters of unprocessed raw materials to industrialised nations. ECOWAS members have not succeeded in exploiting the potential of their natural resources for the industrialisation and processing of their minerals (Deme, 2013). As a result, trade relations remain outward-looking, with members trading with America, Europe, China, India and other industrialised countries to a greater extent than with other members. For example, the US alone had a total trade volume of $14.1 billion in 2017, while ECOWAS exported $4.8 billion worth of goods and imported $9.3 billion (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2023). Europe accounts for about 28% of ECOWAS exports (ECOWAS, 2023). But intra-regional trade between ECOWAS members accounts for $12.7 billion (11.2%) of total exports of $113.6 billion in 2021 (Economist Intelligence, 2023). Nigeria was the largest contributor at $3.3bn, but it remains insignificant, accounting for only 5.9% of total exports of $56.3bn (Economist Intelligence, 2023). Similarly, imports from ECOWAS account for $12.9 billion (10%) of the $128.9 billion in 2021. The largest importer is Nigeria with $2bn (3.4%) of the country's total imports of $57.4bn (Economist Intelligence, 2023). With the above trade pattern, it is therefore practically impossible to achieve economic integration. ECOWAS is economically more permeable and more susceptible to external influences than to co-operation from within. From this perspective, ECOWAS has a Herculean task ahead of it.

An important factor hindering the realisation of economic integration in ECOWAS is French influence. The former French colonies in West Africa, 10 out of 15, remain under the undue influence of France and the excessive control of the political economy of Francophone countries under the permanent domination of France. France sees its control over the Francophone countries of West Africa as a continuation of economic prosperity and hegemonic strength (Chafer, 2002). A good example is France's direct control over the production and supply of foreign currency in West Africa. France continues to exercise monopolistic control over mining resources in Francophone West Africa, as well as the direction and flow of foreign exchange reserves and foreign investment, imports and exports (Oloruntoba, 2016). As a result, West Africa remains highly polarised, and France does not allow meaningful cooperation within the country. Despite President Nicolas Sarkozy's declaration to loosen currency controls and allow Francophone West Africa to adopt its local currency, France continues to control the CFA in West Africa, sometimes unnecessarily devaluing the currency to the detriment of host economies. It is believed that the common currency "Eco" introduced by member states in 2017 was sabotaged and thwarted by France because it would reduce French economic influence and control over Francophone members if it were successful. This is a major setback for economic regionalism.

Another valid explanation for the failure of ECOWAS economic regionalism is political instability and socio-economic crisis. Barely six years after gaining political independence, the West African region was hit by a fierce wind of coups and

countercoups, leading to a setback in democratisation and the emergence of military rule (Piccolino & Minou, 2014). This era was followed by political violence, civil unrest, international conflicts and other forms of violence. A genuine democratisation of the region is still pending in the 21st century, as the coup in Niger in July 2023 has shown. The political elites have failed to harness the region's resources for economic development, resulting in countless socio-economic crises that have manifested themselves in burning poverty, hunger, unemployment, illiteracy, disease, corruption and mismanagement, ultimately leading to the outbreak of various national and international security threats that manifest themselves in terrorism, banditry, secessionist aspirations, militancy, piracy, political violence and social vices, including transnational organised crime (Akinyemi et al. 2019). ECOWAS members have failed to secure the area and are seeking outside assistance. These security threats and political crises will not allow the region to achieve economic prosperity and regional cooperation.

Current Relations Between France and West Africa, the Eco-Movement and France's Response

France maintains close economic, political, security and cultural relations with the Francophone countries of West Africa. At the economic level, France remains the most important player in French West Africa in the mining sector (David, 1998). Imports and exports between France and its former colonies in West Africa also remain higher than between the member countries. France still arrogantly believes that Francophone West Africa belongs to it, and it is not far from direct colonisation. Amin (1973) claims that neo-colonialism continues where colonisation in West Africa left off. Senegal's resources and other natural resources are being exploited by the colonisers, especially France. The same view is held by Nkrumah (1965), who believes that imperialism and colonisation never left Africa. If anything, they have changed their form in a disguise known as neo-colonialism. In 2007, France's former President Nicolas Sarkozy said in a speech in Senegal, known in France as the Discours de Dakar, that Africa's problem is that "the African man has not gone down in history enough" and " African men are presented as prisoners of their own culture, characterised by irrationality and the inability to contemplate the future" (El Yattioui, 2020). The above insensitive statement shows what and how France feels and views the countries statutorily. Economic injustice prevails in the former French West African colonies. Thus, 60 years after independence, the former colonies are obliged to deposit 50% of their currency reserves in the French treasury (El Yattioui, 2020).

The CFA is regarded as French currency imperialism in Africa. The CFA franc, originally the French colonial franc for Africa, was officially created on December 26, 1945, by a decree of General de Gaulle (Sylla, 2017). Rather than allowing the former colonies to forge their common destiny of regional integration, Sylla (2017) notes that "France promoted economic integration between the colonies under its administration, thus controlling their resources, economic structures and political systems, and this destiny was maintained under post-colonialism". The CFA is subject to several imperial

caveats. One of them is the pegging of the exchange rate to the euro. The second is the French guarantee of unlimited convertibility of CFA francs into euros. The third is the centralisation of foreign exchange reserves at the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) and the Bank of Central African States (BEAC), which are obliged to pay 50% of their reserves into a special "operating account" of the French Treasury '(Sylla, 2017). Although the CFA is not cited as a cause of impoverishment of user countries, the continued use of the CFA currency by Francophone West Africa is reported to benefit France and harm West Africa. This situation has recently been contested by several Francophone countries, so much so that in 2017, French President Emmanuel Macron reiterated France's willingness to abolish the CFA franc in Africa if countries so wished (Sylla, 2017). The resentment over the continued use of the CFA franc by Francophone countries in West Africa arose on the eve of the introduction of a common currency in West Africa, Eco, which was believed to have been manipulated and held up by France.

France's failure to move to a middle ground and its authoritarian, arrogant approach is costing the country a huge fortune and causing a backlash in the region. Not only in West Africa, but most Francophone African countries in the Central African Republic, Gabon, Algeria and several others have decided to sever their military ties with France (Finighan, 2023). France was involved in security breaches in West Africa during the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), in which it supported the Biafran secessionists with arms and logistics. This did not augur well for relations between Nigeria and France for many decades (Gambari, 1980). The military coups that took place in many Francophone countries in the 2020s also have an undertone of an accusation that France is compromising security. Mali and Burkina Faso, for example, claimed that the presence of French troops did not support the fight against terrorism in their countries. And this despite the presence of over 5,000 French troops (Melly, 2021). During the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, France was accused of escalating the crisis to such an extent that French President Emmanuel Macron flew to Rwanda in 2021 to apologise (Melly, 2021). Macron announced in 2022 that France would withdraw its troops from Mali, and in 2023 Burkina Faso demanded that French troops leave the country. This was followed by Niger in August 2023 after the military coup (Forster, 2023).

Politically, France is gradually losing ground in West Africa after the Commonwealth of Nations announced that it would accept new members from Gabon and Togo (Forster, 2023). France pursues a cultural and political policy in Francophone Africa within the framework of the Francafrique policy, a sphere of influence over Central and West African Francophone states (Roberts, 1963). Francafrique was created during the Cold War to maintain the umbilical cord between France and its former colonies. This helped France to achieve the regional hegemony of a world power (Forster, 2023). France is a privileged partner for most Francophone leaders in West Africa, maintaining partnerships in intelligence and military co-operation, political alliances, the possibility of military interventions and development aid (Cohen, 2022). However, the young population in West Africa despises this romantic relationship between their countries and France. Currently, France has lost about six African states to coups d'état between

2020 and 2023: Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, the Republic of Niger and Gabon. The jubilation that heralded the coups, the warm welcome given to the military junta that carried out the coups, and the expulsion of the Nigerien military and envoys indicated the deep hatred and desire for liberation from excessive French control in Francophone West Africa and beyond (Guiffard, 2022).

In 2017, ECOWAS members planned to introduce a common currency, the Eco, to be operational by 2027 (Forster, 2023). This will replace the use of CFA francs in 10 West African countries, a currency system founded by Charles de Gaulle in 1945. It is believed that France invisibly lobbied Francophone West Africa to prevent the introduction of the Eco in West Africa. Before the Eco was proposed, Francophone countries announced their intention to abandon the CFA franc for local currencies. After preparations for the introduction of Eco had progressed far enough, eight Francophone countries made a counterproposal in December 2019 to introduce a new currency called Eco to replace the CFA. This was seen by the Anglophone countries of West Africa as a deliberate attempt to stall progress on the unification of the West African currency. In January 2020, the Anglophone finance ministers in West Africa condemned the move by the Francophone countries as sabotage (Norbrook et al. 2020). A strong link to France was reported, where some countries within the BCEAO admitted that "it was President Macron who imposed this agenda on us. Macron specifically talked about the CFA franc in Abidjan" (Norbrook et al. 2020).

However, it is not only the French connection that is hindering the successful arrival of Eco in West Africa. Only five countries (Cape Verde, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Togo) fulfil the criteria of the single currency, i.e. a budget deficit of no more than 4% and an inflation rate of no more than 5% (Norbrook et al. 2020). In addition, the large differences in the composition of the members raise a critical question. Nigeria alone accounts for 67% of ECOWAS GDP and 50% of the region's population. This means that the introduction of a common currency will mean an increase in naira in the region (Norbrook et al. 2020). Furthermore, the abolition of the CFA is not as simple as it seems. Francophone countries deposit 50% of their currency reserves with the French Treasury. As expected, a practicable formula for unravelling this long-term agreement, which has existed since 1945, is not feasible. So, France will not give it up so easily, or rather, the Francophone countries in West Africa may not be able to break away from the CFA by consensus to form and operate the Eco (Norbrook et al. 2020).

France has succeeded in convincing Francophone West Africa that the CFA is stronger than most Anglophone currencies, creating the Anglophone-Francophone dichotomy that always exists and emerges from time to time. Francophone countries are convinced that by dumping the CFA, they risk instability, which is guaranteed by the way the CFA works in terms of value and inflation control (Mugabi, 2021). Essentially, France believes that if Eco is successful, it would lose significant financial influence in West Africa to rival Anglophone Nigeria. However, the introduction of a common currency by ECOWAS is expected to facilitate trade, to reduce transaction costs and promote payment transactions between ECOWAS countries (Dewast, 2019). But West African currencies

are not immune to shocks and fluctuations that can emanate from unforeseen global economic developments (Dewast, 2019). Even if France willingly abandons the CFA and allows for the free adoption of the Eco, the challenges of meeting the criteria are a headache for members. This will have an impact on West Africa's economic integration (Kazeem, 2019). Other factors that could hinder integration include financial volatility, vulnerability to security threats, susceptibility to import-export dominance and economic backwardness affecting the region.

Conclusion

This paper examines the past and present relations between France and West Africa, the ways in which these relations influence the direction of the political economy in West Africa, and the current challenges affecting these relations. West Africa is considered one of the regions that have made an early breakthrough in promoting economic regionalism since 1975, but the goal of economic co-operation has failed due to several factors. France continues to exercise excessive control over Francophone West Africa. The imbalance in trade and intra-trade problems between members hinder economic integration as all countries are primary producers of commodities that cannot co-operate with each other in international trade. A major step in 2017 was the proposal to introduce a common currency, Eco, which is believed to promote trade partnerships, boost trade activities between members and facilitate trade between them. Unfortunately, the invisible hand of France, which has imposed the CFA on Francophone West Africa, has thwarted this process. However, the newspaper notes that while France is willing to allow Eco to operate, most of the ECOWAS members could not meet the minimum criteria for the adoption and operation of the proposed currency. Besides the economic challenges, political instability as manifested in the recent resurgence of coups in Francophone Africa, socioeconomic crises, and other poor indicators of development performance will continue to hinder ECOWAS's ambition for greater economic integration.

The study reminds Africa that it still has a long and hard road ahead of it to truly emancipate itself economically and politically. Far from being free, the continent is severely cornered by the same powers that have extorted and exploited its resources through various processes, starting with slavery, imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, which today masquerades as globalisation. The African sub-regions and the continent as a whole have no choice but to strive for integration that will promote economic cooperation, political freedom and regional harmony. The way Europe is pursuing its integration should be a good model for Africa. The study also suggests that the former colonial powers will not leave Africa free. An aggressive and evasive approach is needed. This can now be seen in some countries, particularly in the Francophone West African states currently under military rule, such as Burkina Faso, Mali and the Republic of Niger. They are busy fighting and resisting the neo-colonial arrangement that France has imposed on their economy, trying to decouple themselves. However, they are even being pushed back by their neighbors in West Africa who are

under the influence of France. France, which refuses to give up direct colonialism, is now being challenged by the efforts of its former colonies, which are struggling to wrest control of their political economy from France. This may not be as easy as expected. Other African countries are motivated by this boldness. The neo-colonialists are fighting back, and they will continue to fight. But Africa will not remain an arena of experimental conflict where its resources are extorted through the promotion of harmful policies and conflicts. The forces of globalisation will expand alliances for Africa, as is currently evident in the BRICS movement and the increasing activities of China, India and Russia on the continent. New alliances and other forces will change the direction of relations, which will eventually bring better benefits to Africa.

Therefore, providing practical policy implications that will set ECOWAS on the path of genuine development and integration is urgently needed. One of the panaceas, a necessary but difficult one, is for the West African states to boost their economies by initiating industrialisation. The huge diversity of resources possessed by ECOWAS members should be extracted and processed within their countries. African countries, especially West Africa, need to develop indigenous industrialisation policies that facilitate the extraction and exploration of their abundant natural resources and exploit them for processed finished products that bring in respectable and favourable international trade. This will enable an increase and improvement in trade partnerships in manufactured goods among members, which, in return, will boost the economy and guarantee political stability, socioeconomic development, and progress that will qualify the countries to adopt a common currency.

The neo-colonial economic order that constantly subordinates West African states to the interests of the West must be reorganised in favour of the sub-region by abandoning all forms of agreements and informal subjugations that are detrimental to the African economy. The unfair trade arrangement between France and her former colonies should be peacefully renegotiated in a more beneficial manner to increase the flow of wealth to the owners of the resources. In addition, ECOWAS should utilise the population bulge and exploit the service sector to create wealth instead of over-relying on raw material production alone. Another practical suggestion is that West Africa and Africa should focus on internal trade partnerships and economic alliances rather than engaging outside the continent. This will utilise the countries' economic and technological capacities. In addition, Africa should diversify its global trade relations with other emerging economic powers in Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and other parts of the world to have alternatives to the West and its monopoly on the exploitation of African economies. This should also include the clause of technology transfer and technical assistance.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they have no financial interest in this manuscript.

Notes on Contributors

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Legitimacy, Regionalism, and Efficacy: Algeria's Role in Modern West African Security Dilemmas[1]

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Abstract:

This paper examines Algeria's role in shaping regional dynamics through its relationships with two key actors in West Africa: the Polisario Front in Western Sahara and Niger's junta government following the 2023 coup. It investigates how Algeria navigates its foreign policy to influence stability, with a focus on the concept of perceived legitimacy. Algeria's support for the Polisario Front and diplomatic engagement with Niger's coup leaders reflect its commitment to sovereignty, non-interference, and Pan-Africanism. By rejecting certain international recognitions, Algeria plays a significant role in shaping the regional security environment. It positions itself as a defender of self-determination and a protector of weaker states, offering diplomatic and military support to build regional alliances and counter external powers. This strategy contrasts with interventionist approaches, focusing instead on solidarity and regional cooperation. The paper argues that Algeria's policy of non-interference, combined with its emphasis on legitimacy, contributes to both internal political stability in neighbouring countries and broader security in Africa. It suggests that Algeria may be positioning itself as a regional superpower, with a long-term strategy to foster stability and strengthen its geopolitical influence. This study provides insights into how Algeria's foreign policy shapes the broader security context in West Africa.

Introduction

Intrastate and bordering turmoil, which threatens territory's overall stability, calls into question if international actors should intervene. Should a state lose its sovereignty if it is deemed illegitimate? Contested and/or deserted conflicts, such as the ones related to the sovereignty of the 2023 coup d'état in Niger and Western Sahara, have created opportunities for a regional power to step in where previous international (colonial) powers have left or declared the territory illegitimate. Leaving a vacancy for a new moderator, Algeria has taken initiative in positioning itself as the regional superpower of West Africa. This paper seeks to understand, through the case studies of Western Sahara and Niger, what Algeria's ambitions and desired outcomes are in regional bilateralism, and how they differ or coincide between cases.

Legitimacy, or rather illegitimacy, has threatened both Western Sahara and Niger's existence as states. In the case of Western Sahara, the United States (Trump, D., 2020) and, more recently, France (Macron, E., 2024) declared the region as the territory of Morocco; the Court of Justice of the European Union however passed two decisions in October 2024 reinforcing the sovereignty of the Sahrawi people through their inalienable right to self-determination. In the case of Niger, French President Macron declared the coup d'état "completely illegitimate" and "profoundly dangerous" on July 28th (France 24, 2023), two days following the coup, and the United States followed a month later abruptly halting all military and economic activity (U.S. Department of Defense, 2023). Russia and China have however maintained bilateral activity with Niger.

Lack of Western recognition has caused heightened insecurity in both cases. Sanctions, tariffs, and troop withdrawal compound governmental fragility. In the wake of being unrecognized by Western nations, Algeria has seized the opportunity to step in and back both *weak* states. If Algeria proves capable of supporting both states' sovereignty – a key Algerian foreign policy objective – and instilling a greater level of peace, it will be a victory for their own perception as a qualified regional superpower.

This research contributes to West African qualitative security studies, explores Algeria's role as a regional security protector, and follows two West African security cases which have never been compared. Analyzing and comparing Western Sahara's Polisario Front and Niger's coup government relationships with Algeria discusses relevant, current disputes in West African security. Additionally, building upon the questions posed in this research's findings, we further unpack the role of international legitimization, or renunciation, on regional stability. In discussing the idea of states deemed legitimate or illegitimate, we found that legal legitimacy differs from political legitimacy. In the case of Western Sahara for example, former United States President Donald Trump announced the contested territory as the possession of Morocco in exchange for Morocco's normalization of diplomatic relations with Israel. In the case of Niger, the United States and France rejected junta government legitimacy, given their

lack of democratic and electoral processes, and demanded the reinstatement of deposed President Bazoum. Suspending aid and withdrawing troops, Western allies abandoned Niger militarily and economically. However, states such as Russia and Algeria declare Niger's junta a credible government for bilateral negotiations (Atalayar, 2024). In the case of Western Sahara, up to 84 countries–including Algeria, Nigeria, South Africa– had officially recognized SADR statehood (Universidad de Santiago de Compostela). This necessitates the following questions: *What, or who, ultimately determines a state's legitimacy? What is the role of recognized political legitimacy in regional relationships and how does it impact regional stability?* Given international legal norms, Western Sahara may be a state and Niger's junta may be a justified, viable government; yet they are not geopolitically perceived as such. Therefore, this research requires a review of literature on how different scholars define legitimacy and how legitimacy varies in *weak* states.

Literature Review
Political Science

In the discipline of Political Science, scholars often leave the concept of *state legitimacy* vague, following lines of nationhood or statehood. According to European scholarship, a legitimate government should have "good governance, democratic rights, and welfare gains," (Gilley, B., 2006, p. 47-71). Additionally, modern scholars of recognitional value and political legitimacy argue that in conceptualizing political legitimacy, the foundations of "authority, power, and coercion … are inadequate"; rather, focusing on the dynamics *between* power and authority imbue legitimacy with value. (Greene 2019, 68). Greene also claims that "sometimes the recognition of outsiders, such as the 'international community,' matters for the effective functioning of a regime." (Greene 2019, 85). Thus, some states necessitate legitimacy from external governments for their regime to function.

Recent scholarship explores a new approach to legitimacy, treating it as subjective and discussing the disadvantage of being a weaker state in the current state system. Lamb asserts that to have a legitimate government, a state must be "predictable, justifiable, equitable, accessible, and respectful," (Lamb, R. D., 2014). In Lamb's definition of legitimacy, subjectivity can change the approach to recognition. For example, Algeria believes that Niger's junta government is legitimate in its claim to temporarily govern and that its legitimacy derives from a stated intention to eventually cede power, as well as the previous President's prioritization of Western interests over Nigerien interests. Political legitimacy can therefore function as a geopolitical tool of aligned values, rather than as an objective determinant.

Law

In the discipline of International Law, the concept of legitimacy is typically determined through both conventional sources, such as treaties, and state practice, which can evolve into customary international law. Once a treaty is signed and ratified by the relevant parties, there is generally little debate regarding the sovereignty and legitimacy of the states involved, at least with respect to the co-contracting states. These agreements often serve as the cornerstone for formalizing relations and establishing legal frameworks for recognition. However, in the case of declarations of independence, the matter becomes more complex, as international law provides less clarity on the legality of unilateral actions aimed at secession.

In the context of Kosovo, for instance, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an advisory opinion on July 22, 2010, which addressed Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in 2008. The Court concluded that there was no prohibition in international law against such declarations (ICJ, 2010). While the ICJ did not decide on the broader question of the legitimacy of Kosovo's statehood or its recognition by other states, it confirmed that Kosovo's declaration itself did not violate international law. This sets a precedent for how international law treats declarations of independence, particularly in the absence of a clear global consensus or a recognized framework for self-determination.

In contrast, the case of Western Sahara—which has long been a subject of dispute—demonstrates how self-determination can shape legal legitimacy. The ICJ's 1975 advisory opinion on the territory of Western Sahara affirmed the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination (International Court of Justice, 1975). Although the ICJ did not declare Western Sahara to be an independent state at that time, it did recognize the legitimacy of the Sahrawi people's claim to self-determination, implying that they could one day form a legitimate state. Subsequently, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which represents the interests of the Sahrawi people, has been granted full membership in the African Union (AU), further asserting its legitimacy as a political entity on the continent.

The issue of political legitimacy—whether a state or government is recognized as legitimate by other states—often becomes the central factor in discussions of statehood and sovereignty. Recognition is a highly subjective process, influenced by political interests, strategic alliances, and regional dynamics. For example, while the SADR has been recognized by numerous African nations and holds membership in the AU (SAIIA, 2022), it has not been recognized by key global powers, including countries in Europe and the United States. This discrepancy underscores how legitimacy in international relations can be fluid and contingent on the perceptions of other states. As such, a state's legitimacy often hinges not solely on legal frameworks but also on political recognition, which can vary depending on the position of the perceiving state.

Moreover, under international law, the principle of democracy is not an absolute right or a strict obligation (ICJ, 1975). The ICJ and other international bodies have clarified that while democratic governance is encouraged, there is no binding legal

requirement for all states to adhere to democratic principles. In this light, coups d'état, or military takeovers of governments, are not automatically deemed illegal under international law. While they often violate domestic legal frameworks and international norms, such events are not outright prohibited by international law, making it difficult to categorically declare them illegitimate. In fact, a coup may be recognized by other states, even if it violates democratic principles, further complicating the legal understanding of legitimacy.

Thus, international law does not unequivocally condemn coups d'état or the self-determination of peoples, such as those in Western Sahara. The ICJ's position on the right to self-determination, coupled with the absence of a legal framework against unilateral declarations of independence, reflects the fluid and often contested nature of legitimacy in both legal and political spheres. This research does not aim to define legitimacy in an overarching sense, as such a discussion would require an in-depth exploration across various disciplines. Instead, the focus here is on the contested and malleable nature of legitimacy, particularly as it pertains to the legal frameworks governing self-determination, statehood, and regime change. This literature review provides a foundation for understanding the complexities of legitimacy within both Political Science and International Law, highlighting the ways in which the term is interpreted and applied in real-world scenarios.

Given the variation of legitimacy between the Political Science and Law disciplines, as well as amongst prominent states in recognizing either case, this research does not focus on legitimacy; rather, it seeks to understand the role of both turmoil in West African regional security without diminishing their agency as states creating bilateral relationships.

Case Study Selection

The contested legitimacy of both Western Sahara and the Niger coup government, the established, strong connections with Algeria, and the contentious relationship with Western nations make this case comparison pertinent and well grounded. Both cases share economic, cultural, ethnic, political, and religious similarities to Algeria, dating back decades. As their neighbor, Algeria has ongoing geopolitical interests in the wellbeing of Western Sahara and Niger. Ensuring stability and legitimization through bilateral involvement, Algeria has been the prominent moderator and protector in both cases. Western Sahara and Niger indicate the current condition of stability in West Africa as well as Algeria's expanding role as the region's security protector.

Western Sahara
Case Context

The contested territory of Western Sahara dates back to the end of Spanish colonial rule, when it was known as Spanish Sahara. Although a movement for statehood began once Spain withdrew from the colony, both Morocco and Mauritania began fighting for

control over the territory from 1976 onwards. A long, violent conflict took place between Morocco and the Polisario Front, shortly after the latter proclaimed an independent SADR on February 27th, 1976. The war ultimately ended in a UN-organized ceasefire in 1991. In 2020, after nearly 30 years of peace, Morocco reignited the conflict and brought to light, once more, the questioned sovereignty of Western Sahara. The Polisario Front–SADR's government–continues fighting Moroccan occupation, yet the skewed power of each state, coupled with increased Moroccan settlerism and "green" energy developments in Western Sahara, make the self-determination struggle difficult.

International actors disagree on the legitimacy of Western Sahara, with key players–such as the United States, France, and Spain–denouncing its sovereignty and others–Algeria, South Africa, Latin American states, and the African Union–reinforcing it. While international law declared Western Sahara a non-self-governing territory and its people entitled to self-determination, Western leaders have claimed that Morocco rightfully claims autonomy over the territory.

For the past forty years, Algeria has assumed the role of main supporter, protector, and moderator for Western Sahara.

Historical Algerian Relations

Having experienced colonial oppression itself, Algeria has deep seated political similarities with Western Sahara. In 1976, Algeria brought both humanitarian aid and troops to the Amgala region of Western Sahara. Engaging in 16 years of consistent conflict, Algeria provided troops and weapons to the Polisario Front–Western Sahara's National Liberation Movement. Algeria militarily backed Western Sahara until the UN ceasefire in 1991 (NYT Archive, 1976). Humanitarian aid and refuges were created for Sahrawis in Algeria, taking in between 100,000-160,000 refugees in Tindouf (Wilson 2016, 37) following the Moroccan "Green March" in 1975–which moved 350,000 Moroccans into Western Sahara (Paul et al. 2013, 395)–and the ongoing conflict between the Polisario Front and Morocco until 1991 (United Nations, 2024).

Diplomatically, Algeria has backed the Polisario Front's government internationally since 1976 (University of Central Arkansas). Routinely attending UN mediated negotiations from 2007-2020, Algeria acted as the Polisario Front's heavyweight, giving legitimacy to a territory substantially weaker than Morocco.

Modern Algerian Relations

As a legitimized powerful nation, Algeria continues diplomatically supporting the Polisario Front. Recently, Algeria has strongly advocated for the SADR through diplomatic and symbolic statements. In response to the 2020 United States renunciation of Western Saharan sovereignty, the Algerian Foreign Ministry denounced Trump's decision, stating it has no legal effect as it contradicts international law and that the statement worked against all de-escalation efforts (Reuters, 2020). Additionally, Algeria

responded forcefully in response to France's recent rejection of Western Saharan sovereignty in July 2024, withdrawing the Algerian ambassador from France and calling into question France's morality and continued colonial ties (Algeria Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022).

Algeria has provided humanitarian support to Western Sahara in the form of refugee camps which hold most of the Sahrawi population within Algerian borders. The refugee camps in Tindouf house about 173,600 Sahrawi refugees, demonstrating Algeria's humanitarian efforts in the Western Sahara conflict (L'observatoire des camps de réfugiés, 2019). The UN Security Council established the Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) in 1991, which monitors the cease-fire in Western Sahara and acts as a token of the international community's involvement in the resolution of the conflict today (United Nations Peacekeeping). The camps themselves operate as an interim state for Sahrawis, equipped with schools, hospitals, security, construction, civil society, food and agriculture, internet connection, athletics, and health monitoring by humanitarian organizations such as the UNHCR, Red Cross and Red Crescent, and UNICEF (L'observatoire des camps de réfugiés, 2019).

Algeria has not provided military backing to Western Sahara since Morocco's breach of the ceasefire in 2020, but it has actively engaged in spreading awareness of SADR state sovereignty. In 2024, Algeria endorsed Western Saharan sovereignty through both official government press releases and meetings with UN officials. Without Algerian power behind Western Sahara, the contested territory would have likely become Moroccan, so much so that Morocco has kept on insisting Algeria is recognized as a party to the conflict.

Algerian Intentions

The Algerian state benefits in major ways from backing Western Saharan sovereignty. Geopolitically, Morocco and Algeria compete in a decades-old rivalry for regional influence and leadership (El-Katiri 2016, 23-24). Western Sahara provides a viable conduit for Algeria to combat Moroccan influence, given their regional competition for unipolar control. Fighting for this territory's sovereignty– a key Algerian foreign policy goal–simultaneously blocks Morocco from mainland Africa. If Western Sahara gains full independence, Morocco will be fully cut off from mainland Africa, given its closed border with Algeria and its likely confrontational relationship with a fully independent SADR. This will deteriorate Morocco's strength and capacity as a regional power. On the global stage, Morocco will have less bargaining leverage with the EU on negotiations of immigration–specifically if SADR were to adopt a closed border mirroring that of Algeria. On the regional level, Morocco will lose a major national conflict and solidify its portrayal as an oppressor to African states rather than an ally. Western Sahara's achievement of statehood would reflect its history as an occupied state against an oppressor. Ultimately, given the history and present relationship between Western

Sahara and Morocco, SADR statehood means Moroccan impairment—a tangential victory for Algeria.

Culturally, anti-Moroccan sentiment in Western Sahara creates a straightforward allyship for Algeria. France's history of oppression and colonization in Algeria incites similar cultural perspectives and empathy towards the Sahrawi nationalist movement. Backing the Polisario Front and SADR benefits Algeria on the cultural level of combatting neocolonialism. In 2023, Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf reiterated that " [African states] should not forget that our brothers and sisters in the last African colony, …Western Sahara, are waiting for our support and backing…" (Algeria Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). Positioning itself as a regional ally and support for Western Sahara, Algeria enforces the narrative of Pan-Africanism and brotherhood.

Economically, phosphates, the fishing industry, and agriculture thrive in Western Sahara. The previous EU-Moroccan trade agreement on fishing and agriculture—and its condemnation by the Court of Justice of the European Union in October 2024— demonstrates the potential profit and plentiful resources in Western Sahara and its significance for Morocco's trade partnership with Europe. If Western Sahara becomes a fully independent state, the special relationship between Algeria and SADR will enable Algerian access to profitable business investment and trade. Simultaneously, Morocco would lose access to major green energy outputs and phosphate mines in Western Sahara. This once again reinforces Algeria's regional power, placing Morocco at a serious geopolitical and economic disadvantage.

Niger
Case Context

On July 26th 2023, a military junta led by Abdourahamane Tchiani staged a coup deposing former President of Niger, Mohammed Bazoum, assuming the position of President himself (The Times and the Sunday Times, 2023). The junta retains governmental control over a year later, appointing Prime Minister Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine and Commander of the Presidential Guard Lieutenant-Colonel Habibou Assoumane on August 7th, 2023 (Olivier, M., 2023). The junta justified its intervention referencing corruption, economic shortfalls, and lack of democracy under the previous regime—terms used recurrently since Niger's 1996 coup (Smith, D., 2010; France 24, 2010). Former president Mohammed Bazoum comprises another notable feature of the previous regime, a strong Western ally emphasizing the necessity of the United States and France in Nigerien bilateral relations (Gjevori, E., 2023).

International actors disagree on the coup's justifiability, either suggesting a needed, legitimate transition or an unconstitutional, illegitimate seizure of power. Economic sanctions and military withdrawal following the coup left Niger's economy crippled. The removal of over 2500 U.S. and French troops in Niger massively decreased the state's counterterrorism support.

Algeria took the primary role of external supporter and moderator. While not explicitly condemning the coup, it has poised itself as Niger's strategic partner to navigate a return to constitutional rule (Camara, K., & Charles, D., 2023). Algeria vehemently opposes another international intervention in the region, as French-led Operation Barkhane proved a failure after 8 years of counterterrorism and stability efforts. Additionally, French popularity has declined in Niger, giving Algeria another opportune interest (Al Jazeera, 2023).

Historical Algerian Relations

Algeria's interest in supporting Niger and West Africa is not new. Given shared populations, culture, religion, and economics, Algeria presented itself as a viable security provider for West African states–notably efforts in Mali–for decades (El-Katiri 2016, 11 & 23). Before Qaddafi's fall, Libya equally involved itself in state security efforts. Interstate linkages and state moderation intentions caused Algeria to mediate dialogues during the early Tuareg Rebellions from 1990 until its end in 2000 (El-Katiri 2016, 23-24). Beyond mediation, Algeria has traded across the Nigerien borderlands since pre-colonial times, exchanging luxury items, salt, and livestock via the trans-Saharan caravan route (Alesbury 2013, 112). Algeria's shared border with Niger enables flows of migrants and refugees between the two states (Alesbury 2013, 118-120).

Modern Algerian Relations

Following Niger's 2023 coup d'état, Algeria positioned itself as the conflict moderator, offering transitional plans and leadership support for the junta government. While this position may appear intuitive, given their intentions to become the regional power, their stance straddled that of Western condemnation with neighbors Mali and Burkina Faso's aggressive pro-coup stance (Milliken, E., & Cafiero, G., 2023). The Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS)–a regional organization of (then) 15 West African States–publicly denounced Niger's coup, meeting with deposed President Bazoum and requesting the "restoration of his legitimate authority," (Al Jazeera, 2023). Additionally, the organization prepared a "standby force" to reinstate Bazoum militarily (Al Jazeera, 2023). Taking a firm anti-interventionist position–against another international peacekeeping mission mirroring Operation Barkhane–as well as a decisive posture towards transitioning back to civilian rule, Algeria currently plays the role of regional moderator skillful ly (Milliken, E., & Cafiero, G., 2023).

So far, Algerian support takes the form of diplomatic moderation with the junta government and security protection for the state, rather than direct militaristic involvement. Algeria sees the conflict and withdrawal as an opportunity to emphasize state sovereignty and push for a movement away from French and U.S. involvement in West Africa. A month after the coup, Algeria proposed a plan detailing a 6-month return to civil constitutional rule for Niger (France 24, 2023; Embassy of Algeria, 2022). Additionally, it committed Algerian protection of airspace against any international involvement (France 24, 2023). The junta accepted Algeria's offer of mediation and

support, with disagreement on the plan's duration. In the year following the coup, Niger demonstrated its commitment to the bilateral Algerian relationship, sending Prime Minister Mohamed Lamine Zain and Defense Minister Lieutenant General Salifu Modela to meet with Algerian Prime Minister Mohamed Nadhir Arbawi (Arredondas, M., 2024). Algeria, noting the importance of this West African ally, repeatedly emphasized the "special importance" of their visit with "the Sister Republic of Niger," highlighting "the historic fraternal relations" and community between the two states (Arredondas, M., 2024). Nadhir Arbawi stated that it was the first meeting in a future of collaborative efforts–military, economic, and social (Arredondas, M., 2024). Algerian diplomatic vernacular enforces the themes of brotherhood and Pan-Africanism, pushing against the Western coup condemnation.

On one level, the Western withdrawal from the West African coup states has created a mutual defense pact between the junta governments of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, known as the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) (Al Jazeera, 2024), ultimately strengthening regional interstate collaboration measures. On the other hand, Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso all immediately withdrew from ECOWAS in January of 2024 (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2024). This demonstrates an intense shift away from regional collaboration, with the three states turning inward towards one another to reinforce their security situation–wholly separate from ECOWAS (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2024). Following their withdrawal, Algeria met with the current President of ECOWAS to restate their rejection of military intervention and to discuss the situation (Mestour, C., 2023). It is worth highlighting that, despite Algeria's condemnation of international intervention, the Russian paramilitary Wagner Group has increased involvement with junta governments in the AES (Atalayar, 2024). In November of 2024, Niger invited Russian firms to invest in Uranium, given the decrease in French trade after the coup (Atalayar, 2024). Algeria has openly criticized the Wagner Group's military involvement in the region, maintaining its value on international nonintervention (Khettache, A., 2024).

Algerian Intentions

Algeria's recent increase in interstate diplomacy with Niger's junta government raises the question: *Why?*

Politically, Algeria's historical stance on state sovereignty explains its encouragement of internal solution building, while moderating and protecting against any forms of occupation. Having sovereignty as an explicit, recurrent national goal, Algeria quickly intervened in the coup aftermath to prevent international involvement, or meddling, in Niger's statehood. Newly vulnerable, given French and United States troop withdrawment, Algeria aims to suspend external action until Niger has stabilized. Cynically, Algeria could be profiting off a vulnerable, weaker state to carry out its own incentives–under the guise of mutuality and respect.

Culturally, anti-French sentiment in Algeria and recent anti-French protests in Niger demonstrate similar perspectives and ideologies on development renouncing French

involvement. Given Algeria's colonial history, the recent discontent and removal of France from Niger demonstrates an alignment of personal values. Reinforcing anti-West perspectives regionally plays a role in Algerian motivation.

Economically, Algeria stands to gain from Niger's allyship. The development of the African Gas Pipeline spans from Europe into Nigeria, crossing through Niger (The World Bank in Algeria, 2024). Discussing the infrastructure project during high-level diplomatic meetings encourages reciprocity and agreement on the future project–which is set to create new market opportunities for Algeria, the largest liquid natural gas exporter at 30 mtpa (Global Energy Monitor, 2022). The Hydrocarbon sector makes up 19% of Algeria's gross domestic product and 93% of its exports (The World Bank in Algeria, 2024). Additionally, the African Development Bank Group's establishment of the Multinational Trans-Sahara Highway–road segments in Niger, Chad, and Algeria receiving $167 million for improvement–will increase trade volume and access to landlocked fishing resources (African Development Bank Group, 2019).

Case Comparison
Algerian Bilateral Approach

Bilateral relations with Western-perceived "illegitimate states" bolster Algeria's role as the West African regional security provider. We argue that Algeria seeks to involve itself in both contested states because the legitimacy opportunity–a lack of recognition by regional and international organizations–presented itself. Supporting a state undergoing Western criticism progresses Algeria's regional agenda. Through heavily backing both contested states of Western Sahara and Niger, Algeria bolsters itself on the regional–and international–stage.

The largest similarities in Algeria's approach to regional bilateralism are prioritization of international noninterference, strong diplomatic backing, and emphasis on Pan-Africanism. These foreign policy similarities suggest a trend in Algeria's approach to West African bilateral relations with weaker, "illegitimate" perceived countries. We will separately discuss international noninterference, strong diplomatic backing, and emphasis on Pan-Africanism as independent factors, yet their foundations intertwine and coincide with one another.

International Noninterference

Algeria's foreign policy objective of sovereignty–and vehement opposition to international intervention– holds true in both cases. Preventing Western nations from intervening has been Algeria's overarching short term goal in both cases. Practically, Algeria has protected airspace against international intervention, advocated for sovereignty and independence, housed refugee camps, and spoken diplomatically on behalf of the state. Fortifying both governments through their own state power, Algeria has effectively kept international actors from making final decisions on either regional conflict, granting instead a level of autonomy to the state itself. Algeria's approach to

leaving Niger and Western Sahara autonomous opposes typical European initiatives which include democracy or free market contingencies in aid contracts. Algeria has promised military protection and diplomatic support without attempts to interfere in the respective governments. While maintaining state autonomy has been largely successful, coups d'état have increased Russia's involvement in West Africa.

Niger's junta government rejects all Western influence, presenting itself as a favorable geopolitical conflict. Additionally, as anticolonial rhetoric defines Western Sahara, its sovereignty combats French and American investment in the region. Algerian bilateral engagement with these two states strategically combats international—mainly Western— intervention in West Africa.

Diplomatic Backing

Algeria's practice of supporting each state currently follows protective and diplomatic practices rather than violent or forceful military backing. Algeria mainly aims to demonstrate its capacity and understanding of the nuance and complexity currently in both situations, and ultimately, to come away with a diplomatic, moderating victory. The Algerian Foreign Ministry consistently makes statements supporting Western Sahara and condemning any actions which decelerate SADR statehood. Similarly, the Foreign Ministry also actively condemned any international intervention in Niger, emphasizing the importance of ongoing bilateral dialogues and a peaceful transition. Proving capable of moderating each volatile transition and unresolved conflict frames Algeria as a formidable diplomat, both on a regional and an international scale.

Pan-Africanism

In both cases, Algeria uses Pan-Africanism as an underlying foundation for future bilateralism. Familial terms such as "brotherhood" or "sister republic", create a cultural relevancy and allied connection—one crucial pillar of Algerian bilateralism. Algerian official statements focus on the similarity and regionalism of West Africa. Backing *weak* states against foreign intervention demonstrates Pan-Africanism, protection, and cultural relativity. Algeria seeks to portray its understanding and support of regional conflicts as a fellow African state, rather than a foreign oppressor. In so doing, Algeria builds good neighborly relations, a sense of familial regionalism, and cohesive foundations in West Africa.

While these three approaches hold true through both cases, it is crucial to note that the stakes and relationships themselves vary. Algeria's relationship with Western Sahara could be defined as special, or even dependent; being SADR's biggest support, the contested territory's hope for statehood is bound to continuous Algerian solidarity. Without this strong, outspoken regional ally, Western Sahara would lose significant support regionally and internationally. Presently losing its sovereignty and potential for statehood, SADR differs from Niger's junta government; a different junta may overturn the current coup government, proving a failure for Algerian support, but its reversal

would not ultimately endanger the statehood of Niger. Additionally, Algerian involvement in Niger has massively increased recently following the 2023 coup d'état; prior to the coup, Algeria has shared similarities with Niger–including population, trade, language, religion–but not an ongoing bilateral relationship. It is worth noting that the connecting feature of these two studies is their perceived illegitimacy by (some) European states, not an equivalent value on the importance of each relationship.

Outcomes

To assess the effectiveness of both cases on Algeria's perceived strength, outcomes must be viewed through a current and future perspective. We define current as the outcomes which Algeria has already gained in its bilateral relationship and future as Algeria's prospective, overall goals.

In Western Sahara, the current bilateral relationship with Algeria has proven widely effective for bolstering Algerian reliability as a regional superpower. Algeria has almost singularly backed Western Sahara, maintaining the fight for its sovereignty and publicly dissenting against oppositional states. It has maintained its foreign policy value of state sovereignty through this endeavor, solidifying its credibility in maintaining an ongoing diplomatic conversation for nearly 50 years. The future relationship with Western Sahara may provide economic opportunities, an indebted, allied neighbor, and reduced Moroccan influence in West Africa.

In Niger, the current bilateral relationship opens doors for expanded Algerian alliances in West Africa. Tying itself to Niger's transition and prosperity, Algeria's role as an effective ally–maintaining state autonomy and prioritizing sovereignty–may appeal to *weak* neighboring states. Sharing beliefs on Pan-Africanism and noninterference, post-coup states may look to Algeria for future support. So far, Algeria has succeeded in deterring Western interference in Niger–a victory in its fight against international interference. The future relationship, or rather the effectiveness of Algeria in navigating and supporting the post-coup state, could bolster its credibility as a mediator–both regionally and internationally. Additionally, success in Niger would expand Algeria's regional allies–potentially into Mali and Burkina Faso–thereby solidifying its stronghold as the North African superpower. Secure states facilitate regional stability, equally beneficial to Algeria.

The future outcomes of both Western Sahara and Niger remain to be seen; a failure in either case discredits Algeria's ability to stabilize the region. Additionally, the lack of statehood has prevented the Polisario Front from fully governing the territory. If Western Sahara gains full independence, will they be capable of autonomously self-governing? Or in Niger, where the 2023 coup seems like a recurrence in a cycle, will the junta succeed, or will their actions instigate another coup? Observing the outcomes of each conflict helps analyze the efficacy of Algeria's role in establishing regional stability.

Conclusion and the Future of Algerian Regional Collaboration

Algerian bilateral relationships with weaker, "illegitimate" states follow three foundational principles: international noninterference, diplomatic backing, and Pan-Africanism. Using the case studies of Western Sahara and Niger's junta government, one can see trends in Algeria's approach to regionalism.

Algeria's foreign policy strategically seeks regional allies and dominance. Contrasting Morocco, Algeria does not heavily pursue policy and allyship with Western countries. This difference marks a crucial understanding of the competition for regional superiority between Morocco and Algeria. It also guides and predicts Algerian bilateral approaches and future allies. Using the legitimacy opportunity allowed by post-coup states or contested territories, Algeria advances its own foreign policy priorities.

Ultimately, Algerian foreign policy in West Africa strategically and skillfully targets weaker states to build a foundation of regional support. Whether Algeria proves to be effective in stabilizing West Africa–via each of these cases–remains to be seen. Supporting *weak* states regionally creates a future regional stronghold. Algerian unipolarity in North Africa is contingent upon successful regional bilateralism.

Future research should address Algerian failure in fragile states, such as Mali, to gain a comprehensive understanding of this topic. While the case studies of Niger and Western Sahara remain inconclusive on the future outcomes of Algerian involvement, Mali's tense relationship with Algeria could ameliorate understanding on the failures of Algerian regional bilateralism.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they have no financial interest in this manuscript.

