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## **The African Union's Counter-Terrorism Strategies: Between Globalized Jihadism and Regionalized Responses**

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# **The African Union's Counter-Terrorism Strategies: Between Globalized Jihadism and Regionalized Responses**

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**Abstract:** While there is a consensus on the perception of terrorism as a globalised hybrid threat to the national security of African states, there is also a debate on the mechanisms put in place by the African Union to address the spread of transnational terrorism. In this regard, the emergence of African jihadist networks affiliated with Al Qaeda and the Islamic State have a domino-effect on the African continent, which has become the hub of the Salafist and jihadist galaxy in a region already crippled by state failure, inter-ethnic conflict and the intervention of foreign actors. This has prompted the African Union to place the fight against terrorism at the top of its agenda. Thus, this research analyses the interrelation of the various counter-terrorism strategies of the African Union, in order to better understand the new anti-terrorism priorities of regional and international cooperation policies. This article attempt, through causal analysis and historical context, to refine the understanding of the African Union's counter-terrorism responses including legislative, institutional and soft law measures of preventing violent extremism and counter terrorism financing. In addition, the mechanisms for interregional and international cooperation against terrorism are based primarily on militarization and security obsessions. This is why it is necessary to rethink the African Union instruments for effectively coordinating the fight against terrorism with new non-conventional approaches.

According to the Secretary-General's July 27, 2021 report to the UN Security Council, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) poses a threat to international peace and security, with its expansion into Africa through Da'esh's regional affiliates, particularly in the context of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the countries with the largest increases in terrorism-related deaths in 2019 were in sub-Saharan Africa, including Burkina Faso, which saw a six-fold increase.<sup>2</sup> As the hybridisation of jihadist threat continues to spread into new operating areas in West, Central, and Southern Africa, this has pushed African countries to strengthen counterterrorism (CT) efforts coordinated by regional organizations;<sup>3</sup> it is, therefore, relevant to focus on the African Union's counter-terrorism strategies: between globalized jihadism and regionalized responses. Concerning the dynamic interrelation of the different AU policies shaped by collective security measures' including legal mechanisms on preventing violent extremism, this element is explored in the present contribution, namely the role of AU institutions, moreover a sub-regional, trans-regional and international anti-terrorism cooperation.

The analysis is inevitably interdisciplinary and enhanced with literature in the fields of international relations, public policy, the law as well as security studies, in the attempt to answer a crucial question about the African Union counter-terrorism strategies, including institutional architectures, soft measures and cooperation policies at regional and international level to prevent from the jihadist threat. The case of the African Union, with its

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Security Council, Thirteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat. Secretary-General's ISIL reports, S/2021/682, (New York: Counter-Terrorism Committee, 27 July 2021), 1, accessed December 21, 2021, <https://www.undocs.org/en/S/2021/682>

<sup>2</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace, Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism (Sydney: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), November 2020), 14, accessed December 20, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GTI-2020-web-2.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> United States Department of State Bureau of counterterrorism, Country Reports on Terrorism 2020 (United States: U.S. Department of State Publication, 2021), 11, accessed December 21, 2021, [https://www.state.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2021/07/Country\\_Reports\\_on\\_Terrorism\\_2020.pdf](https://www.state.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2021/07/Country_Reports_on_Terrorism_2020.pdf)

complex institutional and legislative framework regarding counter-terrorism, will provide a privileged point of view to the analysis, mainly through a “Multivariate Regression Analysis” and “Causal Process Tracing” methodology, to identify problems of complexity and the assessment of the AU counter-terrorism policies, in such region characterized by the dilemmas of state failure, ethnic conflicts and foreign interventions.

The underlying claim that will be tested throughout the paper focuses on the common thread of the interrelated variables that analyses the African Union counter-terrorism policies, with the spread of African jihadist networks affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. Mainly through the legislation measures, institutional framework and soft approaches preventing violent extremism and counter financing terrorism, this complemented by regional, transregional and international anti-terrorism cooperation.

The analysis will be symmetrically split into three chapters. The first one will be devoted to the Jihadist nebula in Africa, including Al Qaeda and Islamic State affiliates as well as the factors of their emergence as a globalized hybrid threat. Then, the second chapter is about the African Union's Counter-Terrorism strategies namely legislative and institutional framework, prevention counter violent extremism (P/CVE) and international anti-terrorism cooperation policies. Finally, the third chapter is dedicated to the assessment of the African Union's policies and limits to preventing and combating terrorism.

### **Jihadist nebula in Africa: a globalized hybrid threat**

The African continent is a fertile ground for violent extremism and globalised jihadism, with a causal triangle of state failure, ethnic conflict, and the involvement of foreign actors, forming a hybrid threat to human, regional, and international security.

*Jihadist networks in Africa: Al Qaeda and Islamic State affiliates*

The African continent has become a sanctuary for the Salafist Islamic insurgency, especially as these armed groups have developed increasingly close links with global jihadist movements, namely al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS).<sup>4</sup> From this perspective, the jihadism trajectory follows a pattern of geographic expansion from the Middle East to North Africa, as part of historical waves from; near, then far and modern jihadism, embodied by the Islamic State.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, African jihadism is typically shaped by a “Glocal” dimension under the dual dynamics of local and transnational interactions,<sup>6</sup> such as the Algerian “Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat” (GSPC), which has evolved into Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM),<sup>7</sup> as well as Ansar al-Shariah in Tunisia (AST), which has increased cooperation with the Islamic State in Libya.<sup>8</sup> As a result, strong cross-border alliances have been forged, including “Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen” (JNIM),<sup>9</sup> and Al-Shabaab, which is al-Qaeda’s East African franchise,<sup>10</sup> thereby forming a “jihadist belt of fire.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Branislav Stanicek and Mathilde Betant-Rasmussen, “Jihadist networks in sub-Saharan Africa: Origins, patterns and responses”, European Parliamentary Research Service EPRS, (September 2021): 1, accessed December 20, 2021, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698048/EPRS\\_BRI\(2021\)698048\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/698048/EPRS_BRI(2021)698048_EN.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ewan Stein, *Modalities of Jihadism in the Middle East and North Africa: Ideological and Historical Roots. Jihadism and Violence in the Arab World*. (Barcelona: European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), yearbook, 2015), 47, accessed December 20, 2021, <https://www.iemed.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Modalities-of-Jihadism-in-The-Middle-East-and-North-Africa-Ideological-and-Historical-Roots.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Mathieu, Pellerin. “Les violences armées au Sahel : du djihadisme aux insurrections ?”, *Études de l’Ifri* (20 décembre 2019): 11, accessed December 21, 2021, [https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/pellerin\\_violence\\_armees\\_sahara\\_2019\\_002.pdf](https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/pellerin_violence_armees_sahara_2019_002.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> François Gèze et Salima, Mellah, “ «Al-Qaida au Maghreb», ou la très étrange histoire du GSPC algérien,” *Algeria-Watch* (22 septembre 2007): 1, accessed December 21, 2021, [https://algeria-watch.org/pdf/pdf\\_fr/gspc\\_etrange\\_histoire.pdf](https://algeria-watch.org/pdf/pdf_fr/gspc_etrange_histoire.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Mapping Militant Organizations, Ansar al-Shariah (Tunisia) (California: Stanford University, August 2018), 1-10, accessed December 22, 2021, <https://stanford.app.box.com/s/op036p1adctj47lm5iznacenuyvk8fq>

<sup>9</sup> Branislav, “Jihadist networks in sub-Saharan Africa, 2.

<sup>10</sup> The Soufan Center, *DIMINISHED, BUT NOT DEFEATED: The Evolution of al-Qaeda since September 11, 2001* (New York: The Soufan Center, September 2021), 29, accessed December 10, 2021, [https://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/TSC-Report\\_Diminished-but-Not-Defeated-The-Evolution-of-al-Qaeda-Since-Sept-11-2001\\_Sept-2021.pdf](https://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/TSC-Report_Diminished-but-Not-Defeated-The-Evolution-of-al-Qaeda-Since-Sept-11-2001_Sept-2021.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Belkacem Iratni, “Les défis et enjeux sécuritaires dans l’espace Sahélo-Saharien, la perspective de l’Algérie,” *Paix et sécurité centre de compétence Afrique Subsaharienne*, (mars 2017): 13, accessed December 21, 2021,