Notes on Contributors

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Neo-colonialism, violence, and the EU's approach to peace operations in Africa[1]

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Abstract:

The article examines the European Union's (EU) approach to peace operations in Africa through the lens of neo-colonialism. The authors begin by situating Africa on the Richardson scale of violence, comparing its conflict levels to other continents, and exploring the root causes of its persistent instability, including colonial legacies and weak post-colonial military institutions. The study outlines evolving models of peace operations, contrasting traditional UN missions with ad hoc coalitions (AHCs) and highlighting the shift in EU missions from direct intervention to capacity-building (in form of training and advising). The paper argues that EU's strategy is fragmented, reactive, and often shaped more by geopolitical self-interests than normative commitments. Through a detailed case study of the Central African Republic (CAR), the article analyses four EU missions, evaluating their scope, impact, and limitations. The authors claim that while EU operations have achieved tactical successes, they remain constrained by limited mandates, political ambiguity, and growing anti-Western sentiment in Africa (often fuelled by competing foreign actors), raising deeper questions about the possibilities and necessities of Europe's long-term role on the continent.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to shed light on the strategic approach of the European Union (EU) to peace and stability in Africa, especially through its own military Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) crisis management operations. Before we can even begin to discuss that, however, we lay the ground by reiterating the Richardson scale of violence, compare the situation of Africa to other continents in terms of violent conflict, and shortly conceptualizing peace operations and their evolution. Following that, we dive into the EU's strategic approach to African peace and stability in general and the EU's peace operations in Africa in particular. Finally, we provide an even closer look at the seemingly never-ending spiral of violence taking place in the Central African Republic as well as the international effort to restore peace and stabilize the country.

Richardson scale of violence and Africa compared to the world

To be able to situate Africa on the "violence map" of the world, in other words, to see how much violent conflicts characterize Africa compared to other continents, we must first establish what the scale of violence is. The method we can use to measure violence globally has been invented by Lewis Fry Richardson in his (posthumous) book titled "The Statistics of Deadly Quarrels" in 1960. A "deadly quarrel", in Richardson's definition is any human violence that leads to the purposeful death of humans, be it 1 human, or 1 trillion humans and everything in between. This includes everything from simple homicides to conflicts to wars to nuclear annihilation. He used the base-10 logarithmic scale to be able to measure human violence at this range in one scale, which we find extremely useful. His scale – reminiscent of the Richter scale of earthquakes (which is also logarithmic) – we call the Richardson scale of violence:

Richardson scale of violence			
Magnitude 0	1 to 9^4 deaths	10	murder, small scale group violence
Magnitude 1	10 to 100 deaths	10^2	battle
Magnitude 2	100 to 1000 deaths	10^3	conflict
Magnitude 3	1 thousand to 10 thousand deaths	10^4	war
Magnitude 4	10 thousand to 100 thousand deaths	10^5	war
Magnitude 5	100 thousand to 1 million deaths	10^6	war (e.g. Rwandan genocide)
Magnitude 6	1 million to 10 million deaths	10^7	war (e.g. Taiping

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[4] Of course, for the rest of the table, the numbers after the „to" should be 99, 999, etc. However, for the sake of easier understanding and memorizing, we have given up some precision.

			rebellion, US civil war, Congo wars)
Magnitude 7	10 million to 100 million deaths	10^8	World War I and II
Magnitude 8	100 million to 1 billion (1000 million) deaths	10^9	nuclear war
Magnitude 9	1 billion to 1 trillion (1 million million) deaths	10^{10}	nuclear war, potential annihilation of humanity

Figure 1: Richardson scale of violence, table compiled by the authors, based on Brian Hayes' article (Hayes, 2002) from 2002 about Richardson's book.

We can get an excellent general overview of the situation regarding violent conflicts in Africa from the 2022 article of Palik et al. in the PRIO paper series, "Conflict Trends in Africa 1989-2021" (Palik et al., 2022) (they also include a significant part of data going back to 1946). One of the key takeaways from this paper is that nine African countries – Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, DR Congo, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia – have been experiencing conflict and war linked to the activity of the Islamic State (IS). Furthermore, IS extremism is spreading, with the Islamist terrorist group expanding even into Tanzania, a country that has not faced internal conflict for decades. State-based and non-state-based conflicts and wars often appear in the same geographical regions and countries in Africa. Interstate conflicts and wars are rare in Africa (they have counted 7 between 1990 and 2021). The most common form of violence is civil conflict and war and internationalised civil conflict and war, e.g. in 2020 all the 30 state-based conflicts and wars in Africa belonged to these categories. Most of the battle-related deaths (BRDs) result from low intensity conflict. Africa had the highest number of state-based conflicts and wars in the world from 1946 to 2021, namely 105, while Asia had 82, the Middle East 41, Europe 38, and the Americas 27.

Palik et al. (2022) define conflict as resulting in yearly BRDs between 25 and 999 and war as above 1,000 BRDs. On the Richardson scale, this mostly corresponds to Magnitude 1 and 2 as conflict, and Magnitude 3 as the beginning of war. In 1990, one of the worst years, they have counted 63,000 BRDs from 8 wars (of Magnitude 3) and 1,563 BRDs from 5 conflicts (of Magnitude 2). The years 1999-2000 witnessed another spike in BRDs: in 1999, 6 (Magnitude 3) wars accounted for 58,000 BRDs, and in 2000, 6 (Magnitude 3) wars resulted in 56,500 BRDs. After this, BRDs declined sharply, to start to rise again in the 2010s and 2020s (Ibid, p. 12). According to their research, African wars are fought for two reasons, either over territory, or over government (replacing or changing the composition of governments). With a few exceptions, conflicts do not spread to entire countries but are contained in a specific geographic area within affected countries (hot spots).

Here, we reproduce one of the most striking illustrations from the PRIO paper, which reveals that the majority of the conflict-affected countries in Africa – across all types of conflict – are concentrated roughly in the central region of the continent, while violence appears significantly less prevalent in the northern and southern parts of Africa:
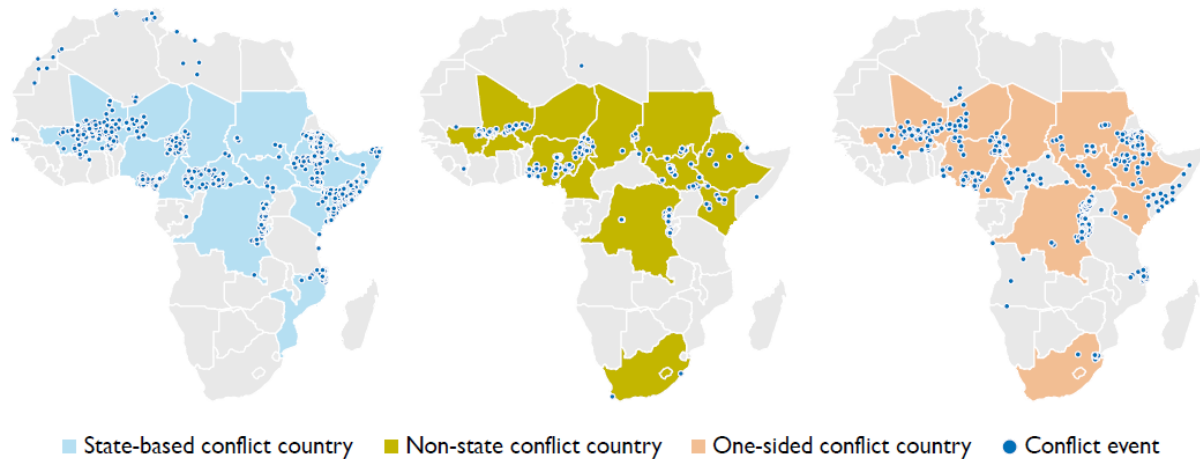

■ State-based conflict country   ■ Non-state conflict country   ■ One-sided conflict country   ● Conflict event

Figure 2: Illustration of geographical spread of conflicts based on the PRIO paper (Ibid, Figure 21, p. 26)

Additionally, Africa is the most severely affected continent by state-based, non-state-based and one-sided conflicts – when governments or non-state-based organisations commit armed violence against civilians, e.g. genocide, in case of Rwanda or Sudan – in the world (Besenyő, 2019, pp.70-72, 84-86). The number of non-state conflicts is growing. While most of the violence remains low-intensity – and the majority of BRDs stem from these conflicts – a small number of high-intensity conflicts, particularly those reaching Magnitude 3 or higher, account for high levels of BRDs, when wars erupt.

The comprehensive picture is this: Africa suffers the most violence out of all continents, and the reason for that is mostly communal violence (violence between ethnic and religious communities, represented by organized armed non-state actors), and to a lesser extent violence over territory and government (regime change). A lot of this can be laid squarely at the door of European colonizers, who have drawn African boundaries with rulers – arbitrary borders (Kleynhans & Wyss, 2025) – not paying any attention to the ethnic and religious realities on the ground, and to pre-existing indigenous African polities and states, only to their own imperial interests. These arbitrary borders have become one of the major sources of conflict, since they separate African ethnic and religious communities.

Furthermore, colonial states did not have robust militaries, first, because they only served as auxiliaries to the militaries of their colonizers (Ibid, p. 666), second, because if they had strong militaries, they could have used those *against* their colonizers. At decolonisation, the European colonizers have thus left the new African states with very small and weak militaries. There is a cold political logic to this: the ancient and classic method of "divide and conquer".

Favouritism was a systematic and strategic feature of colonial rule. The preferential treatment of specific ethnic groups—such as the Hausa in Nigeria, the Tutsi in Rwanda, or the Acholi in Uganda—led to their disproportionate representation in colonial militaries, police forces, and gendarmerie units. This entrenched ethnic imbalance fuelled tensions among communities. Moreover, such favouritism was typically paired with hierarchical discrimination: African soldiers were rarely promoted beyond junior ranks, depriving local personnel of opportunities to gain leadership experience or strategic expertise. These structural imbalances played a major role in post-independence instability, contributing to Africa's first military coup in Togo in 1963, which culminated in the assassination of the elected president and the eventual rise of Gnassingbé Eyadéma, who ruled from 1967 until his death in 2005. Similar patterns were evident in Nigeria's 1966 coup and, decades later, in the roots of the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Ilorah, 2009).

These examples also show that even after African states had become nominally independent, they were in general politically unviable and economically and militarily very weak. This made it easy for Western states to continue to exploit them in covert political and economic ways, in other words, to practice neocolonialism. Three states in the Sahel, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have recently taken decisive steps to distance themselves from Western (French) influence, including expelling French military forces and reassessing bilateral agreements, forming the Alliance of Sahel States (Alliance des États de Sahel, AES), and turning to Russia and China for assistance). They are reclaiming their economies, asserting national sovereignty, and embracing both nationalism and pan-Africanism. While such moves may signal the potential for transformative change across the continent, they also carry significant risks. In the short term they are contributing to increased instability. The security vacuum created by the withdrawal or expulsion of Western forces, including national troops and multinational peacekeeping operations, is often filled rapidly by international terrorist organizations that are already established and expanding their influence in the region. These escalating security threats place an increasing burden on national armed forces (even if they claim to have an international ally such as Wagner) and may ultimately lead to renewed need for international peace operations to stabilize the situation.

What are peace operations and how do they evolve?

Peace operations have evolved through several generations since their inception after the Second World War in the framework of the United Nations (UN) and later regional organisations and multilateral treaties. They have been characterized traditionally, since the end of the Cold War, as having "generations" by a wide range of authors, Kai Michael Kenkel being a good example. He distinguishes between five generations (Kenkel, 2013): 1 – traditional peacekeeping, 2 – multidimensional (military+civilian), 3 – peace enforcement, 4 – peacebuilding, 5 – hybrid missions (UN+regional organisations). Recently, categorisation into "generations" has been criticized, and an alternative method of categorisation proposed based on what the objective is:

minimalist (end violence), moderate (end violence+establish good governance), maximalist (address the root causes of the conflict) (Hellmüller et al., 2022). The common ground in all these categorisation attempts is that we must deal with the increasing complexity of peace operations, which manifest in their outside characteristics, their mandates, their composition and their objectives.

Beyond these categorisation methodologies for peace operations, we are also interested in the more fundamental issue of what peace operations actually *are.* Different schools in international relations theory (such as realism, liberalism, constructivism, Marxism, feminism, post-colonialism) have conceptualized peace operations in different ways, and they all have a point, but for the purposes of this short introduction we will choose the lens of liberal institutionalism, which in our view has the most general explanatory power for the phenomenon of peace operations. In contrast to the pre-1945 anarchic international system—where states operated solely based on rational self-interest and conflicts erupted without any overarching authority trying to put a stop to them - the post-Second World War era saw the emergence of a rules-based global order. Rooted in the Bretton Woods system and institutionalized through the United Nations, this new framework introduced a form of international policing. The UN, alongside authorized regional organizations, assumed responsibility for maintaining peace and stability. Under Article 51 of the UN Charter, which affirms the inherent right to self-defence, these actors are empowered to operate in conflict zones when authorized by the Security Council, effectively formalizing mechanisms for collective security. In this system, UN peace operations (since they are not in self-defence) must receive a mandate from the UN Security Council and/or be invited in by the host country's authorities.

Since there is still nothing close to a global authority accepted by everyone that could keep the peace between states, and in that sense act as a sort of world police force, and the UN has no standing army, the UN tries to keep (restore, enforce, etc) the peace by conducting peace operations. In lieu of a non-existent UN force, the UN must resort to raising the forces for these operations from its member states and reimburse their expenses from the UN peacekeeping budget. Viewed through this lens, peace operations are basically "policing" efforts of the international community to overcome a brutal Hobbesian international system in which wars could rage on unchecked and civilian populations would suffer without any hope for outside help and protection (which was the case for most of our history up until the establishment of the UN, and unfortunately for numerous conflicts, it still is the case today).

The UN is the major international organisation that conducts peace operations, with the most legitimacy. However, the UN cannot deal with all international conflicts alone, so regional international organisations, such as NATO, the OSCE, the CIS, ASEAN, the League of Arab States, the EU, the AU and its RECs (regional economic communities) and international forces based on multilateral agreements (such as the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) on the Sinai Peninsula) also engage in mediation,

peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peace enforcement efforts, some of them in the form of peace operations.

Most military peace operations have been conducted by the UN, the EU and the AU and its RECs. The other international organisations listed above have conducted very few altogether. Most states outside the Western world (who besides the UN, are also involved in NATO and EU peace operations) mostly contribute troops and police forces (Troop Contributing Countries, TCC and Police Contributing Countries, PCC) to UN operations and not try to organize their own operations in the framework of their own regional international organisations. NATO, which also did a relatively large number of peace operations, is focused not on Africa, but elsewhere. The AU and its RECs conduct peace operations only in Africa, although African countries contribute, together with Asian countries, the most military personnel to UN peace operations (mostly in Africa, but outside of Africa as well).

Malte Brosig, in his chapter on peacekeeping in the Handbook of African Defence and Armed Forces (Ibid, pp 696-715) provides a comprehensive overview of the history and present of UN peacekeeping on the African continent, which has seen 31 UN operations as of July 2025, most of them after the end of the Cold War. He describes the biggest difference between traditional UN operations and what seems to be the future of peace operations, the so-called AHCs (military ad hoc coalitions). This difference is that UN operations are defensive, lightly armed and not able to engage in the armed conflict itself (also due to the historic political impartiality of UN operations), while AHCs have been "invented" with the specific intent of having an operational force that can and does engage in the armed conflict. The emergence of AHCs was necessitated by the intensification of violence in Africa. Older missions worked reasonably well in Burundi, Sierra Leone, Darfur, Liberia, Ivory Coast, but peacekeepers with both equipment and mandates for keeping an existing peace (ceasefire) are unable to deal with ongoing high intensity conflicts with no ceasefire or peace in sight, such as we can witness in the DRC, CAR, Mali, South Sudan and Somalia.

The UN tried to deal with this situation, putting as many troops and money into its African operations as possible (peaking in April 2015 with over 107,000 peacekeepers worldwide, reaching almost 100,000 (95,219 to be exact) in Africa) (UN Missions Summary, 2015), but the new generation of UN operations are struggling to deliver results, because the real watershed, making the UN operations an actual fighting force in Africa, is something that UN member states outside Africa would not support. To put it bluntly, nobody from outside Africa really wants to die for Africa. Thus, the solution that has been found is that AU and REC operations, and AHCs made up of the troops of willing African nations are fighting the wars in Africa against terrorism, religious extremism and separatism based on the incompatibility of the reality of ethnic communities and arbitrary state borders. The outside world (mostly the UN, the EU and the US) is supporting the efforts of African states and their regional organisations through either financial support, training or capacity building.

Many AU and REC missions are acting as a first entry/bridging force, after which the UN, when the circumstances are more suitable, takes over. African nations are engaged with peace operations in Africa for natural reasons: they have an interest in stabilizing their neighbours and preventing the spillover of violence, and for some of them the UN reimbursement for peacekeeping is a very important contribution to their very low defence budgets.

Brosig defines AHCs as "autonomous arrangements with a task-specific mandate established at short notice for a limited period of time" and lists six examples of AHCs in Africa. These are: the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) between 2011-18, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) fighting Boko Haram, the G5 Sahel Joint Force (which fell apart because Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger left) (Security Council Report, 2024), the Accra Initiative (against terrorism in the Sahel), and the East African Force (against the M23 in the DRC) (Ibid, pp 711-712). The AHCs are legitimized by the AU's Peace and Security Council. The AHC's advantages over peace operations (other than the main one, being able to fight a war) is fast decision making, little bureaucracy (since they circumvent all international organisations and are down to the political will of the African countries who establish them), and direct control over the resources that their members contribute. AHCs operate under Article 51 of the UN Charter, since the African countries participating in them act in self-defence and generally only on the territories of the AHC members. This means that AHCs do not need to get UN, AU or EU blessing first.

We can see that the task of the AHCs is to fight terrorist, religious extremist and separatist organized armed groups, which is something that UN-EU type peace operations are not prepared to do, but this is what Africa really needs. The UN type peace operations can come later, when the war is over and there is a peace to be kept, along with state-building, security sector reform, training, capacity building and humanitarian assistance, for which peace operations are much better suited than AHCs would be. We agree with Brosig that AHCs are not institutional competitors to peace operations, but they are in some cases the prerequisite of a peace operation to start working. Peace operations and AHCs thus operate at different phases of the process. International donors are funding AHCs, for example the EU through the European Peace Facility (EPF).

EU military operations in Africa

The EU has started conducting civilian and military peace operations in 2003, and in the 22 years since then, has conducted and continues to conduct 45 missions and operations altogether. Out of its civilian missions, some have been in Africa, but out of its military operations, almost all have taken place in Africa, as the table below shows.

EU CSDP missions and operations in the world		
	civilian	military
ongoing	12	10

out of which in Africa	4	8
completed	13	10
out of which in Africa	6	9

Figure 3: EU CSDP missions and operations in the world, authors' compilation based on EEAS data: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/missions-and-operations_en#11929

The ongoing missions and operations around the world, including Africa, are also illustrated on the map below:

Military missions/operations | Civilian missions | European Peace Facility assistance measures | Military naval operations/EUNAVFOR
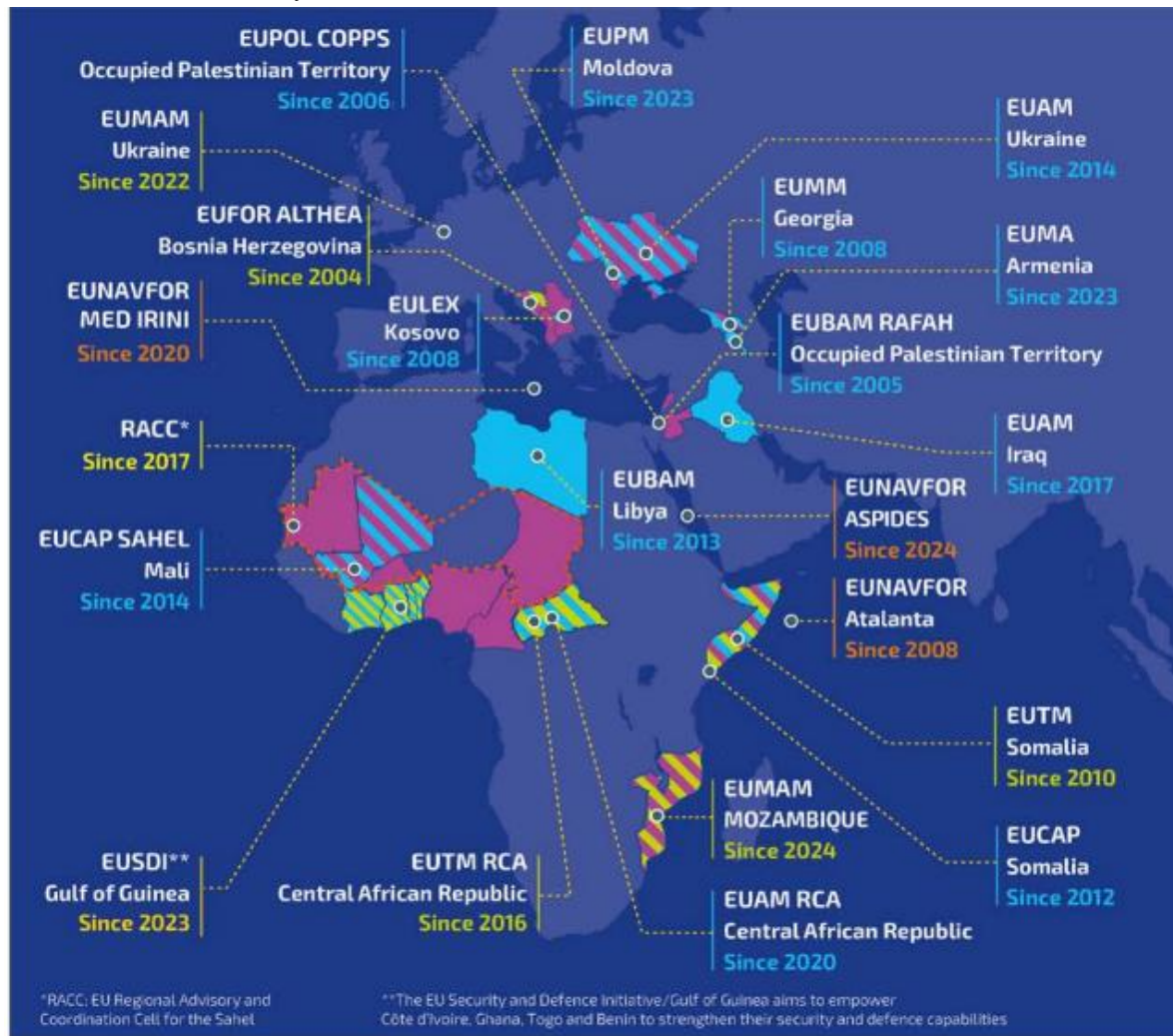
Figure 4: EU security and defence engagement around the world. Source: EU missions, 2025.

We can see that out of the CSDP military missions and operations, both in the past and in the present, most were or are in Africa, or in the case of the naval operations, around Africa. This tendency of the EU to militarily engage in Africa more than anywhere else in the world stems from several reasons. One is the simple fact shown earlier in this article that Africa has the most violent conflict zones in the world. The other is that the

colonialist past of some European states ties Europe economically and politically to Africa. The third reason is that Europe does not want migration from Africa to overwhelm it, so it aims to contribute to stabilizing the continent to stem migration, terrorism and radical Islamism (Ibid, p. 642). CSDP land operations in Africa can be said to have evolved through several types.: From 2003 to 2009, the EU conducted EUFOR operations (Artemis, EUFOR DRC, EUFOR Chad/CAR), with executive mandates to provide protection to civilian populations as bridging operations until the UN can take over. The EU has also started on naval operations (EUNAVFOR), naming these after Greek goddesses (Atalanta, Sophia, Irini) and gods (Aspides), mostly to respond to migration (Molnár & Vecsey, 2022) and the threat of terrorism. From 2010, the EU has changed its approach, and it switched to training missions, hence the acronym EUTMs (EUTM Somalia, EUTM Mali, EUTM RCA) (Ibid, pp. 646-657). Besides EUTMs, the EU has "invented" other mission types as well to deal with the African needs, and to utilize the full spectrum of CSDP, including the military and civilian crisis management instruments as well. They have introduced EUCAP missions, aimed at civilian (police, judiciary) capacity building, EUAM (advisory missions), and EUMAM (military advisory missions). The direction of the evolution is clear, both the EU and Africa want African solutions to African problems, hence the shift to training, capacity building and advisory missions which aim to train and equip African militaries to deal with their own conflicts, and the less European troops and more African troops on the ground. The EU is training and financing African armies, so it does not have to send its own troops anymore.

The EU's strategic approach to Africa

The EU's strategic approach to Africa regarding defence is in a process of transformation at present, and both the EU institutions and the EU Member States seem to be confused about how to go forward. The official strategic documents, such as the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), the Strategic Compass, the "Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa" document, the Sahel Strategy, the joint communiques of EU-AU summit and ministerial meetings, consist of three elements related to peace and security. One, they emphasize the strong strategic partnership between the two continents and the indispensable nature of African peace and prosperity for the EU. Two, they have a strong normative element, emphasizing democracy and human rights. Three, the implementation mostly consist of the EU supporting African ownership, throwing money at Africa (through the African Peace Facility, the European Peace Facility, the NDICI and other instruments), providing training and advisory missions to African militaries, and development assistance to treat the root cause of terrorism and migration in place and keep the migrants the EU cannot deal with at home.

On the other hand, as Peo Hansen shows, this seemingly normative, "soft power" approach of the EU is only the narrative, the surface, behind which the EU has always acted and continues to act as a geopolitical actor just like all the others. Despite the normative rhetoric, it cooperates with authoritarian regimes, tuning down the normative narrative, whenever that is what its interest dictates. Also, this divide

between rhetoric and reality is closing, as the EU, in response to the Russian threat, has started to act openly as a geopolitical actor, which is less and less apologetic about abandoning its post-Cold War vision of placing itself above global power politics (which never worked beyond the rhetoric), and returning into the arena of hard power and global competition (*Hansen, 2025).*

Examining the EU strategic documents themselves, their authors have clearly been bureaucrats, not visionary leaders. The EUGS wasted few words on Africa and contains no substance beyond platitudes such as we will invest more in Africa, human rights and development in Africa are the key to security and prosperity in Europe, we will fight terrorism, and we will support the AU and the RECs (EU Global Strategy, 2016). The Strategic Compass goes one step further and is a bit more concrete, emphasizing the EU's support to African-led peace initiatives, including support to African peace support operations (EU Strategic Compass, 2022).

The document "Towards a Comprehensive Strategy with Africa" from 2020 has a section on defence, which clearly states that "African states bear the main responsibility to act, as they are the foremost guarantors of their own security", however the EU is willing to support Africa in these efforts (Towards a Comprehensive Strategy, 2020) by financial support and EU missions and operations. The EU's Sahel Strategy from 2021 is in the same vein: it emphasizes African ownership, EU support and its insistence on democracy and human rights (EU Sahel Strategy, 2021). After the spectacular failure of this strategy in the Sahel, the EU institutions have not been able to come up with a new strategy yet which they could propose to the Member States. Witnessing the rapid unfolding of events in the Sahel, this is now not even possible, as the Sahel seems to have started to make its own choices, which means that the EU must change its own mindset regarding Africa as well.

The newest strategic document of the EU on defence, the White Paper of March 2025 is primarily about the war to the east of Europe and the efforts to rearm and ramp up defence industrial capacity, with the goal of reaching defence readiness by 2030. Africa is mentioned in the White Paper only four times (as opposed to about 30 times in both the EUGS and the Strategic Compass), which, since the focus of the White Paper is defence readiness and defence industry, is understandable (EU White Paper, 2025). Africa is mentioned as a region of instability, from where the spillover effects of migration, terrorism and climate change threaten Europe, and where the European interest is the stabilisation of the continent.

The European approach to African peace and security right now, to put it bluntly, seems to be "we have our own problems right now, so please deal with your own", encouraging African ownership and supporting AU-led and REC-led peace operations. This chimes with the African approach of "African solutions for African problems", and with the awakening pan-African movement that emphasizes the dignity, independence and sovereignty of Africa. (Though to be precise, we need to mention that there have been outside players who felt the opportunity to fill the vacuum on their own (such as the United Arab Emirates financing proxies, or Turkiye and China also engaging in the

region) or by invitation such as Russia through Wagner's invitation). This is also the spirit expressed in the May 2025 communique of the EU-AU ministerial meeting, which emphasizes African ownership, and the EU's support to UN, AU and REC peace efforts, also through equipment provided through the EPF (EU-AU ministerial, 2025).

Outside of the DRC, the Sahel is the most virulent hotspot of violence in Africa, where the EU's approach has spectacularly failed, the EU missions and operations were asked to leave, the Sahel countries one by one left the G5 corps established for peace operations in the Sahel, three of the Sahel countries left the ECOWAS as well, and instead have established the AES. Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have gone their own way, invited in Russia in the form of the Wagner Group to assist them, and are on their way of renationalizing their economies (e.g. gold mines in Burkina Faso), rejecting further Western influence and control (even making steps to leave the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU or UEMOA – Union économique et monétaire ouest-africaine), abolish the CFA Franc – guaranteed by the French Treasury – as their legal tender and create their own common national currency), which they regard as neocolonialism and imperialism. As Hansen *(2025)* shows, not without cause, as the EU's history with Africa points to a seamless transition from colonialism to neocolonialism, with the continuation of exploiting Africa's natural resources for economic gain for Europe. France went even beyond simple exploitation in its vision, which was to include its overseas territories in Africa in the common market evolving in Europe, to create a Euroafrica, which would amount to a power the world would have to reckon with (*Hansen, 2025)*. In Hansen's thinking, the "strategic autonomy" the EU is striving for is of the Hobbesian kind, and it will not leave Africa alone, but will try to keep Africa as Europe's sphere of influence, even it is not Europe's colony anymore. In other words, the EU, as all great powers, acts as an empire, which advances its interest through turning its neighbourhood into its backyard.

Meanwhile, Africa might have come to a point of awakening with the events in the Sahel in the last few years. There is no consensus in the wider world either on how to regard for example Ibrahim Traoré, the President of Burkina Faso: as an authoritarian, undemocratic military leader who came to power through a coup and is not ready to organize general elections to return to civilian rule, or as a genuine nationalist leader who has risen from the bottom up, is an organic product of Africa, and has wide popular support. This issue goes to the heart of what democracy is, and whether we should expect African nations to practice democracy exactly in the European way, or we are prepared to accept that in Africa, democracy might look different and let Africans define for themselves what democracy and sovereignty means for them.

Case study: the peace efforts in the Central African Republic

This evolution of EU peace operations is perfectly demonstrated in the Central African Republic (CAR). The European Union has engaged with CAR under its Common Security

and Defence Policy four times due to the country's instability and the domestic security situation, basically continuously since April 2014.[5]

The first of the four EU peace operations in the Central African Republic was launched in response to total state collapse after the 2013 coup d'état, overthrowing President François Bozizé on 24 March 2013. There were widespread atrocities and ethnic cleansing, and the ongoing international efforts – particularly the understaffed and underequipped African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (AFISM-CAR/MISCA) – failed.[6] The European Union military operation in the Central African Republic (EUFOR RCA) was authorised by UNSC Resolution 2134 (2014) forming the legal background for Decision 2014/73/CFSP of the European Council (Council Decision (CFSP), 2014).

The mission was launched on 1 April 2014 – even though originally, the EU force generation meeting on 13 March could not provide either the sufficient number of troops or the logistic support necessary for deployment (Nimark, 2014) – and reached full operational capability (FOC) of 700 personnel a bit more than two months later, on 15 June, under the command of Major General Philippe Pontiès of France for its entire deployment. Manned by 14 European countries (including non-EU states such as Georgia, Serbia and Turkiye, besides Estonia, Finland, France, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain) (Yuksel, 2020), EUFOR RCA had a strong executive mandate, the UNSC authorizing "*the EU operation to take all necessary measures within the limits of its capacities*" (United Nations Security Council, 2014). The robust mandate was necessary to cope with the challenging security situation in the CAR as well as to deliver results in the very limited timeframe. As a military bridging operation, EUFOR RCA was to contribute to the establishment of a safe and secure environment, to pave the way for and hand over the mission area (Tardy, 2018) – originally to the African-led International Support Mission in the CAR (AFISM-CAR/MISCA) which later changed to MINUSCA (EUFOR RCA, n.d.-a) due to real-world developments in the meantime – within four to six months of reaching FOC, with a special focus on the area of the capital city, Bangui (EUFOR RCA, n.d.-b).

Having a closer look at the 348-day-long mission, we can conclude that it can be considered a success, though mostly on a tactical level, given its very limited mandate and its area of responsibility being only the capital city. The first soldiers set foot on the

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[5] On the other hand, to have the full picture, we need to mention that five years earlier there was another EU peace operation involving CAR as well, the EU Military Operation in Eastern Chad and Northeastern Central African Republic (EUFOR Tchad/RCA) between 15 March 2008 and 15 March 2009. According to its mandate the mission was deployed to contribute to protecting civilians (particularly refugees and internally displaced persons), to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and the freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel and to contribute to protecting UN personnel, facilities, installations and equipment in northeastern CAR (and eastern Chad) only, due to the refugee crisis along the Darfur border. (EU Military Operation, 2008; Balogh et al., 2016).

[6] AFISM-CAR/MISCA was established by UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2127 on 5 December 2013 and formally ended on 15 September 2014, when authority was transferred to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) (MISCA establishment, 2014).

soil of the Central African Republic on 9 April 2014 (First EU peacekeeping, 2014), and only three weeks later, on 30 April, the international force took over security responsibilities for the Bangui M'Poko International Airport, a crucial lifeline for the landlocked country in general and especially for the humanitarian operations. EUFOR RCA managed to mitigate the threat of escalating ethnic violence in Bangui carried out by the forces of the Muslim Séléka ('coalition' in Sango) and the rival, predominantly Christian-animist Anti-Balaka militias. Elements of rebel militias were cleared out of Bangui neighbourhoods of Boy-Rabé, PK12, as well as the 3rd and the 5th districts (EU Military Operation, 2014). When the operation was officially closed on 23 March 2015, it accounted for only one casualty, a French corporal who died from a severe form of malaria (Closing ceremony of EUFOR RCA, 2015).

The downside of the mission on the other hand was its limited scope, both geographically and in terms of mandate, which restricted EUFOR RCA's ability to address the broader instability beyond Bangui and left large parts of the country outside its reach vulnerable to continued violence and lawlessness. Despite all its efforts, hundreds of civilians in Bangui were hospitalised or lost their lives during this period. Having a very limited force with approximately 700 soldiers and limited means – acting more of a tactical stabilization force and not a full-scale peace operation – it was unable to address the root causes of the conflict, nor could it play a role in disarmament or reconciliation. Nonetheless, through EUFOR RCA, the European Union demonstrated its capacity for rapid force deployment. While the mission was logistically weak and heavily dependent on France, the EU fulfilled the tasks set by the mandate, gained valuable time ahead of MINUSCA's deployment, and reinforced its credibility as a crisis-response actor committed to African security.

The UN's peacekeeping operation MINUSCA was authorised by UN Security Council Resolution 2149 (2014) one day after the first boots from EUFOR RCA touched ground in CAR. The robust mandate provided significantly stronger manpower with an initial 10,000 military personnel and 1,800 police personnel, though parallel to this, the area of responsibility grew exponentially as well. Less than half a year later, on 15 September 2014, MINUSCA officially took command from MISCA, becoming the primary peace operation in the country. Having a capable international peacekeeping force with a Chapter VII authorization, EU was not inclined to pursue traditional military peacekeeping, instead it decided to complement MINUSCA's mandate and to contribute to CAR's stabilization and post-conflict state-building.

On 15 December 2014, the Council approved the concept for crisis management in form of a military advisory mission, based in Bangui, for a one-year period, with the intention to "*contribute to providing the CAR Government with expert advice on reforming the FACA* [Forces armées centrafricaines] *to make them into a multi-ethnic, professional, republican armed force,*" and with the possibility of providing "*the CAR army with specific, limited, non-operational training*" (Press Release, 2014). The official invitation letter dated 16 January 2015 from Catherine Samba-Panza, the Transitional President of the Central African Republic sped up the EU process. It was quickly followed

by Council Decision on 19 January 2015 on establishing the mission (Council Decision (CFSP), 2015a), then its amendment, on 16 March 2015 (Council Decision (CFSP), 2015b) about launching the European Union CSDP Military Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUMAM RCA), appointing Brigadier General Dominique Laugel of France to be the Mission Commander of EUMAM RCA, exercising both the functions of EU Operation Commander and EU Force Commander.

Since the military mission had a non-executive mandate, its main objective was not to engage in direct operations, but to provide high-level, strategic military advice to the FACA, more particularly to personnel at ministerial, general staff, and operational levels. The idea was – in close cooperation with MINUSCA to insure synergy – to help rebuild the national defence institutions and in this regard contribute to capacity building, to play a key supporting role in the Security Sector Reform (SSR), to help develop the military education system, to promote ethical and accountable leadership structures in the armed forces, and to contribute to the formation of a professional, democratically controlled and ethnically representative FACA (Mission description, n.d.). As Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, concluded: "*EU experts will now support preparations for security sector reform. This will help the Central Africa Republic turn the corner after this security crisis*" (Central African Republic, 2015).

As part of EU's comprehensive approach, in addition to this, EUMAM RCA was also authorised to organize, support and conduct limited and targeted non-operational training for the FACA, the first of such courses already took place in Q3 of 2015 (EUMAM RCA, 2015). The personnel of around 60-70 military professionals with France as the lead nation, were contributed by nine countries (seven EU-members (Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain) plus Serbia and Moldova) (EUMAM RCA, n-d.), with 52% being advisors, 25% in Rear Logistic Support and 23% in Force Protection and in the medical field (Beech, 2015).

As the end of the mission was originally outlined in the Council decision about the mandate of EUMAM RCA – no later than 12 months after having reached FOC – the operation was terminated on 16 July 2016 (Council Decision (CFSP), 2016). Though not a high-impact, game-changing mission, EUMAM RCA can be considered a *success*: it delivered on the tasks given by its mandate, as well as keeping the EU flag flying in the Central African Republic, and even more importantly, it laid the groundwork for the next phase of EU peace efforts in the country.

The aspiration for continuity was mutual. On 8 October 2015, Transitional President Samba-Panza invited the European Union to remain engaged in supporting the FACA through a reinforced operational training structure in a continued cooperation with MINUSCA (EUTM RCA, n.d.-a). Less than half a year later, on 14 March 2016, the Council approved the Crisis Management Concept for a possible EU military training mission in CAR, outlining the transformation of the military advisory mission into a mission providing strategic advice and operational training (Press Release, 2016-a). The decision was followed by a repeated invitation, this time by President Faustin-Archange

Touadéra – the first elected president after the coup d'état on 24 March 2013 – who sent a letter on the day of his inauguration, 30 March 2016. Less than three weeks later, on 19 April 2016 the Council formally decided (Council Decision (CFSP), 2016) to establish the EU Military Training Mission (the third in Africa after Somalia and Mali) in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) with July 2016 for the date of its launch (EUTM RCA, n.d.-b).

Analysing the original mandates of EUMAM RCA and EUTM RCA there are only very few points where they differ. EUTM RCA's mandate authorizes the non-executive mission to provide operational training to FACA, education to FACA's commissioned and non-commissioned officers, as well as support the CAR Government not only in the preparation but in the implementation of the Security Sector Reform during the 24-month mandated period (These areas are often referred to as the three pillars: 1) strategic advice, 2) education, and 3) operational training). The initially 170-strong mission (Press Release, 2016-b) started its work under Mission Commander Brigadier General Eric Hautecloque-Raysz of France (acting both as Operation Commander and Force Commander) symbolising France's de facto lead nation role (Council Decision (CFSP), 2016).

The original mission mandate was extended three times by 24 months (Council Decision (CFSP), 2018) and twice by 12 months (Council Decision (CFSP), 2024b; Council Decision (CFSP), 2025), so altogether, for 8 years. Besides the extensions and the budget allocations, mandates have transformed the training mission throughout the years. In Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/1082, the target group for the strategic advice was extended to include the "President's cabinet, and advice on civil-military cooperation including to the Ministry of the Interior and the Gendarmerie" (Council Decision (CFSP), 2018). While two years later, Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/1133 made no substantive changes, it noted the need for coordination with the other EU CSDP mission in the country, the EU Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUAM RCA), that was formally established 8 months earlier (Council Decision (CFSP), 2020). The last time the mandate made significant changes to the EUTM RCA mission was Council Decision 2022/1334[7]: in 2022, the Council decided that EUTM RCA should continue providing strategic advice to CAR's Ministry of Defence and to the General Staff of the FACA and education to FACA in non-operational domains, but this time it was highlighted that this contribution should focus on the respect of human rights, international humanitarian law and international standards regarding gender issues, the protection of civilians, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda as well as training establishments for commissioned and non-commissioned officers of the FACA. The continuation of FACA's training – that was suspended by the EU Political and Security Committee in November 2021 – was up to the PSC's decision if conditions (on safety and effectiveness) are met. A new point

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[7] Council Decision 2022/1334, 2024/2396 and 2025/1341 only changed the end of mission dates and the budgets.

was also added: the support for the strategic communication efforts to foster the values of the European Union and to expose violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law by foreign forces in the Central African Republic.

As an important addition, the mandate reflected on the international developments in CAR: the support for the strategic communication efforts to foster the values of the European Union and to expose violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law by foreign forces in the CAR (Council Decision (CFSP), 2022), referring to the grave human rights violations allegedly committed by Wagner Group elements (Dincă, 2024) that have been operating in the country since the second half of 2017, with direct links to the country's presidency. These alarming events included extrajudicial killings, torture, sexual violence, and forced displacement of civilians.

The number of personnel deployed has been changing over the years – as of July 2025, it is 94 persons (plus 11 more in Brussels) – not reaching the authorized 365 persons who so far have been deployed by 10 EU member states (Belgium, France, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden) and five partner states (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Georgia, North Macedonia and Serbia) under the command of nine mission force commanders (besides France (3) from Belgium (2), Portugal (2), Spain and Romania[8]. On the other hand, another significant change was not mentioned in any of the Council Decisions, the territorial expansion of the mandate: from 2018 onward the next years with Bouar, N'Délé and Bangassou (L'EUTM-RCA participe, 2020).

During the nine years since the mission was launched – as of 8 July 2025 –, it has trained almost 9,500 FACA personnel (Central African Republic, 2025), in total, six battalions: five deployable infantry battalions (the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 7th (Bataillon d'Infanterie Territorial), and one Amphibious Battalion. Besides the training, it launched more than 100 specialization courses for at least 3,598 students, including officers, NCOs and recruits. EUTM RCA also contributed through strategic advice in the development of key documents such as the National Defence Plan (2017), the Military Programming Law (2019-2023), the Recruitments Plan (2018), besides 69 texts (decrees, laws, ministerial orders), and 45 texts approved by steering committees. The mission has also contributed to infrastructural projects such as the assembly of the military bridges Sapéke and Zinga (EUTM RCA, n.d.-a). A unique contribution needs to be mentioned as well: Cultural Heritage Protection (CHP). It is mentioned only in a very limited number of EU military mission plans, but EUTM RCA is one of them (besides EUMAM Ukraine Special Training Command (EUMAM UA STC) and the EU Training Mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia). Since 2023, EUTM RCA has been monitoring threats for cultural heritage and raised awareness through its Strategic Advice Pillar (Foradori & Rosa, 2025).

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[8] The current Mission Commander – as of 12 July 2025 – Brigadier General Nicolae-Gabriel Oros of Romania, on 4 March 2025, was appointed to be Advisor on National Defence and Army Reconstruction to the Presidency of the CAR (Mission Force Commander, 2025).

The mission's mandate has been extended until 19 September 2026, which prevents a final assessment of its overall accomplishments. However, after nine years of activity, certain conclusions can already be drawn. Based on the results mentioned above, on the one hand, EUTM RCA can be considered both a tactical and operational success: it trained and provided education for thousands, ranging from recruits to senior leadership, delivered advice on multiple levels of military and ministerial leadership, contributed to the development of key defence documents and was able to step out of the limited area of previous missions, and left Bangui to reach important locations on the countryside. On the other hand, when examining the greater picture, the impact remains somewhat modest. The road to a lasting Security Sector Reform is far from complete. The training – that has started to focus on EU (Western) values such as human rights or gender issues – was forced to be paused because of the direct links between the CAR government and Russia's Wagner Group, whose actions are widely considered incompatible with EU principles (as well as interests) (Lijn et al., 2022). Further concerns remain about training soldiers who may defect or engage outside the supposedly democratic FACA structures.

The EUTM RCA just passed the three-year mark after its launching, when on 12 July 2019, President Touadéra sent a letter to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, formally inviting the EU to establish a civilian mission to support the already ongoing Security Sector Reform and to contribute to the reorganisation and deployment of the country's Internal Security Forces. On 21 November 2019, the Council approved a possible civilian advisory mission, less than a month later, on 9 December 2019, the European Union Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUAM RCA) was established by Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2110. Its strategic objectives were largely like those of the previously launched missions with the difference that they were targeting actors outside the structures of the Ministry of Defence and the FACA. Namely, to strengthen governance and administrative capacity within the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security; to contribute to the sustainable transformation, capacity building and effectiveness of the Internal Security Forces; and to establish an integrated situational awareness framework supported by a specialized analytical capacity, with a special focus on the areas of strategic communication and political-security developments. EUAM RCA was tasked by the mandate to provide advice at strategic level to the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security and to the Internal Security Forces in close coordination with, most importantly among others, EUTM RCA, MINUSCA, UN Police (UNPOL), and the African Union. Promoting the implementation of international humanitarian law and human rights, protecting civilians, gender equality and prohibiting discrimination (with a special focus on ethnic- and belief-based discrimination) were also mentioned by the decision, similar to EUTM RCA. Being a civilian mission, EUAM RCA was put under the command and control of the Head of Mission, with Paulo Soares – in fact a colonel of the Portuguese National Republican Guard (GNR) – being named as the first person to fill in this position. The

initial end date of the mission was set to be 8 August 2022 (Council Decision (CFSP), 2019).[9]

The first members of EUAM RCA arrived at the end of July 2020, and the mission was launched soon after, on 9 August 2020, based on the Operation Plan adopted by the PSC on 18 June 2020 (First steps, 2020). As the mission has not completed its tasks, Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/1333 renewed the operation for another period of two years, until 9 August 2024, but not amending the original Council Decision (Council Decision (CFSP), 2022), as was the case with Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/2003 (Council Decision (CFSP), 2024a), and following the completion of the strategic assessment of both EU missions in CAR, Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/2723 that extended the mission until 7 August 2026 (Council Decision (CFSP), 2024c). In the meantime, the mandate of Colonel Soares has reached its end, and the Political and Security Committee appointed José Manuel Marques Dias, also a colonel of Portugal's national gendarmerie force, the GNR by PSC Decision (CFSP) 2022/1436 (25 August 2022) from 1 September 2022.[10]

Similarly to the other ongoing EU mission in CAR, EUAM RCA remains active, with its mandate set to expire in over a year. EUAM RCA as of July 2025 has 69 personnel in the field, contributed mostly by Belgium, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, and Spain. While a final assessment is premature, several achievements and shortcomings have already become apparent. The mission has successfully delivered strategic advising to the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security and the Internal Security Forces (National Police, National Gendarmerie) and even managed to extend this circle to include the Presidential Office, the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting and Fisheries, the Customs Office and the Prison Administration, and the Ministry of Justice, even reaching out to civil society organisations (About EU Advisory Mission, 2021). It enlarged the EU's contribution to the Security Sector Reform, to include structures outside of the Ministry of Defence and the FACA, helped the wording of the Internal Security Forces Programming Law (as did EUTM RCA with the military version), advised the means of building interoperability between the National Police and the National Gendarmerie and contributed to capacity building, especially in the areas of situational awareness and planning. While doing so, EUAM RCA has also been flying the EU flag, illustrating the importance of Africa to the European Union, as well promoting EU values (such as human rights, gender equality, and accountability) to various areas and levels of government, government agencies and the internal security forces.

With that said, as an advisory mission, EUAM RCA's scope has remained inherently limited. The institutions of the Central African Republic continue to be under-resourced,

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[9] During this period, Colonel Soares was named Head of Mission three times (Political and Security Committee (PSC) Decision (CFSP) 2019/2189 (17 December 2019), 2020/1774 (24 November 2020) and 2021/2099 (25 November 2021).

[10] This mandate was renewed several times by PSC Decision (CFSP) 2023/1512 (19 July 2023), 2024/2021 (17 July 2024), and 2024/2796 (22 October 2024) until 9 August 2026.

chronically underfinanced with deep-rooted political connections – some of which are influenced by foreign actors – to the highest levels of the country's government. As a result, the real outcomes of the reforms remain modest and precarious. Any meaningful and lasting change will likely materialize only in the long run, and only if international support is sustained.

To draw the conclusions, we might want to zoom out a bit and look at the bigger picture. From this perspective, even the core existence of EUAM RCA can be considered a success. During the last decade, since 2015, EU has established only two new advisory missions besides EUAM RCA (EUAM Iraq and European Union Partnership Mission in Moldova), while not being able to end one since the closure of the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan in 2016 (Smit, 2024). The CSDP budget is running low and EU member states are less than excited to get involved in more missions,[11] but despite this, EUAM RCA was established, and its mandate has been extended ever since.

#	Mission	Type	Duration	Number of personnel	Lead nation(s)	Objectives
1	EUFOR RCA	Military mission, executive (combat capable stabilization mission)	Apr 2014 – Mar 2015	app. 700 troops	France	Short-term stabilization of Bangui, protection of civilians, supporting humanitarian aid
2	EUMAM RCA	Military, non-executive (advisory mission composed of military and police officials	Mar 2015 – Jul 2016	app. 60-70 personnel	France	Military advisory to FACA-reform strategy and structure
3	EUTM RCA	Military mission, executive (training mission)	Jul 2016 – present	app. 248-365 personnel	France → Belgium	Training and capacity building for FACA
4	EUAM RCA	Civilian advisory mission	Dec 2019 – present	app. 202 personnel	Portugal	Civilian security sector reform (police, justice, gendarmerie)

Figure 5: Main indicators of the European Union's peacekeeping operations in the Central African Republic as of 7 July 2025. (Civilian mission / Military mission).

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[11] To have the full picture, we need to mention that EU civilian missions are relatively smaller than similar ones of the United Nations, and they are running on a more modest budget as well (Fiott, 2020).

Conclusion

Africa's political and economic weakness has been capitalized on by stronger outside states, who have colonized Africa and even though overt colonisation has ended generations ago, neocolonialism is still being pursued to divest Africa of what is left of its raw materials and energy sources. In other words, Africa is the most violent continent on the planet for reasons of geography and history, and the present politics that has not made a clean break with the past. This change cannot be expected from outside powers, however well-intentioned they may be, this is what Africa must achieve for itself. It is in this context that the EU's strategy towards Africa and peace support operations in Africa must be analysed.

The European Union is only one of the actors having its own complex interest in Africa. Several countries, coalitions, international organisations and even transnational companies – often with stronger financial means than African countries themselves – have their own agendas when dealing with Africa. "Traditional" players such as former colonial powers, France, the UK, Portugal, Spain, Belgium but even Italy and Germany to a certain extent, during the Cold War years, followed by the United States and Russia (Soviet Union at the time) and post-WW2 institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, were lately joined by China, Brazil, as well as the BRICS, India (on its own terms, too), Turkiye, and NATO in some limited ways, and just recently countries like the Gulf States (notably the UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia) as well as Iran or Indonesia made significant moves either economically, militarily, politically or culturally (religiously). In a geopolitical environment marked by the mayhem of conflictions and collusions, engaging with even a single country in a long-term effort toward sustainable stability and development remains a formidable challenge. This is clearly shown by the efforts and the outcomes of the European Union's peace operations in the Central African Republic.

Since 2014, the EU has launched several missions in the Central African Republic under its Common Security and Defence Policy to support the country in facing its security challenges and to contribute to its democratic and sustainable reforms. As part of EU's comprehensive approach, these missions include both military and civilian operations, with executive or non-executive mandates, focusing on stabilization, capacity building (training, education) and institutional reforms. The above mentioned four missions have been smaller in size (and budget) than missions of the United Nations, but their outcomes have proved that they were important contributions, and necessary stepping stones in the way forward for a democratically functioning, stable Central African Republic. These missions have been showing for more than a decade that the European Union is dedicated to a strong and well-functioning Central African Republic, and with similar missions continent-wide, to a strong and well-functioning Greater Sahel Region, and Africa. This last decade in question, on the other hand, has witnessed several significant changes in the region and in CAR as well. If we consider the current developments with numerous coups d'état in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, just to name a few, the rise of a strong anti-West sentiment, the mere existence of mission like EUTM

RCA or EUAM RCA can be considered miracles, meaning that these small but important steps, fostered by the European Union, cannot be taken for granted, and not only the EU, but outside actors, partners, the entire international community are needed to keep this process going in order to achieve stability and prosperity for the Central African Republic, the goals laid down by the resolutions of the United Nations and the European Union.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they have no financial interest in this manuscript.

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Climate-related Security Risks in the Sahel[1]

Ita Bonner[2]

Abstract:

The Sahel region faces unprecedented climate-related security risks that amplify existing vulnerabilities and create conditions exploited by non-state armed groups (NSAGs). This paper examines the complex relationship between climate change and the rise of NSAGs, particularly Boko Haram, in the Lake Chad Basin. Through a comprehensive review of contemporary literature, case studies, and recent data analysis, the study demonstrates how environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and displacement contribute to farmer-herder conflicts and create recruitment opportunities for extremist groups. While climate change is rarely the primary cause of conflict, it functions as a threat multiplier that exacerbates poverty, marginalization, and competition over dwindling natural resources. The research reveals how groups like Boko Haram capitalize on climate-induced vulnerabilities to expand their territorial control and recruitment base, thereby undermining regional stability. The paper concludes with policy recommendations for addressing climate security challenges through integrated approaches that combine environmental adaptation with peacebuilding initiatives.

1.Introduction

The Sahel region represents one of the world's most climate-vulnerable areas, where environmental degradation intersects with complex security challenges to create unprecedented risks for regional stability. Extended in ten countries, among which, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal, the Sahel is characterized by semi-arid conditions that make it particularly susceptible to climate change impacts (UNHCR, 2021). This region experiences significant population mobility, socio-economic fluctuations, political instability, and evolving security dynamics, all of which are increasingly influenced by environmental factors.

The concept of climate security has gained momentum in academic and policy circles as evidence grows regarding the interconnections between environmental change and conflict dynamics. The UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) provides a comprehensive definition of climate security as "preventing and resolving violent conflicts caused by global warming by improving the management of transhumance corridors, resolving land ownership issues, reducing competition over access to natural resources and extractive industries and fostering agreements over climate adaptation strategies as well as local level resilience and livelihoods" (UN DPPA, 2019, p. 15). This definition encompasses multiple dimensions of climate-security interactions, highlighting the need for multifaceted approaches to address these challenges.

The relationship between climate change and conflict is neither direct nor deterministic. Rather, climate change operates as a threat multiplier that amplifies existing grievances, vulnerabilities, and social tensions (Mach et al., 2019; Goodman, 2024). In the Sahel context, environmental stressors interact with pre-existing factors such as poverty, weak governance, ethnic tensions, and resource competition to create conditions that non-state armed groups can exploit for recruitment and territorial expansion.

1.1 Terminology and conceptual framework

Understanding the climate-security nexus in the Sahel requires an understanding of key concepts. Climate change refers to long-term shifts in global or regional climate patterns, primarily attributed to human activities since the mid-20th century (IPCC, 2021). In the Sahel context, climate change manifests through increased temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, and intensified extreme weather events.

Semi-arid climates are characterized by limited rainfall, high evaporation rates, and degraded soils with low organic carbon content and poor structure (Lal, 2004). These conditions make the region particularly vulnerable to desertification and land degradation.

Transhumance represents a traditional mobile livestock farming method based on regular, seasonal movements following predictable patterns and established routes

(Higazi & Abubakar, 2018). Pastoralism encompasses a broader mode of subsistence involving domestic animal husbandry in grassland environments using household and herd mobility strategies (Galaty, 2015). Nomadism constitutes a specific form of pastoralism where herders travel continuously with their animals throughout the year in search of water and pasture (Blench, 2001).

1.2   Literature review and research gaps

While extensive literature exists on climate change impacts in the Sahel and separate bodies of work address security challenges in the region, research specifically examining the climate-NSAGs nexus remains limited. Notable contributions include Onuoha's (2009) analysis of environmental degradation and conflict in the Lake Chad Basin, Buhaug's (2015) work on climate-conflict linkages in Africa, and more recent studies by Ide et al. (2021) on environmental peacebuilding in the Sahel. However, comprehensive analyses of how climate change specifically facilitates NSAG operations and recruitment remain scarce.

This research gap is particularly significant given the prominence of groups like Boko Haram in climate-vulnerable areas. Recent studies by Okafor and Piesse (2017) and Ide et al. (2016) have begun to address this gap, but more systematic analysis is needed to understand the mechanisms through which climate stress enables extremist group expansion.

1.3   Research question and methodology

This study addresses the following research question: Under the climate security framework, what are the specific links between climate change and the rise and expansion of non-state armed groups in the Sahel, with particular focus on the Lake Chad Basin?

The methodology employs a qualitative desk review approach, synthesizing existing literature, peer-reviewed research, case studies, and contemporary data from international organizations and research institutions. The analysis draws on recent reports from UN agencies, regional organizations, think tanks, and academic sources published between 2018- 2024 to ensure currency and relevance.

2.   Climate change and environmental degradation in the Sahel
2.1   Regional climate characteristics and projections

The Sahel region, defined here according to the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) framework, encompasses a transitional zone between the Sahara Desert and tropical forests, roughly spanning 10° to 20°N latitude. This semi-arid region has experienced significant climatic variations over recent decades, with profound implications for human security and livelihoods.

Current climate projections indicate severe challenges ahead. According to the UNHCR

Climate Risk Profile for the Sahel (2021), temperatures are projected to rise between 2.0°C and 4.3°C by 2080 compared to pre-industrial levels. Precipitation trends remain uncertain but suggest an overall increase in annual rainfall of up to 16mm by 2080, though this masks significant seasonal and spatial variations. Critically, both dry and wet periods are expected to become more extreme, increasing the unpredictability of weather patterns essential for agricultural planning.

Sea level rise poses additional threats to coastal Sahelian communities, with projections

indicating potential saline intrusion into coastal waterways and groundwater reservoirs. The population share affected by at least one heatwave per year is projected to rise dramatically from 4.3% in 2000 to 19.9% in 2080, with an estimated 59 additional very hot days per year anticipated over this period (UNHCR, 2021).

2.2   Agricultural vulnerability and food security

Agriculture forms the backbone of Sahelian economies, making climate vulnerability

particularly acute. In Mali, agriculture and livestock production contribute approximately 40% of GDP, while in Nigeria, agriculture employs over 70% of the rural population (World Bank, 2023). However, crop yields for staple grains, including maize, millet, and sorghum, are projected to decline significantly due to temperature increases and changing precipitation patterns.

Current soil quality data from the UN Biodiversity Lab (2023) reveal critical deficiencies in soil organic carbon (SOC) across the region, indicating severely degraded agricultural

capacity. Per capita water availability is declining, driven both by climate change and rapid population growth, with projections suggesting a 40% reduction by 2080 in several Sahelian countries (UNHCR, 2021).

Food insecurity affects an estimated 40% of the Sahel's population, with this figure rising to over 60% in conflict-affected areas (WFP, 2023). This widespread food insecurity creates conditions of desperation that extremist groups exploit for recruitment and territorial control.

3.   Climate-driven conflicts: The farmer-herder dynamic
3.1   Traditional coexistence and contemporary tensions

Historically, farmer and herder communities in the Sahel maintained symbiotic relationships based on complementary resource use and seasonal movement patterns. Pastoralists provided livestock products and fertilizer to farming communities while accessing crop residues and water sources. However, this traditional coexistence has deteriorated significantly due to environmental pressures and population growth.

Resource scarcity, desertification, and irregular rainfall patterns have forced herders to deviate from traditional migratory routes, bringing them into increased contact and competition with sedentary farming communities. Climate-induced displacement has

intensified as herders seek viable pastures and water sources, often leading them into territories claimed by farming communities.

3.2   Escalation and militarization

The scope and intensity of farmer-herder conflicts have escalated dramatically. According to the African Union Peace and Security Commissioner (2018), conflicts between pastoralists and farmers across Africa claim more lives than terrorism. In Nigeria alone, over 10,000 people died in farmer-herder conflicts between 2009-2019, with approximately 4,000 casualties occurring in the final two years of this period (Foreign Affairs, 2019).

These conflicts have become increasingly militarized, with both communities acquiring small arms for protection. The proliferation of weapons has transformed localized disputes into prolonged violent confrontations. The March 2018 attack in Ogossagou, Central Mali, exemplifies this escalation, where over 160 people were killed, 70 injured, and hundreds displaced in what the UN Office on Genocide Prevention characterized as ethnically targeted violence driven by the "growing ethnicization of the conflict in central Mali" (UN News, 2019, p. 2).

3.3   Climate change as a conflict amplifier

UN Security Council Resolution 2349 (2017) represents a watershed moment in recognizing climate change as a contributing factor to instability in the Lake Chad region. The resolution explicitly acknowledges that climate change contributes to insecurity through environmental degradation, leading to water scarcity, drought, desertification, land degradation, and food insecurity.

The resolution's significance extends beyond symbolic recognition, as it provides the legal and political framework for addressing climate-security linkages in international peace and security responses. This represents the first explicit acknowledgment by the UN Security Council of climate change as a factor in regional conflict dynamics.

4.   Non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and climate vulnerability: The Boko Haram case study

4.1   Regional context and NSAG landscape

The Sahel hosts numerous extremist organizations that exploit climate vulnerabilities. Key groups include Jama'at Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), formed in 2017 through the merger of several terrorist organizations, including Ansar Dine and Katibat Macina; the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS); and various Boko Haram factions operating primarily in the Lake Chad Basin (Institute for Security Studies, 2025).

For this analysis, we focus on Boko Haram's operations around Lake Chad, where climate impacts are most pronounced and the group's exploitation of environmental vulnerabilities is most evident. Boko Haram, officially known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna

Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, has adapted its strategies to capitalize on climate-induced displacement and resource competition.

4.2   Lake Chad environmental crisis

Lake Chad has experienced dramatic shrinkage, losing approximately 90% of its surface area since the 1960s due to climate change, overuse, and altered precipitation patterns (UNEP, 2004). This environmental catastrophe has devastated traditional livelihoods, including fishing, farming, and livestock rearing, affecting approximately 40 million people across four countries.

Recent climate data for Nigeria (1901-2020) shows temperature increases of 1.3°C while annual rainfall decreased by 95mm (Nigerian Meteorological Agency, 2021). In Chad,

summer precipitation has declined by 15% over the past two decades while temperatures increased by 1.2°C since 1975, amplifying drought effects and reducing crop yields (Funk et al., 2012).

4.3   Boko Haram's exploitation of climate vulnerabilities

Boko Haram has systematically exploited climate-induced vulnerabilities through several mechanisms. The group has established control over remaining water sources and fertile lands, imposing taxes on communities seeking access. This strategy leverages resource scarcity to generate revenue and establish territorial authority (International Crisis Group, 2020).

High unemployment rates, particularly among youth, create recruitment opportunities. In northeastern Nigeria, 76% of the population lives in poverty, while youth unemployment reaches 65% in rural areas (National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria, 2022). Chad shows similar patterns with youth unemployment at 22% and rising (World Bank, 2023).

Boko Haram systematically raids pastoralist communities for cattle and farming communities for grain, exploiting food insecurity to weaken community resilience. The group has poisoned water sources to force population displacement and eliminate competition for scarce resources (UNOWAS, 2018).

Some pastoralist communities have entered into protection agreements with Boko Haram, paying livestock in exchange for unhindered access to grazing areas and protection from other armed groups. This creates an economy where climate stress drives communities to support extremist groups for survival (Tony Blair Institute, 2024).

4.4   Displacement and recruitment dynamics

Climate-driven displacement has created massive population movements that Boko Haram exploits for recruitment. Since 2015, over 71,000 people have fled Nigeria and northern Cameroon to Lake Chad shores, while an additional 2.9 million people remain internally displaced across the region (UNHCR, 2023).

Displacement camps and settlements around Lake Chad have become recruitment grounds where Boko Haram offers economic opportunities to displaced youth with limited alternatives. The group's recruitment strategy emphasizes religious identity and economic necessity, appealing to Muslim youth marginalized in predominantly Christian areas.

5.   International responses: Climate security in Peace Operations

5.1   The climate security mechanism

The UN Climate Security Mechanism, established in 2018, coordinates international responses to climate-security challenges. This mechanism supports peace operations in integrating climate considerations into conflict analysis and mission planning (UN Staff College, 2021).

The August 2021 Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change provided additional impetus for climate security responses, with the UN Secretary- General acknowledging unprecedented climate risks. Subsequently, the Security Council approved climate-related mandates for 11 regional and country-specific missions.

5.2   Regional Missions and Climate Mandates

Special Political Missions with climate-related mandates include:
•   UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS): Focuses on preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention across the Sahel, with specific attention to transhumance-related conflicts and resource competition (UNOWAS, 2023).
•   UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA): Addresses climate-security linkages in Central Africa, including Lake Chad Basin challenges affecting multiple countries.
Peacekeeping Operations have increasingly incorporated climate considerations:
•   United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA): Prior to its termination in December 2023, MINUSMA addressed farmer-herder conflicts and resource competition as key stability challenges (UN Peacekeeping, 2023).
•   United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA): Addresses climate-induced displacement and resource conflicts affecting regional stability.

5.3   Resolution 2349 and legal framework

UN Security Council Resolution 2349 (2017) established the legal precedent for addressing climate-security linkages in the Lake Chad Basin. The resolution specifically recognizes climate change as contributing to instability through environmental degradation, water scarcity, drought, desertification, land degradation, and food insecurity.

The resolution mandates enhanced coordination between regional and international actors, improved early warning systems, and integrated approaches addressing both security and environmental challenges. It represents the most comprehensive international legal framework for climate security responses in the Sahel.

6.   Analysis and policy implications

6.1   Climate change as a threat multiplier

The evidence demonstrates that climate change works as a threat multiplier in the Sahel, amplifying existing vulnerabilities rather than directly causing conflict. Environmental degradation reduces agricultural productivity, increases resource competition, and forces population displacement, creating conditions that NSAGs exploit for recruitment and territorial expansion.

The Lake Chad case illustrates how environmental crisis enables extremist group operations through multiple pathways: resource control provides revenue and territorial authority; displacement creates recruitment opportunities; economic desperation drives communities to seek NSAG protection; and social disruption weakens traditional governance structures.

6.2   NSAG adaptation strategies

Boko Haram and similar groups have demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of climate vulnerabilities, adapting their operational strategies accordingly. These adaptations include geographic targeting, economic integration, recruitment messaging, and resource warfare.

These groups focus their operations on climate-stressed areas where state presence is weak, and populations are vulnerable. They establish protection economies that exploit resource scarcity. Through their outreach, they emphasize economic opportunity and religious identity in recruitment appeals to displaced and marginalized populations. Ultimately, they weaponize scarce resources through control, taxation, and destruction.

6.3   Policy recommendations

Addressing climate-security challenges in the Sahel requires integrated approaches combining immediate security responses with long-term adaptation strategies.

Short-term measures can include:

a)   Enhanced early warning systems linking climate data with conflict risk assessment.

b)   Rapid response mechanisms for climate-induced displacement.

c)   Improved coordination between humanitarian, development, and security actors.

d)   Community-based conflict resolution mechanisms for farmer-herder disputes.

Medium-term strategies must focus on:

a)   Investment in climate-resilient agriculture and water management infrastructure.

b)   Economic diversification programs reducing dependence on climate-sensitive sectors.

c)   Education and employment programs targeting vulnerable youth populations.

d)   Strengthened local governance institutions capable of managing resource disputes. Long-term approaches:

a)   Regional climate adaptation strategies addressing transboundary challenges.

b)   Integrated water resource management for shared river basins and lakes.

c)   Sustainable land management practices aiming to reduce desertification.

d)   Regional security cooperation addressing climate-related displacement and conflict.

7.   Conclusion

This analysis demonstrates that climate change functions as a significant threat multiplier in the Sahel, creating conditions that non-state armed groups exploit for expansion and recruitment. While climate change rarely causes conflict directly, it amplifies existing grievances around resource access, livelihood security, and governance failures that groups like Boko Haram manipulate for strategic advantage.

The Lake Chad Basin exemplifies how environmental degradation enables extremist group operations through resource control, recruitment from displaced populations, and exploitation of economic desperation. The shrinking of Lake Chad has devastated traditional livelihoods for 40 million people while creating opportunities for Boko Haram to establish territorial control and recruitment networks.

Current international responses, while increasingly recognizing climate-security linkages, remain insufficient to address the root causes of vulnerability. UN Security Council Resolution 2349 provides an important legal framework for climate security responses, but implementation requires enhanced coordination between humanitarian, development, and security actors.

Moving forward, effective responses must integrate climate adaptation with conflict prevention, addressing both immediate security threats and underlying environmental vulnerabilities. This requires long-term investment in climate resilience, economic diversification, and governance strengthening rather than purely security-focused approaches.

The Sahel's experience offers important lessons for other climate-vulnerable regions where environmental stress intersects with security challenges. As climate change intensifies globally, understanding and addressing these linkages becomes essential for maintaining international peace and security.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they have no financial interest in this manuscript.

Notes on Contributors

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Refugee Crossroads in Africa[1]

Béla Szilágyi[2]

Abstract:

There are several refugee crossroads in Africa. One of the most significant and most recent is in the Sahel, where refugees from Sudan, Central African Republic, and Cameroon flee to the country of Chad. This paper examines the humanitarian and forced migration situation of the country with a crisis that affects at least 3.9 million people. The research analyses humanitarian organisations' dual approach to humanitarian assistance and development projects, particularly focusing on refugee support and capacity building in healthcare and education sectors. Through qualitative assessment of multiple intervention sites, including the Kalambari and Guilmey refugee camps, the study documents sustainable solutions in vocational training, healthcare delivery, and infrastructure development. More specifically, the assessment of multiple intervention sites demonstrates a Hungarian humanitarian aid and development organization, Hungarian Baptist Aid's impact through establishment of optical centres in N'Djamena and Moundou hospitals; delivery of specialized training for 40 IT professionals; implementation of sustainable sewing programs across four locations; and infrastructure development including solar energy systems at Guinebor 2 Hospital serving 172,000 people. The study documents critical operational challenges in Chad's complex environment, where only 22 percent of rural births receive qualified medical assistance, and telecommunications infrastructure remains severely limited with 0.68 mobile connections per person. Key findings demonstrate the necessity and effectiveness of integrated programming that simultaneously serves refugee and host communities while building local capacity through sustainable infrastructure and skills development, exemplified by successful sewing training programs and vision care initiatives. The research identifies critical operational challenges, including bureaucratic challenges, security concerns, and infrastructure limitations, while highlighting the importance of strategic partnerships with local authorities and international organizations for project sustainability. This analysis provides evidence-based insights for NGOs operating in the Sahel region, highlighting the correlation between security protocols and aid worker safety in conflict zones, noting that 33 percent of international staff incidents occur within the first three months of deployment. The findings underscore the necessity of comprehensive risk assessment, cultural sensitivity, and sustainable project design in humanitarian operations within the Sahel region.

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Introduction

Emergency within a crisis: the general humanitarian context

The Republic of Chad, a landlocked country in Central Africa, faces a complex and alarming humanitarian situation. Factors such as armed conflict, political instability, massive population displacements, food shortages, disease, and environmental challenges contribute to a multidimensional humanitarian crisis that has a profound effect on the country's inhabitants. This situation is intensified by a combination of recurring factors and temporary crises, making the humanitarian response particularly difficult (UN OCHA, 2024b). Four major crises directly affect 3.9 million people in Chad:

- First, 32 percent of the population, i.e. 5.8 million people, 51% of whom are women, need multifaceted humanitarian assistance. More than 3.4 million people are affected by food insecurity and malnutrition, including 663,000 who are severely food insecure.

- Second, 550,000 people have been directly affected by population movements, including refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons. Of these, 55% are women and 60% are children under the age of 18. However, this number increased rapidly by the intensified crisis in Sudan. By December 2024, the number of forcibly displaced persons climbed to 1.8 million including 1.2 million refugees (UNHCR TCHAD, 2025).

- Third, the health situation is characterised by the prevalence of diseases with epidemic potential, such as cholera and measles, while other diseases, such as malaria, impact the country where access to healthcare is poor.

- Finally, natural disasters (floods, drought, crop pests) are recurrent and increasingly frequent, and could affect up to 2.7 million people.

The humanitarian situation in Chad is complex and worrying, marked by a few inter-dependent issues, including the food crisis, insecurity and armed conflict, socio-economic vulnerability, and forced displacement. More than one third (36.8 percent) of the country's workers and their families live on less than 1.90 US dollars per person per day (UN OCHA, 2024. p. 11).

Chad is in the Sahel region, also known as the hunger belt of Africa, and is currently perhaps one of the most significant states in the region. The conflicts and civil wars raging for many years in the neighbouring countries, the Central African Republic, Sudan, and Libya, furthermore the presence and activity of the terrorist organization Boko Haram in Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria, have left their mark on the quality of life of the people living in the region. Many people fled from the fighting in the region to Chad, still considered a stable country today, and therefore, these people movements lay an additional burden on the country. Chad hosts 1.8 million forcibly displaced persons (UNHCR TCHAD, 2025), facing limited resources. While humanitarian aid continues, integration of development efforts and strengthened self-reliance are crucial.

During the discussions with the local government bodies, officials of almost all the ministries emphasized that the humanitarian projects shall not exclusively be aimed at refugees, but also serve the needs of the host community, since the local residents living in the vicinity of the refugee camps often live in similar conditions as refugees. As a result of the refugee influx, the sudden increase in population in some areas strained the available basic needs resources (drinking water, food, energy, shelter, etc.) and are not sufficient for either the refugees, or for the host community. Humanitarian actors must strive to avoid the unfortunate adverse effect of conflict between the displaced population and the host communities.

Starting in the second half of 2023, the Hungarian Baptist Aid (HBAid) participated in the complex humanitarian aid and development mission in Chad, in the framework of strategic cooperation with the Hungary Helps Agency (HHA). The HHA opened its office in January 2024 in N'Djamena, with the aim to strengthen the stability of Chad and the Sahel region, by providing humanitarian and development projects. HBAid, as an implementing partner of HHA, actively participated in the implementation of various humanitarian aid and development projects and programs throughout Chad. The main purpose of this paper is to present a comprehensive and realistic picture of the tasks performed by HBAid, addressing both successes and challenges. The secondary purpose of this article is to serve as a guide for other non-governmental organizations that may plan to carry out relief work in Chad in the future.

HBAid makes every effort to carry out sustainable solutions during both the planning and the implementation of humanitarian assistance and development projects. Within the framework of humanitarian action, we can identify two primary areas of challenge that sometimes overlap. These two areas are immediate humanitarian assistance and long-term development projects. Many humanitarian organizations, as well as HBAid, are active in both areas, providing humanitarian assistance, as well as development activities in Chad.

The following figure demonstrates the comparison of humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation/development assistance:

Comparison of Humanitarian Assistance and Rehabilitation/ Development Assistance	Humanitarian Assistance	Rehabilitation / Development Assistance
Goals	reduction of mortality and morbidity, alleviation of deprivation	economic growth and poverty reduction through capacity building and sustainability
Implementation	fast	slow
Decision making	reactive	proactive
Period	shorter	longer
Context	natural or man-made crises	in developing countries

Occasion of intervention	in a crisis situation	any time
Mechanism of operation	filling immediate and direct needs	causal treatment
Media	high level of media interest	low level of media interest
Aid workers	often international	mainly local employees
Intervention logic	case-by-case	multidimensional
Visibility of results	visible in the short term	visible in the longer term, more difficult to measure

Figure 1: Source: Szilágyi, Horváthné Angyal and Gál, 2022, page 28.

Higher Education: Humanitarian Response Manager specialized training

At the close of the second decade of the new millennium, there are more than 60 military, civilian, and multidimensional peace operations worldwide, under the auspices of international organizations or multilateral treaties. In addition to wars and armed conflicts, natural and human-instigated disasters contribute to the suffering of millions, to the loss of critical infrastructure and to the deterioration of security many regions. While disasters and conflicts vary in nature, magnitude, and impact, the affected communities are frequently unable to cope with their negative effect or only to a limited extent. In such cases, there is a need for rapid and professional deployment and management of humanitarian operations until the crisis is resolved. While countries with stronger economic positions may have the advantage of being better prepared for disaster situations, the scale and uniqueness of a disaster can pose significant challenges even for more resilient states with advanced technology, infrastructure, and institutions. To respond at the highest possible level, humanitarian operations necessitate highly skilled professionals with specialized knowledge to manage and lead them (Holt, Taylor & Kelly, 2009).

Óbuda University (URL1), the university's Africa Research Institute (URL2) and Hungarian Baptist Aid with other partners have established the Humanitarian Response Manager specialized training (URL3) that, therefore, aims to cultivate highly qualified professionals who possess specialized theoretical and practical knowledge in the management of humanitarian operations. These professionals will be equipped to respond effectively to the challenges posed by crisis situations and to integrate their existing expertise with additional competencies to address issues within their designated area of responsibility. Only a few universities offer such education, most notable are Harvard, Fordham, Liverpool and the NOHA Network.

Óbuda University's Humanitarian Response Manager specialized training is a one-year post-graduate blended, on-line and in-person diploma course. Two intensive courses were provided in-person in Chad for refugee and IDP (Internaly Displaced Person) camp managers, their deputies and colleagues, CNARR and other governmental agency employees, NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) employees, altogether to

40 students. Some had long years of vast experiences, others were fairly new to the humanitarian work or specialized in only one sector.

The Humanitarian Response Manager training provided extensive, deep knowledge with a wide range of practical opportunities and group work. The following areas are taught (not a complete list): Types of humanitarian crises, Sustainable Development Goals, Humanitarian accountability, Coordination of humanitarian action, Personal and organizational safety, Security management and planning, Event and crisis management, Vulnerable social groups, The beneficiaries and their involvement in humanitarian action, Protection of minorities, Financing humanitarian action, Fundraising, Project cycle management, Monitoring and Evaluation, The role of religion in conflicts and cultural communication, Humanitarian Negotiations, Civil-Military co-operation, The International Legal Protection Regime, Influence of illegal activities to humanitarian operations, Human trafficking and smuggling, Crimes against vulnerable groups, Child soldiers, Migration, Refugees, IDPs, Camp coordination and camp management, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Nutrition, Food aid and food security, Shelter, Health, Logistics, Prolonged crises, Nation-building and post-conflict reconstruction, Humanitarian aid simulation.

However, it must be noted that one of the most important strengths of the course is that the students who were also professionals, at the same time worked closely with each other enriching their studies with their mutual experiences. Furthermore, they also provided vital and essential information and great cooperation assistance for the effectiveness and localisation of work of HBAid in Chad.

Refugees and refugee camps

According to the UNHCR report (UNHCR TCHAD, 2025) released in January 2025, Chad hosts more than 1.8 million forcibly displaced people, including 1.2 refugees from conflicts in neighbouring Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Cameroon. More than 125,000 refugees and asylum seekers from the Central African Republic have fled to Chad escaping different waves of violence since 2005. There is a clear and immediate need for extensive humanitarian assistance in Chad, and this is therefore the largest operations of the UN specialized agencies in the region. With the support of other UN agencies and 40 non-governmental organizations, UNHCR leads and coordinates the refugee response in support of the Government of Chad.
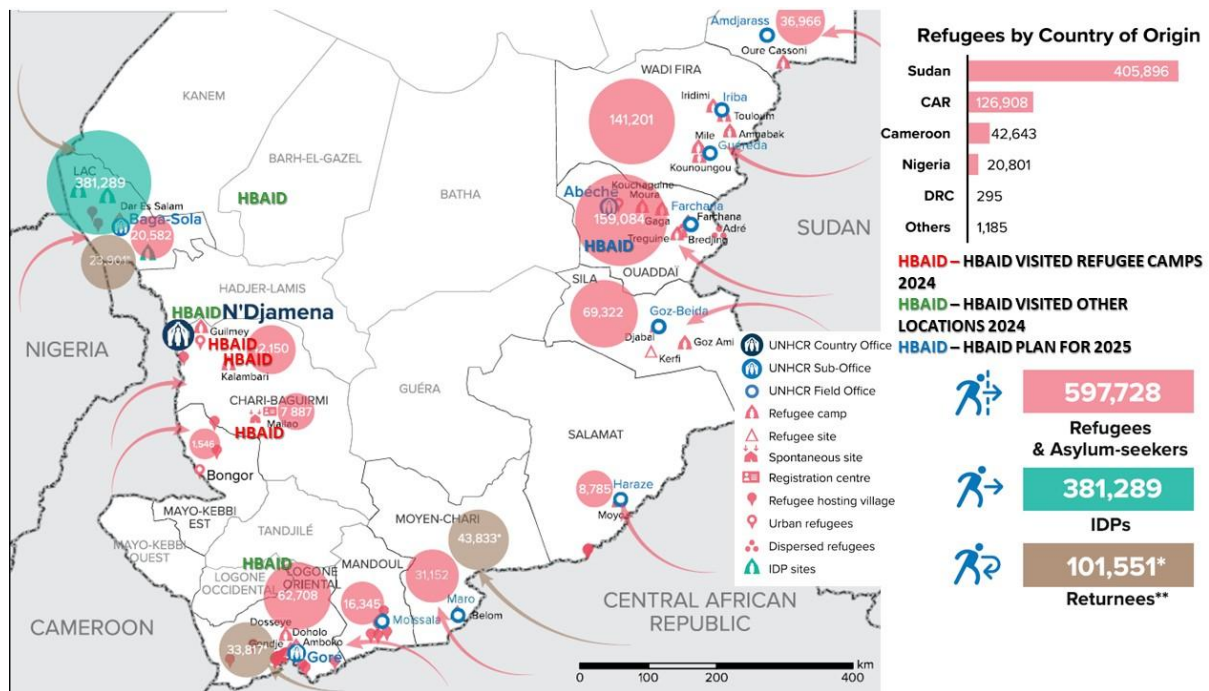
Figure 2: Source: Data abstracted by the author from UNHCR documents (UNHCR CHAD, 2023).

Kalambari refugee camp

The Kalambari camp is south of N'Djamena, in the vicinity of Kalambari, a village located to the west of the Koundoul sub-prefecture. According to the Commission Nationale pour l'Accueil et la Réinsertion des Réfugiés et des Rapatriés[3] representative (M. Idriss Mahamat Ali Abdallah Nassour, head of CNARR), the Kalambari camp is a refuge for Cameroonian refugees who fled inter-community violence in the far north of Cameroon. This inter-community conflict pits several ethnic groups against each other, namely the Arabs with the Mousgoumes, Massa and other ethnic groups. The Mousgoumes and Massas are farmers and fishermen. The camp is 40.9 hectares in size and is made up of two zones, A and B, with 17 blocks, 100 to 155 households per block, 1850 shelters with 2860 households in total, and 9550 refugees, according to the UNHCR. The camp has 20 boreholes, 19 washing areas, 169 garbage bags, 438 latrines, a health centre, a school, a registration centre, a children's and women's area, and a market.

Guilmey refugee camp

The Guilmey camp is home to Cameroonian refugees who fled the town of Kousseri in December 2021, following a deadly intercommunity violence between Arabs and Mousgoumes, Massa and several other ethnic groups. Guilmey is a village located 5 km from Farcha in the 1st arrondissement of the city of N'Djamena. It has a surface area of

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[3] National Commission for the Reception and Reintegration of Refugees and Repatriates

11 hectares subdivided into 6 blocks, with 711 shelters, 138 households, and a total of 4,657 refugees. Each block has a block leader, and the camp has a president or delegate. Refugees in the Guilmey camp have set up activity groups and committees to represent them in dealings with CNARR (M. Idriss Mahamat Ali Abdallah Nassour, head of CNARR) and its partners. The camp operates a health center, a school, a children's center, a women's center, and a market.

Several national and international organizations work closely with CNARR (Commission Nationale d'Accueil et Réinsertion des Réfugiés et Rapatriés (National Commission for the Reception and Reintegration of Refugees and Repatriates) in the camps to assist refugees:

- International Organization for Migration (IOM): refugee assistance
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): refugee protection
- World Food Programme (WFP): assistance and food security
- APLFT: deals with GBV (gender-based violence)
- Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS): education and child protection
- INTERSOS: AGR, border monitoring and reforestation
- LM International (LMI): "WASH" water sanitation and hygiene
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS): child protection and GBV
- International Rescue Committee (IRC): health
- International Committee for Relief and Development (CIAUD): emergency aid and empowerment
- Chad Red Cross (CRT): shelters and distribution
- Unité Nutritionnelle Ambulatoire (Ambulatory Nutrition Unit- UNA): nutrition

Mailao refugee camp

The Mailao site is located 1 km South-West of Mailao City, opposite a reception centre called CARM. The distance from N'djamena to Mailao is approximately 65 km. The Mailao site was made up exclusively of refugees from the Mousgoum community, who fled the December 2021 Arab-Mousgoum intercommunity conflict in Cameroon. It covers approximately 100 households. The site has been operational since the beginning of 2022 (M. Idriss Mahamat Ali Abdallah Nassour, head of CNARR).

HBAid's activities in these camps
Sewing training

HBAid organized a 4-week intensive sewing and clothing repair training for refugees. The students who completed the training "leased" the sewing machines for 3 years for free, including a raw material starter package, with the aim of empowering them to start a small business that provides them and their family's sustainable and increasing independence. In the mentoring phase following the training, the trainer monitored and

supported the start of the small business for a month. Even beyond that phase, the contact with the graduated students is still ongoing. The students will receive the sewing machines as a donation after the 3-year "leasing" contract expires. In the refugee camps, the sewing machines were placed in a designated room, where the graduates can support each other as a social cooperative (Mr. Sandor Horvath, HBAid's Chad project manager).

Vision examination

Hungarian specialists and local opticians previously trained by HBAid conducted eye and vision examinations for hundreds of refugees (women, men, and children). Serious cases (e.g. cataracts, cross-eyed vision) were reported to the head of the refugee camp. Nearly 40 percent of those examined had severely damaged eyes or vision problems. For the problems that can be remedied with glasses, the team prepared the glasses as a free donation (Mr. Benedek Raak, HBAid's head optometrist).

Medical assistance

HBAid medical professionals, colleagues from the HBAid Rescue24 (search and rescue and emergency medical unit with Commander Laszlo Pavelcze), and other doctors participating in the mission, carried out medical reconnaissance in medical institutions and refugee camps to provide specific medical assistance in the southern border section of the country, including malaria control, infectious disease control, paediatric and general health assistance for hundreds of refugees on several occasions.

Humanitarian aid and development outside refugee camps
Infrastructural developments

As part of the development projects, HBAid renovated two training rooms in the Baba Moustapha Cultural Centre in the capital city, N'Djamena. The aim was to create an education and training base where working professionals, civil and governmental employees, the unemployed, as well as internally displaced persons and refugees may benefit from further educational opportunities. In one of the poorest countries in the world, where the daily challenges of the population are aggravated by the influx of millions of refugees, further education opportunities are considered an enormous advantage. (Mr. Abdoulaye Souleymane Ousman Babale, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Historical Heritage, Tourism and Hand Crafts, General Secretary).

The Hôpital Central de N'Djamena serves as a pivotal healthcare institution in the region. This hospital plays a crucial role in providing medical services and advancing public health initiatives within the community. It is recognized for its commitment to addressing various health challenges prevalent in the area, particularly infectious diseases (Africa Research Connect, n.d.). Hôpital Central de N'Djamena not only provides essential medical care but also engages in educational activities aimed at enhancing the skills of healthcare professionals. By fostering a collaborative environment, the hospital

aims to improve healthcare delivery and outcomes for the people of Chad. In the framework of the infrastructural improvements of the Ophthalmology department, HBAid renovated several examination rooms and patient rooms, in addition to donating medicines, optical and eye examination devices, to be discussed later.

The Moundou Provincial Hospital is a public healthcare institution located to the South-West of the city of Moundou on the left bank of the Logone River, in the residential district, covering an area of approximately 960,000 m². It is bordered to the south by the Diaspora Hotel and the Hôtes. The (SNE) Société National d'Electricité and the (MCT) Manufacture des Cigarettes du Tchad are located to the West and the Adoum Dallah High school is to the North, to the East is the Collège d'Enseignement Général. It was created in the 1950s and has undergone various transformations like other public health facilities. It is under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Health and is part of the Logone Occidental regional health delegation. Moundou Provincial Hospital has the following departments: Emergency ward, General Medicine, Paediatrics, Surgery, Ophthalmology, Medical Imaging, Biomedical Analysis Laboratory, Pharmacy, Operating theatre, ARV dispensing unit, social service with voluntary testing centre, Hygiene and sanitation, Maternity ward (Dr. Mahamat Ahmat Adoum Adjid, Moundou Hospital director).

HBAid carried out infrastructural improvements in the Ophthalmology department of the Mondou hospital, several examination rooms, patient rooms and water systems were renovated. In addition to the renovation, medicines, state-of-the-art optical and eye examination devices, to be discussed later, were donated.

The Guinebor 2 Hospital (Ms. Lucia Bastos hospital administrator) (Christian Health Service Corps, n.d.) located on the western outskirts of N'Djamena, has been providing health-care services to surrounding communities since 2011. Currently a 70-bed hospital with a reputation for good quality and affordable surgery, it is continually growing and seeking to develop the range and quality of services it offers. Guinebor 2 Hospital (G2) serves a multi-ethnic local population of 172,000 and receives patients from multiple people groups across Chad, from neighbouring Cameroon, and sometimes even from Sudan and the Central African Republic (CAR). In a typical month, G2 Hospital will serve over 1,000 new out-patients, plus approximately 800 appointments for follow-up or dressing changes, 400 - 500 emergency cases and 200 in-patients. Each month, on average, they deliver 180 babies, complete 100 surgeries, 4,500 lab tests, 380 physiotherapy appointments and 450 ultrasounds. A wide spectrum of surgeries can be performed at G2 Hospital, including orthopedics, urological and abdominal surgeries. Chad remains one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, and so malnutrition, malaria, and maternal/infant mortality are commonplace within the communities they serve. In order to support the sustainability of the hospital and decrease operational costs, HBAid constructed a significant solar energy storage battery plant, extended the hospital existing electricity production solar panels system and also donated two oxygen concentrators.

Health assistance and Education programs

As part of the immediate assistance, based on the protocol agreed upon with the Ministry of Health, several hospitals in the capital and also in rural areas received donations of medicines, medical supplies and hospital equipment on several occasions in 2024 (Dr. Abdel-Madjid Abderahim Mahamat, Ministry of Public Health and Prevention of the Republic of Chad). In addition, negotiations are underway for additional medical missions to Chad. In addition to the above, medicine was also donated on an ad hoc or extraordinary basis, for example, when assisting the wounded of the ammunition warehouse that exploded next to the N'Djamena airport in June 2024 (Wright & Njie, 2024).

Optician training

Optician training is an essential part of the HBAid's projects in Chad. The aim of the optician training is to teach the latest techniques and technical innovations of eye examination, using modern, state-ort-the-art technology to local professionals working in the field of optometry, and train them in the various types of spectacle lenses and spectacle making. During the training, HBAid cooperated, among others, with the domestic office of the OPC (l'Organisation pour la Prévention de la Cécité, in English: Organization for the Prevention of Blindness), the international organization for the prevention of blindness, and with the head of the PNLC, the National Program against Blindness organization.

In almost the entire African continent, but especially in equatorial countries and countries with a high number of hours of sunshine, cataracts are a common disease in the population over 50 years old, according to Mr. Benedek Raak, HBAid master optician (Foster, 1987). The training to the local specialists also addressed this issue. Another grave challenge is the unavailability of vision tests and glasses, especially for the rural population. One of the reasons for this is the small number of specialists and optical shops, as well as the lack of available modern tools and raw materials.