Meanwhile, the expansion of Da'esh<sup>12</sup> affiliates with a high degree of interconnected patterns of rapprochement between North African and Sahelian groups.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the Islamic State in Libya has intensified its expansionist momentum with networks in West Africa, taking southwestern Libya as a support zone for the Islamic State's efforts in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin.<sup>14</sup> In this perspective, Algerian jihadist movements have followed the same path through the "Jund al-Khilafah" in Algeria (JAK-A).<sup>15</sup> In the Sahel region, terrorist groups expanded their operations in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. These include affiliates of ISIS, such as ISIS-Greater Sahara (ISIS-GS), and ISIS-West Africa (ISIS-WA) in the Lake Chad region, in addition to Boko Haram (BH) with the ISIS facilitation networks associated with the ISIS Mozambique.<sup>16</sup>

Henceforth, Jihadist movements follow an itinerary of guerrilla warfare of the flea, where the enemy suffers the dog's disadvantages, thus, it succumbs to exhaustion and anemia!<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the jihadist geopolitical perception is classified into three realms: "hostile zones", "safe zones", and "shatter belt" regions that are legitimate for conquest,<sup>18</sup> with the

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<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/senegal/14011.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Branislav, "Jihadist networks," 2.

<sup>13</sup> Lounnas Djallil, "Jihadist Groups in North Africa and the Sahel: between disintegration, reconfiguration and resilience", MENARA Working Papers, no. 16, (October 2018): 1, accessed December 21, 2021,

[https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/menara\\_wp\\_16.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/menara_wp_16.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Kathryn Tyson and Emily Estelle, "Africa File: Libya foothold creates options for the Islamic State in northwestern Africa", The American Enterprise Institute's, Critical Threats Project (December 09, 2021), accessed December 11, 2021,

<https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/africa-file/africa-file-libya-foothold-creates-options-for-the-islamic-state-in-northwestern-africa>

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Security Council, Thirteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, 1-16.

<sup>16</sup> United States Department of State Bureau of counterterrorism, Country Reports on Terrorism 2020 (United States: U.S. Department of State Publication, 2021), 1-318, accessed December 11, 2021, [https://www.state.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2021/07/Country\\_Reports\\_on\\_Terrorism\\_2020.pdf](https://www.state.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2021/07/Country_Reports_on_Terrorism_2020.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> J. Ingram Haroro and Mohammed Omar, "History's rhymes in the fall of Kabul and Mosul: Flawed ideas, broken promises, and poisonous spin", The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) (2 September 2021), accessed December 7, 2021, <https://icct.nl/publication/historys-rhymes-in-the-fall-of-kabul-and-mosul/>

<sup>18</sup> Joseph J. Hobb, "The Geographical Dimensions of Al-Qa'ida Rhetoric". *Geographical Review* 95, no. 3, *New Geographies of the Middle East*, (Jul., 2005): 307-309, accessed November 27, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30034241>

propagation process of “geopolitical triptych”. This is based on a strategy of “flea jumps”, which consists of the creation of a sanctuary, the securing of a “grey zone” and the choice of an active zone adopted by the African Islamist terrorist organizations (ITO's).<sup>19</sup>

*The fabric of African jihadism: the causal nexus between endogenous and exogenous factors*

African jihadism is deeply rooted in the sub-state terrorism causes, the domestic crisis, but has transnational terrorism linkages,<sup>20</sup> therefore a two-pronged approach, integrating both international and domestic dimensions.<sup>21</sup> In this case, the corollary connection between “failed states” and transnational terrorism implies that vulnerability with a vacuum of public authority and weakness intensifies the threat of terrorism, both locally and internationally. Dramatically, African jihadists establish themselves in “ungoverned spaces” where the state authority is weak; as such JNIM and Shabab emerged from uncontrolled civil war areas,<sup>22</sup> ethnic conflicts, specifically in the Sahel, as the case of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) in Mali.<sup>23</sup>

While simultaneously, Islamist ideology religion, which is supported by the factor of a common identity, is a tool for propagating the jihadist cause.<sup>24</sup> This explains why AQIM and