Among the general population, especially the elderly, women and children, as well as the population over 45 years old, near vision is largely unresolved, which can be remedied with reading glasses. HBAid is committed to continue this project, with the involvement of newly trained local opticians, to screen additional refugee camps, schools, and local people in need.

In addition to the training, HBAid also supported the basic health care system in Chad by renovating optometrist centers providing optometry equipment and a fleet of vision improvement equipment in the N'Djamena Central Hospital and the Moundou Provisional Hospital. An additional center will be renovated and equipped in Abeche. In order to ensure sustainability, an optical center will be established, where glasses will be made for the needy, free or at a reduced price, with the involvement of local specialists. The optometry equipment in this latest center will also be used for mobile

outreach. With these tools and professionals, the eye examination campaign will take place in refugee camps, schools, and other places where the need is identified.

The long-term vision is the construction and operation of a self-sustaining system that will be able to support the vision tests and the provision of glasses for those most in need.

Information technology course

HBAid carried out two IT/computer skills courses for a total of 40 people in the newly renovated classrooms in the Baba Moustapha Cultural Center. In addition to the students delegated from the refugee camps, young Chadian job seekers were among the participants who wanted to find a job but missed the IT skills for a successful job application. Other participants worked in minor roles in some segments of the government apparatus, but their work required more IT knowledge. The course material was prepared with the involvement of a local accredited teacher, and the certificate awarded at the end of the courses is recognized as an official certification in the Chadian vocational training system (Minister Dr. Ndolembai Sadé Ndjesada, Ministry of National Education and Civic Promotion).

Sewing training for people with disabilities

As assistance, education and empowerment of people with disabilities (Coordination of Development Actors for Disabled People in Chad, led by Mr. Serge Mahamat) is a priority for HBAid and it has been heavily involved in these programs in Hungary and in over 20 countries in the world, another sewing course was implemented for persons with multiple disabilities, in a classroom renovated to host them specially, thereby giving them the opportunity to integrate into the world of work and start their own sall business. Additionally, all the participants underwent eye and vision examination, and over 80 percent needed glasses that were provided to them.

Midwife training

Ministry of Health officials, rural local authority leaders, hospital workers all stressed the importance of and vast need for midwifery training. It has been emphasized throughout all the meetings that the provision of maternal and infant care services in rural Chad is consistently low.

The data on maternal health is devastating: There were 287,000 maternal deaths in the world in 2020, globally one woman dies in every two minutes from a maternal cause. Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for around 70% (254,000) of estimated maternal deaths worldwide and has a 545 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births ratio, in comparison Europe and North America is at 13 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. Chad was among the three countries with extremely high maternal mortality rates in 2017, actually the second worst in the world: South Sudan (1,223 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births), Chad (1,063 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births) and Nigeria

(1,047 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births). A 15-yearold girl in Chad is estimated to have a 1 in 15 chance of dying of maternal causes during her lifetime – the highest lifetime risk in the world! (WHO et al, 2023). In Chad one in 16 women die due to complications while giving birth, which translates to a rate of 6.2 percent. Only 22 percent of women were assisted by qualified health personnel while giving birth in 2015 (Institut National de la Statistique, des Études Économiques et Démographiques (INSEED), Ministère de la Santé Publique (MSP) et ICF International, 2016). This figure is likely to be much more alarming in rural areas and particularly for nomadic farming communities, due to factors like geographical inaccessibility of modern medicine, political neglect, and cultural preferences, exacerbating their vulnerabilities (Zinsstag, Ould Taleb & Craig, 2006).

The infant mortality rate refers to the number of infants who do not survive past the first year of life, expressed as a value per 1,000 births. The infant mortality rate in Chad declined in 2022 and saw its lowest number, with 64.1 deaths per 1,000 live births.

The hospital's professional developed high-impact interventions to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality. These are:

- Improve family planning coverage (including for young people)
- Training and deployment of skilled birth attendants
- Organize maternity units capable of handling obstetric and neonatal emergencies (15% of pregnancies): EmONCs
- Reduce financial barriers to services (EmONC, obstetric emergency referral)
- Development of community networks in RH
- Monitoring and management: maternal death surveillance and response, SONU monitoring.

Of the high-impact interventions listed above, the midwife training is planned to focus on teaching and empowering the midwives to be capable of

- Proper management of postpartum hemorrhage
- Quality prenatal care and consultations
- Indicating and using the obstetric suction cup
- Providing SONUB care correctly
- Performing neonatal resuscitation

The first training is planned to be held in N'Djamena as a TOT session. 15 participants, gynaecologists and midwives are expected to take part from Moundou, Abéché and N'Djamena and the areas of these regions. Then they will work with local birth providers in three pools in their respective regions, most of whom received little training before if any, thus multiplying the effect of the training and the population reached (Dr. Lydie Danmadji, Head of Hopital Mere et Enfants).

The security risks humanitarian actors face

The implementation of humanitarian tasks in conflict zones is an increasingly dangerous task, and those providing assistance are so-called "soft" targets. Those performing humanitarian tasks are unarmed and untrained in combat. Perhaps this, among many other factors, contributes to the increase in the number of atrocities against aid workers. In fact, the statistics show a slowly increasing trend, both in terms of volume and severity of incidents. Comparing the data of the Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD, Humanitarian Outcomes: Aid Worker Security Database) from the 1990s, we can see 7-10 times increase in some data in the 2010s: The number of total security incidents rose from 35 in 1997 to to 277 in 2019. The number of humanitarian workers who fell victim of a crime increased from 75 to 483. 39 humanitarian workers were killed in 1997, however 125 were killed in 2019. 30 humanitarian workers were kidnapped in 1997, while 124 in 2019 (Horváth, Szilágyi & Besenyő, 2024, pp 27-30.).

From a security point of view, it is an alarming figure that 33% of international employees fell victim in the first three months of service, while 17% in the first 30 days (Land, 2016). What do these numbers communicate? Do they point to a lack of preparation, local knowledge, culture, local characteristics, or a deliberate violation of safety rules?

According to a 2014 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs report (Land, 2016), international staff tend to overestimate security risks, which varies with the length of time spent in the field. In the case of local employees, the situation is reversed, as they generally underestimate dangers and risks, since they grew up and live in that environment, they are already "accustomed" to critical situations daily. From the statistical data, it can be read that currently, kidnapping for financial gain has become one of the biggest sources of danger. When analysing the risks and exposure, it can be concluded that the local employees are more exposed to this type of danger due to their greater number and familiarity, while the members of the international contingent - and therefore considered "more valuable" - are in the crosshairs of the perpetrators in terms of the hoped-for or expected profit. In view of the risk analysis of the given area, as well as the above, colleagues participating in the HBAid mission in Chad are either former peacekeepers with several years of humanitarian experience or seasoned humanitarian workers with extensive security preparatory training behind them to carry out the tasks in Chad. Besides the essential local partnerships on many levels including, staff, driver, translator and local authorities, personnel selection, training, contingency preparation, continuous analysis of evolving situations, and flexibility in project implementation are all key elements to keep local and international staff safe.

**Numbers of reported attacks on aid workers
Between 2021 and 2023**

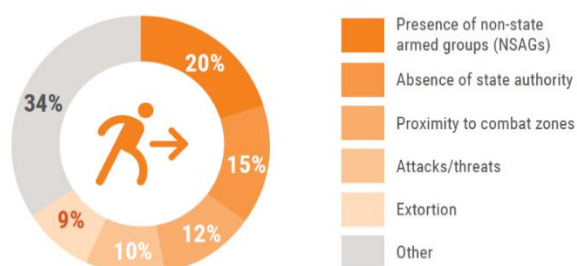| 2021	2022	2023
85 incidents	**95** incidents	**40** incidents
11 killed	**07** killed	**08** killed
63 kidnapped	**78** kidnapped	**24** kidnapped
11 wounded	**10** wounded	**08** wounded

Figure 3: Source: UN OCHA: 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Requirements Overview, Sahel. p. 19.

At the same time, it is of outmost importance to assess the security of the beneficiaries, as well. The following figure describes their reasons of insecurity and the incidents especially children face.

Central Sahel and Chad

Reasons for feelings of insecurity

20% 15% 12% 10% 9% 34%

Presence of non-state armed groups (NSAGs)
Absence of state authority
Proximity to combat zones
Attacks/threats
Extortion
Other

Types of movement restriction

Reasons for the increase in gender-base violence incidents

34% 9% 32% 11% 28% 15%

Food insecurity
Poverty
Presence/attack of NSAGs
Gender norms
Crime
Other

Incidents involving children

Figure 4: Source: UN OCHA: 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Requirements Overview, Sahel. p. 19.

Operational Challenges
Transportation and movement

Driving in Chad is dangerous due to unsafe driving habits, poor road conditions, flooding, crime, and other hazards. According to all health care providers we worked with, more people die of accidents on the roads than of malaria!

In view of the security situation, as well as close ministerial supervision, a detailed planning and authorization procedure precede rural trips. For rural trips, the local authorities issue a so-called "mission order" or "movement order" upon request, which proves the "service" nature of the trip. The mission order / movement order assists passing through checkpoints along the way, as well as informs the regional managers with our task.

Due to the varied topography of Chad and the weather characteristic of the given season, it is important to choose the right vehicle, prepare a route plan, the

communication connection and, depending on the destination, the use of local "security personnel". The latter is often offered or provided to us by the responsible regional official. This is especially true for the Lake Chad area, but also for the Northwest and East regions. Establishing a contingency plan and planning for sufficient water, food, various supplies, and the communication network, is mandatory for projects in Chad (Mr. Sandor Horvath, HBAid's Chad project manager).

Communication

Chad is massively lagging in the development of telecommunications. Under the country code +235, there were a total of 12.11 million connections in 2023 (WorldData.info, n.d.). Among them were 12.10 million mobile phones, which corresponds to an average of 0.68 per person. Chad's telecommunications market is one of the least developed in the world but experiences a rapid growth and investment. The Government of Chad and foreign investors are focused on developing mobile cellular technology and fibreoptic infrastructure to improve web connectivity and digitize documents and services (International Trade Administration, 2020). Fixed telephone lines are rarely used; broadband internet is extremely limited. Most users rely on mobile internet connections. Huawei broke ground on a national data centre in July 2020 and is in the construction of a 4G network and fibreoptic cables. Mobile networks offer basic mobile data services using GPRS and EDGE technology as well as 3G/4G. The local GSM coverage is variable, as is the majority of the data traffic. Even satellite phone communication is unreliable.

Infections/diseases

Yellow fever is common in the region; proof of vaccination must be presented upon entry to the country. Malaria is not only widespread year-round, but the second most frequent killer in the population. Other insect-borne diseases including filariasis and African sleeping sickness, are also present. HIV/AIDS is widespread. Waterborne, foodborne and infectious diseases include typhoid, cholera, tuberculosis, and rabies. Communicable diseases, such as diarrheal diseases, lower respiratory infections, and malaria, are the major contributors to death among the population of Chad (WHO, 2023).

Risks, dangerous places and situations

There is a continuing risk of instability in Chad, particularly in its border regions and during major political events. Chad is undergoing a political transition, and voting in Presidential elections concluded on May 6, 2024. Following the announcement of preliminary results, opposition groups called for protests. Legislative elections are also due to take place before the end of 2024. Chad is extremely dangerous due to the risk of terrorism, kidnapping, civil unrest and violent crime. The terrorist groups, Islamic State West Africa and Boko Haram, remain active in the Lake Chad region (Venturi &

Barana, 2021). In an attack in 2022, Boko Haram killed at least 30 Chadian soldiers near Baga Sola, Lac Province. A state of emergency is in place in the Lac and Kanem provinces with Chadian security forces conducting military operations. In October 2024, Boko Haram killed at least 40 soldiers in an attack on a Chadian military base in Barkaram, Lake Chad region. Clashes between security forces and protestors have previously resulted in deaths. Violent conflict, including with armed rebels, continues to occur in parts of Chad. Kidnapping, armed robbery, and carjacking, has increased, including in daylight. Police checkpoints are common. For this reason, one is strongly advised to follow the advice of local authorities. To travel outside N'Djamena, one must get authorisation from the Ministry of the Interior, which is normally granted without difficulty in a few days' time. (Mr. Sandor Horvath, HBAid's Chad project manager).

Conclusion

The assessment of Hungarian Baptist Aid's humanitarian and development initiatives in Chad in 2023-2024 reveals several significant findings regarding the implementation of sustainable humanitarian assistance in complex crisis environments. The organization's dual-track approach, simultaneously addressing immediate humanitarian needs while pursuing long-term development goals, demonstrates both the challenges and opportunities inherent in contemporary humanitarian operations.

The research findings indicate that successful humanitarian interventions in Chad require careful attention to three critical dimensions. First, the integration of refugee and host community needs proves essential for project sustainability, as evidenced by HBAid's vocational training programs and healthcare initiatives. This approach aligns with current humanitarian best practices and helps mitigate potential tensions between displaced populations and local communities. Second, the study underscores the importance of capacity building through knowledge transfer and infrastructure development. HBAid's implementation of specialized training programs - including humanitarian response manager, optical, midwifery, and IT training - represents a significant contribution to local capacity enhancement and empowerment. The success of these initiatives suggests that technical skill development, when properly aligned with local needs and market demands, can contribute meaningfully to community resilience. Third, the research highlights the critical role of security considerations in humanitarian operations. The documented increase in incidents involving aid workers, particularly during their initial deployment period, emphasizes the need for comprehensive security protocols and thorough pre-deployment preparation. This finding has significant implications for humanitarian organizations operating in the Sahel region.

Several key conclusions emerge from this analysis:

1. Sustainable humanitarian assistance in Chad requires a balanced approach that addresses both immediate crisis needs and long-term development goals.

2. The effectiveness of humanitarian interventions depends heavily on strong partnerships with local authorities, international organizations, and community stakeholders.
3. Security challenges in the region necessitate careful risk assessment and management strategies, particularly for international staff.
4. Infrastructure limitations, particularly in communications and transportation, significantly impact project implementation and require careful advance planning.

These findings contribute to the broader discourse on humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies and offer practical insights for organizations planning similar interventions. The research suggests that successful humanitarian operations in Chad require a nuanced understanding of local contexts, robust security protocols, and sustainable project design.

Looking forward, this analysis indicates several areas requiring further attention from the humanitarian community. These include the need for improved coordination mechanisms among aid organizations, enhanced security protocols for field operations, and more systematic approaches to capacity building. Effective assistance is based on knowledge of distinct local characteristics and possible solutions to needs, respective to the community being served. Knowledge can be obtained in the most authentic way from the local partners and recipients (authorities, beneficiaries, other actors in need), as well as from national and international aid organizations working in the area performing similar tasks, thus building relationships with representatives of ministerial, local, and international actors is of fundamental importance. Additionally, the study suggests that future humanitarian interventions in Chad should prioritize sustainable technology transfer and infrastructure development while maintaining sensitivity to local contexts and needs.

The experience of HBAid in Chad demonstrates that effective humanitarian assistance requires a careful balance between immediate aid and long-term development, underpinned by strong local partnerships and comprehensive security measures. These lessons have broader implications for humanitarian operations in similar complex emergency environments, particularly within the Sahel region. This conclusion acknowledges both the achievements and limitations of current humanitarian approaches in Chad, while pointing toward opportunities for improved effectiveness in future interventions. The findings underscore the continuing need for adaptive, context-sensitive humanitarian assistance that can effectively address both immediate crises and long-term development challenges in complex operational environments.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they have no financial interest in this manuscript.

Notes on Contributors

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Türkiye's Contribution to Modernization of Africa's Security and Defense Autonomy[1]

Mert Efe Özuygun[2]

Abstract:

Türkiye's engagement with Africa reflects a strategic evolution from cultural and trade partnerships to transformative security cooperation. This study investigates Türkiye's contributions to African defence autonomy through defence technology exports, capacity-building programs, and strategic collaborations. Employing case studies of Libya and Somalia, the article analyses the impact of these initiatives on regional stability and global power competition. Key findings emphasize Türkiye's role as a partner distinct from traditional powers, advancing defence technologies, training local forces, fostering development, and employing adaptive diplomacy in fragmented security environments such as Libya. The study positions Türkiye as a model for sustainable, equitable, and innovative security engagement in Africa, employing qualitative case analysis to examine the multifaceted contributions of Türkiye's defence initiatives.

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Introduction

Africa's importance on the global stage is underscored by its extensive natural resources, strategic geography, and the legacies of colonization. The continent is home to 30% of the world's mineral reserves, significant deposits of rare earth elements, and 65% of arable land, positioning it as a crucial player in global sustainability and technological advancement. Its geographical location encompasses vital trade routes, including the Red Sea and the Gulf of Guinea, which are essential for international commerce (Boudreau et al., 2024).

Despite its considerable wealth, Africa continues to grapple with the enduring impacts of colonial legacies. The arbitrary borders established during the colonial period, coupled with the state-building initiatives of emerging elites, disrupted traditional social structures and self-governance systems, often stifling local development (Ramani, 2021, pp. 3–4). These artificial divisions, along with insufficient post-independence investment in infrastructure, have contributed to ongoing economic and political challenges. This article aims to answer how Türkiye's defense technology exports and capacity-building programs contribute to African security, and what implications these initiatives have for regional stability and global power dynamics.

Technological Advancements and Security Dynamics

Technological advancements play an increasingly pivotal role in shaping global security. Traditional military strategies have evolved, with innovations such as cyberwarfare, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and advanced defense systems dominating international security discussions. Beyond physical hardware, ideological and media strategies, including disinformation and propaganda, have become critical tools for shaping perceptions and influencing outcomes (Forest, 2021, pp. 14–22). For instance, the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria demonstrate how control over narratives can complement physical warfare. These developments underscore the interdisciplinary nature of security science, which integrates technology, societal factors, and strategic defense to address complex global challenges. These technological innovations not only transform military strategies but also empower African nations to develop their defense capabilities.

Non-Military Contributions: Cultural Diplomacy and Development

Türkiye's engagement in Africa encompasses more than just military partnerships; it also prominently features cultural diplomacy. This effort has significantly strengthened Türkiye's presence on the continent through initiatives such as the Türkiye Scholarships student exchange program and the establishment of vocational training centers. These initiatives exemplify a human-centric approach to international relations, fostering goodwill, empowering local communities, and enhancing long-term partnerships.

For example, Türkiye has awarded scholarships to thousands of African students who have pursued higher education in Turkish universities. Many of these alumni return to

their home countries equipped with valuable technical skills, contributing to local capacity building and deepening the ties between Türkiye and Africa. Similarly, vocational training centers established by various African nations provide youth with essential employable skills, bolstering local economies and fostering people-to-people connections that sustain diplomatic trust.

By incorporating educational and cultural programs into its strategy for Africa, Türkiye highlights the significance of soft power alongside its military and economic contributions, ensuring a well-rounded approach to cultivating sustainable partnerships.

Türkiye's Engagement in Africa

Türkiye has emerged as a significant partner for Africa, offering an alternative to traditional powers. This growing influence aligns with Türkiye's broader aspirations to become a key global player in the defense industry. Türkiye's strategic location, at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, makes it a vital hub for connectivity and trade. Building on this position, Türkiye has prioritized innovation, particularly in defense technologies, as a cornerstone of its global engagement (Málnássy, 2022, pp. 60–71). Recent statements by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan highlight Türkiye's willingness to contribute to the European New Defense Architecture (Tekin, 2025).

Türkiye's historical relationship with Africa is diverse and perceived differently across various political communities. These perceptions range from viewing the Ottoman legacy as a period of shared history and cultural exchange to interpreting it as a period of foreign rule in certain Arab contexts (Besenyő, 2021, pp. 60–71). While Ottoman influence in North Africa is often associated with governance and cultural exchange, perceptions in certain Arab regions interpret this period as one of foreign rule. Conversely, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the absence of direct Ottoman engagement means that contemporary ties are shaped more by Türkiye's modern diplomatic and developmental initiatives than by historical legacies (MFA, 2024). Despite these varying historical interpretations, Türkiye's contemporary engagement in Africa, characterized by decades of goodwill initiatives such as building schools, mosques, water wells, and health infrastructure, has generally fostered trust and provided a unique foothold in African markets. Türkiye has effectively differentiated itself from other global powers competing for influence on the continent (Fenton-Harvey, 2024) by positioning itself as an ally free from imperialist baggage.

Theoretical Framework: Security Science and the African Context

This section provides the theoretical foundation for understanding the intricate security landscape in Africa. It explores the evolving role of military-technical advancements, particularly within the context of Türkiye's growing military engagement on the continent. It examines the concept of security science, its various dimensions, and its intersection with military-technical sciences, thus establishing a framework for analyzing Türkiye's contributions to African defense autonomy and the implications of its expanding military presence (Swanepoel, 2023, pp. 14–17).

The security concept has significantly evolved from a limited, state-centric view focused on military threats to a broader, multi-faceted perspective that includes economic, social, environmental, and human security. This shift has fueled the growth of security studies as an interdisciplinary field and led to the rise of "security science" which aims to provide a robust framework for understanding and tackling complex, interconnected security challenges.

Linking Theory to Türkiye's African Strategy

Buzan's (2007) multidimensional security model—encompassing military, economic, and societal dimensions—provides a lens to analyze Türkiye's holistic approach. For instance, Türkiye's UAV deployments in Libya (military) align with its economic investments in Sudan and cultural scholarships (societal), reflecting a deliberate integration of security science principles.

Barry Buzan argued in his work, People, States, and Fear, that traditional security understandings were "too narrowly founded" advocating for a broader framework encompassing military, political, economic, societal, and environmental dimensions (Buzan, 2007). Despite security science gaining attention, a widely accepted definition is still difficult to find, highlighting the variety of viewpoints on the subject. This complexity requires a thorough analysis of the current definitions.

Buzan's (2007) securitization theory provides a macro-level lens for analyzing Türkiye's multi-domain engagement, emphasizing how cultural diplomacy (e.g., scholarships) enhances societal stability. In contrast, Lasicová and Ušiak's (2013) multi-layered framework highlights the operational synergy between Türkiye's military-technical interventions (e.g., UAVs in Libya) and socio-economic programs (e.g., TİKA infrastructure in Sudan), demonstrating how systemic integration advances defense autonomy (Lasicová & Ušiak, 2013).
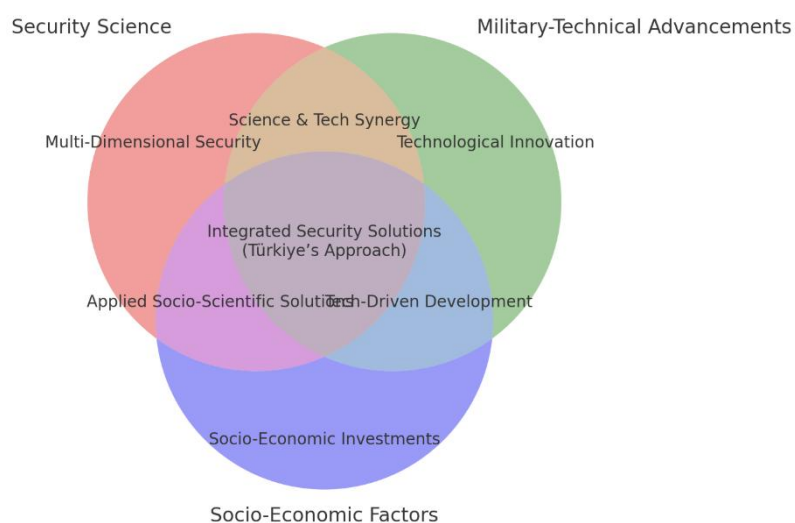

Figure 1: Global Power Focuses and Contributions in Africa
Source: Own library.

This definition aligns with the broader discussion on the interplay between safety and security, as highlighted in academic discourse. For example, revisiting the relationship between these concepts reveals how they intersect in areas such as risk mitigation, crisis management, and infrastructure protection (Karanikas, 2018, pp. 547–551).

Key Strengths of this Definition

Comprehensive Scope: This definition explicitly acknowledges the multi-layered nature of security, encompassing individual, group, local, state, regional, and global levels. This is highly relevant to analyzing Türkiye's engagement in Africa, which operates at multiple levels.

Inclusion of Diverse Factors: The definition explicitly lists a wide range of factors influencing security (military, economic, domestic, social, legal, environmental, energy, and cyber), aligning with the multifaceted nature of security challenges in Africa.

Dynamic and Relative Nature: The emphasis on "temporary (relative) stability" acknowledges that security is not an absolute state but rather a dynamic and constantly evolving condition.

Focus on Elimination of Threats: The definition's focus on eliminating crises, risks, threats, and wars provides a clear objective for security policies and actions.

The evolving and multi-dimensional nature of security is evident in various definitions that extend beyond a purely military-centric focus. Walt (1991) defines security as "the study of the threat, use, and control of military force," emphasizing the role of defense in countering external threats, which aligns with Türkiye's strategic focus on providing advanced defense technologies to African nations (Coates, 2014). Wolfers (1952) describes security as "an ambiguous symbol," incorporating both objective and subjective dimensions, highlighting the necessity of fostering trust and stability, objectives that Türkiye achieves through capacity-building initiatives and humanitarian efforts (Degaut, 2015). Paris (2001) frames security as "the absence of threats to core values," encompassing survival, well-being, basic rights, and a sustainable environment, closely aligning with Türkiye's broader engagement in Africa, which seeks to create a secure and stable environment that promotes governance and development (Paris, 2001). Together, these perspectives reinforce the multifaceted approach to security science advocated in this article, illustrating how Türkiye integrates military, social, and developmental aspects to contribute to Africa's defense autonomy.

Key Debates and African Security Challenges

Security is a contested concept, evolving from a state-centric military focus to a broader, multidimensional understanding. This evolution reflects the changing nature of threats and increasing global interconnectedness. The African context presents unique security challenges, including:

- *Intrastate Conflicts:* Ethnic tensions, resource competition, and weak governance.
- *Transnational Threats:* Terrorism, organized crime, and piracy.

- *Socioeconomic Vulnerabilities:* Poverty, inequality, and lack of access to basic services.
- *Climate Change:* Environmental degradation and resource scarcity.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach involving local, national, regional, and international collaboration. These security science principles are applied in Türkiye's engagements in Africa, as illustrated through case studies in Somalia, Libya, and beyond.

The resurgence of the M23 rebel group in the Democratic Republic of Congo underscores the fragility of African security frameworks. In January 2025, Rwanda-backed M23 forces terminated a ceasefire brokered during the Biden administration and seized Goma, a strategic city of 1 million people. The offensive triggered mass displacement, looting, and prison breaks, while 400 Romanian mercenaries contracted to defend the city surrendered their weapons to UN peacekeepers and fled (Lawal, 2025). This crisis highlights the limitations of external security interventions and the urgent need for sustainable, locally-led defense solutions.

Military-Technical Sciences and Their Intersection with Security Science

Military-technical sciences are a crucial subset of security science. They focus on applying scientific and engineering principles to develop, deploy, and utilize military technology. This field encompasses how technological advancements in weapons, defense systems, and intelligence tools shape military strategy, operational effectiveness, and broader security dynamics.

Military science, as defined by (Piehler, 2024), is a systematized body of knowledge concerning the theory, application, and employment of military units and weapons in warfare and armed conflict. It encompasses military leadership, organization, training, history, ethics, doctrine, tactics, operations, strategy, geography, and technology.

The intersection of military-technical sciences and security science is crucial for addressing contemporary security challenges. Military-technical advancements provide essential tools for security science, enabling:

Enhanced Situational Awareness: Technologies like UAVs, satellite imagery, and advanced sensors.

Improved Response Capabilities: Technologies such as precision-guided munitions, cyber defense systems, and rapid communication networks.

Critical Infrastructure Protection: Military technological advancements are essential for protecting critical infrastructure.

Information Warfare: The use of technology for information operations.

Non-Lethal Weapons: The development of non-lethal technologies.

African Defense & Development Goals with Military-Technical Sciences

Military-technical sciences contribute to African defense and development by effectively integrating military-technical sciences into their security strategies. African states can:

Enhancing Defense Capabilities: Improving situational awareness, reconnaissance, and precision strike options. Develop their defense industries, reduce reliance on foreign arms imports, and strengthen their decision-making autonomy in defense matters.

Fostering Economic Growth: Stimulating economic activity through local defense industries and technology transfer. Stimulate economic activity through the development of local defense industries, create jobs, and facilitate the development of dual-use technologies with civilian applications.

Building Sovereignty: Enhancing defense autonomy and reducing reliance on external powers. Enhance regional cooperation in addressing shared security challenges through the sharing of information, technology, and expertise.

In the African context, military-technical sciences play a crucial role in addressing:

Counter-terrorism and Counterinsurgency: Technologies like UAVs, advanced communication systems, and biometric identification systems.

Maritime Security: Advancements in naval technology.

Border Security: Technologies like surveillance systems, drones, and advanced communication networks.

Disaster Response: Military-technical capabilities.

Africa's Defense Landscape and Geopolitical Challenges

Africa's defense landscape is shaped by a complex interplay of historical, political, and socio-economic factors. From the enduring legacies of colonialism to modern security dilemmas, the continent faces a unique set of challenges that demand both regional and international attention. The interplay of local governance issues, external interventions, and the competition for influence among global powers underscores the strategic importance of Africa in contemporary geopolitics. This section delves into the historical and ongoing factors influencing Africa's security environment, examining the dynamics of conflict, colonial legacies, and the modern-day proxy wars that further complicate the region's pursuit of stability.

Africa's defense landscape reflects this complexity. Internal conflicts, terrorism, and organized crime, combined with external powers' competing interests, have created significant security challenges. Over recent decades, African states have recognized the importance of modernizing their defense sectors, not only to manage domestic instability but also to safeguard their sovereignty in the face of shifting geopolitical dynamics. Historically reliant on Western military assistance, many African states are now pursuing self-reliance by developing indigenous defense capabilities and forging diverse international partnerships, following a period of hesitation between 1950 and 1980, regarding modernization models inspired by either Western or Soviet approaches (Martin, 2012, pp. 71–86).

A History of Conflict and Colonial Legacies

Africa's tumultuous history is characterized by the interplay between its colonial past and contemporary conflicts. The colonial period laid the groundwork for structural

vulnerabilities, such as weak state institutions and arbitrary borders that disregarded Indigenous sociopolitical dynamics. These issues contributed to the "security racket" model described in Mercenaries: An African Security Dilemma, where the pursuit of state security paradoxically undermined rulers through the empowerment of "strongmen." This paradox highlights how colonial legacies continue to perpetuate cycles of instability, with security frameworks rooted in control rather than collaboration (Musah & Fayemi, 2000, pp. 13–42).

The necessity for a comprehensive approach to security is evident. Threats transcend traditional military concerns, extending into economic resilience, political stability, and societal well-being. Security in this context encompasses the capacity to maintain sovereignty while addressing external pressures and domestic vulnerabilities. William G. Thom, in his seminal work African Wars: A Defense Intelligence Perspective, highlights the persistent complexity of these threats. His analysis of conflicts ranging from postcolonial insurgencies in Rhodesia to ongoing strife in the Horn of Africa underscores Africa's position as one of the most conflict-prone yet under-analyzed regions in the world (Thom, 2010, pp. 55–97).

Understanding the African Security Crisis

Africa's security challenges are rooted in complex dynamics that have evolved in the post-Cold War era, characterized by state fragility, small arms proliferation, and the rise of non-state actors. The dissolution of Cold War patron-client relationships dismantled state dominance, giving way to private military companies, warlords, and ethno-nationalist movements, all vying for power within weakened governance structures. This has created an environment where criminal networks, resource-driven conflicts, and socio-economic disparities exacerbate instability (Musah & Fayemi, 2000, pp. 13–42).

To address these challenges, a redefined concept of security is critical—one that prioritizes human security. This entails ensuring basic needs, democratic governance, justice, and sustainable livelihoods. Effective security should expand beyond traditional military approaches to involve governments, NGOs, and civil society, fostering a participatory and inclusive framework. Key strategies include:

Arms Control and Demobilization: Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs are essential to remove excess weaponry from communities and provide pathways for ex-combatants to reintegrate into society. Stricter regulations on arms trade and international cooperation are needed to limit the inflow of weapons.

Inclusive Governance and Transparency: The foundations of peace must rest on accountable governance, open dialogue, and public participation. Transparent decision-making and institutional reforms will rebuild trust and empower marginalized groups, such as women and demobilized soldiers, to contribute to security solutions.

Strengthening State Capacity: Investing in state-building measures, such as professionalizing security forces, enhancing economic reform, and fostering legitimacy, will reduce dependence on non-state actors. Governments should focus on providing

equitable access to resources and fostering economic opportunities for at-risk populations, particularly the youth.

Regional Cooperation: African states must embrace collaborative frameworks, such as those offered by the African Union, to tackle cross-border threats and foster collective security initiatives. Shared resources and cooperative defense planning can help mitigate interstate tensions and strengthen regional stability.

By addressing the structural drivers of insecurity—such as weak governance, arms proliferation, and socio-economic inequities—Africa can transition toward a more stable and prosperous future. Reforming military systems, empowering communities, and redefining security as a human-centric endeavor are pivotal steps in breaking the cycle of violence and fostering sustainable peace.

However, expanding defense partnerships can introduce logistical and operational complications, as demonstrated in Ukraine. The reliance on a combination of Soviet-era and NATO-standard artillery systems during the conflict exposed the challenges of maintaining compatible munitions and ensuring operational efficiency. Variations in caliber standards and a fragmented inventory led to supply chain issues and operational delays (Saw, 2023). Without careful planning for equipment compatibility and maintenance, African nations may face similar hurdles when diversifying their defense relationships.

Global Power Competition in Africa

As shown in Figure 1, Africa's wealth of natural resources and global powers have continually sought to engage with the continent in ways aligned with the strategic interests of global actors.

Country	Technology Focus	Key Contributions
Türkiye	UAVs, training	Affordable, adaptable systems
China	Infrastructure loans	Ports, railways under strategic debt
Russia	Wagner Group presence	Resource extraction, paramilitary
France	Counterterrorism ops	Counterterrorism operations and military bases

Figure 2: Global Power Focuses and Contributions in Africa.

In the 21st century, Africa has become a geopolitical battleground where global powers vie for influence and dominance. China, through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), formerly known as 'One Belt One Road' has established itself as a dominant economic partner, investing heavily in infrastructure and securing access to critical trade routes. The Warsaw Institute article highlights China's significant role in Africa, detailing projects like railways, harbors, and government buildings, and emphasizing how China uses loans and infrastructure investments to gain influence. For example, China's control of ports under high-interest loans ties African countries economically. Between 2007 and 2020, China invested $23 billion in African infrastructure, vastly exceeding Western

efforts. These strategies reflect China's focus on economic dominance and strategic footholds in Africa (Hajdu, 2023).

China's engagement extends to contested regions like Western Sahara, where economic and diplomatic maneuvers reflect a calculated strategy to expand its influence. For instance, China has historically supported Morocco's claim over Western Sahara in exchange for access to phosphate reserves and fisheries, while simultaneously maintaining rhetorical neutrality to avoid alienating the African Union's stance on self-determination (Besenyő et al., 2022, pp. 249–262). This dual approach underscores China's prioritization of resource acquisition and geopolitical leverage over normative principles, mirroring its transactional partnerships across Africa (Póczik, 2023).

Russia, meanwhile, has focused on military collaborations and leveraging Cold War-era alliances to strengthen its position on the continent. Instead of a direct military presence, Russia employs the Wagner Group, a private military contractor, to exert influence. The Wagner Group operates in 15 African countries with varying levels of confidence and different contracts and strengths. Their primary areas of activity include the Central African Republic, Libya, Mali, Sudan, and recently, Niger and Gabon. This strategy has allowed Russia to provide military support, train local forces, and stabilize governments while securing economic interests through mining, oil, and forestry concessions (Besenyő et al., 2024, pp. 28–41; Foreign Affairs Committee, 2023).

The United States, though attempting to counter these advances with governance and counterterrorism initiatives, has seen its economic influence wane compared to China's (Aydın & Liu, 2024). Amid this competition, African states are asserting their autonomy by diversifying partnerships. Analysts suggest that Africa's best strategy is avoiding alignment with a single power and fostering relationships that serve the continent's developmental goals (Ndzendze, 2023). This dynamic environment underscores the critical need for defense autonomy and robust internal security systems to ensure sustainable growth and sovereignty (Adzande et al., 2024).

Historical Ties with France, Strategic Role, and Military Engagement

France's enduring influence in Africa, rooted in its colonial legacy and sustained through post-independence Françafrique networks (Bovcon, 2013, pp. 5–26), has been exemplified by military interventions like *Operation Barkhane* (2014–2022). Deploying 4,000 troops across Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad, the operation aimed to dismantle jihadist networks but became emblematic of France's contentious role in the Sahel. While framed as a counterterrorism mission, Barkhane faced widespread accusations of *neocolonialism* for propping up corrupt Regimes that prioritize political stability and often sideline governance reforms. This can lead to the triggering of anti-French protests among civilians, reflecting underlying tensions in the society. Casualties and perceived overreach (Erforth, 2020, pp. 560–582; Gnanguênon, 2014).

The operation's outcomes starkly contradicted its objectives: jihadist violence surged by 300% during its tenure, and the Sahelian public increasingly accused France of

prioritizing geopolitical clout over regional stability (ACLED, 2023). This backlash culminated in a wave of coups—Mali (2020–2021), Burkina Faso (2022), and Niger (2023)—where junta leaders expelled French forces and pivoted to Russia's Wagner Group for security partnerships. As a Malian activist asserted, "Barkhane was here to save France's influence, not us" (Olech, 2023). Ultimately, the operation's failure highlighted the collapse of France's paternalistic security model in Africa and its inability to adapt to the evolving needs and demands of Sahelian states.

Despite these efforts, reliance on France has diminished in recent years as African states increasingly seek to diversify their defense partnerships. Türkiye, China, and Russia have emerged as alternative partners, offering competitive options in terms of technology transfer, equipment costs, and reduced political strings. Yet, this diversification brings logistical and operational challenges. As illustrated in Figure 2, Türkiye ranks second globally in drone exports (1,421 units), surpassing Russia and France (Gettinger & Drone, 2019).

Rank	Country	Number of drones(approx.)	Rank	Country	Number of drones(approx.)
1	United States	13,000	5	Germany	670
2	Türkiye	1,421	6	India	625
3	Poland	1,209	7	France	591
4	Russia	1,050	8	Australia	557

Figure 3: Approximate Numbers of Drones per Country
Source: Gettinger and Drone (2019).

Türkiye's Contributions to African Security

Against this backdrop of great power rivalry, Türkiye's approach offers a distinct model of engagement that emphasizes long-term collaboration, as explored in this section.

Defence Exports and Technological Innovation

Türkiye's advancements in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology have garnered global recognition, establishing it as a leading innovator in the global defense industry. As to recent reports, Türkiye has surpassed traditional powerhouses such as China and the United States in UAV exports, accounting for 65% of global sales since 2018. This remarkable achievement highlights the efficacy and competitiveness of Turkish UAVs, including Baykar Defense's TB2 Bayraktar and Akıncı, Turkish Aerospace Industries' ANKA and Aksungur, and Vestel's Karayel (Frantzman, 2020; Besenyő, 2021, pp. 81–84).

Türkiye's UAVs, such as the Bayraktar TB2 and Akıncı, have revolutionized modern conflict management. Their affordability and adaptability make them ideal for countering asymmetric threats, as demonstrated in Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Ukraine. These systems have proven effective in countering asymmetric threats and offer African states a cost-effective alternative to traditional suppliers. Its integration into the

defense systems of six NATO and four EU member states further underscores its strategic importance and Türkiye's growing influence in the global defense market (BaykarTech, 2021). For African states, the availability of cost-effective, proven technologies like the TB2 represents a viable alternative to traditional suppliers, especially in addressing asymmetric threats such as terrorism and insurgency.

Capacity Building Through Training and Knowledge Transfer

Africa's diverse economic conditions and unique security challenges make it an ideal partner for Türkiye's defense initiatives. While some African urban centers exhibit relative affluence, many regions contend with socioeconomic disparities, political instability, and legacy influences from former colonial powers. These powers often exercise control through unequal contracts, strategic financial dependencies, and at times, military or proxy interventions.

Türkiye has approached these challenges by prioritizing sustainable development through capacity-building initiatives. Beyond providing advanced defense equipment, Türkiye invests in human capital through military training programs, knowledge transfer initiatives, and infrastructure development. A prime example of this commitment is Türkiye's largest overseas military base in Somalia, which serves as a hub for training Somali forces and enhancing their operational capabilities. Additionally, Türkiye's bilateral assistance—facilitated through agencies like the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA)—extends to countries such as Sudan, Niger, and Djibouti, further solidifying its position as a key ally in Africa (Chaon, 2024).

This strategic focus on fostering resilience and self-reliance contrasts with the extractive approaches often employed by other global actors, positioning Türkiye as a reliable partner for long-term growth and stability.

Strategic Partnerships and Regional Integration

Türkiye has effectively framed itself as an "*Afro-Eurasian state*", reflecting its unique geographical and cultural position between Europe, Asia, and Africa. This identity underpins its efforts to strengthen ties with African nations through diplomacy, trade, and security cooperation. Türkiye's diplomatic footprint on the continent has grown substantially, with the number of embassies expanding from 12 in 2009 to 42 by 2019. This expansion is complemented by increased military cooperation, trade agreements, development aid, and cultural exchange programs, fostering goodwill and positive perceptions among African nations (Ünveren, 2021).

A key aspect of Türkiye's strategy is its emphasis on regional integration. By aligning its initiatives with the African Union's objectives and collaborating with regional security frameworks, Türkiye supports collective efforts to address shared challenges such as terrorism, organized crime, and instability. For example, Türkiye's partnership with Somalia has been pivotal in supporting the Somali government's counterterrorism efforts and rebuilding its defense infrastructure. Similarly, Türkiye has strengthened ties with

Niger and Gambia through security agreements and economic collaborations, targeting regional stability in the Sahel and West Africa.

Year	Key Milestone
2009	Türkiye joins CTF 151 (anti-piracy efforts).
2011	First Africa Partnership Summit held in İstanbul.
2017	Mogadishu military base opens in Somalia.
2019	Libya-GNA maritime agreement signed.
2023	Cybersecurity partnership with Niger launched.

Figure 4: Timeline of Türkiye's Engagement in Africa
Source: Melvin (2019).

A key aspect of Türkiye's strategy is its emphasis on regional integration. By aligning its initiatives with the African Union's objectives and collaborating with regional security frameworks, Türkiye supports collective efforts to address shared challenges such as terrorism, organized crime, and instability. This approach echoes the Ottoman Empire's historical role as a mediator and stabilizing power across diverse regions, where it effectively built alliances with local powers to safeguard mutual interests and maintain regional order (Alloul & Martykánová, 2021). For example, Türkiye's partnership with Somalia has been pivotal in supporting the Somali government's counterterrorism efforts and rebuilding its defense infrastructure, reflecting a blend of modern defense support and capacity-building reminiscent of Ottoman diplomatic strategies. Similarly, Türkiye has strengthened ties with Niger and Gambia through security agreements and economic collaborations, targeting regional stability in the Sahel and West Africa. These efforts parallel the Ottoman approach of leveraging diplomatic, military, and economic tools to manage complex regional challenges and foster applicable, mutually beneficial relationships.

Türkiye's emphasis on mediation and capacity-building offers a contrast to failed external interventions. For instance, Türkiye proposed to mediate the Rwanda-DRC conflict, leveraging its neutrality and growing African partnerships. However, Kinshasa's rejection of Ankara's offer (Ilunga, 2025) reflects the challenges of navigating entrenched geopolitical rivalries. This underscores the importance of Türkiye's long-term, trust-based model—prioritizing local agency over transactional alliances. These engagements demonstrate Türkiye's commitment to fostering mutual growth and development. According to the Republic of Türkiye's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these initiatives are part of a broader policy framework that emphasizes solidarity, sustainability, and long-term partnerships (MFA, 2024).

Case Studies: Türkiye's Role in African Security
1. Libya: Recalibrating Conflict Dynamics & Security Autonomy

Türkiye's involvement in Libya's civil conflict between the *UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA)* in Tripoli and General Khalifa Haftar's *Libyan National Army (LNA)* in Tobruk reshaped the security landscape and highlighted Türkiye's growing

regional influence. The GNA, backed by the United Nations, sought to stabilize the Libyan capital and uphold a democratic framework, resisting Haftar's authoritarian ambitions to seize Tripoli and consolidate power under a military-led regime. Haftar's LNA received support from key regional powers, including Egypt, the UAE, and Russia (via the Wagner Group), which advanced their strategic interests in North Africa by backing an authoritarian alternative to the GNA (Balzan, 2017). Türkiye aligned with the GNA due to mutual geopolitical interests, particularly the 2019 maritime boundary agreement in the Eastern Mediterranean that directly supported Türkiye's Blue Homeland Doctrine. This intervention not only stabilized the GNA but also influenced neighboring countries' security policies by reinforcing regional maritime security norms. The Blue Homeland Doctrine expresses Türkiye's legitimate maritime rights within the framework of international law. Efforts to protect these rights make an important contribution to global and regional peace in terms of both implementing international law and the possibility of regional countries benefiting from all resources equitably founded by Cihat Yaycı, who is a Turkish author, former rear admiral, and theoretician of irredentism and expansionism.

Key Actions and Impact: Türkiye's involvement in Libya significantly shifted the balance of power during the civil conflict between the GNA and Haftar's LNA. Through the deployment of Bayraktar TB2 UAVs, Türkiye demonstrated the strategic value of advanced, cost-effective technology in modern warfare (Besenyő & Málnássy, 2024, pp. 3–17). Key results included halting the LNA's advance on Tripoli and securing the 2019 maritime boundary agreement, bolstering Türkiye's Blue Homeland Doctrine. While rival powers like Egypt and Russia countered Türkiye's influence, the intervention underscored the role of innovative military technologies in achieving geopolitical objectives (Málnássy, 2024, pp. 104–121).

Strategic Goals: Türkiye's intervention was underpinned by three primary objectives:

1. *Securing the Maritime Agreement:* The Türkiye-GNA deal delineated exclusive economic zones (EEZs) in the Eastern Mediterranean, bolstering Türkiye's claims to contested waters rich in energy resources and challenging rival maritime claims by Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration. This provides additional context for why Türkiye pursued the GNA maritime agreement and how it relates to the broader Eastern Mediterranean conflicts with Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration (Köse, 2021).

2. *Enhancing Regional Influence:* By supporting the GNA, Türkiye expanded its leverage in North Africa, aligning its actions with the Blue Homeland Doctrine, which emphasizes safeguarding maritime interests and securing critical trade routes (Yaycı, 2020).

3. *Countering Rival Powers:* Türkiye's presence balanced the influence of regional adversaries like Egypt and the UAE, as well as global actors like France and Russia, who sought to expand their strategic dominance in Libya by backing Haftar. A pivotal aspect of Türkiye's strategy was the maritime jurisdiction agreement signed with the GNA on November 27, 2019, which delineated exclusive economic zones in the Eastern

Mediterranean. This agreement not only bolstered Türkiye's claims to contested waters rich in energy resources but also countered the influence of rival powers in the region.

Challenges and Rival Powers: Despite its successes, Türkiye faced significant challenges in navigating the complex geopolitics of Libya. Egypt vehemently opposed the GNA due to concerns over its ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, while France and the UAE criticized Türkiye's intervention, fearing destabilization and the strengthening of Islamist-leaning factions. Russia's Wagner Group amplified these challenges, providing direct military support to Haftar, escalating the conflict, and increasing the risk of a proxy war in the region. These rival powers' actions often clashed with Türkiye's strategic goals, necessitating a delicate balance between maintaining its influence and avoiding broader escalation.

By intervening in Libya, Türkiye not only solidified its role as a critical partner to the GNA but also reinforced its position as a key regional player capable of influencing the security architecture of North Africa. This involvement underscored the strategic value of Türkiye's advanced military technologies, such as UAVs, as tools for projecting power while simultaneously advancing geopolitical objectives in contested regions.

In early 2025, Türkiye's engagement with Libya's eastern factions deepened further when Major General Saddam Haftar—son of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar—visited Ankara for formal military meetings, signaling a significant warming of relations. Shortly after, the Libyan House of Representatives, aligned with the LNA, established a parliamentary committee to re-examine the 2019 Türkiye–GNA maritime agreement, which had been dormant due to internal divisions. This move is interpreted as a potential precursor to broader recognition of the maritime MoU by both Libyan factions, reinforcing Türkiye's long-term strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean. These developments underline Ankara's adaptive diplomacy and its capacity to re-engage former adversaries in pursuit of shared security and energy interests (Libyan News Agency, 2025).

This shift reflects Türkiye's pragmatic recalibration strategy. By presenting Libya's eastern factions with tangible maritime and economic benefits—such as contesting Greek and Egyptian EEZ claims—Ankara has offered a "better deal" that reframes past hostilities into future cooperation. The evolving relationship with the LNA demonstrates how Türkiye's strategic diplomacy combines short-term tactical gains with long-term geopolitical recalibration.

2. Somalia: Capacity Building for Defense Autonomy

In Somalia, Türkiye has adopted a long-term approach that blends military and economic engagement to address security and development challenges. This partnership reflects Türkiye's commitment to fostering defense autonomy in fragile states (Eyrice Tepeciklioğlu et al., 2023, pp. 289–294; Talbot, 2023, pp. 53–85).

Key Actions: The establishment of Camp TURKSOM (Somali Turkish Task Force Command), Türkiye's largest overseas military base, has been central to training Somali forces. These efforts have strengthened Somalia's ability to combat threats posed by

groups like Al-Shabaab. Additionally, Türkiye has assumed management of Mogadishu's airport and seaport, enhancing economic activity and governance.

Outcomes: Türkiye's holistic approach has not only enhanced Somalia's defense capacity but also positioned Türkiye as a trusted partner in the Horn of Africa. Over 1,500 Somali forces have been trained, contributing to a measurable decrease in security incidents in key regions. These efforts align with Türkiye's hybrid peacebuilding model, simultaneously advancing short-term stabilization and long-term resilience (Eyrice-Tepeciklioğlu, 2021, pp. 200–211).

Challenges: Despite these gains, over-reliance on Turkish training risks creating new forms of dependency. For instance, 80% of Somali officers trained by Türkiye reportedly lack post-training logistical support, raising sustainability concerns (Melvin, 2019, pp. 14–16).

Sustainability Considerations: Türkiye's military presence offers a dual opportunity: to foster Somalia's defense autonomy and contribute to regional stability. However, to avoid replicating external aid pitfalls, Türkiye must support broader capacity-building—including logistics, institutional reform, and closer alignment with AU-led security strategies.

3. Sudan: Broadening Security Partnerships

Sudan's strategic location along the Red Sea makes it pivotal in regional security dynamics, and Türkiye's deepening partnership reflects its ambitions to expand its influence in the region.

Türkiye's 99-year lease on Suakin Island integrates military collaboration (e.g., naval training facilities) with economic revitalization, including tourism infrastructure and port modernization. This dual approach mirrors Ottoman-era strategies of combining trade and security, fostering Sudan's capacity to safeguard Red Sea trade routes while stimulating local employment (MFA, 2024). However, tensions with Egypt over Nile River disputes complicate long-term sustainability.

Key Actions: Türkiye has established facilities for military training and implemented significant development projects through the *Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA).* These projects include building schools, hospitals, and agricultural infrastructure, reflecting Türkiye's multidimensional approach to partnerships.

Strategic Importance: Sudan's proximity to key maritime trade routes and its role in the Red Sea region underscore its value to Türkiye's security and economic strategies. By bolstering Sudan's defense capabilities and contributing to its development, Türkiye has strengthened ties with a nation pivotal to maintaining stability in the region.

Challenges: Challenges in managing the ongoing humanitarian crisis and ensuring effective partnerships amid internal conflict.

4. Niger and Gambia: Securing the Sahel and West Africa

Türkiye's expanding footprint in West Africa highlights its commitment to addressing the unique security challenges of the Sahel, particularly in Niger and Gambia.

Niger: Counterterrorism and Tech Transfer

Türkiye's 2023 cybersecurity partnership with Niger exemplifies its focus on asymmetric threats. By deploying Bayraktar TB2 drones and training Nigerien forces in digital surveillance, Türkiye addresses Sahelian jihadism while reducing reliance on French-led operations. This aligns with Niger's post-2023 coup shift toward diversified partnerships, though interoperability challenges persist with existing Western systems (Mustapha, 2024).

Gambia:

Türkiye's role in Gambia focuses on internal security and economic development. Turkish advisors have provided critical training to Gambian police forces, while Turkish companies have taken on the management of key infrastructure, including ports.

Challenges: Issues of logistical compatibility when integrating Turkish systems with existing Western technologies.

Across Libya, Sudan, Niger, and Somalia, Türkiye's interventions reflect a nuanced and adaptable strategy (Sıradağ, 2018, pp. 308–325). While Libya and Somalia represent high-stakes engagements with direct military involvement, Sudan and Niger illustrate Türkiye's capacity to leverage economic and technical partnerships. Despite challenges such as geopolitical tensions and regional instability, Türkiye's actions underscore its commitment to fostering local capacity and advancing Africa's security autonomy.

5. Comparative Analysis: Türkiye vs. Traditional Powers

While China prioritizes infrastructure loans (e.g., BRI ports) and Russia leverages paramilitary groups (e.g., Wagner), Türkiye distinguishes itself through localized capacity-building. For example, Türkiye's Mogadishu military base trains Somali forces, whereas France's Operation Barkhane focused on direct counterterrorism. This contrast highlights Türkiye's sustainability-driven model.

Region	Key Actions	Outcomes	Challenges
Libya	Deployment of UAVs, military advisors, and logistical support.	GNA stabilization, expanded maritime claims.	Tensions with Egypt, Russia, and UAE
Somalia	Opened Mogadishu base (2017); training Somali forces and developing navy and coastguard.	Enhanced local defense autonomy.	Sustainability of reliance on Türkiye
Sudan	Redevelopment of Suakin Island (99-year lease); economic and military collaboration.	Increased Red Sea influence, strengthened ties	Tensions with Egypt, political instability
Niger	Signed military agreements; provided training and technical	Enhanced regional security, stronger partnership.	Integration with Western systems

	support for counter-jihadist efforts.		

Figure 5: Comparative Analysis of Türkiye's Engagement Across African Nations.

Türkiye's nuanced approach to African security prioritizes local needs while advancing its strategic interests. From deploying advanced defense technologies in Libya to building long-term capacity in Somalia, Sudan, Niger, and Gambia, Türkiye has established itself as a credible and flexible partner. By integrating military, economic, and diplomatic efforts—and recalibrating its stance even with former rivals such as Haftar in Libya—Türkiye demonstrates the potential for adaptive, sustainable, and mutually beneficial partnerships in Africa's evolving security environment.

Türkiye's Cultural and Educational Initiatives

Since 2011, Türkiye Scholarships have enabled over 61,000 African students to study in Türkiye, fostering goodwill and building a network of African professionals educated in defense, governance, and development. For instance, Somali officers trained in Türkiye's military academies now lead counterterrorism units, showcasing the tangible impact of these programs (Özuygun, 2024, pp. 32–54).

Institutions like the Maarif Foundation operate 175 schools across 26 African nations, providing quality education to over 17,000 students annually (Kavak, 2024). These schools not only deliver academic excellence but also serve as cultural bridges, promoting mutual understanding. Additionally, Türkiye's cultural diplomacy extends beyond education. Programs such as the "African Students Meets Business Life" initiative connect African graduates in Türkiye with global employment opportunities, contributing to their socio-economic empowerment. Türkiye's engagement also includes cultural festivals, sports collaborations, and artistic exchanges, fostering a deeper understanding and mutual appreciation between Turkish and African societies (Özkan, 2014, pp. 83–119). By integrating education, culture, and people-to-people connections, Türkiye has positioned itself as a credible and innovative ally on the continent, though its continued success may depend on sustaining influence in fragile states where institutional legitimacy remains in flux.

One notable graduate of Türkiye Scholarships, a former officer from Mali, now oversees security strategy in his region, leveraging Türkiye's expertise in military training and regional stability frameworks. On the other hand, operating cultural centers in 10 African nations, the Yunus Emre Institute fosters language and cultural exchange, enabling Africans to engage with Türkiye's history and values. Beyond education, Türkiye's cultural diplomacy initiatives extend to community-building programs, such as vocational training for women and youth in Somalia, and joint sports collaborations with Gambia. These efforts strengthen grassroots ties, ensuring long-term mutual benefit.

Conclusion

Türkiye's engagement with Africa offers a replicable model for other nations seeking to balance strategic interests with equitable partnerships. By prioritizing local capacity building and integrating socio-economic and military strategies, Türkiye addresses immediate security challenges while fostering long-term development. This dual approach has enabled Türkiye to establish itself as a credible and innovative partner capable of responding to Africa's complex security landscape.

Türkiye's evolving approach in Libya also illustrates the fragility of long-term engagement in fragmented states. After intervening militarily to support the UN-recognized GNA and halt Haftar's advances, Türkiye has gradually built diplomatic bridges with Haftar-aligned factions. This transformation, potentially paving the way for broader recognition of the 2019 maritime agreement, shows Ankara's ability to recalibrate and leverage geopolitical incentives. By highlighting the benefits of maritime delimitation in opposition to Greek and Egyptian claims, Türkiye has reframed the maritime deal as a strategic asset for all Libyan factions. While this approach showcases diplomatic agility, it also underscores the fragility of sustaining influence in environments with unresolved governance divisions.

Future opportunities lie in expanding collaboration on emerging fields such as cybersecurity, climate resilience, and satellite technologies. For instance, Türkiye's expertise in developing UAVs and space technologies could support African nations in addressing border surveillance, disaster management, and resource allocation challenges. Similarly, joint climate resilience initiatives, such as constructing drought-resistant infrastructure or enhancing water security, can contribute to regional stability. Future research should explore the long-term impact of Türkiye's capacity-building initiatives on African defense autonomy, providing insights for other middle powers aiming to balance strategic interests with equitable partnerships.

Türkiye's model also provides valuable lessons for middle powers aiming to establish equitable partnerships in the Global South. By emphasizing mutual benefits, cultural diplomacy, and sustainable development, Türkiye demonstrates how nations can contribute to global stability while advancing their geopolitical objectives. As global competition in Africa intensifies, Türkiye's balanced and inclusive approach serves as a blueprint for fostering resilient and prosperous partnerships.

Key Findings and Analysis

Türkiye's strategic engagement in Africa has emerged as a significant model for addressing the continent's evolving security and development challenges. The study highlights three primary dimensions of Türkiye's contributions:

Defense Innovation and Technology: Türkiye's advancements in UAVs and other military technologies have positioned it as a global leader in defense exports. These innovations, epitomized by the Bayraktar TB2, have provided African nations with cost-effective, adaptable, and proven solutions for addressing asymmetric threats such as

terrorism and insurgency. The integration of Türkiye's technologies into African defense systems underscores its role in strengthening Africa's defense autonomy.

Capacity Building and Long-Term Partnerships: Beyond exporting military equipment, Türkiye prioritizes capacity-building through training programs, technical support, and infrastructure development. Initiatives like the Somali Turkish Task Force Command and investments facilitated by *TİKA* demonstrate a commitment to fostering self-reliance and resilience among African nations.

Cultural and Educational Engagement: Türkiye's soft power approach, including scholarships, educational exchange programs, and artistic initiatives, has deepened people-to-people connections and enhanced mutual understanding. These efforts strengthen diplomatic ties and create a foundation for sustainable collaboration.

Türkiye's holistic strategy, which integrates technological, economic, and cultural dimensions, distinguishes it from traditional African powers. By addressing immediate security needs while fostering long-term partnerships, Türkiye has positioned itself as a credible and innovative ally on the continent.

Furthermore, Türkiye's evolving role in Libya reflects both the adaptability and fragility of its strategic model. Initially intervening to halt Khalifa Haftar's advance and support the UN-recognized GNA, Türkiye has since recalibrated its approach by initiating formal dialogue with eastern factions, including the LNA. The recent diplomatic engagement with Saddam Haftar and the reactivation of discussions around the 2019 maritime agreement suggest that Türkiye is leveraging geostrategic incentives— such as expanding Libya's EEZ rights vis-à-vis Greek and Egyptian claims—to transform prior adversaries into pragmatic partners. This reflects an emerging trend in Türkiye's security diplomacy: combining hard power intervention with long-term political flexibility to secure shared strategic outcomes. However, this approach also reveals potential fragilities, particularly if institutional fragmentation in Libya persists. Thus, the Libyan case illustrates both the reach and the limits of Türkiye's hybrid engagement strategy in fragile post-conflict states.

Policy Recommendations for Africa's Security Future

To ensure sustainable security and development, African nations and their partners, including Türkiye, should consider the following policy recommendations:

Promote Defense Autonomy: African states should adopt Türkiye's Mogadishu UAV Training Center (2023) model, which combines drone exports (e.g., Bayraktar TB2) with local maintenance workshops. For instance, Niger could replicate this by partnering with Turkish Aerospace Industries to establish a regional drone manufacturing hub, reducing dependency on imports and fostering technical skills.

Strengthen Regional Cooperation: Collaborative frameworks under the African Union (AU) and regional organizations should be reinforced to address cross-border threats, share intelligence, and coordinate responses to transnational challenges.

Integrate Security and Development Strategies: Security initiatives must align with socio-economic development plans. Investments in education, infrastructure, and

governance reform are critical for addressing the root causes of instability, such as poverty and inequality.

Focus on Capacity Building: Long-term partnerships should prioritize knowledge transfer and the training of local security forces to ensure sustainability. Programs similar to those implemented by Türkiye in Somalia can serve as benchmarks for other nations.

Encourage Inclusive Partnerships: African nations should diversify their defense partnerships to avoid dependency on a single power. Engaging multiple partners allows for tailored solutions while mitigating risks associated with geopolitical rivalries.

Cybersecurity Partnerships: Collaborate on developing a robust cybersecurity infrastructure to combat growing digital threats. Türkiye's recent collaboration with Niger on enhancing digital infrastructure provides a model for tackling cybersecurity threats. Establishing regional cyber-defense hubs in Africa, supported by Türkiye's expertise, could significantly mitigate risks posed by cybercrime and terrorism. For example, Türkiye's 2023 agreement with Niger to protect critical infrastructure from Boko Haram cyberattacks—including AI-driven threat detection systems—could scale regionally under ECOWAS oversight. This mirrors Türkiye's Domestic Cyber Shield Initiative, which reduced ransomware attacks by 40% in 2022 (DTO, 2024).

Climate Resilience: Partner on initiatives addressing climate-driven security risks, such as water scarcity and resource competition. As water scarcity becomes a growing security issue, Türkiye's experience in sustainable infrastructure development, such as dam construction and drought-resistant irrigation, could provide African nations with critical tools for climate resilience.

Space Technologies: Leverage Türkiye's advancements in satellite technologies for border surveillance and disaster management. Türkiye's satellite technologies, such as those developed by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBİTAK), could be leveraged to improve Africa's border surveillance and disaster management capabilities. Collaborative efforts in this field would enable real-time monitoring of environmental changes and security threats.

Türkiye's Role in Implementing Recommendations: Türkiye's existing initiatives align with these goals. For example, its cybersecurity partnerships with Niger (2023) and satellite technology transfers to Sudan exemplify opportunities for collaborative innovation.

Opportunities for Sustainable Safety and Security in Africa

Looking ahead, Türkiye and Africa can explore new opportunities for collaboration that build on existing achievements and address emerging challenges:

Cybersecurity and Digital Infrastructure: As cyber threats grow, Türkiye's expertise in cybersecurity can help African nations safeguard critical infrastructure and develop robust digital defenses.

Climate Security and Resilience: Climate change poses significant risks to Africa's stability. Joint initiatives to develop climate-resilient infrastructure and address resource-based conflicts could enhance regional security.

Space and Satellite Technologies: Türkiye's advancements in space technology can support African nations in areas such as border surveillance, disaster management, and communication networks.

Youth Engagement and Education: Expanding scholarship programs and vocational training initiatives will empower African youth to contribute to their nation's security and development.

Humanitarian and Peacekeeping Collaboration: Türkiye's experience in humanitarian operations and peacekeeping can complement African-led initiatives, fostering shared leadership in addressing regional crises.

Future Perspectives

In summary, Türkiye's engagement with Africa demonstrates a strategic blend of defense diplomacy, cultural exchange, and economic cooperation. By leveraging advanced military technologies such as UAVs and establishing long-term capacity-building initiatives, Türkiye has positioned itself as a unique partner, fostering defense autonomy for African states. These actions have bolstered regional stability while reshaping global power dynamics. In Libya, the ability to convert tactical military intervention into long-term diplomatic normalization—particularly by convincing former adversaries of shared economic gains—offers a preview of Türkiye's capacity for iterative diplomacy. However, such flexibility also demands careful management to avoid overreach or perceived opportunism. Looking ahead, Türkiye's African partnerships could extend into cybersecurity collaborations to address emerging threats, satellite technologies for disaster management, and climate resilience projects to tackle resource-based conflicts. By prioritizing these areas, Türkiye can strengthen its role as a model for sustainable and equitable partnerships on the continent.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they have no financial interest in this manuscript.

Notes on Contributors

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List of Figures

The Death of President Déby and the Resurgence of Another[1]

Ketil Fred Hansen[2]

Abstract:

This article explores the political transformation in Chad following the death of President Idriss Déby Itno (IDI) in April 2021 and the rise of his son, Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno (MIDI), culminating in his election as president in May 2024. Drawing on primary sources and recent scholarly work, the study documents the murky circumstances surrounding IDI's death, the swift establishment of a Transitional Military Council (TMC), and the constitutional coup that enabled MIDI to consolidate power. It examines the regime's tactics of repression, co-optation, and strategic pardons to neutralize opposition, including the controversial appointment of opposition leader Succès Masra as Prime Minister. The article also analyses the Doha peace agreement, the Inclusive and Sovereign National Dialogue, and the constitutional referendum that paved the way for MIDI's presidency. Despite formal democratic reforms, the transition was marked by authoritarian control, exclusion of dissenting voices, and allegations of electoral fraud. The study concludes that Chad's political landscape remains dominated by fear, elite manipulation, and limited prospects for genuine democratic change, perpetuating the Déby legacy under a new guise.

Introduction

On Tuesday April 20 at 11 PM, 2021, the death of Marchal President Idriss Déby Itno (IDI) was announced on the Chadian national television and radio.[3] Less than 24 hours earlier, on April 19, the National Independent Electoral Commission (Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI) had declared IDI the winner of the Presidential elections held the former Sunday, on April 11 (Dariustone, 2021, April 16). The CENI had thus, officially, managed to count some five million ballots arriving from more than 23.000 polling stations within the country in eight days. Before the elections CENI had announced they would need two weeks to count the ballots and had planned to pronounce the preliminary results on April 25. The CENI officially declared IDI the preliminary winner of the presidential elections with 79,3% of the votes, late at night on Monday April 19 (France 24, 2021, April 19).[4]

Having come to power in a coup d'etat in 1990 and won every presidential election since (1996, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016), the victory in the 2021 elections did not surprise people in Chad, nor international observers. Protests against IDI's candidature to stand for his sixth presidential election had been fierce. A massive civil rally held in N'Djamena on February 6 (2021), the day IDI announced his candidature, had been violently stopped by government forces (France 24, 2021, February 6; Human Rights Watch, 2021, April 8). Demonstrations intensified as some of the strongest opponent candidates, including IDIs own nephew Yialla Dillo, head of "Parti Socialiste sans Frontières", were not recognises by the CENI as valid candidates. Others were accepted but withdrew before the actual campaign started due to massive electoral fraud up front. This was the case with two of the elderly and most experience opposition leaders, Saleh Kebzabo from the "Union National pour le Développement et le Renouveau" (undr), and Ngarlejy Yorongar, leader of the "Fédération Action pour la République" (far). Succès Masra, leader of *Les Transformateurs* - the most prominent newcomer on the political opposition scene – called for boycotting the presidential elections because of fraud. Masra (age 37) was not accepted as presidential candidate as the 2018 constitution in vigour imposed a minimum age of 40.

IDI, however, had no intention of stepping down. Instead, his regime increased its severity against opponents and outlawed political rallies and arrested people who did not respect the (unconstitutional) banning of political gatherings. For example, on March 20, the regime arrested the two most prominent human rights leaders in Chad, Max Loalngar and Mahamat Nour Ibedou when they peacefully demonstrated against IDI's candidacy (Front Line Defenders, 2021, March 23). When released, the police continued to survey them and their organisations closely until the elections day.

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[3] This article is a considerably updated and revised version of a keynote speech delivered in French at the conference *l'État: entre universalisme et variabilité des pratiques* (Université Assane Seck, Ziguichor, Senegal) on 8 December, 2023.
[4] The first announcement's of IDI's victory I have managed to find was published around 22 h on April 19 (2021).

Not only the regime used violence to try to suppress rival voices or increase their power. The *Front pour l'Alternance et la Concorde au Tchad* (FACT), a main group among the insurgent "politico-militaires" in Chad, crossed the borders from southern Libya with some 1500 men in arms on the election day, aiming at a coup d'etat. FACT managed with relatively ease to advance many hundred kilometres across northern Chad.

This article seeks to document and discuss political developments in Chad from the death of President Idriss Déby Itno in April 2021 to the election of his son Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno as president in May 2024. This contemporary history of Chad has naturally enough given its recentness, received little scholarly attention. McDonald (2024) has focused on the omnibalancing of Déby's reign rather than the state itself and offers valuable theoretical insights. Vircoulon (2024) tells a detailed story of how President Mahamat Déby manages the transition from an interim military president to an elected civil president.[5] Thus, this article is mostly based on primary sources from various news sites, policy papers and public statements. Emphasis is made on contested, significant events and happenings in high politics in Chad from 2021 to 2024. What happened when President Idriss Déby died in the battlefield? How killed him and why? How did the appointed Military Transitional Council mange to gain security and control in Chad? Which institutions were dissolved, and which were (re)created? How did the new regime deal with the military opposition groups? How did the regime react to protests and dissidents? And finally, how did Mahamat Déby manage to move aside his two strongest opponents and gain the presidential elections?

When the facts are established and all these questions answered, it will be possible for future researchers to write a more theoretical article about the same period in Chad's contemporary history.

The first serious encounter with the Chadian army took place six days after crossing the frontier. On Saturday April 17 (2021) the *Direction Générale de Service et Sécurité des Institutions de l'Etat* (DGSSIE) killed close to a hundred rebels, took 200 prisoners and destroyed some 50 of FACT's vehicles, according to Mahamat Déby, who at the time headed the DGSSIE (Gwatiwa, 2024, p.2). Still according to Mahamat Déby, only one of his men were killed that day and a few injured (Déby Itno, 2024, pp. 99–101). The official military spokesperson for the Chadian Army, General Agouna, however, told international news agencies that five government soldiers were killed and 36 were injured, but that the army had killed some 300 rebels that weekend (Al Jazeera, 2021, April 20). FACT never confirmed, nor denied, any of these estimations.

Nonetheless, whatever chiffers were correct, another army column, headed by Mahamat Déby's father, Marchal President Idriss Déby Itno (IDI), left N'Djamena in the evening of April 17 (2021) with the aim of fighting the FACT rebels. On Sunday April 18 around 15h, this column entered in combat zone near Noukou, some 300 km north of N'Djamena (Déby Itno, 2024, pp. 99–101). President IDI was seriously injured. One

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[5] I only discovered Vircoulon's article few days before the revised version of this article was due, and has made less use of it than it deserves.

may speculate that he was killed on the spot since areas around the presidential palace in N'Djamena, saw a large deployment of thanks and armoured vehicles around midnight. The French newsmagazine *Jeune Afrique* stated that IDI had died from the serious wounds already on Sunday 18 April (Olivier & Duhem, 2021, April 20). IDI did not make any public appearances, nor verbally nor visually, after his electoral victory was officially announced (Vogel, 2024, p. 201). Mahamat Déby writes in his autobiography that, around 11h on Monday April 19, "la victoire est totale" (p.101). At that time, he also learned that his father IDI had been evacuated to N'Djamena. When he himself arrived in Ndjamena with a helicopter on April 19, his father was already dead (Déby Itno, 2024, pp. 101-103).

So, the official story announced on the national radio on 20th of April (2021), and repeated in the official booklet describing how interim president Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno (MIDI)[6] managed the transition (Présidence de la République du Tchad, 2024, January), stated that IDI died in the middle of the night on April 20 (Le Monde, 2021, April 20); International Crisis Group, 2021, April 22). This does not correspond with the story told by the current president of Chad in his autobiography. Given that MIDI also was the head of the presidential guard (the DGSSIE) and present on the battlefield when his father died, MIDI's own story about his father's death may perhaps be the most correct version? If this is the case, IDI was already dead when he was declared winner of the presidential elections late on Monday April 20, 2021.

For sure, as most news agencies reported, the circumstances around IDI's death were unclear and murky (See e.g Associated Press, 2021, April 20; Al Jazeera, 2021, April 20). How Déby was killed and who killed him are still not revealed, many years after his death. In fact, the homicide has never been officially investigated, despite international pressure to do so (see e.g. African Union. (2021, April 20). In his inaugural speech on May 24 (2024), MIDI asked for the first time, for an "independent and impartial investigation" on the circumstances of the death of his father (M. I. Déby, 2024, May 23

To keep the official story that IDI was killed by enemies of Chad at the battlefield was important. This made his legacy; IDI had been brave and courageous, a martyr offering his life for his country. Mahamat Déby – who added both "Idriss" and "Itno" to his name to honour his father's death after taking over presidency – contributed to make IDI a national hero by making and keeping the official the story about his death as the one and only recognised truth.

In fact, the new regime was so eager to keep one and only official story about IDI's death that even discussing how IDI was killed was not and is still not after MIDIs inaugural speech in May 2024, tolerated. This has led to many half-hidden speculations and conspiracy theories that were never confirmed, but neither proved to be incorrect. Here I will briefly refer to two of the most infamous ones.

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[6] Mahamat Déby, added «Idriss» and «Itno» to his name when he was nominated transitional president, and is often just called MIDI in unofficial conversations in Chad.

Some assume that this "honourable sortie" had been planned by IDI and his closest entourage up front. Could there be, in fact, a better death of an old - 68 years, 30 of them as president, in a country where life expectancy at birth is 53 years - and sick - rumours said IDI suffered from untreatable cancer- (Amnesty International USA, 2021, April 7), Marchal than being killed in the battlefield while defending his country? (Franceinfo, 2021, April 20). Years ahead of his death, IDI stated in an interview with *Le Monde* that: What remains for me to do […] is to prepare Chad for a change of power (Le Monde, 2001, June 5). This hypothesis is not supported by the French anthropologist Jeremy Tubiana who claims that IDI systematically prevented any discussions, also within his extended family, about who should succeed him (Tubiana, 2021 p. 134). While most politico-military opponents of IDI agreed that the only way to remove him was to use armed force (Harchaoui & Carayol, 2021, June 30), the political-military establishment in N'Djamena apparently found General Mahamat Déby to be the best heir to the throne, when a transfer of power suddenly appeared necessary.

Other rumours insisted that IDI had been killed by one of his own, a close relative or a trusted guard, on Sunday April 18 (2021) (see e.g. Rewmi, 2021, April 21). Some speculated that the killing of IDI was a blood revenge orchestrated by Yalla Dillo, a former presidential councillor turned political opposition. Yalla Dillo had criticised IDIs wife, Hinda Déby, and her NGO "Fondation Grand Coeur" for interfering (too much) in politics. Hinda Déby sued Dillo for defamation and orchestrated, in February 2021, an arrest warrant on him. In the chaotic operation early morning on February 28, 2021, when security forces arrived at Dillo's house to arrest him, Dillo's old mother and one of his sons were killed (DW, 2021, March 1; Dia, 2021, March 9). Dillo himself managed to escape and hide. Three years later, these rumours about a blood revenge in April 2021 intensified when Yalla Dillo was accused of being behind the attempted murder of the president of the supreme court in Chad.[7] On February 28 (2024), Yalla Dillo was killed by MIDI's security forces at the premises of the headquarter of the *Partie Socialiste sans Frontier* in N'djamena (See e.g. BBC News, 2024, February 28).

The speculations that IDI was killed by one of his own, were supported by unofficial photos showing IDI killed by a bullet shot from a very short distance, most probably by a French-produced FAMAS automatic rifle. The FAMAS had been used by the presidential guard since around 2010 (B-AREV, 2024, September 9). However, as these rumours were never confirmed nor investigated, they ebbed out as "fake news" or "conspiracies".

Even if French official sources never confirmed it, most probably IDI was together with a French military intelligence officer when he was seriously wounded or killed on April 18 (2021) (See e.g. 237online, 2021, April 28). French intelligence thus, indeed knew who killed IDI. France has never revealed who was behind the murder, nor has France insisted that the killing of a close ally and friend should be investigated. Most

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[7] Le président de la Cour suprême, Samir Adam Annour, did not recognise Yalla Dillo s candidature for the upcoming presidential elections, suddenly decided to take place on May 6, 3-4 months earlier than originally planned.

probably, thus, France believes that revealing who killed IDI would create immense insecurity and probably increase conflicts in Chad. Maybe this was why France was the first Western state to officially support Mahamat Déby as Chad's interim president? And French President Macron the only European head of state to participate in the funeral?

Techniques and tactics to transform a coup d'etat to a legitimate presidency

At 11 AM on April 20 (2021), when the death of President IDI was publicly announced, it was also proclaimed that his 37 years old son, General Mahamat Déby, was to lead the country through an 18 month long transitional period. The transitional period should lead to new, free and fear presidential elections (Tahingam, 2021, April 20). In his first presidential decree, dated April 20, Transitional President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno nominated the other 14 generals to form the Transitional Military Council (TMC). In addition to himself, seven of the other generals were ethnic Zaghawas, three were Goranes/Toubous, one was Tama, one was an Arab, and two were Saras (Vogel, 2024 p. 201). Thus, 13 out of 15 of the generals in the TMC were Muslims from the northern parts of Chad. Officially, the TMC was set up "to ensure the country's defence against terrorism" and replaced the civil government (Présidence de la République du Tchad, 2021, April 21). State of emergency was declared, general curfew from 6 PM to 5 AM was imposed and a new 104 paragraphs long *Transitional Charter,* published on April 20, replaced the constitution from 2018. In the 2018-constitution a president in Chad had to be minimum 40 years of age; Mahamat Déby was 37 years old. But the new regime had managed to write the 104 paragraphs long *Transitional Charter* within a very few hours. Or more probably, they started drafting the Charter when IDI died, on Sunday April 18 (2021), or even before...[8]

In the chaotic and unsecure situation on April 20, it seems as if nobody noticed paragraph 97 in the *Transitional Charter* stating that the traditional period could be prolonged once at the will of the majority of the TMC (Présidence de la République du Tchad, 2021, April). Nor that nothing in the Charter denied members of the TMC, including Transitional President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, to run in future presidential elections.

Article 81 in the Chadian constitution from 2018, in vigour until April 20, 2021, reads:

In case of vacancy of the Presidency of the Republic for any cause, or of definite incapacity as declared by the Supreme Court, referred to by the Government, and deciding with the absolute majority of its members, the duties of the President of the Republic, with the exception of the powers specified in Articles 85, 88, 95 and 96, are provisionally exercised by the President of the National Assembly and, in case of incapacity of the latter, by the First Vice President.

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[8] I received a WhatsApp call from a very close friend of (parts of) the Déby family late at night on Sunday April 18, announcing the death of IDI. I did not believe him as I could not any rumours about it on any weblog.

In every case, it proceeds to new presidential elections at least forty-five (45) days and ninety (90) days at most after the vacancy is opened (République du Tchad, 2018, May 4).

However, the actual president of the National Assembly, Haroun Kabadi, declared himself unable, due to personal health issues and the security situation in Chad, to fulfil his constitutional duties to organise new presidential elections within three months and act as interim president until then (Aminata.com, 2021, April 23; Tchadinfos.com, 2023, May 5). According to the April 21 communiqué from the office of the National Assembly, Haroun Kabadi noted ("prend act") that the national assembly had been dissolved and that Mahamat Déby is the head of the army and the president of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) Thus, accordingly "[i]n view of this military, security and political context in the country and the sub-region, the President of the National Assembly has, in all lucidity, given his agreement for the establishment of a Transitional Military Council" (Présidence de la République du Tchad, 2021, April 20).

With both the government and the national assembly dissolved, and the constitution suspended, the appointed 15 generals in the TMC held suddenly all formal powers in Chad. Or, in fact, according to paragraph 47 of the Transitional Charter, the president of TMC held all powers himself as he could nominate and revoke members of the TMC, nominate and revoke the prime minister, nominate and revoke members of the high institutions in the country, dissolute the National Transitional Council (CNT), rule by decree and declare emergency. Thus, MIDI had fulfilled a constitutional coup and made his formal powerbase even broader than his father's had been.

International reactions to the military takeover

As the only European state, France accepted the military take-over by MIDI and his CMT as highest legal body in Chad on April 20, the same day as Déby's death was announced (Présidence de la République française, 2021, April 20). The official statement from the French presidency stated that "France loses a courageous friend" and that Chad's stability and territorial integrity was primordial for France (ibid.). French President Emanuel Macron was also the only European head of state to attend his funeral on 23 April. At the funeral President Macron repeated that France will never let Chad down (Le Point Afrique, 2021, April 23).

The European Parliament waited a month, until May 20, to condemn the take-over as "an unconstitutional military coup", while also criticising the suspension of the constitution, and the dissolution of the National Assembly (European Parliament, 2021, May 20). The US did not officially comment the military takeover the first month and then, on May 21, while not condemning the coup, called for a "peaceful, timely, and civilian-led transition of power to democratically elected government before October 2022" (U.S. Department of State, 2021, May). The Peace and Security Council of the African Union condemned it as an unconstitutional transfer of power, and categorically asserted that "no form of extension of the transition period prolonging the restoration of constitutional order, would be acceptable to the AU" and called upon the chairman

of the TMC and all its members "not to contest or take part in the upcoming national elections towards democratic rule" (African Union Peace and Security Council, 2021, May 14). For sure, Mahamat Déby used much creativity, energy and money to legitimate why he would not follow the recommendations of the AU, EU and the US.

Repressing opponents or paying them off?

State of emergency was declared, and curfew imposed.[9] The military transitional regime prohibited all political rallies for some weeks. Those who did not respect that decision was heavily sanctioned. Amnesty International reported at least 16 people were deadly wounded or shot dead by the police when they demonstrated against the constitutional coup in the streets of N'Djamena and Moundou during the first four weeks after the TMC took power (Amnesty International, 2021, June 1). The Office of the United Nations High Commissionaire for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported more than 700 arrests among those protesting the military take-over (OHCHR, 2021, April 30). Not infamous for following the rule of law before the constitutional coup, Chad entered a period where even more people feared for their rights and lives. Numerous people were detained, and an unknown number disappeared in the aftermath of the constitutional coup. Protesting the constitutional coup your life was at risk.

Leader of the main opposition party, *Les Transformateurs,* Succès Masra planned a political rally on July 14 (2021) – emblematically chosen as this is the French National Day – together with Wakit Tama, a coalition of opposition parties and civil society organizations in the country. The rally was not permitted by the transitional military regime. However, the regime accepted the rally to take place two weeks later, on July 29. Some 500 people shouted slogans against France's support for the TMC and the constitutional coup, without interference from the regime's security apparatus. Could this be taken as a sign for some respect for human rights in Chad?

At least, after the constitutional coup, Mahamat Déby and his Transitional Military Counsel rapidly undertook actions to appear more like a civic and civil government. Only six days after the coup, on 26 April, Albert Pahimi Padacké was appointed as prime minister. Padacké, an old political enemy – at least of the surface - of deceased president Idriss Déby, had been third runner up in the presidential elections on April 11, receiving some 10% of the ballots. A week later, on May 2, MIDI assigned the transitional government consisting of 40 ministers, deputy ministers and state secretaries. An all-time high nine of them were women and several of the ministers were apparently political adversaries of MIDI. By this MIDI gained some international legitimacy as a civilized military president.

On May 5, the TMC announced that the FACT rebels were defeated. However, the new Chadian regime was astonished to discover the amount of Russian produced military equipment possessed by FACT soldiers. FACT's spokesperson strongly rejected

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[9] Parts of the following paragraphs are based on the author's chapters on Chad in the *African Yearbook* (Leiden: Brill).

that they had received any help from Russia or – at the time – the private, military company Wagner associated with the Russian regime.

On June 12 it was payback time for former President of the National Assembly, Haroun Kabadi. He was nominated secretary-general of *Mouvement Patriotique du Salut* (mps), the political party created by IDI and endorsed by MIDI.

Finally, increasing domestic alliances (Henningsen, T.B. & L. E. Gissel, 2022) by nominating, by presidential decree on September 24, 93 members of the new National Transitional Council (CNT) (Jeune Afrique, 2021, September 25). The CNT should function as an interim national assembly -the elected one had been dissolved on April 20 – for as long as it took to organize new parliamentary elections. Based on experience this could take a while; elections for the newly repealed national assembly had been postponed numerous times and elections of new representatives were overdue for five years.[10] Nominating members of the CNT, MIDI selected both young and old, men and women, experienced politicians and oppositional civil society leaders. They were granted a decent salary supported by substantial - work-related - fringe benefits. The strongest opposition part, *Les Transformateurs*, and the strongest civil society organisation, *Wakit Tama,* were not represented in the National Transitional Council (CNT).

Seventy-three-year-old Haroun Kabadi, former head of the national assembly and newly appointed leader of the political party in power (MPS), was elected as its president by acclamation. An anonymous member of the newly appointed TNC told Radio France International's (RFI) reporter that «this could not have been otherwise since he [Kabadi] refused to act as interim president to let Déby's son take over the presidency illegally. We continue to live in the Déby-system without Idriss» (RFI, 2021, October 5).[11]

Rumours said that Kabadi, when president of the National Assembly, had access to a close to unlimited amount of cash to arrange pressing political, and personal, issues. His price for accepting the constitutional coup on April 20 had now been paid back; first by being nominated to the very powerful position as Secretary General of the ruling MPS and then, while still serving as Secretary General, appointed as president of the TNC as well. Both positions included access to huge amounts of cash that could be used without vouchers and material benefits like cars, drivers, guards and servants, in addition to free diesel, telecom and electricity.

In short, the first year of TMC and MIDI's rule was characterized by a calculated mix of buying off allies and (former) adversaries and repressing those who did not accept to collaborate. This way of governing created unpredictability and fear, two factors reigning political life in Chad after MIDI's constitutional coup.

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[10] The parliamentary elections in Chad took place on December 29, 2024 and were the first once since 2011.

[11] «*cela ne pourra se passer autrement vu qu'il a refusé d'assurer l'intérim pour laisser le fils Déby prendre la présidence en toute illégalité. Nous sommes dans la continuité du système Déby sans Idriss*»

Trying to appease the military opposition - the pre-dialogue

Another example of buying off adversaries included MIDI's pre-dialogue with leaders of politico-military movements. A presidential decree dated August 17 (2021), created two bodies to organise preparatory talks with various opposition groups. The 70-member strong committee appointed to negotiate with the civil opposition was headed by two well-known figures in political life in Chad. Acheikh Ibn Oumar had been Minister of Foreign Affaire under President Habré and served as Chad's ambassador in Washington under IDI, before becoming a fierce opponent of his regime. After some 24 years in exile in France, IDI graced him in 2018. In 2021 he was offered the position as Minister of Reconciliation by MIDI.

The second 'special technical committee' was 29 members strong and consisted mostly of military personnel known for their former loyalties towards President Marshal Déby. The committee was headed by the aging Goukouni Oueddei (born 1944). He was a former head of state (1979-82), and, prior to that, a legendary rebel leader in FROLINAT- and therefor a hero for many of the politico-military movements operating in Chad.

Numerous pre-liminary meetings before the pre-dialogue should start were organised in various locations (Cairo, Paris, Khartoum, Doha...) with the most powerful politico-military opposition groups. E.g Goukouni Oueddei met with the leader of the *Union of Resistance Forces (UFR)* Timan Erdimi in Doha in October (2021) to negotiate terms for participating in the upcoming pre-dialogue. Erdimi wanted amnesty for himself and all his men in the UFR, release imprisoned soldiers and sympathizers, return of property confiscated by the regime and unbanning of political rallies. Within three months more than 500 prisoners were amnestied and Erdimi's death sentence - convicted in absentia for attempted coup in 2008 (Hansen, 2013) -was waived.

Right before the pre-dialogues were to start in Doha (Qatar)- in mid-Mars 2022, Goukouni Oueddei was replaced by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs in Chad, Chérif Mahamat Zene, (see e.g. DW, 2022, March 10). Complicated and slow, and very costly – the total cost was estimated to 1,3 billion US$ and was mainly paid by the state of Qatar (Hansen, 2023)- the pre-dialogue lasted for close to five months. When they finally ended on August 8 (2022), between 30 and 40 leaders of politico-military rebel movements signed the 14 pages long and detailed peace agreement, also including an important disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) component (Peace Agreements Database, 2022).

In the Doha Peace Agreement's preamble, we read that:

"Taking into consideration the process initiated by the Transition Political Authorities in Chad to set the country on the pathway of peace, democracy and development, becoming a state with a stable rule of law which ensures a territorial integrity, national unity and social justice" […]Taking into consideration that protection and promotion of human rights, democratic principles, rule of law and justice, as well as cessation of personal impunity, implementation of good

governance practices and transparency in public administration are necessary conditions for the stability, development and prosperity of the whole society." (ibid.).

As will be evident less than three months later, on "black Thursday" October 20, most of these words proved to be of no worth. But first an inclusive national dialogue was organised.

The Inclusive and Sovereign National Dialogue (DNIS)

The Inclusive and Sovereign National Dialogue (DNIS) in Chad commenced on August 20, 2022, and concluded on October 8, 2022. Staring off as a forum with some 1400 delegates representing both civil and military opposition, religious- and traditional leaders, women- and youth organizations together with people loyal to MIDI and the TMC, the dialogues soon encountered serious problems. First, important politicians and military leaders refused to take part in the dialogue due to its organisation and likely outcome. Neither Succès Masra, nor anyone from the civil society organisation *Wakit Tama* participated. Nor did the leadership within the FACT political-military movement (USIP, 2022, October 4). Second, many of the participants did not get space to raise issues they felt were primordial, or their opinions were neglected, and thus many participants formally abandoned the dialogue after a short time. This was the case with both representatives for the Protestants and the Catholics in Chad. Others did not formally withdraw but only stopped showing up in the five organised thematic committees and their many working groups. This was the case with many of civil society representatives, but also political opposition delegates.

While the DNIS profoundly restructured Chad's political space, the dialogues were criticised for not being inclusive, nor national, nor sovereign. Indeed, many argued the outcome was decided ahead by MIDI and his cercle of military friends. Even if interim president MIDI had made the DNIS look inclusive by appointing Gali Gatta Ngothé, a formally oppositional intellectual, as chair, and used Saleh Kebzabo, another well-known oppositional politician, as facilitator, few believed DNIS would end with any substantial changes or restrictions on MIDI's powerbase.

Four-star army general, with the overall responsibility of some 35,000 troops, MIDI declared himself a five-star general on December 2 (2021) (Kodmadjingar,2021, December 5). Due to increased internal and external threats following the constitutional coup, MIDI's goal was to increase the number of troops to 60,000 by the end of 2022. Parts of the increase resulted from the DDR process agreed upon in the Doha Peace Accord in August (2022). However, the DDR process encountered many problems, including funding.

Among the 245 recommendations made by DNIS (Vircoulon, 2024, p. 21) was to write a new constitution and vote over it by referendum, to increase the number of delegate in the Transitional National Council, (CNT) from 93 to 197, (Alwihda Info, 2022, November 7) to prolong the transitional military rule by up to two years and to

allow all members of the TMC, including interim president Mahamat Déby, to run for president in the first upcoming elections. Specially the two latter decisions were very controversial. In fact, they were the main reason for the civil demonstration throughout major cities in Chad on October 20 (2022).[12]

The" Black Thursday" -the October 20 rally

By far the largest demonstration against MIDI and his regime took place on 20 October (2022). On this day exactly 18 months had passed since MIDI took power in the constitutional coup. Many citizens believed that MIDI had promised to arrange free and fair elections within these 18 months and step down, as the African Union, the EU and the US had insisted on. However, nor MIDI himself, nor the TMC had ever made such a promise. They always stressed that this period of 18 months was, if deemed necessary, renewable once. This had been stated in the *Transitional Charter*. And, to massive disagreement, this was also a stated outcome of the DNIS. The outcome of the DNIS was even to allow for another two years to prepare for presidential elections, thus increasing the *Transitional Charter's* deadline with another six months, until October 2024. Still, thousands of ordinary citizens took to the streets in all major cities to reclaim MIDI to step down as interim president and not present himself in the upcoming presidential elections.

The security forces of the regime reacted immediately using harsh violence. By noon Prime Minister Saleh Kebzabo admitted that some fifty citizens were killed (France 24, 2022, October 20). Rapidly nicknamed "*Black Thursday*", the regime updated the death toll of the October 20 demonstrations to 73. Human rights organisations, however, could later prove that at least 128 were killed, 518 injured and 943 arrested (Amnesty International, 2023, October 20). Many of those arrested were transported 600 km to the infamous Koro Toro prison in the midst of the desert where they were sentenced to spend years in jail in a trial called "a parody of justice" by the Chadian Bar Association (CIVICUS Monitor, 2023, January 20.) However, as part of MIDI's tactique to gain sympathy from adversaries, many of the sentenced prisoners received a presidential pardon after a few months (RFI, 2023, February 23).

Insisting that the demonstration was an insurrection supported by [unspecified] foreigners, the regime answered by banning the activities of the *Transformateurs¸ Parti Socialiste sans Frontières* (PSF), and *les Patriotes*, together with four less important opposition parties, for three months. They also prohibited the civil society coalition Wakit Tama from all activities and imposed nightly curfew (from 6 PM to 6 AM) in all major cities.[13] As police continued to search for what they named "potential coup makers" among the demonstrators, head of *Les Transformateurs¸* Succès Marsa fled to Cameroon on 1 November, and later to the US.

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[12] Right after the end of the DNIS on October 8 (2022), MIDI dissolved the government and appointed a new one, making Saleh Kebzabou his Prime Minister.
[13] The curfew was only lifted on 5 December (2022).

Presidential pardons and Succès Masra as Prime Minister

Among the most remarkable presidential pardons was the 380 FACT fighters pardoned on April 5 (2023), less than three weeks after they were sentenced, many of them to lifetime imprisonment, for having taken part in the attempted coup in April (2021). Another noteworthy presidential pardon was the one given to Succès Masra on 31 October (2023), after negotiations facilitated by DRC president Felix Tshisékédi. In November (2022), Masra's US lawyers demanded the International Criminal Court in The Hague to investigate MIDI for crime against humanity. As an answer to that, the Chadian Court of Appeal issued an international warrant for Masra, on June 8 (2023), accusing him of "attempted attack on constitutional order, incitement to hatred and an insurrectional uprising." (RFI, 2023, October 5). Thus, the presidential pardon and amnesty for both perpetrators and victims, civilians and militaries, in the October 20 (2022) demonstration shocked most supports of *Les Transformateurs* and many others within the political and civil opposition. For MIDI, on the other hand, this pardon fitted perfectly well with his tactics of using sticks and carrots, buying former adversaries or threatening them if they became too difficult or powerful.

Succès Masra arrived in N'Djamena on November 3 (2023) after more than a year in exile, mainly spent in US and France. The political establishment in the country whispered soon that Masra had already made a deal with MIDI to become Chad's new Prime Minister after the referendum on the new constitution. The referendum had been planned since the beginning of the year but was finally decided to take place on December 17 (2023). Drafting the constitution took months even though everyone in the drafting committee was appointed by MIDI. On June 27 (2023) the new draft was voted by the CNT. 174 out of 197 voted in favour, though the official version of the new constitution was not complete. Only 232 of the 290 paragraphs officialised as Chad's 2023 constitution were available to the CNT at the time of voting. The same was the case as citizens voted on December 17 (2023).

Thus, what people casted their ballot for in the referendum, was not determined. Officially, the Chadian constitution as published on the website of the presidency stated that the constitution was "approved by referendum on December 17, 2023" (Présidence de la République du Tchad, 2024, June). However, what the Chadian citizens over 18 was asked to vote was the following question: "Do you approve the draft new Constitution of the Republic of Chad?"[14]

During the campaign leading up to the referendum the only question discussed was whether Chad should continue as a unitary state or should become a federal state. Many thousand members of the ruling MPS were engaged to campaign for "yes", and received smaller material benefits for that, while members of the organising committee received high salaries and per diems. Huge sums of money and material benefits were also handed out to potential "yes" voters all over the country during the campaign.

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[14] "Approuvez-vous le projet de nouvelle Constitution de la République du Tchad ?"

Not a single powerful politician argued for creation of a federal state, the "no" alternative. The few desiring a more decentralised political system in Chad, among them were the first PM under MIDI's transitional government, Albert Pahimi Padacké and the rejected presidential candidate Yalla Dillo, argued for boycotting the referendum instead of voting "no". Succès Masra argued that people should vote what they thought were the best for Chad without revealing his own position until some days ahead of the referendum (WeAfrica, 2023, December 13.) Then he stared convincing his supporters (and others) to vote "yes". He then most probably already knew that he would be nominated prime minister after the referendum.

In fact, also among the elites the referendum was about preserving a unitary state (yes) or not (no). Explaining the content of the 232-paragraphs long constitution – turning out as 290 paragraphs when the constitution was official – had been impossible in a country where at least half of the population was illiterate. More than four million voted "yes" while less than 700.000 voted "no" on December 17 (2023). The new constitution then replaced the constitution from 2018 (and the *Transitional Charter* in vigour since April 20, 2021).

Some important changes included the re-establishment of a prime minister as the head of government, the high court of justice, the supreme court, and the senate. The age of eligibility for a president was lowered from 40 to 35 and the term of office of a president was reduced from seven to five years. Still, a two-terms presidential limit was conserved in the new constitution (Présidence de la République du Tchad, 2024, June). For sure, the first three years as interim president did not count as a term and MIDI can, if re-elected in 2029, be Chad's president until 2034. Although the president in Chad still retained control over the most important nominations and decisions, Chad's fifth constitution is probably the most democratic ever, at least in theory.

The election of MIDI and the resignation of Succès Masra

On January 1 (2024) MIDI appointed Succès Masra as Prime Minister. By accepting this position most people ceased thinking of Masra as a trustworthy political opposition candidate, representing a real alternative to authoritarian military rule in Chad. MIDI had first threatened him seriously and then bought his loyalty. First president MIDI had accused Masra of attacking the constitutional order and being behind an insurrectional uprising in June. Then, half a year later, he appointed Masra as Chad's new Prime Minister (Reuters, 2024, January 1). According to the new constitution (art. 100), the Prime Minister propose to the president the other members of the government, but the president appoints them.[15] Masra managed to have two of his fellows within *Les Transformateurs* as ministers. However, MIDI was in total control of the government, and he could personally dismiss any minister for whatever reason.

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[15] Article 100 : le Premier ministre est le chef du Gouvernement. Il est nommé par décret du Président de la République. Les autres membres du Gouvernement sont nommés par le Président de la République sur proposition du Premier ministre.

Politically, Chad seems to live a stale-mate situation under its first government under the fifth republic. Masra had no credibility, nor as an opposition, nor as a PM within the regime. Trying to gain some legitimacy by offering his entire salary as scholarships to brilliant students (North Africa Post, 2024, January 8) did only increase rumours about too heavy corruption and fringe benefits for high level politicians.

Everyone outside the presidential power circles, also Masra, was surprised when the newly established election agency in Chad, with the happy acronym ANGE [16] that had replaced the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) in January (2024), announced that the presidential elections would be held on May 6 (VOA, 2024, February 28). It was common knowledge that the elections would take place in October (2024). In February candidates were invited to present their candidature for the elections. More than 200 leaders of various smaller political parties soon regrouped to confirm their support for MIDI (VOA 2024, February 28 ; Le Monde, 2024, May 6). Head of the *Parti Socialiste sans Frontières* and a possible runner up for the presidential election, Yalla Dillo, was killed inside the party's premises on February 28 (2024), accused of trying to liberate a party member who had been jailed by the notorious National State Security Agency (ANSE). This incident intensified the sense of insecure climate both among regular citizens and among the elites prior to the presidential elections.

Finally, ten candidates were accepted to participate in the presidential elections. Seven of them were unknown to most Chadians and received from 0,4% to 1,5% of the ballots on May 6. Interim president Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno gained the elections in the first round with 61% of the vote, while Masra received 18,5 % and the infatigable Albert Pahimi Padacké received close to 17% (Journal du Tchad, 2024, May 17).

Masra had asked his supporters to take photos when the results were proclaimed and published in all the 23,000 polling stations and WhatsApp the local results to a secure call-centre controlled by *Les Transformateurs*. His party would calculate the results to minimise changes for fraud. MIDI did not like this idea as Masra resembled huge crowds when campaigning for the elections. Right before the election day, thus, MIDI ordered that no photos should be allowed near the polling stations. Those who did not respect this decree were heavily punished. Masra was, hence, unable to prove anything and his appeal to the court for electoral fraud, filed on May 12, (France 24, 2024, May 13) was rejected. Masra resigned as Prime Minister on May 22, and a new government was formed on May 27 (2024). Since then, Masra has close to disappeared from political life in Chad, until he was imprisoned on May 16 (2025) accused of spreading hateful messages on social media (BBC, 2025, July 13).

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[16] The French word ANGE means angel in English.

Conclusion

The death of Idriss Déby Itno (IDI) and the subsequent rise of his son Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno (MIDI) mark a significant turning point in Chad's political trajectory, characterized by contested legitimacy, repression, and strategic manipulation of power. Although initially promising a brief transition, MIDI's rule extended beyond expectations, underpinned by repression of dissent, strategic pardons, and co-optation of opposition figures like Succès Masra, who ultimately lost credibility.

Efforts to present a facade of democratic reform, including a constitutional referendum and peace dialogues, were marred by exclusion, lack of transparency, and continued authoritarian control. Despite promises of elections and reforms, MIDI maintained dominance, using a mix of rewards and crackdowns to suppress opposition and consolidate his regime.

The 2024 presidential election reaffirmed MIDI's hold on power amidst allegations of fraud, sidelining of opposition, and public disenchantment. Chad's political landscape remains shaped by fear, co-optation, and repression, with little evidence of genuine democratic transition under MIDI's leadership. This perpetuates a legacy of authoritarian rule, leaving the country in a state of uncertainty and limited prospects for meaningful change. However, one important change since his father's presidential periods now comes into play.

For sure, the strategies and techniques for gaining and keeping political power in Chad has been very costly for MIDI and his regime. Huge financial resources have been spent on various reconciliation processes, presidential pardons, creation of new positions both within the bureaucracy and the political apparatus. To align with the elite political power circles have been increasingly primordial for living a lucrative and good life, while most inhabitants continue to suffer in poverty.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they have no financial interest in this manuscript.

Notes on Contributors

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Nation Building and Intelligence Reforms Debacle in Transitional Democracies: A Review of Post-Colonial Hangovers in Nigeria[1]

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Abstract:

This work is an explorative review of the intricate nation building trajectories as it relates to intelligence reforms in multicultural and transitional democracies as exemplified in the Nigerian situation, More so, the work provides an epiphany of the postcolonial vestiges that have been pulling the country into disparate directions and massively hindering the emergence of a sustainable and robust intelligence architecture, culture and management. Post-colonialism has exacerbated ethnic, religious and political tensions in the country in ways that all genuine intelligence reforms have been stifled. The consequence is accentuated insecurity and convoluted democracy in a country where genuine nationhood is a mirage. The paper adopted a historicist content analysis of nation building; intelligence reform efforts and the overall challenges rooted in the dark colonial hangovers. Useful policy recommendations were offered to reposition the country on the part sustainable nation building, intelligence reforms and democratic consolidation in tandem with best global practices.

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Introduction

The challenge of nation building in transitional democracies is a multifaceted issue, deeply rooted in historical legacies and contemporary realities. In Nigeria, this challenge is exacerbated by the lingering effects of colonialism, which continue to shape the country's political and institutional landscape (Obi, 2021). The post-colonial hangover, characterized by institutional inefficiencies and governance deficits, has had a profound impact on Nigeria's ability to develop a robust intelligence architecture. This paper seeks to explore the intersection of nation building and intelligence reforms in Nigeria, arguing that the remnants of colonial rule have significantly hindered the country's efforts to establish an effective intelligence system.

The Nigerian state, established in 1960 following independence from British colonial rule, inherited a range of institutional and structural challenges that have persisted over decades (Akinola, 2020). The colonial legacy left behind an intelligence apparatus that was primarily geared towards maintaining colonial control rather than addressing the needs of a sovereign nation. As a result, Nigeria's post-independence governments have grappled with the task of reforming this inherited intelligence structure to serve the purposes of national security and democratic governance (Ezeani, 2019).

Historical analysis reveals that the Nigerian intelligence sector was initially modelled on the British intelligence system, reflecting the colonial power's priorities and methods (Nwankwo, 2018). This legacy has manifested in several ways, including the centralization of intelligence functions, lack of accountability, and the use of intelligence agencies for political repression rather than for national security (Ojo, 2022). These issues are compounded by the political instability and corruption that have plagued Nigeria since its independence, further undermining the effectiveness of intelligence reforms (Abubakar, 2021).

Reforming the intelligence sector in Nigeria has proven to be a complex and contentious process. Various reform initiatives have been undertaken over the years, but their success has been limited by institutional resistance, political interference, and inadequate implementation strategies (Kalu, 2020). The lack of a coherent and comprehensive strategy for intelligence reform reflects the broader difficulties faced by Nigeria in its nation-building efforts. The intelligence sector's shortcomings have had significant implications for national security, democratic consolidation, and public trust in government institutions (Ibrahim, 2021).

Comparative analyses of other transitional democracies provide valuable insights into the challenges and strategies associated with intelligence reforms. In countries such as South Africa and Indonesia, efforts to overhaul intelligence institutions have involved both structural changes and cultural shifts towards greater transparency and accountability (Ngoma, 2019; Haris, 2022). These experiences highlight the importance of aligning intelligence reforms with democratic values and the rule of law, a principle that has often been neglected in Nigeria's reform efforts (Junaid, 2023).

The implications of ineffective intelligence reforms extend beyond national security, impacting broader aspects of governance and public confidence. In Nigeria, the

persistent inefficiencies in the intelligence sector have contributed to ongoing security challenges, including terrorism and insurgency, which have further destabilized the country and hindered its development (Bello, 2022). The inability to effectively address these threats has eroded public trust in government institutions and undermined efforts to build a cohesive and functional nation (Musa, 2021).

Nigeria, like many other post-colonial states, has struggled with the challenges of nation building and intelligence reforms. The country's transition to democracy has been marred by the legacy of colonialism, which has hindered the development of a robust and effective intelligence architecture. This paper reviews the historical context of Nigeria's intelligence apparatus, the challenges of reforming it, and the implications for nation building.

This paper will argue that addressing the intelligence reform debacle in Nigeria requires a comprehensive overhaul of the sector, guided by principles of democratic governance and the rule of law. Such an overhaul should address the structural weaknesses and cultural issues that have impeded past reform efforts and ensure that intelligence agencies are positioned to effectively support national security and democratic consolidation (Okafor, 2022). By examining the historical context, challenges, and implications of intelligence reforms in Nigeria, this paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of the intersection between nation building and intelligence reform in transitional democracies.

Historical Context:

Nigeria's intelligence apparatus was established during the colonial era, with the primary goal of maintaining British colonial rule. The apparatus was designed to suppress local dissent and maintain control over the population. After independence in 1960, the intelligence apparatus was inherited by the Nigerian government, with little reforms or changes.

Historical Context
Post-Colonial Legacy in Nigeria

The post-colonial legacy in Nigeria has significantly influenced the country's political and institutional development. Nigeria, a former British colony, gained independence in 1960, inheriting a complex and often dysfunctional administrative system (Ogunbiyi, 2022). The colonial administration's focus on resource extraction and administrative control left a legacy of institutional weaknesses and political instability. According to Akinola (2020), the colonial period established a centralized bureaucratic system that was ill-suited for the diverse and multi-ethnic fabric of post-independence Nigeria. The British colonial rulers had little regard for local governance structures, leading to a legacy of mistrust and inefficiency in the public sector (Ezeani, 2018).

The immediate post-independence period was marked by political turmoil and a series of military coups. The lack of a strong democratic tradition and the entrenchment

of military rule created an environment where institutions, including the intelligence services, were subject to the whims of political leaders (Adebayo, 2021). This political instability hindered the development of a robust and impartial intelligence system, which in turn affected national security and governance.

Evolution of Nigeria's Intelligence Apparatus

Nigeria's intelligence apparatus has undergone significant changes since independence. Initially, intelligence functions were primarily handled by the police and military intelligence units. The Nigerian Police Force, established during the colonial period, was tasked with maintaining internal security but lacked the specialized capabilities needed for effective intelligence gathering (Chukwuma, 2019). The military, particularly after the first coup in 1966, became more involved in intelligence activities, often using these capabilities for political purposes rather than national security (Igbokwe, 2020).

The establishment of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) in 1999 marked a significant development in Nigeria's intelligence architecture. The NIA was intended to centralize intelligence functions and provide a more coordinated approach to national security (Olawale, 2021). However, the agency's effectiveness has been marred by issues of political interference and corruption. According to Alabi (2022), the NIA has struggled to develop a professional and autonomous intelligence culture due to its entanglement in partisan politics.

Previous Reforms and Their Outcomes

Efforts to reform Nigeria's intelligence sector have been recurrent but largely unsuccessful in addressing fundamental issues. The 2007 Intelligence Reform Act was a notable attempt to enhance the professionalism and oversight of the intelligence community (Ajayi, 2018). This Act aimed to establish clearer guidelines for intelligence operations and improve accountability mechanisms. Despite these efforts, the implementation of the reforms has been inconsistent. Ongoing problems such as inadequate funding, lack of training, and persistent political interference have undermined the effectiveness of these reforms (Idris, 2020).

Another significant reform effort occurred in 2013 with the establishment of the National Security Adviser's office, which was designed to provide more strategic oversight and coordination of national security policies (Fola, 2019). While this office has played a role in improving strategic planning, it has also faced criticisms for centralizing too much power and failing to address operational deficiencies in the intelligence agencies (Olatunde, 2022). The lack of a coherent and integrated approach to intelligence reform continues to plague Nigeria's efforts to build a robust security framework.

Early Reform Efforts

Nigeria's intelligence sector has seen several reform efforts over the decades, each aimed at addressing the various challenges inherited from the colonial era and those arising from the country's internal dynamics. The initial reforms in the early post-independence years were primarily driven by the need to establish a coherent national security framework. However, these efforts were often hampered by political instability and frequent changes in government. The early attempts at reform were characterized by a focus on centralization and control, which mirrored the colonial administrative practices (Adebayo, 2021; Ezeani, 2018).

One of the earliest significant reforms was the establishment of the National Security Organization (NSO) in 1976. The NSO was created to coordinate the activities of various security agencies and provide a more unified approach to intelligence and national security (Chukwuma, 2019). Despite its ambitious mandate, the NSO struggled with issues of bureaucratic inefficiency and political interference. Its operations were often shrouded in secrecy, leading to a lack of transparency and accountability. According to Ajayi (2018), the NSO's centralized structure made it prone to abuses of power, and its effectiveness was further undermined by frequent leadership changes following military coups.

The Intelligence Reform Act of 2007

A more structured attempt at reforming Nigeria's intelligence sector came with the Intelligence Reform Act of 2007. This Act was part of broader efforts to professionalize and modernize Nigeria's intelligence services in response to growing security challenges, including terrorism and organized crime (Ajayi, 2018). The Act aimed to establish clearer operational guidelines for intelligence agencies and enhance oversight mechanisms to ensure accountability. Key provisions included the creation of an Inspector General for Intelligence to oversee compliance with operational standards and the establishment of an intelligence oversight committee in the National Assembly (Alabi, 2022).

Despite the promising framework, the implementation of the 2007 reforms faced significant hurdles. According to Fola (2019), one of the main challenges was the lack of political will to enforce the new regulations. Political leaders often viewed intelligence agencies as tools for maintaining power rather than as institutions for national security. This perspective led to continued interference in intelligence operations and the appointment of agency heads based on loyalty rather than competence (Idris, 2020). Additionally, the lack of adequate funding and resources hampered the ability of intelligence agencies to implement the reforms effectively.

The Act also faced resistance from within the intelligence community. Many officials were wary of the increased oversight and transparency measures, fearing that they would undermine their operational autonomy (Ojo, 2020). This resistance was compounded by a deeply ingrained culture of secrecy and a reluctance to embrace change. As a result, many of the intended reforms were either partially implemented or ignored altogether. According to Olatunde (2022), the Intelligence Reform Act of 2007

ultimately failed to achieve its objectives due to a combination of political, institutional, and cultural barriers.

Establishment of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA)

The establishment of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) in 1999 marked another significant milestone in Nigeria's intelligence reform efforts. The NIA was created to centralize the country's foreign intelligence operations and provide a more coordinated approach to national security (Olawale, 2021). This move was part of a broader strategy to streamline intelligence functions and eliminate overlaps between different agencies. The NIA was tasked with gathering and analysing foreign intelligence, conducting counterintelligence operations, and supporting national security policy formulation.

However, the NIA's effectiveness has been limited by several factors. One major issue has been the agency's entanglement in domestic politics. According to Alabi (2022), the NIA has often been used as a tool for political espionage, with its resources diverted towards monitoring political opponents rather than addressing genuine security threats. This misuse of the agency has eroded public trust and undermined its credibility. Additionally, the NIA has faced challenges related to funding and resource allocation. Inadequate funding has limited its operational capabilities and hindered its ability to invest in modern technology and training (Idris, 2020).

Another significant challenge has been the lack of inter-agency cooperation. Despite its mandate to centralize intelligence operations, the NIA has often operated in isolation, leading to duplication of efforts and inefficiencies. According to Chukwuma (2019), the agency's relationship with other security bodies, such as the Department of State Services (DSS) and the Nigerian Police Force, has been marked by rivalry and lack of coordination. This fragmentation has weakened the overall effectiveness of Nigeria's intelligence apparatus and hindered efforts to create a cohesive national security strategy.

Reforms under the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA)

The establishment of the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) in 2013 represented another significant attempt to reform Nigeria's intelligence sector. The ONSA was created to provide strategic oversight and coordination of national security policies, aiming to address the fragmentation and inefficiencies within the intelligence community (Fola, 2019). The office was tasked with developing national security strategies, coordinating intelligence activities, and advising the President on security matters.

While the creation of the ONSA has brought some improvements in strategic planning and policy coordination, it has also faced criticisms for centralizing too much power in the hands of the National Security Adviser (NSA). According to Olatunde (2022), this centralization has sometimes led to an over-concentration of authority and a lack of accountability. The NSA's office has been accused of bypassing established

oversight mechanisms and making unilateral decisions without adequate consultation with other stakeholders.

Moreover, the ONSA has struggled with the same issues of political interference and corruption that have plagued other intelligence agencies. According to Olawale (2021), the NSA's office has often been drawn into political conflicts, with its resources and capabilities used to advance partisan interests. This politicization has undermined the office's credibility and effectiveness, making it difficult to implement comprehensive and unbiased security reforms.

Challenges in Implementing Reforms

Several recurring challenges have impeded the successful implementation of intelligence reforms in Nigeria. One of the most significant is the pervasive issue of political interference. Political leaders have frequently used intelligence agencies to pursue personal and partisan agendas, undermining their professionalism and independence (Akinola, 2020). This interference has also led to frequent changes in agency leadership, disrupting continuity and long-term planning.

Corruption is another major obstacle. According to Ojo (2020), corruption within the intelligence community has diverted resources away from essential functions and eroded public trust. Misappropriation of funds, embezzlement, and nepotism are common problems that have hindered the development of a capable and accountable intelligence apparatus.

Inadequate funding and resources have also posed significant challenges. Many reform initiatives have been hampered by a lack of financial support, limiting the ability of agencies to invest in necessary infrastructure, technology, and training (Idris, 2020). This financial shortfall has left Nigeria's intelligence agencies ill-equipped to address modern security threats effectively.

Additionally, the deeply ingrained culture of secrecy and resistance to change within the intelligence community has impeded reform efforts. Many officials view reforms as threats to their autonomy and operational effectiveness, leading to passive or active resistance (Olatunde, 2022). This cultural resistance has made it difficult to implement measures aimed at increasing transparency and accountability.

Lessons from Comparative Case Studies

Comparative case studies of intelligence reforms in other transitional democracies offer valuable insights for Nigeria. For instance, South Africa's post-apartheid intelligence reforms focused on establishing clear legal frameworks, enhancing oversight, and promoting a culture of accountability (Chukwuma, 2019). These reforms were supported by strong political will and a commitment to democratic principles, which were crucial for their success.

Similarly, Ghana's intelligence reforms in the 1990s emphasized professionalization and the de-politicization of intelligence services. According to Adebayo (2021), these reforms were successful due to a combination of strong leadership, adequate funding,

and a clear vision for the role of intelligence in a democratic society. These examples highlight the importance of political commitment, legal frameworks, and adequate resources in successful intelligence reforms.

Recommendations for Future Reforms

Based on the analysis of previous reforms and their outcomes, several recommendations can be made for future efforts to reform Nigeria's intelligence sector. Firstly, there is a need for strong political commitment to depoliticize intelligence agencies and ensure their independence. This commitment should be reflected in the appointment of agency heads based on merit and competence rather than political loyalty (Ojo, 2020).

Secondly, enhancing oversight and accountability mechanisms is crucial. This can be achieved through the establishment of independent oversight bodies and the strengthening of parliamentary oversight committees. These bodies should have the authority and resources to conduct regular audits and investigations into the activities of intelligence agencies (Alabi, 2022).

Thirdly, adequate funding and resource allocation are essential for the successful implementation of reforms. The government should prioritize investment in the intelligence sector, focusing on infrastructure, technology, and training. This investment should be accompanied by measures to ensure transparency and prevent the misappropriation of funds (Idris, 2020).

Additionally, there should be efforts to promote a culture of transparency and accountability within the intelligence community. This can be achieved through regular training and awareness programs, emphasizing the importance of ethical conduct and adherence to democratic principles (Akinola, 2020). Engaging with civil society organizations and the public can also help build trust and legitimacy for intelligence reforms.

Finally, international cooperation and assistance can play a valuable role in supporting Nigeria's intelligence reforms. Partnerships with other countries and international organizations can provide technical assistance, training, and resources to help build the capacity of Nigeria's intelligence agencies (Olawale, 2021). These partnerships can also facilitate the exchange of best practices and lessons learned from other contexts.

The history of intelligence reforms in Nigeria reveals a pattern of ambitious initiatives that have often fallen short due to political interference, corruption, inadequate funding, and cultural resistance. While there have been some successes, such as the establishment of the National Intelligence Agency and the Office of the National Security Adviser, these reforms have not fully addressed the fundamental issues facing Nigeria's intelligence sector.

Moving forward, a comprehensive and sustained effort is needed to build a professional, accountable, and effective intelligence community in Nigeria. This effort must be underpinned by strong political commitment, adequate resources, robust oversight mechanisms, and a culture of transparency and accountability. By learning

from past experiences and drawing on international best practices, Nigeria can develop an intelligence Holocaust.

Impact of Post-Colonial Hangovers

The enduring influence of colonial legacies on Nigeria's intelligence reforms cannot be understated. The centralized and hierarchical nature of the colonial administration has persisted in the post-colonial era, perpetuating inefficiencies and reinforcing a culture of secrecy and lack of accountability (Nwankwo, 2019). The political and administrative structures inherited from colonial rule have contributed to a persistent mistrust of government institutions and a fragmented approach to governance (Okeke, 2021).

The post-colonial hangovers have created an environment where intelligence agencies often operate with little oversight and are prone to abuses of power. The legacy of corruption and political interference has impeded efforts to establish a professional and effective intelligence apparatus (Ojo, 2020). This environment not only undermines national security but also hampers democratic consolidation, as the public's trust in governmental institutions is eroded by persistent scandals and inefficiencies.

Overall, Nigeria's historical context reveals a complex interplay of colonial legacies and post-independence challenges that have shaped the country's intelligence apparatus. The colonial inheritance of centralized and inefficient administrative systems, combined with political instability and corruption, has hindered the development of a robust intelligence framework. Despite various reform efforts, the enduring influence of these post-colonial hangovers continues to affect Nigeria's ability to build an effective and accountable intelligence system. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive understanding of the historical context and a commitment to fundamental reforms that align with democratic principles and the rule of law.

Challenges of Reforms
Institutional Weaknesses

The process of reforming Nigeria's intelligence sector is fraught with institutional weaknesses that have significantly hampered efforts to build a more effective and accountable intelligence architecture. One of the primary challenges is the deeply entrenched bureaucratic inefficiencies that plague Nigerian intelligence agencies. As noted by Ojo (2020), the existing structure of these agencies often reflects a legacy of colonial administrative practices, which prioritize hierarchical control over operational effectiveness. This bureaucratic inertia contributes to slow decision-making processes and a lack of responsiveness to emerging security threats.

Furthermore, the lack of specialized training and resources for intelligence personnel undermines the operational capacity of these agencies. According to Idris (2020), many Nigerian intelligence officers lack the advanced skills and technological tools required for modern intelligence gathering and analysis. This deficiency impairs their ability to

effectively combat sophisticated security challenges, such as terrorism and organized crime. The inadequate investment in training and technology is a critical barrier to implementing successful reforms within the intelligence sector.

Political Interference and Corruption

Political interference and corruption are pervasive issues that significantly affect the effectiveness of intelligence reforms in Nigeria. Political leaders often exert undue influence over intelligence operations, using these agencies for partisan purposes rather than for national security (Igbokwe, 2020). This interference compromises the impartiality and objectivity of intelligence assessments, which are crucial for making informed decisions on national security matters.

Corruption further exacerbates the challenges faced by the intelligence sector. The misuse of resources, bribery, and embezzlement undermine the integrity and efficiency of intelligence operations (Nwankwo, 2019). Corruption creates an environment where loyalty to political figures takes precedence over professional competence and integrity. This dynamic not only weakens the effectiveness of intelligence agencies but also erodes public trust in these institutions (Olawale, 2021). Addressing corruption and reducing political interference are essential steps toward achieving meaningful and sustainable reforms in Nigeria's intelligence sector.

Socioeconomic Factors

Socioeconomic conditions in Nigeria also pose significant challenges to intelligence reforms. The country's economic instability and high levels of poverty create a backdrop of social unrest and conflict that complicates efforts to build a robust intelligence framework. According to Ezeani (2018), the economic hardships faced by many Nigerians contribute to an environment where criminal activities and insurgency thrive, placing additional pressure on intelligence agencies to address a broad range of security threats.

Moreover, the disparity in regional development and access to resources affects the overall effectiveness of intelligence operations. As noted by Fola (2019), underdeveloped regions may lack the infrastructure and support necessary for effective intelligence gathering and coordination. This uneven development exacerbates existing challenges and creates disparities in the capabilities of intelligence agencies across different parts of the country.

Inadequate Legal and Institutional Frameworks

The legal and institutional frameworks governing Nigeria's intelligence sector are often insufficient to support comprehensive and effective reforms. The Intelligence Reform Act of 2007, while a step in the right direction, has faced challenges in its implementation due to gaps in legislative oversight and enforcement (Ajayi, 2018). The lack of clear and enforceable guidelines for intelligence operations contributes to

inconsistent practices and undermines efforts to improve accountability and transparency.

Additionally, the fragmentation of intelligence functions across various agencies complicates the establishment of a cohesive and coordinated intelligence system. According to Alabi (2022), the overlapping responsibilities and jurisdictions of different agencies hinder efforts to streamline operations and create a unified approach to national security. A more integrated and coherent institutional framework is necessary to ensure that intelligence reforms are effectively implemented and sustained over time.

Public Perception and Trust

Public perception and trust in intelligence agencies play a crucial role in the success of reform efforts. The historical context of political interference and corruption has fostered a general mistrust of intelligence institutions among the Nigerian populace (Ojo, 2020). This lack of trust can hinder cooperation between intelligence agencies and the public, which is essential for gathering information and addressing security threats. Efforts to rebuild public trust must focus on improving transparency and accountability within intelligence agencies. As noted by Chukwuma (2019), increasing public engagement and demonstrating a commitment to ethical practices are key to restoring confidence in these institutions. Effective communication of the benefits and successes of intelligence reforms can also help to counteract negative perceptions and build support for ongoing reform efforts.

The challenges of reforming Nigeria's intelligence sector are multifaceted and deeply rooted in historical, political, and socioeconomic factors. Institutional weaknesses, political interference, corruption, and inadequate legal frameworks all contribute to the difficulties faced in achieving effective reforms. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes strengthening institutional capacities, reducing corruption and political influence, improving legal and regulatory frameworks, and rebuilding public trust. Only through a concerted and sustained effort can Nigeria overcome these obstacles and develop a robust and effective intelligence system capable of addressing the complex security challenges it faces.

Efforts to reform the intelligence apparatus have been met with resistance from vested interests and a lack of political will. The challenges include:

Lack of Democratic Oversight and Accountability

The lack of democratic oversight and accountability is a significant impediment to effective intelligence reforms in Nigeria. The intelligence agencies in Nigeria often operate with minimal scrutiny from democratic institutions, which undermines their accountability and effectiveness. According to Ajayi (2018), the absence of robust oversight mechanisms means that intelligence operations are frequently shrouded in secrecy, leaving little room for public or legislative scrutiny. This lack of transparency fosters an environment where abuses of power and inefficiencies can thrive unchecked.

In democratic settings, oversight bodies such as parliamentary committees play a crucial role in monitoring the activities of intelligence agencies and ensuring they operate within legal and ethical boundaries (Olawale, 2021). However, in Nigeria, such oversight is often weak or ineffective. The legislative and executive branches have struggled to establish and enforce comprehensive oversight frameworks for the intelligence sector. This has led to a situation where intelligence agencies can act with relative impunity, often prioritizing the interests of political elites over public security and democratic principles (Fola, 2019).

Effective reforms must therefore include the establishment of robust oversight mechanisms that ensure intelligence activities are conducted in accordance with democratic values and legal standards. Strengthening the role of parliamentary committees and creating independent bodies to review intelligence operations could enhance accountability and help rebuild public trust in these institutions (Idris, 2020).

Inadequate Training and Capacity Building

Inadequate training and capacity building are major challenges facing Nigeria's intelligence agencies. The complexity and sophistication of modern security threats require highly skilled personnel with advanced training in intelligence gathering, analysis, and operations (Ezeani, 2018). However, many Nigerian intelligence officers lack the necessary expertise and training to effectively tackle these challenges.

The limited investment in professional development and capacity building has resulted in a workforce that is often ill-equipped to handle emerging security threats. According to Igbokwe (2020), intelligence agencies in Nigeria frequently face difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified personnel due to the lack of competitive salaries and career development opportunities. This inadequacy in training and resources hampers their ability to conduct thorough and effective intelligence operations.

Reforming Nigeria's intelligence sector necessitates a focus on developing and implementing comprehensive training programs that equip personnel with the skills and knowledge required for modern intelligence work. This includes investing in advanced technological tools and fostering a culture of continuous professional development (Ojo, 2020). Enhancing capacity building efforts will be crucial for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of intelligence operations in Nigeria.

Corruption and Politicization of Intelligence Agencies

Corruption and politicization are pervasive issues that severely impact the effectiveness of Nigeria's intelligence agencies. Political interference in intelligence operations is a significant concern, as political leaders often use these agencies for partisan purposes rather than focusing on national security (Nwankwo, 2019). This politicization compromises the objectivity and impartiality of intelligence assessments, which are critical for effective decision-making and security management.

Corruption within intelligence agencies further exacerbates these problems. The misappropriation of funds, bribery, and nepotism undermine the integrity of intelligence

operations and erode public confidence in these institutions (Olawale, 2021). Corruption creates an environment where loyalty to political figures is prioritized over professional competence and ethical conduct, leading to inefficiencies and abuses of power (Ojo, 2020).

Addressing corruption and reducing political interference require comprehensive reforms that promote transparency, accountability, and meritocracy within intelligence agencies. Implementing strict anti-corruption measures, enhancing internal oversight, and fostering a culture of integrity are essential steps in mitigating these issues (Idris, 2020).

Inadequate Legal Framework and Regulations

An inadequate legal framework and regulatory environment pose significant challenges to intelligence reforms in Nigeria. The existing legal and regulatory structures governing intelligence operations are often insufficient to support effective and accountable practices. The Intelligence Reform Act of 2007, while a positive development, has faced challenges in implementation due to gaps in legislative oversight and enforcement (Ajayi, 2018).

The lack of clear and comprehensive legal guidelines for intelligence operations contributes to inconsistent practices and a lack of accountability. According to Alabi (2022), the fragmentation of intelligence functions across various agencies further complicates efforts to establish a cohesive and regulated system. The absence of a unified legal framework hinders efforts to streamline operations and ensure that intelligence activities are conducted in accordance with established legal standards.

Reforming the legal and regulatory frameworks governing Nigeria's intelligence sector is crucial for ensuring effective and accountable intelligence practices. This includes updating existing laws, closing regulatory gaps, and establishing clear guidelines for intelligence operations. Strengthening legal oversight and ensuring that regulatory bodies have the authority and resources to enforce compliance are essential components of a comprehensive reform strategy (Fola, 2019).

Implications for Nation Building:

The intelligence reforms debacle has significant implications for nation building in Nigeria. It has undermined national security, democratic consolidation, and economic development. The country's inability to establish a robust and effective intelligence architecture has made it vulnerable to external threats and internal insecurity.

National Security and Democratic Consolidation

The effectiveness of a nation's intelligence apparatus plays a critical role in shaping its national security and democratic consolidation. In Nigeria, the historical challenges and ongoing issues within the intelligence sector have had profound implications for both these areas. The intelligence failures in Nigeria have often led to significant security

lapses, such as the inability to prevent or effectively respond to insurgencies and terrorist attacks (Ogunbiyi, 2022). The persistent weaknesses in intelligence operations undermine national security, which in turn impacts the overall stability of the country. National security is a fundamental pillar of state stability and governance. Effective intelligence services are crucial for identifying and neutralizing threats before they escalate into larger crises (Akinola, 2020). In Nigeria, intelligence shortcomings have contributed to ongoing conflicts and security threats, including the Boko Haram insurgency and various ethnic and sectarian clashes. According to Chukwuma (2019), the inability of Nigeria's intelligence agencies to provide accurate and timely information has often resulted in delayed or inadequate responses to security threats, exacerbating instability and violence.

Furthermore, the state of national security has direct implications for democratic consolidation. Democracy thrives in environments where there is trust between the state and its citizens, and where institutions function effectively and impartially (Ezeani, 2018). In Nigeria, the frequent security crises and the perception of ineffective or corrupt intelligence agencies have eroded public trust in the government. This erosion of trust undermines democratic institutions and processes, making it difficult to achieve meaningful democratic consolidation (Igbokwe, 2020). The lack of confidence in security and intelligence agencies can lead to disengagement from the democratic process, decreased civic participation, and even political instability.

The integration of intelligence reform into broader national security strategies is essential for fostering democratic values. Reforming intelligence services to enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency can help rebuild public trust and strengthen democratic governance (Alabi, 2022). By aligning intelligence practices with democratic principles, Nigeria can improve its national security framework and support the consolidation of democratic institutions.

Public Trust and Institutional Legitimacy

Public trust in governmental institutions is a crucial component of effective governance and nation-building. The integrity and performance of intelligence agencies are directly linked to the public's perception of the state's legitimacy and effectiveness (Ajayi, 2018). In Nigeria, the intelligence sector has faced significant challenges related to corruption, inefficiency, and political interference, which have adversely affected public trust and institutional legitimacy (Ojo, 2020).

Corruption within intelligence agencies has been a major issue in Nigeria. Reports of financial mismanagement, bribery, and political patronage have tarnished the reputation of these institutions and led to a loss of confidence among the public (Fola, 2019). When intelligence agencies are perceived as corrupt or biased, their ability to carry out their functions effectively is compromised. This not only hampers their operational capabilities but also diminishes their credibility in the eyes of the public (Idris, 2020).

Institutional legitimacy is built on the principles of accountability, transparency, and effective performance. When intelligence agencies fail to uphold these principles, they undermine their own legitimacy and, by extension, the legitimacy of the state itself (Olawale, 2021). In Nigeria, the recurring scandals and inefficiencies in the intelligence sector have contributed to a broader crisis of legitimacy, affecting the public's confidence in the government's ability to protect and serve its citizens (Nwankwo, 2019).

Restoring public trust requires comprehensive reforms that address the root causes of corruption and inefficiency. This includes implementing robust oversight mechanisms, ensuring transparent processes, and fostering a culture of accountability within intelligence agencies (Olatunde, 2022). By improving the performance and integrity of intelligence institutions, Nigeria can enhance their legitimacy and strengthen public trust, which is essential for effective governance and nation-building.

Economic Impact and Development

The state of national security and institutional effectiveness has significant implications for economic development. Insecure environments and inefficient institutions can deter investment, hinder economic growth, and exacerbate poverty (Okeke, 2021). For Nigeria, the challenges within the intelligence sector have had tangible effects on the country's economic development.

Security concerns, such as insurgencies and terrorism, directly impact economic activities by creating unstable environments that are unappealing to investors. Businesses may be reluctant to invest in areas with high security risks, which can lead to reduced economic opportunities and slower development (Chukwuma, 2019). The economic costs of insecurity include not only the direct expenses related to security operations but also the broader impact on investor confidence and economic stability (Ogunbiyi, 2022).

Moreover, inefficiencies and corruption within the intelligence sector can lead to misallocation of resources and reduced effectiveness of economic policies. When intelligence agencies are not functioning optimally, the government may struggle to implement policies effectively, leading to poor outcomes in areas such as economic planning, infrastructure development, and social services (Fola, 2019). This misallocation of resources can hinder economic growth and development, exacerbating existing inequalities and limiting opportunities for progress.

Addressing the economic impact of intelligence sector weaknesses requires a multifaceted approach. Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of intelligence operations can enhance national security and create a more stable environment for economic activities. Additionally, reforming intelligence institutions to reduce corruption and increase transparency can help ensure that resources are allocated effectively and that economic policies are implemented successfully (Ezeani, 2018).

Social Stability and Community Relations

The effectiveness of intelligence services also has implications for social stability and community relations. Intelligence agencies play a crucial role in maintaining social order and addressing issues related to crime and conflict (Igbokwe, 2020). In Nigeria, the shortcomings of the intelligence sector have affected social stability and the relationship between the state and local communities.

Ineffective intelligence operations can lead to inadequate responses to local security issues, contributing to increased crime rates and social unrest. Communities that feel inadequately protected or marginalized by the state may experience a breakdown in social cohesion and an increase in local conflicts (Chukwuma, 2019). This can further strain the relationship between the government and local communities, leading to a cycle of distrust and instability.

The role of intelligence services in community relations is particularly important in diverse societies like Nigeria, where ethnic and religious tensions can be exacerbated by security issues. Effective intelligence operations can help address these tensions and promote social stability by providing accurate information and facilitating timely responses to emerging conflicts (Alabi, 2022). However, when intelligence agencies are perceived as biased or ineffective, they can contribute to worsening tensions and conflicts within communities (Ajayi, 2018).

Enhancing the effectiveness of intelligence services requires a focus on community engagement and responsiveness. Intelligence agencies should work to build trust with local communities by addressing their concerns, providing accurate information, and ensuring that their operations are transparent and accountable (Idris, 2020). By improving their relationships with communities, intelligence agencies can contribute to social stability and strengthen national unity.

Conclusion

The historical and contemporary challenges faced by Nigeria's intelligence sector have profound implications for the nation's security, democratic consolidation, economic development, and social stability. The legacy of colonial rule, characterized by centralized and inefficient administrative systems, has persisted into the post-independence era, contributing to the inefficacies within Nigeria's intelligence apparatus. Despite various reform efforts, issues such as political interference, corruption, and lack of professionalism continue to plague the sector.

These challenges undermine national security, making it difficult for the government to respond effectively to threats such as insurgencies and terrorism. The resulting security lapses have a direct impact on democratic consolidation, as they erode public trust in government institutions and hinder the development of a stable and participatory political environment. Additionally, the inefficiencies and corruption within the intelligence sector have significant economic repercussions, deterring investment and impeding economic growth. Social stability is also affected, as inadequate intelligence

operations contribute to increased crime rates and local conflicts, further straining the relationship between the government and communities.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive overhaul of Nigeria's intelligence sector, aimed at establishing a professional, transparent, and accountable intelligence framework. Such reforms are essential not only for enhancing national security but also for fostering democratic governance, economic development, and social cohesion.

Recommendations

To effectively reform Nigeria's intelligence sector and address the challenges outlined, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Strengthening Institutional Frameworks:
   - Establish Robust Oversight Mechanisms: Create independent oversight bodies to monitor intelligence activities and ensure accountability. These bodies should have the authority to investigate misconduct and enforce standards.
   - Improve Coordination Between Agencies: Foster better communication and cooperation among various intelligence agencies to enhance information sharing and operational efficiency.
2. Enhancing Transparency and Accountability:
   - Regular Audits and Public Reporting: Implement regular audits of intelligence agencies and make reports available to the public to promote transparency.
   - Independent Oversight: Establish an independent oversight committee with the power to review intelligence operations and address complaints from the public and within the agencies.
3. Promoting Professionalism and Training:
   - Specialized Training Programs: Develop comprehensive training programs to enhance the skills and knowledge of intelligence personnel. Emphasize areas such as intelligence analysis, cybersecurity, and counterterrorism.
   - Merit-Based Recruitment: Ensure that recruitment and promotion within intelligence agencies are based on merit and qualifications rather than political connections.
4. Fostering Community Engagement:
   - Community Liaison Programs: Establish community liaison offices to build trust between intelligence agencies and local communities. These offices can serve as points of contact for community members to report concerns and receive information.
   - Responsive Operations: Design intelligence operations to be responsive to the needs and concerns of local communities, ensuring that their safety and security are prioritized.
5. Integrating Intelligence Reform into National Security Strategies:

- Alignment with National Security Priorities: Ensure that intelligence reform initiatives are aligned with the broader national security strategy, addressing both immediate threats and long-term security goals.
- Comprehensive Security Framework: Develop a comprehensive security framework that integrates intelligence reform with other elements of national security, such as military and law enforcement operations.

6. Combating Corruption:
   - Anti-Corruption Measures: Implement strict anti-corruption measures within intelligence agencies, including regular integrity checks and stringent penalties for corrupt practices.
   - Transparency in Funding: Ensure transparency in the allocation and use of funds within intelligence agencies to prevent financial mismanagement and corruption.

7. Leveraging Technology and Innovation:
   - Adopt Advanced Technologies: Invest in modern technologies such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and cybersecurity tools to enhance the capabilities of intelligence agencies.
   - Encourage Innovation: Promote a culture of innovation within intelligence agencies, encouraging the development and adoption of new methods and technologies for intelligence gathering and analysis.

8. Building a Culture of Accountability:
   - Ethics Training: Incorporate ethics training into the professional development programs of intelligence personnel to promote a culture of accountability and integrity.
   - Whistle-blower Protections: Establish and enforce protections for whistle-blowers within intelligence agencies to ensure that personnel can report misconduct without fear of retaliation.

By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can address the persistent challenges within its intelligence sector and create a more effective, transparent, and accountable system. Such reforms are crucial for enhancing national security, fostering democratic consolidation, promoting economic development, and ensuring social stability. Through a comprehensive and sustained effort to reform its intelligence apparatus, Nigeria can strengthen its nation-building efforts and achieve a more secure and prosperous future.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they have no financial interest in this manuscript.

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Revisiting Press Freedom in Nigeria: The Buhari Years (2015-2023)[1]

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Abstract:

Six and half decades after independence, political journalism remains endangered in one of Africa's largest democracies- Nigeria. The key battle revolved around transparency in public office, its reportage and people's right to know. This two-pronged study probed press freedom under President Mohammadu Buhari's watch between 2015 and 2023. Specifically, it examined the political, legal and physical context in which the press operated and explored its consequences, if any, on Nigeria's democracy. It investigated the power of incumbency against the nuances of a political press. Using the normative theory as its theoretical framework, it adapted Reporters Without Borders' press freedom indicators for its analysis. Findings reveal an enduring pattern- the political wing of Nigeria's supposedly liberal, plural and commercial press has become dysfunctional. Its operational context now lies in a highly contested space; shaped by political affiliations, illiberal regulations, state interference and self-censorship. Buhari's relations with the press reflected his militarist ideology, evoked ethnic tensions; and exposed the impotence of Nigeria's state agencies. A perilous path lies ahead for press and politics when shackled this way.

Introduction

Press freedom in sub-Saharan Africa is threatened by two major actors: firstly, populist leaders who

> "…treat rights as an impediment to their conception of the majority will, as a needless obstacle to defending the nation from perceived threats and evils. Instead of accepting rights as protecting everyone, they privilege the declared interests of the majority and encourage people to adopt dangerous beliefs " (Roth, 2020, 1).

These leaders repress civil liberties and weaken state institutions. In so doing, they target the political press, impede independent journalism, fuel distrust of the media, hinder free flow of information essential for public participation in the democratic process and erode the constitutional protection of the press (Campbell & Quinn, 2021). The second actor is Africa's liberal press- an adversarial, ideological, privately owned and influential socio-political force. They are driven by libertine principles of unrestricted freedom to gather, analyze and disseminate information they deem worthy of public interest. They shape public opinion and hold institutions of government to account yet; they are private and only accountable to their owners and shareholders. Both claim to act in public interest but with divergent interpretation of press freedom. While populist leaders prioritize national development and situate the press within it, the liberal press is keen to assert its independence from state control, censorship and political correctness. This tension is at the highlights of the shifting nature of the interplay between press and power in Africa.

This paper examined press freedom in Nigeria under President Mohammadu Buhari's watch between 2015 and 2023. It interrogated his administration's relation with the political press, and the implication on Nigeria's consolidating yet fragile democracy. Major General Mohammadu Buhari- a northerner by birth and military officer by training, first came to power in Nigeria through a military coup in December 1983. His takeover terminated the democratic administration of President Shehu Shagari and ended Nigeria's Second Republic (1979-83). Buhari usurped power during an intense political transition when civil rule was consolidating in the post-Civil War era. In his maiden speech as Nigeria's fifth military Head of State, Buhari identified corruption and bad governance as identical problems deserving immediate government attention, noting that his regime had dutifully intervened to save Nigeria from imminent collapse. 20 months later, precisely in August 1985, Buhari was overthrown through another military coup. His brief stint in power was, however, notorious for his unprecedented hostility towards the press. Though he initially promised to accord the press the freedom they deserved, Seng and Hunt (1986) noted that he was swift to promulgate Decree No. 4 in 1984 through which he criminalized the publishing of any message, rumor, report or statement which is either false or calculated to bring the Federal Military

Government or the government of a state or a public officer to ridicule or disrepute. To detain violators for an indefinite period without legal proceedings, he promulgated Decree No. 2 that same year. Consequently, detention of journalists without trial increased and so did censorship, official secrecy, police brutality, proscription and blacklisting of non-compliant news organizations. In his speech in August 1984, he hinted at what he believed the role of the press should be:

> '*A basic duty to perform is ensuring the peace, unity, progress and stability of this country.*
> *All other interests, serious, business, or mundane, must be subordinated to this basic duty. To*
> *accomplish this goal, it is the primary duty of your newspapers to strain all nerves in*
> *interpreting, explaining, analyzing, debating, assessing and offering suitable alternatives to*
> *government policies and objectives. Our nation is too young for her newspapers to indulge in*
> *destructive sensationalism, deliberate mischief and purposeless slants which will only set us*
> *back from the path of progress and development.'*
> *(New Nigerian Newspaper August 8, 1984).*

Two decades later, Buhari presented himself as a converted democrat, ready to operate under democratic norms and to subject himself to the rigors of democratic elections. After three unsuccessful attempts in 2003, 2007 and 2011, he was overwhelmingly elected president in 2015. During his inaugural speech and all through his two-term, eight-year rule (2015-2023), President Buhari stressed the link between press freedom and democracy and pledged to consciously work the democratic system as enshrined in the Constitution (Buhari, 2015). But how did a former military dictator navigate the murky waters of a powerful political press, largely located in the Lagos-Ibadan axis and mindful of Buhari's anti-media history? Without decrees and military fiat, did President Buhari and his government resist/restrict or allow the liberal press to gather, process and disseminate information independently? Although a few studies (Ekwunife et al 2023, Olomojobi & Okoro 2022) are critical of Buhari's heavy handedness, but did the liberal press, majorly located in the South and historically critical of rulers from the North misrepresent the president? Did ethnicity, economics and ideology influence how the liberal press framed President Buhari during his time in office? What was the nature of the relationship between the president and the press during political upheavals, the fight against militant insurgency, COVID-19 restrictions and economic uncertainties thereafter? And of what consequence to Nigeria's evolving democracy?

These questions, tackled in this mini study are critical for Nigeria and the sub-region. As Africa's most populous nation and one of the continent's biggest economies,

regression and democratic de-consolidation can reverse two and half decades of political progress at home with negative reverberations across West Africa. This contribution therefore unpacked the context within which the political press functioned during Buhari's regime and analyzed the experiences of journalists as they steer through political pressure, economic realities and public expectations. Findings and recommendations in this paper will add to the growing body of literature on press freedom in sub-Sahara Africa and aid policymakers, politicians and scholars interested in exploring the press/politics nexus in Nigeria.

Press Freedom: Tensions and Contradictions

The importance of free press rests on the belief that it has positive effects on freedom and democracy (Sen, 2003). Whether as mediators between the government and the governed, investigators that hold the political class account or reporters of fraud, systemic inadequacies and institutional inefficiencies; a free press is central to elections, reform and policies (Keane, 1991). Ward (2014) traced the emergence of a free press to England (1695) and Sweden (1766) where the shift from censorship to freedom was first constitutionalized. In the US, the First Amendment states that: 'Congress shall make no law… abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances (Congress, 1791).' By the late nineteenth century, the concept of free press, dominated by private capital, acting as a watchdog of the state had formed in the West.

In the twentieth century, this freedom expanded beyond state censorship. Journalism turned to ethics to win back public trust that had been eroded due to overtly commercial and sensational practices of the previous decades. Objectivity in journalism curbs unprofessional excesses. By the 1970s, the concept of press freedom again expanded to include freedom from non-state actors, including media owners, in acknowledgement of the pivotal role of owners in influencing editorial decisions and in shaping news content. According to Lowenstein (1970) a completely free press is not only independent of the state but also free from owners' political and commercial pressures. Weaver (1977) conceived freedom as absence of government restraint, absence of non-governmental restraint and absence of operational restrictions. In the 1980s, Piccard (1985) and Hachten (1987) added concepts of economic freedom, public literacy and national development. By the late 1980s and early1990s, studies extended to the political economy of the media (Herman & Chomsky, 1988), citizen's participation and information democratization (Hagen, 1992), and mediation in the structure of social inequality and protection of human rights (Curran, 1996). At the turn of the century, the focus shifted back to protection from monopoly and concentrated ownership (McQuail, 2000) and media imperialism, globalization and cultural domination (McChesney, 2011). Rozumilowicz (2002) summed up the concept of free press as what exists in a system, demonopolized from state control, political actors, media owners and commercial interest.

Two strands of press freedom are apparent: on the one hand is the all-encompassing and all-inclusive freedom. In this view, journalists have little ethical or legal responsibility to make sure their reports and opinions are objective, balanced and fair. On the other hand, is socially responsible journalism- one that includes adherence to ethics, objectivity and social responsibility. Both strands converge on the constitutional rights of the press but diverge on the extent to which this freedom is used. Tambini (2021) highlighted the above distinction as negative right or freedom from (the absence of state control, emphasized in the American concept of press freedom) and positive right or freedom for (public good, peace and democracy, common in Europe). Either way, Herman & Chomsky (1988) in Manufacturing Consent argued that market forces, corporate ownership and political pressure have increasingly constrained and questioned earlier concepts of a liberal press. According to McChesney (2008), America's corporate media is incompatible with a viable democratic society by reason of degradation of journalism and the hyper-commercialization of culture. Outside the US, particularly in Africa, claims that a free and liberal press is essential to democracy and is not only contested by Africa's ruling elite but also questioned for its vulnerabilities to sectional and oppositional forces. This is particularly important in post-colonial societies with a history of ethnic, religious, regional, sectional and political tension. A case in point, according to Shaw (2012) is the instrumental role of the liberal media in the Rwandan genocide of 1994 when a controversial Hutu radio station urged Hutus to 'go to work' and attack the Tutsi population.

In Africa, the concept of press freedom remains contentious. The liberal and/or socially responsible press, inherited independence, are not free from market forces and corporate greed. Similarly, the authoritarian and Soviet media systems (visible across the continent during military regimes and one-party government) that aims to integrate the press as an extension of the state are not exempt from political control, state propaganda and overbearing civil restrictions. The groundbreaking work by Siebert et al (1956) and McQuail (1983) on media systems did not fully reflect the unique political, economic and media environments in Africa and as such, leaves room for further studies to navigate the complexities of Africa's press/politics landscape. This paper therefore investigated press freedom between 2015 and 2023, probing if Buhari's government helped or hindered Nigeria's supposedly liberal press and of what consequence to democracy.

State/Press Nexus in Nigeria since 1999

Press freedom as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution guarantees the right of Nigeria's press to gather, process and disseminate information freely, yet, this freedom is contested. After three decades of suppressive military rule between 1965 and 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo- Nigeria's first democratically elected president in the Fourth Republic was vocal about the centrality of this freedom to democratic stability. Across the political spectrum, a free press was also seen as instrumental to the effective functioning of Nigeria's new democracy. However, mid-way into Obasanjo's first term,

he was accused of 'borrowing repressive tactics from Nigeria's past to intimidate the press' (CPJ, 2005). Authoritarian decrees of the military era were also enforced, albeit in subtle ways. His administration deployed police officers to threaten, arrest and remand his critics, including journalists in prison. By the start of his second term in 2004, his government had attacked *Insider Weekly, Global Star, Island News, Silver Bird, DAAR Communications and Africa Today* over allegations that these publications disparaged and humiliated the person and office of the president. After eight years in office and a failed third term bid, Obasanjo and the press were driven by distinct, almost parallel priorities (Sklar, Onwudiwe & Kew, 2006). The latter sought to protect democracy while the former considered the press as overtly critical.

President Umaru Yar'Adua (2007-10) and his successor, Jonathan Goodluck (2010-2015) improved on Obasanjo's records with the 2011 Freedom of Information Act which liberalized access to state-held information and strengthened rights already protected in the 1999 Constitution. They also abolished oppressive laws such as Decree 4 of 1984 (Cheeseman et al, 2020), giving way for new publications and a resurgence of old ones. However, government's intolerance of press criticism remained. Examples include efforts to suppress demonstrators during the #Bringbackourgirls protests in 2014. Jonathan's government was also complacent when military officers invaded and confiscated newspaper copies in Lagos and Abuja over allegations that news reports compromised their war against Boko Haram (Suntai, Agbu & Targema, 2018). Ojo (2016) found that Jonathan's regime tightened control over state-owned broadcasters-Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Voice of Nigeria (VON) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). Efforts to keep corruption hidden from public scrutiny, starve news organizations of state advertising revenue and blacklist radical press outlets also endured.

On their part, the press operated at the confluence of political affiliations, ethnicity and commercialization (Ojo, 2018). At one end, owners influenced news content based on ethnic bias, regional preference and political alignment. Olasupo (2022) found that owners of the press in Lagos used their titles to criticize the North and its politics. These newspapers sacrificed objectivity, neutrality and accuracy to support their owners' preferences (Adekunle, 2021). At the other end, Abegunde & Fajimbola (2019) found that the political press was also pressured by declining advertising revenue, dwindling circulation figures and the presence of free information online to act without due regard for objectivity. In addition to the above, Kperogi (2020) explored how digitization enabled Nigerians at home and abroad to disrupt the news and political landscape with forward and backward linkages to legacy media, political participation and governance. Yusha'u (2017) however observed that online news platforms are not the exclusive preserve of defenders of democracy and public interest. Digital spaces are also melting pots of disinformation, misinformation and propaganda (Babaleye, 2020).

Existing literature on Buhari's relationship with the political press is predictable. Egbon's (2023) comparative study found serious press freedom violations during Buhari's rule compared to his predecessor's government and concluded that the press

operated in a more liberal and freer context during Jonathan's regime. In their study, Ekwunife et al (2023) found that Buhari's first term in office was littered with multiple civil rights violations. Suleiman's (2024) quantitative study examined Buhari's second term and found significant human rights violations, including censorship, intimidation of journalists and denial of access to state-held information. Buhari's Twitter ban generated more critical scholarship. Anyim (2021) investigated the implications of Twitter's ban on the economy, freedom of speech and information sharing while Ridwanullah et al (2024) explored the politicization of hate speech in the context of Nigeria's Twitter ban. Olomojobi & Okoro (2022) examined the constitutional complexity of the ban on free speech. Nigeria became "one of West Africa's most dangerous and difficult countries for journalists, who are often spied on, attacked, arbitrarily arrested or even killed" (RSF, 2022, 1). Buhari's clampdown on journalists and his administration's proclivity for intolerance for press freedom was also highlighted by CfR (2021). Freedom House (2023) ranked Nigeria as 'partly free' with incessant police attacks on the press (CPJ, 2022). Nigeria dropped 18 points on the global press ranking between 2015 and 2022 (RSF, 2022).

Year	Ranking	Gain/Loss
2014	112	+3
2015	111	+1
2016	116	-5
2017	122	-7
2018	119	+3
2019	120	-1
2020	115	+5
2021	120	-5
2022	129	-9

Figure 1: World Press Freedom Index (2014-2022). Source: Nigeria: RSF world press freedom ranking 2015-2022.

This paper challenges the above findings and contends that the political press in Nigeria are not mere bystanders whose reportage is free of bias and sensation. It therefore questioned the role of the liberal press play in speaking truth to power. This paper's contribution is that it explored the tension between the power of incumbency by a Northern president against a vocal southern press in a post-colonial African nation grappling with significant socio-economic challenges and declining trust in the press. It examined the nuances of a complicated relationship.

Methodology

To investigate press freedom during President Buhari's administration, this research focused on the political, legal and safety context within which the press functioned (RSF, 2024). The key questions included: Did the state allow the press to function, without obstructing journalists from holding government to account (political)? Were the press free to work without legislative sanctions and excessive regulatory bottlenecks (legal)?

And finally, were journalists protected from physical attacks, harassment, and maltreatment in the line of duty? I used semi-structured interviews to explore the lived experiences of practicing journalists between 2015 and 2023. This method not only aligns with the purpose of the study but is in sync with measures used by The Press Independence and Critical Ability (PICA), International Research and Exchanges Board (Becker, et al., 2007), Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2022) and Freedom House (Repucci & Slipowitz, 2022).

To recruit participants, two techniques were used: purposive sampling and snowballing technique. For the former, I email the political editors at *Punch, Guardian, Daily Trust* and *Tribune* newspapers. For the latter, I asked each editor to connect me with potential others. Both techniques enabled me to reach several journalists from different organizations with varied interests and experiences. I used WhatsApp video calls to conduct interviews for three reasons. Firstly, it gave participants the flexibility of fitting the interviews into their busy schedules. Secondly, it allowed time follow-up questions that would have been impossible through surveys. Finally, WhatsApp helped to overcome restrictions imposed by time, resources and space. In total, 19 interviews were conducted in June and July 2022 with three newspaper editors, nine reporters (Punch- 3, Guardian- 2, Tribune- 2, and Daily Trust- 2), four bloggers in Abuja and three freelance reporters. The newspapers are leading national dailies based on on-and offline circulation. All participants were based in Lagos and Abuja (Nigeria's former and current capital states respectively). Both locations represent Nigeria's two major press hubs- the Lagos/Ibadan press axis in the south and the Abuja/Kaduna axis in the north. Lagos and Abuja symbolize Nigeria's political, ethnic and religious melting pots. In line with best practice ethics, participation was voluntary. I assured participants of confidentiality and anonymity before the interviews commenced. Each participant was made aware of their right to withdraw from the interview at any point.

As practicing journalists, it was difficult to ascertain their political leanings or ideological biases. However, 13 men and six women participated. This disparity reflected the disproportionate overrepresentation of men in journalism in Lagos and Abuja. Similarly, only four participants identified as northerners while the rest were from the South (five from the East and 10 from the West). Again, this reflected the concentration of news organizations in Lagos and evidences the high number of Southerners in the industry. I used open-ended questions that probed the regulatory, political and economic factors that shaped Buhari's relations with the press. I also used the newsgame research tool, prescribed by the Glasgow Media Group (Kitzinger, 2008). Newsgame allowed the use of news content such as the 2015 Cybercrimes Act, Anti-social Media Bill, EndSARS protests, Twitter ban and Covid restrictions events as trigger points for discussion. All participants opted to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal. Comments and quotes are therefore presented in several ways throughout this paper to ensure anonymity.

I used thematic analysis to scrutinize gathered data to understand participants' divergent perspectives of press freedom under Buhari's administration. As indicated by

Bernard (2010), data was first transcribed before repeated sifting and rigorous synthesis into four silos- political, digital, regulatory and security. These were further scrutinized and developed into themes presented in the next section. Finally, findings were situated within the central purpose of this study- to understand the relational dynamics between press and politics during President Buhari's two-term tenure.

Analysis and discussion

Nigeria's reputation as possessing one of Africa's freest political press regressed during Buhari's eight-year rule. Although press freedom was precarious and fragile before 2015, this fragility deepened thereafter. Three agencies shaped the context of press freedom: firstly, the political press and its adversarial reporting, secondly; President Buhari and his political ideology; and finally, Nigerian factor, cut by authoritarianism, propaganda and violence. This section examined these intersections. Thereafter, I present the consequence on Nigeria's democracy. Although delineated by specifics, the analysis overlaps but provide a comprehensive understanding of state/press relations in Nigeria from 2015 to 2023. I shall thereafter summarize and conclude.

The Political Press in Lagos

Nigeria's political press is historically adversarial and largely based in Lagos. Their contributions included strong opposition to colonial rule and demilitarization of national politics in the 1990s. However, since democratization, their role has been contested. A few participants from Abuja navigated the political economy of the political press and situated its essential characteristic within three contexts. First, is the long tradition of adversarial journalism in Lagos, especially against national leaders generally and particularly those from the north. This combative nature developed after independence and matured during decades of military rule. A participant noted that 'Since 1999, the press in Lagos have remained overtly critical of government- be it Obasanjo's, Yar Adua and Jonathan's administration.' Another said, 'The press in Lagos is unsympathetic to the plight of the North. They'll rather criticize than put issues in context'. If these comments are accurate, they indicate a deliberate bias towards government, calculated at discrediting state policies and programs in the public sphere. While there is a broad mix of newsprints in the South, the point made by journalists based in Abuja is that the political press in Lagos has formed an editorial alliance against the north or any other part of the nation. 'This' according to her 'is why news coverage on any issues within Nigeria takes on a northern versus southern perspective.

   Second, participants flagged up the cutthroat competition in the press in the southwest and noted that news organizations generally and particularly in Lagos are driven by market demands that shape their content. A reporter said, 'The decision of Lagos-based newspapers to antagonize any government without objective reporting is not only historical but also linked to their commercial success.' The suggestion here is that commercial success is directly linked to critical views of government. Essentially, nothing sells in Lagos like bad news about the state! Another participant said:

> 'The Lagos press print what sells in Lagos and the South. They publish content that aligns with the perception and ideology that the South is superior to any other part of the nation. In so doing, they are not only adversarial but also sensational and condescending'.

Finally, and closely linked to the above, is the intersection of ethnicity and political ambitions. As noted by a participant, "Politicians from the South often use the vocal Lagos press as the conduit pipe through which they discredit sitting governments and position themselves in the public space as better alternatives." Another added that 'Media ownership extends beyond using the medium to educate, inform and entertain. Politics is at its core and influence is the priority. Put differently, the goal of owning a news title or controlling one is essentially political. It gives owners soft power that has political consequences. Whether in support of a political cause or to discredit another, media owners are not naïve, neutral or uninvolved. Though proprietors claim to have no role in shaping the content of their titles; just as news editors claim to be independent of editorial control, several participants assert that owners, editors and shareholders have invisible hands through which influence news content. With regards to the press in Lagos, the view from their colleagues in the north is that the political class in the South divided between the East and West have strong alliance with the Lagos press to the extent that both politicians and the press are beneficiaries of the union. The former contest and win elections while the latter are compensated with appointments in government.

Commercialization, the invisible hands of owners and overt adversarialism shapes the modus operandi of the political press significantly. It can therefore be argued that, to stay profitable, relevant and as a decisive moderating force, the press must act as an opposition party, attack state policies and expose government's shortcomings without adequate objectivity and context.

Buhari, underperformance and the press

After a decade and a half of democracy, discontentment and critical news reporting, President Buhari was elected in 2015 to fix high inflation, high unemployment and a crooked public system. His landslide electoral victory reflected public trust in his promise to end the war on terror, curb corruption and revitalize the economy. However, falling oil prices on the international market were partly responsible for his government's inability to meet its financial obligations and fulfil its electoral promises. This not only drove poverty incidence up by 69%, but it also increased unemployment to 24% (Animashaun, 2020). Although Buhari was initially seen as a better alternative, based on his anti-corruption campaign, his administration's inability to convert promises to tangible gains became problematic. One year into his government, the press picked on three defining issues and turned against his administration. Firstly, insecurity. Bandits and Boko Haram's attacks on state institutions and public spaces increased within Maiduguri (the epicenter of insurgency) and extended into other states in Northern

Nigeria, as far as Abuja- the nation's capital. According to a participant, 'A few months into Buhari's first term and all through his rule, banditry and violence continued across the North. Whatever Buhari did was ineffective'. Secondly, corruption. The state security apparatus- including the Nigerian Police Force as well as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission were seemingly active in uncovering fraud and financial crimes, most interviewed participants noted that such probes were politicized. They were used to prosecuting members of opposition parties. As noted by an Abuja participant, corruption doubled during Buhari's first year in office. By 2020, Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index ranked Nigeria 146th out of 180 countries, a ten-point drop from 136th place when Buhari was inaugurated in 2015. Finally, Nigeria's economy which had performed well between 2000 and 2014 had shrunk by 2020. A female participant said: 'The economy was not only stagnant but fell into recession just before Covid-19. HIs economic policies proved inadequate to improve Nigeria'.

Buhari's performance became the centerpiece of press reports in Abuja and Lagos. As noted by a participant, 'Public mood towards Buhari's government shifted from enthusiasm to disappointment and anger. Critical voices within the press also grew louder.' Though Buhari had warned, during his inaugural speech of the rot left by previous administrations and appealed to Nigerians to have realistic expectations and hopes, these did not matter much to the press, especially those in the South. Unable to keep pace with unrelenting media critics, Buhari's government resorted to ignoring the press. One participant noted that 'Unlike his predecessors who held media chats with journalists and often granted interviews, Buhari avoided the press. In six years, he did not grant a single presidential media chat. He occasionally spoke with foreign journalists but mainly communicated to local reporters through third parties and spokespersons.' As suggested by another participant, Buhari's unwillingness to speak to the public or grant press interviews was interpreted negatively. An Abuja-based participant said 'Buhari was either incompetent or overwhelmed or both'. It is on record that Buhari was out sick for lengthy periods during his first term, the president's silence and delay in appointing federal ministers fueled conspiracy theories in Lagos and beyond. A participant from Lagos said news reports that the president is unfit to govern or incapacitated became widespread.

On top of political underperformance and extended periods of non-engagement with the local press, a few participants highlighted factors peculiar to Buhari that shaped his government. Although his military record and reputation as a disciplined ruler in the 80s gained him public approval during his 2015 campaign, these attributes worked against him when in government. According to an online editor in Abuja, "Buhari is not a converted democrat. He is part of a privileged northern ruling class whose authoritarian ideology and disdain for human rights is deeply rooted in his background and military past. As a northerner, he believes he is destined to rule Nigeria. And as a former major general, he thinks little about civilians and civil rights.' Another participant said, "Buhari and his ministers were no newcomers to Nigerian politics. Although he

pretends, he is for freedom. He is not. He rules by fiat, fear and intimidation". One said, 'He is an old politician trapped in the 70s command and control mindset. He is unable to elevate his politics to accommodate contemporary realities such as press freedom and civil liberties'. Another said: 'Buhari was desperate for power but ill-prepared for the demands of public office in 2015 Nigeria. Rather than surround himself with technocrats, he mainly appointed Northerners.'

According to a Lagos-based participant, 'Buhari claimed to be a 'converted democrat' ready to follow the democratic process; in power, he used legislative, digital and police intimidation to curtail freedom'. Another participant said: Buhari is uncomfortable with criticism and will do almost everything to contain dissent, whether on- or offline". The overwhelming view among participants is that Buhari's performance fell short of expectations. They claim he was quick to disregard a core pillar of liberal democracy-press freedom. Rather than defend democracy, participants asserted that the government attacked activists and journalists because they deemed the press unsympathetic and disruptive. These comments and others like them point to a perception held by participants that Buhari was too conservative and rigid. His government's actions (or inactions) were interpreted as a deliberate, calculated and systematic attack of any individual and/or organization that questioned their underperformance. Buhari's government conceived the political press as intrusive and invasive.'

By the end of his first tenure in office, the political press and the president were at war. To some Abuja-based participants, press criticism of the president as well as the combative nature of the Lagos/Ibadan press was confrontational. One participant from Abuja noted that there was evidence of state underperformance, but the press in Lagos was relenting in their critique of government. One participant questioned why most Lagos newspapers resorted to calling a sitting president, 'a military general'! He referenced *Punch* newspaper's editorial of Dec. 11, 2019, that said:

> "*As a symbolic demonstration of our protest against autocracy and military-style repression, PUNCH (all our print newspapers, Punch, Saturday Punch, Sunday Punch, Punch Sports Extra, and digital platforms, most especially Punchng.com) will henceforth pre Buhari's name with his rank as a military dictator in the 80s, Major General, and refer to his administration as a regime, until they purge themselves of their insurable contempt for the rule of law.*"

This stand, he believed, is proof of an ill-disposed, confrontation and combative press. A few Abuja-based participants also expressed concerns about unrestricted press freedom- one that they believe was responsible for setting the polity alight. Quoting Buhari, a participant said:

> "*…disinformation has the potential to rupture relationships, sow seeds of discord, and set on the path to destabilization. When fake and hate news is added*

unabashedly, it can only signpost doom.' Another participant said: that Buhari at the NBA 2018 national conference said the rule of law must be subjected to nation's security and national interest."

Both comments indicate the dangers of what they perceived as unfettered freedom within the Lagos press in a country with a history of ethnic suspicion, civil war and ongoing calls for cessation in the Eastern part.

Buhari's frosty relationship with the press can therefore be interpreted as a sign of his disagreement and displeasure. Several participants noted that Buhari expected the press to join forces with his administration in his version of national development, but the press had other ideas. A participant said: 'Buhari's main objective was to make the press downplay the government's shortcomings and present a narrative of steady progress and development but that did not happen. According to another participant, 'We were on his side for a few months but when the economy did not improve, insecurity did not decrease and progress was slow and inconsistent, we (journalists) had to voice our concerns'. Another said, 'Our allegiance is to the public, not to any government or special interest.' In retaliation, participants said the government resorted to old military tactics of repressive censorship, police brutality, restricted access to state-held information, intimidation and silencing radical news sites. I unpacked these below.

Digital Surveillance of Political Journalism

In 2015, Buhari's government introduced the Cybercrime Act as a legislative instrument to prohibit, detect, prosecute and punish cybercrimes. On the surface, it empowered law enforcement to act decisively using surveillance and intervention when required; and allowed the state to clamp down on agencies deemed suspicious and malicious. In practice, however, participants noted that it gave government sweeping powers to infringe on free speech and press freedom. Most participants said Section 22 criminalized online defamation of character, while Section 24 penalized 'cyber-stalking'. A Lagos-based participant said 'Cyber-stalking was vaguely defined while news, even if factual, was labelled by the state as 'offensive', 'intimidating' or 'hateful' and used to haunt journalists. Another said, 'Section 22 was used to justify my arrest twice. They claimed my articles were defamatory, but I was accurate and factual.' A third participant added that his colleagues were picked up and locked up without due process. Evidence of his claims was reported in the press: (*Premium Times*, 12/1/18 & 22/7/22). The Act also legalized the interception of electronic messages of any citizen and mandated internet service providers to 'monitor, store, intercept, block and provide customer's information to state security operations upon request. A few participants said it was used to spy on them and block news sites deemed offensive. One said, 'I know of several news sites that published factual news about IPOB but were deleted by their internet service providers acting on strict instructions from above.' According to a blogger, "People Gazette was blocked for publishing a damning article that implicated the upper echelons of Buhari's administration over mishandling classified information." Most

participants added that digital clampdowns on activists and sites deemed radical were carried out on a large scale. Although the state did not exercise technical control over internet infrastructure, they used Internet Service Providers to monitor controversial content, especially in 2020. In June 2021, Buhari's government banned Twitter (now X) for six months in retaliation to the platform's temporal suspension of the president's account. Twitter alleged that Buhari violated its community's guidelines while Buhari accused Twitter of infringing his right to free speech. (see Guardian, 12/1/22).

Regulatory Authoritarianism

A significant number of participants said press regulators were empowered to censor and punish news organizations that criticized the state. In 2019, the Nigerian Broadcast Commission ordered the indefinite suspension of Daar Communications PLC over an alleged breach of the broadcasting code (See Punch, 6/6/19). Specifically, Daar was punished for airing a pro-opposition interview. A participant said 'The move showed the dangerous extent to which the state went to stifle free speech'. They also agreed that the Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC) with oversight responsibility over telecommunications was weaponized to punish the press. After Twitter's ban, the NCC Act was amended to enable NBC to impose license fees on all online broadcasters. A participant said news organizations were instructed by the state in 2021 to stop reporting details on the war against Boko Haram and bandits because giving such details would fuel public anxiety and harm national security (See World Report, 2021). That same year, NBC fined Channels TV and Arise TV for covering EndSARS demonstrations (See ICIR, 2021). It again, fined Channels TV in Lagos following an interview it granted Nnamdi Kanu, leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). NBC also fined MultiChoice Nigeria for airing a BBC's Africa Eye documentary titled, "Bandits Warlords of Zamfara (ThisDay, 5/3/22). By contrast, participants noted that news organizations, whether the state or privately owned who supported government were protected. According to a participant, 'Put plainly, those who served state interest, served as government's mouthpieces were untouched.' In 2019, the National Assembly introduced the Anti-Social Media Bill, designed as a regulatory measure to criminalize the use of social media in peddling 'false' or 'malicious information'. Participants queried what "What falsehood is" "Whose definition?" "In whose interest?" Pressure from the Nigerian Union of Journalists, Nigerian Guild of Editors, Newspaper Proprietors Association Nigeria, international press freedom agencies and social-justice activists made legislators put the Bill on indefinite hold in 2021 (See Premium Times, 19/11/19).

Police Brutality

Routine harassment of journalists is a constant in Nigeria. A few participants shared their first-hand experience of police violence throughout Buhari's rule. Some evidenced police brutality by showing images of their damaged cameras and destroyed equipment. A Lagos reporter said 'Reporting the pandemic was fraught with complications with the use of excessive force on me and my colleagues without bringing perpetrators into

account.' A journalist from Abuja said, 'strong-arm tactics were used to enforce compliance during lockdown'. She added further that, "It was nearly impossible to work during the pandemic due to unprecedented threats by the police. In some cases, I was beaten and detained." Another participant said, her life was threatened by gun-wielding police officers. A Lagos journalist said, 'In 2020 alone, more than 60 journalists were arrested and prosecuted; three were killed, 34 were assaulted, three press organizations invaded and four television stations were fined.' Another participant said 'A public examples of police brutality included the unlawful arrest of Omoleye Sowore- founder of Sahara Reporter- an online investigative news platform. Sowore was unlawfully detained for 125 days.' (see Campbell, 2021). In October 2020, the Nigerian Army used live ammunition on peaceful demonstrators including reporters at Lekki toll gate- a suburb in Lagos state. A Lagos-based participant noted that 'Over 25 demonstrators lost their lives with many more missing and/or injured. More than 50 youths, including journalists, were arraigned in courts in Lagos and Abuja over their alleged involvement in the Lekki demonstration'. At first, authorities in Lagos and Abuja denied local reports of casualties and accused CNN's report of Lekki as irresponsible. A month after Lekki, all parties, including the military admitted to using excessive. In the immediate aftermath of the Lekki shooting, portions of *The Nation newspaper, TVC television station, African Independent Television (AIT) and Ray Power* radio station in Lagos were set ablaze. According to a participant: "This recklessness at Lekki is a direct attack on the rule of law, press freedom and public right to demonstrate'. News organizations attacked in Abuja included *Premium Times* and *Daily Trust* (See RSF 2021, Premium Times 12/1/19). A participant noted that "… these assaults were linked to reports that the Nigerian Army suffered heavy casualties against Boko Haram' (*Premium Times*, 23/9/18). Another said, 'Rather than fight insurgents, the military resorted to raids, arrests and intimidation… rather than win the war against Boko Haram, the Nigerian military is fighting the press.'

Why and of what consequence to Nigeria's democracy?

Buhari's eight-year rule was characterized by an intolerant state against the nuances of a sectional political press. Despite existing legal and international instruments as well as extensive commitment by his administration to enforce press freedom, the press was neither free nor independent. They operated in a heavily contested space cut by authoritarianism and clampdowns. The press on their part engaged in disinformation, misinformation and sensational reporting aimed at destabilizing the state. This section presents two consequences of tension between the press and power.

The major consequence on democracy of Buhari's complex relations with the political press reveals the impotence of Nigeria's state institutions, particularly of regulators, legislators and the judiciary. Despite explicit constitutional instruments that spell out the limits of power, boundaries of authority and separation of duties; executive office holders, with the president at the top, arrogated to themselves, excessive, largely unchecked authority. Although this is not new to Nigerian politics, Buhari's administration took it to a new level. One participant called it 'military-style

democracy.' His party's (APC) majority seats at the National Assembly (upper and lower legislative houses in Abuja from 2015 to 2023) allowed his government to act with minimum accountability or checks and balance. Another participant said, 'By proxy, the presidency controlled the National Assembly and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). He single-handedly appointed the Independent National Electoral Commissioner- Mahmood Yakubu, handpicked the Chief Justice of the Federation- Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad, directed government-owned broadcasters-NTA, FRCN… and had the national security apparatus at his behest.' While these were not outrightly illegal, his control over these institutions allowed his government to treat civil liberties, including press freedom with disregard. He placed his actions and his party's interest above the public's need to know. And his silence in the press was unprecedented.' Several attempts by what was left of press to engage Buhari's administration were met with silence or rejection. .

Nigeria's politicized state bodies- the Nigerian Police Force, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, the Nigerian Judiciary and Federal Ministries were subservient to the executives. The criminal justice system was at the beck and call of the government and was conditioned to protect the incumbent government. A participant noted that 'the 2019 election was controversial majorly because the president appointed the Independent National Electoral Commission commissioner which amounts to a case of conflict of interest'. Other participants expressed similar concerns. Another said, 'Nigerian politics is loyalty politics. Your loyalty to the party in power or to a particular 'big politician' determines your experience. If you are with the ruling party, you are sorted.' A few participants warned of the dangers to Nigeria's democracy when legislators either take sides with executives or are complacent to illiberal practices by executives. Others expressed concerns over the Independent National Electoral Commission's vulnerability to executive pressure.

Second and consequent upon the first is the widespread culture of self-censorship within the press. A blogger called it, 'the deliberate effort to stay politically correct to avoid state reprisal. It was the unwritten law of self-preservation.' During Buhari's time in office, self-censorship was driven home by three main developments. First was the government's attack on activists in the southeast region and the Southwest. Leading critics like Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Igboho were arrested, detained and charged for inciting public disorder. Second was the attack on free speech. Twitter's ban evidenced the government's intolerance. The state's reaction to youth protests and public demonstrations during and after ENDSARS was intimidating. According to a participant, ENDSARS protests in 2020 and pocket of demonstrations before it was construed by the government as anarchy, disintegration and rebellion that must be contained'. Another blogger said she lost two friends during ENDSARS to stay-police bullets. Deadly reprisals by the state indicated that the government preferred journalists to focus elsewhere. Organizations such as Twitter and Channels TV that reported these events were suspended and/or fined. Finally, coverage of state inefficiency and corruption was deemed out of order. A reporter said: 'News about the president's bad health, his

excessive foreign travels, ethicized ministerial appointments, reporting of COVID cases, palliative disaster and northernization of key political offices were met with aggression.' Whether it was reporting the pandemic, open grazing policy, insurgency or unemployment, the regime was not only uncomfortable but also, keen to retaliate.

Press owners also enforced significant self-censorship in their titles, partly due to fear of state attack, commercial alliances and political connections. Self-censorship was therefore not just about the political state and professional expectations of blurring footage of murder, massacres and content deemed inappropriate for children; it was also out of deference to or fear of some owners. An Abuja based participant noted that 'My editor made sure we are politically correct before we go to press. No more entanglement with the government was his mantra'. This according to her was after several unpleasant visits by the police to their press outfit. Another said, 'In the private outfit where I work in Lagos, the owners have large ears and are listening. There is no room for political criticism, even when the facts point out the obvious.' Market expectations may have also played a role. Whether to avoid advertisers' backlash or the displeasure of shareholders, a large portion of newspaper owners, especially mainstream news organizations were influenced to place their bottom line above the public's need to know. Overwhelmingly, however, the government's attack on press freedom shaped self-censorship the most. Participants agreed that Buhari's intimidation entrenched a culture of passivity across legacy press outfits and attempted to replicate the same on social media. To avoid jail, fines or lengthy court cases, news was redacted, deselected, concealed, falsified or outrightly ignored by some reporters. A newspaper journalist said, 'Several of my critical reports were not published. I had to drop the 'critical' in my reporting when my job was threatened. She cited the limited coverage of bandit attacks and Boko Haram insurgency as the outcome of an official directive by the broadcasting regulator- NBC.

Self-censorship has detrimental consequences on democracy. Although difficult to quantify in the Nigerian context, it limits the power of the press to act as the Fourth Estate when shackled in this way. A reporter said, 'A caged press is complacent with democratic authoritarianism and accommodates information blackouts. The press can hardly bark, talk less bite.' Self-censorship robs the public of vital information required for democratic citizenship. This deficit may have allowed Buhari and his executive allies to function with little scrutiny. Democracy empowers elected public servants to steer the state in specific directions, but the press should play its constitutional, watchdog role. As noted by Sen (2003), journalism performs a critical political role. Without critical journalism, democracy is starved of information flow, dialogues, debates, ideas, critics and reform. Democratic consolidation is at risk in Nigeria or elsewhere if self-censorship remains a survival tool kit.

Conclusion

This paper examined press freedom in Nigeria under President Mohammadu Buhari's watch from 2015 to 2023. As its starting point, it situated Nigeria's fragile democracy

within the context of democratic decline across West Africa. It linked the emergence of populist leaders and democratic dictators to declining press freedom. It also highlighted the dangers of unrestricted freedom of the press and its complexity in ethnically polarized nations in Africa. It thereafter turned its attention to the evolution and theory of press freedom, noting the distinction between the American liberal system and the socially responsible press traditions common in Western Europe. Using three of Freedom House's indicators as a methodological prism through which the extent to which Buhari's government helped of hindered press freedom was probed, data was gathered through 19 semi-structured interviews with reporters, editors and bloggers to unpack press freedom between 2015 and 2023. Findings indicate a significant decline in press freedom during Buhari's eight-year rule. External proofs of this decline included Nigeria's 18-point decline from 111 in 2015 to 129 in the global press freedom ranking in 2022 (RSF, 2022) and reports of extensive crackdown on journalists by CPJ (2023). This study found evidence of persistent digital authoritarianism, increased regulatory surveillance and incessant attacks on journalists and news organizations. While these are not new in Nigeria, Buhari conservatism and militarist leadership style further stifled freedom. Similarly, the press in the Lagos/Ibadan axis also operated with a combative, ideological, regional and editorial agenda that was overtly critical of Buhari and the North and its leadership in general. While both sides (Buhari and the press) claimed to act in public interest in their capacities as elected representatives of the people and as society's watchdog, tensions between the two revealed the impotence of Nigeria's state agencies, namely the justice system. The weakness of the courts, police force to act in a depoliticized manner point up their vulnerability and fragility. Therefore, self-censorship not only became the survival toolkit within the news industry but also a subtle way through which the press avoided controversies, even when such cases were of public interest. Shacked this way, Nigeria's democracy is at risk of information blackout, disinformation and misinformation. Importantly, cleavages in the interpretation of what press freedom is between the state and news professionals may further complicate an already complicated relationship between executive office holders and the liberal press. Importantly, an Afrocentric definition of press freedom, one that questions Western liberal notions of freedom on one hand while on the other hand, understanding the needs and peculiarities of post-colonial, democratic Africa is of crucial importance. Importantly also, state agencies that are institutes enforce constitutional guarantee and protect rights and privileges needs to be strengthened.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they have no financial interest in this manuscript.

Notes on Contributors

Dr. Victor Jatula's research is located in the general field of press and politics. He explores media studies, democracy and development. It is problem-based and relies on

qualitative and empirical data collection methods. The key research focus is economic and political development with a particular emphasis on the political economy of the mass media. Specifically, it investigates factors that foster or hinder democratic processes, political participation and social development. It also examines the role of communication in such spaces and societies. His overarching focus is press and politics; and how this interconnection underpins social changes and development in emerging democracies.

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Banditry and its Implications on Food Security in Northwest Nigeria: A Reflection on the Roles of the State[1]

Kamal Olaniyi Lamidi[2]

Abstract:

The major threat to the realization of poverty eradication and food security through adequate domestic food production in Nigeria today is insecurity. Farmers/herdsmen conflict and operation of the bandits in the rural communities have negatively affected the livelihood of millions of rural dwellers whose activities is to cater for immediate family needs. It is on this note that the paper reflects on the efforts of Nigerian State to manage the insecurity problem for sustainable food production and reducing hunger and poverty. To achieve the paper objective the secondary source of data was employed to serve as means of analysis. By examining and analysing the data, this paper contends that the Nigeria state is not well coordinated in their approaches to curtail security problems instigated by bandits and farmers-herders violence. The criminals took advantage of uncoordinated response of the government to establish themselves and constitute security threats to rural communities across the country. The rural dwellers that are used to the system of producing food for family survival year-in-year-out were either kidnapped or displaced or killed by non state actors. This invariably reduced food production and increase level of poverty and hunger. The paper thus, concludes that if the current security situation is not properly addressed, it will hinder the chance of achieving SDGs, most especially hunger and poverty in Nigeria. The paper recommends among others that the government should be consistent in their approach to security problems and recognized the right of the victims.

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Introduction

The tool for the realization of poverty reduction and hunger elimination in Nigeria today is sustainable agriculture. The reason is that the sector is dominated by small scale farming system. This system involves about 95% of Nigerian farmers, while farmers employed on corporate and government supported large-scale farms account for only about 5 percent (Mgbenka & Mbah, 2016). Small scale farmers are critical stakeholders in crop production and farm enterprises due to their roles right from land clearing up to produce marketing. Over 12 million of them were scattered in rural areas across the country and carried out their farming activities on a farm holding ranging mostly ranging from one to two hectares (Chiaka, 2022). They produced 90 percent of total production in the country (Olalekan, 2020). This invariably explained why the agricultural sector form part of the tools adopted to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) programme for poverty eradication as well as hunger reduction in Nigeria.

Effort to increase the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale farmers, especially among the vulnerable ones, requires an enabling environment. Sustainable farming system depends on the ability of the government to ensure a peaceful co-habitation of producer communities. The primary obligation of the government is to ensure peaceful co-existence among different land users in the rural communities in Nigeria.

The major threat to the realization of adequate domestic food production in Nigeria today is insecurity. The activities of the Boko Haram insurgents, farmers/herdsmen conflict, banditry and kidnappers have had negative impact on agricultural activities. In the affected rural communities, the farming activities were suspended, domestic food production is subdued, farming communities are displaced and access to regional market become impossible (Eigege & Cooke, 2016) due to incessant attacks. The destructive impacts of insecurity are antithetical to farming activities with high consequence on existing poverty level and food security as well as food shortages profile of Nigeria. The violent activities related to herdsmen have grounded agro-economic activities in most of the communities involved across the country. The dimensions of this violence demonstrate lack of connectivity between the government and rural communities' activities in the country.

Meanwhile, Nigeria has been a focal point of insecurity due to the activities of insurgent groups, banditry, and kidnappings, which have destabilized communities and disrupted agricultural production in Northern part of the country. The rural community, known for its substantial contributions to the country's food supply, is now facing significant declines in farming activities due to threats to farmers' safety and the destruction of their farmlands by bandits. This has led to reduced food production, supply chain disruptions, increased food prices, and heightened hunger.

Thus, this paper intends to answer the following questions:

i.   How has a banditry activity in Nigeria affected food security?

ii.   What roles has the Nigerian state played in addressing the problem of banditry?

Answer to these questions require an understanding of the contribution of banditry to food production and overall security of rural communities with focus on the effectiveness of state interventions in mitigating the adverse effects of insecurity on agriculture and food production in Northern part of Nigeria. Findings will inform strategies to restore agricultural productivity and strengthen food security in the region.

Theoretical Framework

System theory was developed by Austrian biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1930s, to explain how systems function as complex, interrelated wholes, whether in biology, social sciences, or engineering. This theory influenced a wide range of fields by focusing on how components interact within a system and how changes in one part can affect the entire system (Bertalanffy, 1968).

System theory views societies as interconnected entities, where changes in one part affect the whole. In Nigeria, insecurity, including violence and kidnappings, disrupts agricultural production, leading to food scarcity. The state's role, according to system theory, is to ensure security to maintain the balance between food production and distribution. Failure to address security challenges can trigger a ripple effect, exacerbating poverty and hunger.

Thus, the government plays a central role in managing the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria, particularly concerning food production. In this context, the government acts as a central system responsible for regulating the interactions between farmers and herders. The government is expected to develop policies that promote equitable access to resources such as land and water, which are primary sources of tension and conflict between the two groups. This can include creating land-use policies that clearly define grazing routes and farmland, thus minimizing disputes. According to Okoli and Atelhe (2014), poor land management and unclear property rights contribute to conflicts between farmers and herders, threatening food security by disrupting farming cycles.

Also, the government is expected to implement conflict resolution mechanisms, such as mediation and peace-building efforts, aimed at preventing violence. The government can bring both farmers and herders to negotiate peaceful coexistence through dialogue and legal interventions (Adamu & Ben, 2017). These conflict-resolution systems equally expected to help stabilize the agricultural economy, preventing losses in crop and livestock production. Therefore, the government needs to invest in security infrastructure, including law enforcement and surveillance, in conflict-prone areas. This is because the absence of a reliable security apparatus allows these conflicts to escalate unchecked, affecting food production as farming communities are displaced, and herders lose livestock (Ezeabasili, 2020). And to maintain food production and ensure that affected communities rebuild their agricultural activities, the government is expected to play a crucial role in conflict management, offering compensation and rehabilitation to victims of farmer-herder conflicts (Ibrahim & Umar, 2021).

Historical overview of Banditry

Banditry in Nigeria has roots extending back to pre-colonial and colonial periods, evolving from localized acts of cattle rustling and raids on settlements to the modern forms of organized crime and violence. Historically, banditry was often linked to economic survival and socio-political resistance, especially in the northern regions where pastoralist communities and agrarian societies had longstanding tensions. The colonial government's repressive policies disrupted traditional socio-economic structures, increasing rural discontent and incentivizing bandit-like resistance to colonial rule (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014).

Post-independence Nigeria saw a rise in rural banditry driven by socio-economic factors like poverty, unemployment, and the failure of governance, which further marginalized rural populations (Bashir, 2017). In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, as Nigeria's population grew and resources became increasingly scarce, banditry escalated, with armed groups carrying out raids, kidnappings, and cattle rustling. Poor policing, lack of resources, and inadequate response from the government compounded these issues, leading to greater lawlessness and insecurity in northern Nigeria (Higazi & Ali, 2018).

Recently, banditry has intensified due to the proliferation of small arms, conflicts between farmers and herders, and weak state presence, which allowed bandits to control vast rural areas, affecting millions. Modern banditry has become a complex criminal enterprise, with armed groups exploiting local grievances to gain legitimacy (Nnamani & Chidi, 2021).

However, these banditry gangs terrorize and dispose of local people in their communities or travelers of their valuable items or properties such as farm produces, money, cattle, camel, and sheep, among others. They operate within and outside rural communities with the assistance of informants which in some instances include state agents deployed to protect lives and properties of the people (Abdullahi, 2019). These criminal groups' activities in Northwest, Nigeria have destroyed the livelihood of several millions of people living. For instance, the activity of Bandits claimed 614,937 people live across the country between May 2023 and April 2024. The northwest recorded the highest figure with 206,030, followed by the northeast with 188,992, while the southwest accounted for the least 15,693 (Kabir, 2024).

The Nexus between State and Food Security

To establish the nexus between the state and food security, there is need to understand the relationship between the state and security. The reason is not far from the fact that the concept of security is now synonymous to human security because what constitutes threat to human existence goes beyond a threat from other states. Therefore, the nexus between the state and security is foundational, the primarily responsible of the state is to maintain order and safeguard its citizens. The concept of security encompasses

protection against both internal and external threats, ensuring the stability necessary for socio-economic development and public welfare (Buzan, 1991). States deployed different apparatuses such as policy, the police, military, as well as other security and intelligence agencies to establish firm control and protect against any acts that can constitute a threat to the stability of the societies. The categorization of states either as weak or failing states, often marked by inadequate security measures and corruption, struggle to protect their citizens, resulting in higher vulnerability to crime, terrorism, and other forms of violence (Rotberg, 2004). Thus, a state's ability to provide comprehensive security influences its stability, legitimacy, and effectiveness in fulfilling its social contract with the people.

States have vital roles in the realization of food security and elimination of hunger and poverty. Though the state is not mandated to feed its population directly, they expected to ensure a smooth and unbreakable channel for every citizen to access food. This is affirmed by the World Food Summit (1996) position, where it stated state needs to demonstrate its capacity to guarantee an environment where citizens would pursue their livelihood activities. As a provider of the public good, it is expected from the state to ensure that the public goods needed by the societies to remain peaceful and prosperous are available (Paarlberg, 2002). The international Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights (CECSR) asserts that "the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger" (UNHR/FAO, 2010:7) and specifies actions to be undertaken by nations to ensure freedom from hunger. These actions include improvement of methods of production, conservation and distribution of food while also achieving "the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources" (UNHR/FAO, 2010) through improvement in the production side of food system.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2002) has declared that the right to food is a human right and not a political option that governments can choose to implement or ignore. Acknowledging this means obligations for governments. It is not normal for the governments to observe their obligations arising from economic and commercial agreements on the international level at the detriment of ligations regarding human rights, which are, moreover, often incompatible with trade agreements.

Then, the State has the primary obligation to protect and promote this right. The core obligation of the state is to take necessary action to mitigate and alleviate hunger as provided for in Paragraph 2 of article II of the Covenant, even in times of natural or other disasters. Every state is expected to ensure that everyone under its jurisdiction has access to the minimum essential food, which is sufficient, nutritionally adequate and safe, to ensure his/her freedom from hunger. These obligations are defined and guaranteed by both local and international law. The state obligation, according to FAO (2010) is divided into three categories, namely, the obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill.

States must respect people's existing access to food and means of obtaining food. This means that any measure which results in preventing access to food is prohibited. This obligation requires states not to take any measures that would hinder or prevent

individuals from having access to adequate and nutritious food. The right holders are at liberty of lawful and safe food. This can only be ensured via regular review of national policies and programs related to food to ensure that they effectively respect the equal right of everyone to food (Manitra *et al*, 2011).

Secondly, states must protect individual's enjoyment of the right to food against violations by the third parties. In addition to the state prevention of third parties from destroying sources of food, it is also an obligation of the state to ensure that food put in the market is safe and nutritious. States must therefore establish and enforce food quality and safety standards. A state must also consider its international legal obligations regarding the right to food when entering into agreements with other states or with international organizations (FAO, 2012).

Lastly, in the obligation to fulfill the right to food, the states must be proactive in strengthening people's access to and use of resources and means of ensuring their livelihoods, including food security. Typical measures include the implementation of agrarian reform programs or minimum income regulations. Meanwhile, in a situation where an individual or groups are unable (due to reasons above his power) to enjoy the right to food by the means at their disposal, the state has the obligation to provide it (FAO, 2012). Out of these three obligations mentioned above, protection is going to serve as parameters upon which this paper reflects on the role of the Nigeria state in food security in current insecurity situation.

The Nigeria Rural Communities and their Potential for Food Security

Attempt to address the objective of this study requires proper understanding of the characteristics of Nigeria and its population, most especially in rural communities. Nigeria is a country in the Sub-Saharan Africa with population of 213 million. The population distribution between the urban and rural areas of the country shows that significant percentage of the population resides in the rural communities (Sunday, 2023). These populations rely on agricultural related activities as a means of livelihood. In Nigeria economies, agriculture occupies an essential position. The sector drives economic growth and accounts for 70 per cent of the country's workforce and majority of this workforce reside in rural communities across the country. Farming occupation that account for 80 per cent of these farmers are smallholder farmers out of which 70 per cent are women and 30 per cent are male. Smallholder farming system characterized Nigerian food production. Majority of smallholder farmers are in the rural communities across the country. They produced 90 per cent of agricultural produce (Adedotun nd). The mode of operation of smallholder farmers is unique and essential to the realization of hunger reduction. Smallholder farmers produce a variety of foods in sufficient quantities to enable all household members to eat a nutritional diet as well as to have sustainable access to food supply (Faber and Wenhold, 2007).

In Nigeria, the activities of smallholder farmers are categorized into two. The first category is crops produced by farmers. They produce crops for domestic consumption. It is family needs that usually determine what to plant, the scale of production and

where the plots of farmland should be located. The farming activities are carried out by individual owners which could be supported with minor hired labour or exchange labour with other farmers using little modern techniques of farming system. Smallholder farmers source for factors of production within his/her family (Dunmoye, 1989; Mgbenka & Mbah, 2016). These farmers take care mainly the food needs of the farm family and produces little surplus for sale. The central objective of this category of farmers is to take care of their family food needs and sell the little that remains.

The second category is livestock producers. This is the second largest agricultural sub-sector that contributes 5 per cent of the agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The common livestock animals in Nigeria are poultry birds, cattle, small ruminates like goats, sheep. The federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, (Edward & Samuel, 2020) put the figure of livestock produced in Nigeria annually as follows; 180 million poultry birds, 76 million goats, 43.4 million sheep, 18.4 million cattle, 7.5 million pigs, 1.4 million horses and donkeys put together. 85 per cent and 81 per cent of rural households keep poultry birds and small ruminants respectively. The rural households keep an average size of 6 small ruminants and 6 birds, and they were raised in free range production system. Its serves as source of nutrition as well as safe net that help smallholder farmer to complement their source of income especially when there is low yield from their crops. In fact, as the beginning of farming season, some farmer sold their livestock to acquire agricultural inputs for their farms.

Rural women take a lead in livestock production in Nigeria. They rear and manage these animals in their backyard because doing that requires minimal time and capital to start and run. The livestock production provides income to women most especially those constrained women by socio-cultural and religious factors to meet their financial obligations. They rear these animals for the purpose raising income to complement their income from surplus crops production. In many instances, the income generated from livestock by these farmers is used to secure agricultural inputs for their farms at the beginning of farming season and other expenses (Ikore, 2022).

In livestock production, herdsmen play a significant role. They constitute the major breeders of cattle which serve as main source of meat consumed by Nigerians. Fulani herdsmen own over 90 per cent of the nation's livestock population. And contribute 3.2 per cent of the nation's GDP. This contribution strategically put herdsmen as stakeholder in the process of achieving food security in the country. According to Lawal-Adebowale (2012), the larger proportions of these cattle population are raised through the traditional method whereby cattle are moved from one place to the other in search of food, mainly grasses and water. The cattle farmers migrate toward south during dry season and toward north during wet season in search of better pasture, and water. Their movement, in most cases, lead to conflicts since these grazing lands do not belong to them, the herders faced with challenges, such as trespass to land and cattle eating farmers' crops, which further escalate into violence and insecurity (Ajayi et al, 2023). Thus, if anything alters the existing smallholder farmers' arrangement, there will be a steep drop in food production, hunger and poverty will mount up.

An overview of factors responsible for banditry and its implications on food security

In Nigeria, majority of violent and conflicts happened in rural communities. The conflicts are more pronounced in the rural communities than urban cities because, the perpetrator of these conflicts and violent take advantage of negligence of government at all levels in rural communities' development to establish, nurture their criminal gangs that later turned to a threat to the country.

Since return of democracy in 1999, Nigeria is facing series of security challenges instituted by non-state actors. These actors range from Niger Delta Militant, The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOB) to Boko Haram, Farmer/Herder Conflict, and Banditry. The mode of operation and the motive behind their formations of these groups varies. In the north, Boko Haram, banditry and farmer/herders conflict operation is more of rural communities than the cities. Except for Boko Haram that started it activities in Borno and Yobe states capital, other nonstate actors' origin are highly connected with rural communities. For instance, Niger Delta militancy emerged because of perceived marginalization and environmental degradation in Nigeria's oil rich states in Niger delta region. The militants who are mainly youths from host communities carried out their activities by targeting oil installations, engaging in oil bunkering as well as kidnapping of oil workers to demand a fair share of oil revenue. Thus, their activities were largely political, economic injustice and exploitation by the state and multinational corporation (Ikelegbe, 2010).

On the other hand, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a secessionist movement that struggles for the establishment of the independent Biafran State as a follow up for the historical Biafran War (1967-1970). The movement was rooted in political exclusion and ethno-nationalist ideology. Their initial mode of operation was peaceful protests and later metamorphous into confrontations with law enforcement including sit at home orders. The emergence of armed factions like the Eastern Security Network (ESN) from IPOB, make the movement more violence in nature (Onuoha, 2021).

Also, Boko Haram emerged as Islamic ideology with aim of rejecting western education and establishing a strict Islamic state. Looking at its mode of operation, Boko Haram remains one of Africa's deadliest terror groups defined by extreme violence, suicide bombings, mass abductions as well as control of territories which constitute a threat to state sovereignty (Zenn, 2014). The farmer-herder conflict is another security challenge that occurs between herders and farming communities across the country. The conflict is primarily driven by struggle over land and grazing routes. Though, this conflict is not ideological driven but is rooted in climate change, desertification, population

growth and week governance were identifying as factors responsible for the conflict (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014).

The persistence of conflict between farmers and herders was attributed to method of cattle rearing in Nigeria. The livestock rearing in Nigeria involves movement of cattle from one location to another location in search for grazing pasture. In this process, cattle move into farmland, eating up crops and destroying the livelihood of farm owners. The resistance of farmers and local communities often resulted in a serious conflict that claimed lives, properties as well as displacement of thousands of people across the country (Okpaleke, 2016). Recall that the causes of these conflicts are combination of many factors. But the common factor is population expansion in Nigeria. Nigeria population is one fast growing population in the world; this equally required an expansion in food production to meet the increasing demand for food. As a result, the routes initially designated for cattle, dated back to the 1950s, in line with colonial arrangements, have been overrun by new human settlements pushing herders further into contested territories (Orji, 2021). The farmers' cultivation encroaches into traditional cattle grazing routes forcing herdsmen cattle to trample on crops cultivation by farmers result in escalation conflicts.

On the other hand, banditry has equally capitalized on disconnection between the government and rural communities to carry out their terror activities against the rural dwellers. Their mode of operation includes attacking, killing, robbing villagers and travellers, cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom and sexual violence. Northwest and North-central are seriously affected by the activities of the bandits. The violent act of the gangs has created fear and insecurity among rural communities. In the rural communities, these gangs are so bold to the extent that they sent notification to villages ahead of their attacks and for farmers to access their farmlands; the bandits impose tax on farmers. For instance, resident of Kidandan village in Kaduna state were asked to pay between N70,00 and N100,000 before they can harvest their farm produce (Mohammed, 2023), while in Katsina State, some communities were asked by bandits to contribute N200,000, N300,000 and N500,000 respectively to them before they can access their farms (Godwin, 2024). Many villages were attacked because of their inability to pay imposed tax as well as buying them motorcycles and cell phones. The communities' that raised the money and paid were either attacks by another faction of bandits or the same faction that collected the money few weeks later. Like this is issue of forcing residence of villages to work on their farm. The bandits, to raised funds to sustain their activities, in some communities, established their own farms and asked farmers to work on their farm first before working in their own farms. They sent message to community leaders requesting for specific number of farmers to work on their farms. Where they failed to comply with such request, the bandits will attack such villages (Emergency Digest, 2024).

Women and girls are also victim of these attacks as many of them are forcefully kidnapped and married or rapped. For instance, in Niger State, bandits attack five communities in broad daylight and embarked on an indiscriminate raping of women

and girls in the present of their children (Adam, 2021; Ogalah, 2021). Also, in Tsafe Local Government Area of Zamfara State, bandits invaded communities for their inability to pay N3 million levy imposed on them and raped women and loot their properties. This, to greater extent, increases the risk of acute food insecurity and disrupts agricultural activities in the country.

As a result of these incessant attacks by bandit, majority of the rural communities, people were forced to abandon their farms. They chased farmers out of their farmlands during harvesting while some farmers where even killed. Some communities were deserted as all the people that are living there left with their livestock due to attacks. They set farm produces ablaze or cart way some harvested food. Those who stayed behind, among the farmers, were subjected to taxation by the bandits before accessing their farms (Punch, 2019) The aftermath of this growing security crisis is abandonment of about 30% of agricultural land in Kaduna State by affected communities, while farming activities in Zamfara and Katsina States were restricted to few areas thus resulting in decline in food production by 60% (WANEP, 2019). In Kebbi State, over 350 rice farmers were affected with farmlands abandoned because of bandit attacks (Punch, 2018). Due to security situation food items like cattle, rice, beans and vegetables, supply from the northern to the southern part has reduced. This had increased the rural-urban migration with serious pressure on available food as well as general agricultural deficit in the country. The outcome of the pressure in the cities on little available food is food inflation which stood at 21.85 percent in June 2021 (NBS, 2022).

Owing to the menace of conflicts, the chain of food distribution was also affected. The bandits attack Fulani herdsmen on their way to markets and robbed cattle traders of their money and goods. In some instances, they invaded markets in hundreds with sophisticated weapons, killed numbers of individuals and set the markets ablaze. For instance, many major local markets where traders from different part of the country buy and sell foodstuff were either shut down or traders are afraid of going due to frequent attacks on such markets. The adverse effect of attacks on markets is reduction in number of trailers of foodstuff coming and going out of the market. Similarly, Shinkafi market in Zamfara State was equally reported functioned between 30 to 40 percent while Dandume market in Katsina State functioned lower by 15 to 25 percent relative with a declined in number of sales and supplies of foodstuff from eight (8) trailers weekly to half truck in two months, according to a revenue officer in Katsina state. The devastated effects of the banditry activities in the northwest is so significant to the level that in Katsina and Zamfara States over 220,000 people were displaced, 8,319 people have been killed including women and children with 500 communities destroyed in Katsina State alone between June 2011 and May 2019.

The consequence of this on food production, according to Ofuoku & Isife (2009) is that more than 40 million tons worth of crops are lost annually in the South-South region of Nigeria, especially Delta and Edo States. The crisis has forced many farmers in the rural areas to flee to cities for lesser jobs like Okada (motorcycle) riding and other artisans' work. Some have even become refugees in neighbouring states. Those that

remains in the villages are afraid to go to farms in far place due to fear of attacks from herdsmen, Osimen, Edokpa & Daramola (2019)

The aftermath of these conflicts was also felt by herdsmen across the affected communities as their cattle were rustling and their women were raped and, in many instances, lives of innocent people were taken. The trend of livestock owner attacks cut across the country, though, the magnitude varies between north and south parts due to high concentration of their production in the north. 28,000 cattle were stolen, and 254 herdsmen were killed in Plateau state between 2013 and 2015 by rustlers, in incidents that affected eight out of the seventeen Local Government Areas in the state (Fidelis, 2021). In Benue State, about 8,680 cattle were stolen and 2,500 Fulani herdsmen were killed in the state. The region lost over one million cattle to Boko Haram insurgency, and the sect used the proceeds of cattle theft to fund their activities in the country (International Crisis Group, 2017). These security problems constitute threat to sources of livelihood in rural communities which is inimical to poverty and hunger reduction in Nigeria

The reflection on role of the Nigerian State

Measures are initiated by Nigeria government to address the challenges of insecurity in the country, most especially in area of banditry and farmer-herders' conflict. These measures include deployment of military personnel to assist other security agencies that are ordinarily charge with responsibility of internal security. This had led to the rescue of kidnapped victims from captivity as well as arrest and killing of bandits. Despite the involvement of security agencies in war against these non-state actors, their impacts in curtailing attacks yielded little results. The security agencies at this point were overwhelmed with resurgence of different non state actors threaten Nigeria security.

Inability of Law enforcement agents like the Police among others to protect the citizens and diminishing confidence of Nigerians in their capability to effectively curtail insecurity prompted some to call for establishment of state police which was vehemently opposed by some state and ethnic based organizations. They argued that state governors will use such security apparatus to victimize people residing outside state of their origin. This call, on the other hand, led to establishment of Western Nigeria Security Network, known as "Amotekun" by governors from six states in Southwestern Nigeria. This development is met with support and opposition among the members of the society and even from the central government. The supporters saw the law and security outfit as means of addressing the conflicts. Those that oppose it claimed that the decision of the governors does not align with the provisions of the Nigerian constitution (Premium Times, 2020). The Amotekun was established to curb the conflict and reposed confidence on the southwest people to return to farming business activities without fear of been attack.

In the Northwest, state like Zamfara and Katsina introduced amnesty program for repentant bandits and cattle rustlers to complement efforts of the central government. In October 2023, the Katsina State government established a lunched outfit known as

Community Watch to tackle insecurity in the state. All these security initiatives failed to bring expected results as bandits and cattle rustlers kept betraying their promises to the government. The perpetrators of these attacks are still carrying out their attacks on innocents' people across the country.

The cost of ransom and imposed tax paid by innocent Nigerians questions the capacity of Nigerian State to protect her citizens. The state security agencies have failed the citizens in recovering the ransoms paid out of fear or efforts to get their loved one released from kidnaper den. The defenceless people of Southern Kaduna, for instance, were forced to pay about N900,000,000 between January and December 2020 as ransom to free their people kidnapped by bandits. For kidnapped victims, the ransomed were raised by immediate family members or with inclusion of extended family. Payment of the ransom shows the level of trust and hope in the state security apparatus. Meanwhile, the nexus between amnesty program for bandits repentant and victims shows that government pays little interest to welfare of innocents' citizens.

The nonchalant attitude of the government to mitigate any further attacks on the farmers by herdsmen and bandits contributed immensely to the crisis. International Crisis Group (2018) reported that both farmers and herders complain that their demands for justice for past criminal acts and warnings of imminent attacks received little or no response from the government. The farmer perceived response of the state security apparatuses and that of government official as a tactics by the government to protect Fulani herdsmen. In his response to the crisis, the Defence Minister Monsur Dan-Ali, linked the growing violence between farmers and herdsmen to the blockage of traditional grazing routes by farmers. This statement, to some farmers, is portraying the federal government as the defender of herders (The Cable, 2021).

Also, the government does not appear ready to end the killing, kidnapping and destruction of properties of innocent rural people. The way bandits frequently travel in convoy of motorcycle to carry out their attacks on communities freely without interruption of security agencies is worrisome. The rural communities were left at the mercy of the bandits, as Nigeria government and her security agencies failed to protect their lives and properties.

The utterance of political office holders in charge of security and late response from security agencies to a distress call, not only affect the peoples' confidence on capacity of the. Nigeria state to protect them but equally shows the political office holders have little understanding of the relationship between peaceful environment and realization of SDGs. Former Minister of Defense, Major General (rtd) Bashir Magashi said people should come together and face the banditry with sophisticated arms (Leadership, 2021). This further explains lack of seriousness of government to tackle the problem.

The responses of the government towards the incidents further worsen the existing fear. In addressing the security situation, Nigeria government display nonchalant attitude. At a point in time, the government refused to openly condemn and to even punish the actors involve in violent conflicts. This attitude of the government has the

potential to encourage more people to be recruited, and it also serves as license to perpetrators to continue business as usual.

The deposition of the Nigerian government to open possession of firearms by herdsmen, also explain the nonchalant attitude of the State to the management of insecurity. Unlike when they carried and relied on long clubs, machetes, bows and arrows, they now carry AK47 and presumably use them on farmers and farming communities to create tensions. This is against Nigerian laws forbidding regular citizens to own and use gun, but this provision of law was ignored and license for herdsmen to operate with impunity despite that the laws do not permit private individual to carry firearms, Fulani herdsmen enjoyed the support of the government as none of them was arrested for violating the law. This was seen as Bauchi State Governor Bala Muhammed said the Fulani have right to carry firearms to protect themselves since government has failed to protect them.

Inability of the government to regulate firearms possession within the ambit of law and havoc they are using these firearms to cause in the country prompted some state governors to call for permission to allow their citizens to carry AK47 so that they can face the bandits with AK47 (Ochonu, 2016). Zamfara State government equally announced his governments' readiness to issue licenses for the people of the state to carry AK47 to face the bandits. This clearly shows that Nigerian state is confused on what to do to fill its constitutional mandate of protect life and properties. The reason is that the failure to explaining how arming people would address the attacks by bandits.

The persistent of these security problems not only has negative impact on development but also question the role of Nigerian state in providing peaceful and stabilized environment. Similarly, the absence of political will on part of the government to implement recommendations of commissions charged with investigating the conflicts between farmers and Fulani herdsmen is also identified as factor that sustained the crisis (International Crisis Group, 2017). Both parties have little hope in the government mediation system. They have little confidence in the operation of police due to bribes and prolong court processes. Victims often complain about the reluctant of security agency to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators even when the security agencies know them. This often led to tit-for-tat attacks among farmers and Fulani communities across the country. In many instances, there were cases of reappraisal attacks on farmers' communities and Fulani settlement across the country. On the other hands, the residents of affected rural communities resolved to engage the services of local hunters and vigilantes to replace the conventional security agencies. This community step also compounded the crisis as those they arrested are executed. They are, also, not free from the immune of extorting cash and cattle from herders as "protections levy" (International Crisis Group, 2017; Vanguard, 2018).

Herding communities also attributed the persistence of the crisis to failure of the government to arrest perpetrators of attacks and punish them to serve as deterrent (International Crisis Group, 2018). Failure of security agencies to intervene in what is called the excesses of both parties, prompted the mobilization of the communities'

militias or vigilantes to launch reprisal attacks. This has led to the death of citizens and those who survived among the farmers migrate to the urban areas abandoning their farmlands (John, 2018).

Conclusion

This paper examined the effects of insecurity on food security in Nigeria and reflected on the government's response to the crisis. The study identified various measures such as security operations and policy initiatives introduced by the government, that have not yielded the expected outcome of producing a peaceful environment needed for agricultural productivity. Persistent of security problem, particularly in rural communities where farming is their major occupation, has disrupted access to market, community forced displacement as well as loss of lives, farmlands, and produce.

The failure of these government interventions is because of the inconsistency of responses on the part of the government, especially concerning operation of banditry in all the affected communities. Majority of government interventions lack proper coordination, timely execution, as well as the involvement of local communities. The natures of government interventions undermine food production, distribution as well as eroding public trust in government institutions. Due to these security challenges, Nigeria risks missing the targets of hunger and poverty eradication under the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There is need for comprehensive and inclusive approach that ensure sustainable peacebuilding and stronger institutional frameworks that capable of breaking the cycle of insecurity.

Recommendations

The study, thus, recommends the following measures to put an end to the security problems that it is affecting rural communities in Nigeria,

i.   The government should provide a highly coordinated security approach to this security problem. The cases of bandit's attacks reported so far shows that these criminals were moving in convoy of hundreds of motorcycles freely and carry out their operations without stoppage from security agencies.

ii.   The government should paid serious attention to the right of the victims of these attacks from bandits and farmer herders' conflicts. It does not speak well of a country that cattle were rustling without government through her security agencies arrest the rustlers.

iii. The government should activate the grassroots security management with constitutional backing by involving traditional institutions, community-based organizations and the entire members of the communities to assist the already overwhelm conventional security agencies.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they have no financial interest in this manuscript.

Notes on Contributors

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Book review: George Klay Kieh Jr. and Kelechi A. Kalu (eds), Insurgency, Terrorism, and Counterterrorism in Africa[1][2]

Richárd Schneider[3]

Insurgency, civil war, terrorism and violent extremism are amongst the principal security concerns in the twenty-first century threatening international peace and security. In 2001, the 9/11 attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in the United States (US) were followed by the spread of terrorist attacks globally and also in Africa. Though jihadist violence was not typical on the continent at the dawn of the 21st century (Bacon and Warner, 2021, p. 76), Africa has recently become the global epicentre of jihadist violence. Emerging insurgencies in Somalia and Nigeria, transnational terrorist networks such as Al-Qaeda, and the emergence of new affiliates of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are posing significant challenges and African states are yet to find effective strategies to counter them.

'Insurgency, Terrorism, and Counterterrorism in Africa,' edited by George Klay Kieh, Jr. and Kelechi A. Kalu, examines insurgency and terrorism in Africa, as well as countermeasures and potential remedies. It is presenting the evolution and transformation of numerous insurgent groups and terrorist organisations, while examining associated counterterrorism regimes with their potential human security impacts across various communities and contexts. The book primarily aims to interrogate both domestic and external factors that make insurgency and terrorism as profitable and effective vehicles for non-state actors when expressing grievances and enforcing interests against incumbent African regimes.

Terrorist organisations and violent extremist groups tend to take root in marginalised areas, exploiting local grievances to radicalise and recruit disillusioned Africans. The book argues that social injustice, poverty, inequality, economic deprivation, and irresponsible external intervention within such marginalised lands or "ungoverned" spaces lacking any governmental authority and control, create conducive environments for anti-government forces and jihadist terrorists to spread extremist ideologies and win locals' support against governments and elites usually considered unfair, corrupt, and oppressive. By utilising case study method, the book puts an emphasis to examine the dynamics between insurgency and terrorism in Africa and beyond, while critically examining their relations with different counterterrorism regimes and strategies through

an interdisciplinary and multi-theoretical perspective. The contributors to this volume delivered valuable perspectives on various terrorist organisations such as Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda, and ISIS, while also gave insights into regional and global counterstrategies and provided policy recommendations to address urgent challenges that African states are currently facing.

Disillusioned by corruption, economic negligence, political marginalisation and oppression under authoritarian regimes, people in multiple African countries have increasingly applied insurgency, violent extremist ideologies and terrorism as instruments for shaping state-society relations (Keih and Kalu, 2023). After giving an introduction and conceptual guidance on insurgency, terrorism, and counterterrorism in Chapter 1, the editors carefully contextualise the subject by arguing that the historical background of terrorism is rooted in the colonial era and the "totalistic" colonial state practice of drawing hegemony on the excessive use of terror (Keih and Kalu, 2023). Accordingly, while human insecurity is considered to be deeply rooted in the colonial era, political oppression and violence as an instrument to subjugate African people continued to unfold across postcolonial Africa. After independence, the unreformed and unstructured African state "continue to underperform in its basic function of providing physical security for persons and properties that have resulted in the persistence of insurgencies and terrorism in the region" (Keih and Kalu, 2023, pp. 33-34). Moreover, political oppression and state-sponsored terrorism after state independence in Africa also contributed to massive insurgencies and terrorist organisations to evolve and seizing on ethnic and socioeconomic malaise as well as community grievances so as to radicalise and recruit amongst African citizens.

After laying the ground pillars of the subject, the editors briefly examine some of the major non-state actors in Africa utilising insurgency and terrorism to achieve their political ends but also puts an emphasis to present counterterrorism strategies whether it comes to national frameworks such as in Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa or regional counterterrorism regimes. In Chapter 2, Kelechi A. Kalu examines why African states in the postcolonial period remained economically marginalised and politically unstable. It is further explained why African states struggling with terrorists and violent extremists, and governments in the West are usually reluctant to end protracted conflicts due to economic and strategic benefits. Relatedly, the effects of terrorism and persistent insecurity in selected African countries on multilateral and bilateral official development assistance from Western countries are analysed to demonstrate the changing positions of African states in strategic partnerships with Western countries.

In Part II, the principal insurgencies in Africa, such as Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria are investigated. The unresolved political and security crisis in the Horn of Africa and the conflict in Somalia as a key driver of regional insecurity and instability have always been of importance to the international community. Numerous international operations and reconciliation efforts have been made since the early 1990s, but due to the multiple internal and external features of the conflict, they failed to

produce sustainable peace and governance. Community-based perspectives utilising soft power approaches were then adopted (see Colletta and Muggah, 2012) within international conflict resolution efforts as an inevitable reflection to past failures and practices focusing predominantly on hard power initiatives such as military intervention and punitive strategies. Accordingly, in Chapter 3, while giving a summary of the historical background of contemporary power struggle, Mohamed Haji Ingiriis examines the nexus between the armed conflict and power-sharing in Somalia and argues that agreements lacking any genuine local engagement will sustain conflict and insecurity in the country. Based on ethnographic observations, it is also highlighted how essential it is to understand clan structures and give ethnic and religious groups and opposing parties equal access to power if one is to end conflict in Somalia. Consequently, the Chapter deepens our understanding on the role of power-sharing in Somalia (and beyond) where the political power competition between regional states and the federal government, and the armed conflict between Mogadishu and Al-Shabaab have until now impeded genuine peace efforts.

In Chapter 4, Sylvester Odion Akhaine identifies the internal and external drivers of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Since 2009, the insurgency has apparently become one of the deadliest terrorist organisations globally. Though religious and cultural antagonism with Western countries is widely referred as an explanation for Islamic fundamentalism in Northern Nigeria, economic deprivation, political marginalisation, regional inequalities, corruption, and inter-ethnic tensions are also key factors in the protracted instability. Given high rates of poverty and unemployment in numerous African countries such as Nigeria, marginalised and disillusioned citizens sometimes join criminal networks and terrorist groups voluntarily for economic benefits. Accordingly, the Chapter critically examines the multiple explanations for and internal drivers of the Boko Haram phenomenon and explaining how foreign influencers and political elites in the country shaped the events, sometimes for their benefit. In this regard, the author also devotes attention to the "merchandisation" (Kieh and Kalu, 2023, p. 100) of the conflict and the broader implications of the insurgency on the broader Lake Chad Basin.

After a detailed examination of the situation in Somalia and Nigeria, the book turns to the historical evolution and transformation of Al-Qaeda in Africa and the rise of ISIS on the continent showing how global jihadism has infiltrated several African countries in the last two decades. In Chapter 5, Al Chukwuma Okoli investigates the implication of transnational terrorism for Africa, the dynamics of jihadist extremism in West-Africa and the mutations and alignments of the Al-Qaeda network which has become a major security concern for certain West- and North-African countries since the 9/11 attacks. The real value of the Chapter lies in its effort to demonstrate the strategic adaptation of mainstream terrorism organisations in Africa and to explore how Al-Qaeda used changing alliances between numerous groups to expand on the continent. The Chapter interestingly presents asymmetric adaptation strategies which helps to understand how Al-Qaeda succeeded to become a regional focal point having the most terrorist affiliates

across the continent.

In Chapter 6, Angela Ajodo-Adehanjoko gives an account of the emergence of ISIS in Sub-Saharan Africa and the political instability and humanitarian crisis it generated throughout the continent from Nigeria to Mozambique. Due to territorial losses in Iraq and Syria, new caliphates have been established in Africa during the 2010s. Since then, the organisation in on the rise at an alarming rate and deadly attacks were perpetrated against different targets, primarily in the Sahel. The success was amongst others a result of its effective online presence or "online jihad" (Kieh and Kalu, 2023, p. 138) that was part of its strategy to attract recruits, connect followers and act globally. Consequently, the Chapter examines propaganda tools that ISIS adopted and explores some of the factors that contributed to the emergence of the organisation on the continent. In this regard, as was also shown in a Kenyan context (Githigaro, 2024), the author argues that counterterrorism operations with hard power and military priorities adopted in many African countries as part of a countering violent extremism (CVE) strategy, provided an enabling environment for ISIS to operate and recruit. ISIS has obviously taken advantage of the security vacuum in Africa, weak governance and poverty, leading to various affiliates across the continent. Before listing some policy recommendations for preventing the further incursion of ISIS into the continent, the Chapter thoroughly examines their brief evolution, focusing on the structural transformation of the Boko Haram insurgency and the emergence of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), and the Islamic State in Somalia (ISS), to name a few.

In Part III, the book turns to regional and external influences and counter-terrorism regimes. Following a summary of regional counterterrorism approaches let them be from Europe (EU) or Southeast Asia (ASEAN), in Chapter 7, Clayton Hazvinei Vhumbunu soundly assesses counter-terrorism measures developed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) within its Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted in 2013. Institutional frameworks, operational capacities, the role of external contributions, just to mention a few aspects, along with the three pillars of the Strategy and the inherent limitations of the regional conflict prevention and management framework such as coordination failures, capacity deficiencies, lack of nonmilitary approaches and human rights abuses by national authorities are comprehensively assessed.

Though more regional organisations in Africa and associated counter-terrorism regimes as well as relevant strategies of foreign influencers such as Russia and France should have been included in the volume, in Chapter 8, the book turns only to the exploration of the US foreign policy and soundly explores the pillars of its counterterrorism strategy in Africa. George Klay Kieh, Jr. addresses the Pan-Sahel Initiative, the East-African Counter-Terrorism Initiative, the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership, the African Coastal and Border Security Program, the U.S.-Africa Command (AFRICOM), just to name a few. It is further highlighted how the GWOT and the US strategy to prevent transnational terrorist networks from using politically

unstable African countries as a base to spread extremist ideologies and perpetrate terrorist attacks shaped US counterterrorism efforts on the continent and what challenges have arisen throughout the last decades. The US as an advocate for the liberal peace concept, promoted democracy, human rights and free market economy in African countries, though its moral authority has been widely controversial since it has also been accused of supporting repressive semi-authoritarian and authoritarian regimes, establishing neocolonial and paternalistic relations (Kieh and Kalu, 2023) with African states in order to maximise economic gains and maintain strategic strongholds on the continent. Therefore, it is demonstrated in the Chapter how contradictory the US foreign policy has become in the postcolonial era and how this was heightened by the "cynical disengagement" policy (Kieh, 2014, p. 191) of Washington leading to the recurrent American retreating from Africa in the post-Cold War era.

In Chapter 9, the editors proffer suggestions how to address and resolve the root causes of insurgency and terrorism in Africa. The book highlights that not only political elites, but communities and citizens should make collective efforts to deal with the complex socioeconomic and political complexities and security issues so typical across the continent. Relatedly, as the book underlines, the reconstitution of the postcolonial African state, effective control over "ungoverned spaces," and the rethinking of nation-building strategies are fundamentally needed to achieve social inclusion and avoid competing loyalties amongst various ethnic and religious groups (Kieh and Kalu, 2023, p. 214 and p. 218).

The book reflects to the changing global security landscape by recognising the essential roles different actors in the security domain such as states, nonstate actors, international organisations, individuals and communities take. This deeply researched book is timely and relevant, and the volume makes a significant contribution to the scholarly debate centred around insurgency and terrorism in Africa. The book highlights the necessity to go beyond traditional military campaigns and address underlying causes of insurgency and terrorism with non-military approaches. This book is primarily for scholars and policymakers, but anyone interested in insurgency, terrorism and the complex African security landscape will greatly profit from reading this book. It offers sound explanations for the rise and proliferation of insurgencies and mainstream terrorist organisations on the African continent. Additionally, it presents and evaluates the multiple counterterrorism strategies developed by states and regional organizations. This book's strength lies amongst others in its approach focusing not only on non-state actors, but also on state responsibility in deteriorating human security and how counter-productive government actions may contribute to the increased support for anti-government forces in marginalised communities suffering from persistent insecurity and political negligence.

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A review of: Soldier's Paradise Militarism in Africa after Empire[1][2]

Miklós Szakali[3]

Samuel Fury Childs Daly dedicated his studies and research to Africa; his main area of interest is the history of decolonization and development of the former British colonies. He primarily researches the history of Nigeria after its independence, as Nigeria is a crucial country in the region in many aspects (population, natural resources, economy, etc.), and it also helps to understand the development of other former British colonies.

He holds a Ph.D. from Columbia University and master's degrees from the School of Oriental and African Studies and the University of Cambridge.

In his previous book, the author published the results of his research on the Nigerian civil war; A History of the Republic of Biafra: Law, Crime and the Nigerian Civil War. With this work, he won many professional recognitions and awards.

When writing Soldier's Paradise, the author relied on written documents, legal notes, and memoirs instead of personal recollections and interviews, which significantly increase the credibility of his findings. At the same time, this method narrowed the scope of the research, since the successive military governments did not seek to document their activities.

For me, the greatest value of the book is its comprehensive approach to the circumstances that led to the emergence of Nigerian militarism and successive military dictatorships, with an outlook on other former British colonies. The author makes it possible to learn about the circumstances that made the rise of military power almost inevitable. In this way, we can conclude that military dictatorships can be considered a typical element in the process of post-colonial African development. The book introduces the most important military leaders and provides insight into their aspirations, ways of thinking and their real results. We can see that almost all military leaders and dictators aimed to strengthen national independence and unity. It is a different matter what means they used to achieve the set goals and how successful they were.

Following the author's detailed approach, it becomes obvious that despite the best intentions of the military power, it did not have the proper means to achieve its goals. In the absence of comprehensive political, economic and social knowledge and experience, they could only rely on the use of military tools and procedures. The military only used the tools it had and knew. The consequence of all this was that

militarism and discipline became an ideology and rose to the level of political objectives. As the author points out, the military leaders approached the management of the country as a military exercise. However, military wartime leadership contrary to civilian peacetime leadership and nation-building are significantly different from each other, so military forces and procedures could not prevail in peacetime nation-building. For example, demanding almost military discipline from the civilian population had the opposite effect. The larger part of the population felt all this as oppression and lawlessness and turned away from the military power, whose support base was thus significantly reduced.

In the second part of the book, the author presents the attempts and pitfalls of creating and operating the legal system of militarism. Militarism regarded law as the second pillar of the system, with which it could govern the country and exercise military power in a decisive and internationally acceptable manner. At the same time, he also points out that the civil legal system is not a natural component or support of military power. Although it can be shaped to some extent for the sake of power, it does not mean full compliance. The establishment of the legal system and the exercise of law also proved to be a point of conflict between the military leadership and the legal community, and tensions arose regarding the roles played in legislation and the way of exercising law. One expressive example of this power struggle and uncertainty is the presentation of the case of Kuti Fela (musician and political activist). The army destroyed and burned down Fela Kuti's residential area, abusing many people and causing significant material damage. At the court hearing, their claim for compensation was rejected several times, referring to the old colonial law, "the King can do no wrong", (p. 164) in other words, military power was declared to be above the law.

We can understand from the example and the author also points out in other chapters that the British colonial legal system played a decisive role in the formation of the legal system of Nigeria and other former British colonial countries. Since the same legal system was applied to all colonies, after gaining independence the nations considered this (being no other) the basis of their national legal system, therefore revised it to a certain extent, modified it, and applied it in accordance with their national interests and characteristics. This explains the common path of development followed by the former British colonies and the unusual practice in which judges could be exchanged between nations and some personalities (Sir Egbert Udo Udoma), (p. 106) could play a prominent role in the legal system and the life of other countries.

For me, the book reinforces the approach, according to which we must examine everything in its context, considering its real circumstances, and we must not judge based on the "superiority" of the Western values.

From a European point of view (due to historical experience), militarism and military dictatorship only mean oppression and terror, which must be rejected under all circumstances. At the same time, in the former colonial countries, we should consider this as an almost inevitable step in their development process. Before we judge, let's not forget that after independence, there was no other example of the seize and exercise of

power than the example of the colonists and the structures (military, legal, etc.) they created. However, these were by no means aimed at building a democratic society and country. This resulted in a very controversial situation, using the tools of the oppressors to build an independent, democratic country. Therefore, we cannot be surprised that the political and social concepts and terminologies used in Western culture have a different meaning and content here, like "...we enjoy the most liberal military democracy in modern history..." (p. 82).

I especially recommend Soldier's Paradise to anyone who wants to explore Nigeria's post-colonial history based on authentic documents. The book offers an excellent opportunity to have an insight into the military dictatorships (circumstances, personalities, ideologies, practices) of Nigeria and partly of the former British colonial countries. I believe that through the author's findings, we can better understand the current situation in Africa, since political-economic instability and military dictatorships still determine Africa's everyday life even in the 21st century.

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