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<sup>19</sup> David GAÜZERE, “D’Al-Qaïda à l’EIL, l’évolution de la tactique de déstabilisation des Etats par les Organisation terroristes islamistes”, Géopolitique, stratégie, relations internationales et cartes, Afrique et moyen Orient, (Samedi 07 mars 2012): 1-3, accessed December 7, 2021, <https://www.diploweb.com/D-Al-Qaïda-a-l-EIIL-l-evolution-de.html>

<sup>20</sup> Jakkie Cilliers, “Africa, root causes and the ‘war on terror’,” African Security Review 15, no.3 (January 2006): 58, accessed December 22, 2021, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/250888795\\_Africa\\_root\\_causes\\_and\\_the\\_%27war\\_on\\_terror%27](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/250888795_Africa_root_causes_and_the_%27war_on_terror%27)

<sup>21</sup> Jakkie Cilliers, “L’AFRIQUE ET LE TERRORISME,” Revue Afrique Contemporaine, no. 209 (Printemps 2004/1): 84, accessed December 23, 2021, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-afrique-contemporaine-2004-1-page-81.htm>

<sup>22</sup> Stig Jarle Hansen, “‘Forever wars’? Patterns of diffusion and consolidation of Jihadism in Africa, Small Wars & Insurgencies (31 Aug 2021):5, accessed December 19, 2021 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2021.1959130>

<sup>23</sup> Clionadh Raleigh and Caitriona Dowd, “Governance and Conflict in the Sahel’s ‘Ungoverned Space’”, Stability: International Journal of Security & Development 32, no.2 (2013): 10- 11, accessed December 22, 2021, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.bs>

<sup>24</sup> Hansen, “‘Forever wars’?”, 20.



JNIM, have instrumentalized identity to an extremely asymmetrical war,<sup>25</sup> in which Fulani jihad is expressed under the “black African credentials.”<sup>26</sup> However, radicalisation in Africa often derives from a lack of opportunities and resources linked to the issue of governance illegitimacy, also shaped by economic marginalisation, pastoral insecurity, and radical preaching.<sup>27</sup>

However, there is a relationship between foreign interventions and terrorism, such as the 2003 U.S. occupation of Iraq, which is used to justify the use of terrorism.<sup>28</sup> As the same, through the “Arab Spring” of 2011, jihadist movements have strengthened from the local embeddedness to the process of regionalisation with transnational networks and internationalisation.<sup>29</sup> As whole foreign interventions enhance the spread of jihadism and external agendas contribute to its perpetuation, with dynamics of multiplicity, such as the civil war in Libya, in the Central African Republic and in Mali, with the emergence of JNIM, as a reaction to the military involvement of France in Mali, which has produced inverse effects<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Luca Raineri & Francesco Strazzari, “State, Secession, and Jihad: The Micro political Economy of Conflict in Northern Mali”, *African Security* 4, no. 8 (2015): 251, accessed December 21, 2021, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2015.1100501>

<sup>26</sup> Raineri & Strazzari, “State, Secession, and Jihad,” 264.

<sup>27</sup> NATO Strategic Direction South Hub. “DRIVERS OF RELIGIOUS RADICALISATION AND EXTREMISM IN THE SAHEL”(Naples: The NSD-S HUB, November 2020), 3-5, accessed december 5, 2021, <https://thesouthernhub.org/resources/site1/General/NSDS%20Hub%20Publications/Drivers%20of%20Religious%20Radicalisation%20And%20Extremism%20In%20The%20Sahel.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> James A. Piazza and Seung-Whan Choi, “International Military Interventions and Transnational Terrorist Backlash”, *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no.3 (2018): 686-695, accessed December 19, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqy026>

<sup>29</sup> Guido Steinberg and Annette Weber, “Jihadism in Africa: An Introduction”, in *Africa: local causes, regional expansion, international alliances*, ed Steinberg Guido and Weber, Annette Jihadism (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale, 2015), 10-11, accessed December 19, 2021, [https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/43540/ssoar-2015-steinberg\\_et\\_al-Jihadism\\_in\\_Africa\\_local\\_causes.pdf?sequence=1](https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/43540/ssoar-2015-steinberg_et_al-Jihadism_in_Africa_local_causes.pdf?sequence=1)

<sup>30</sup> David Doukhan, “The Boiling Sahel”, *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT)*”, March 2021, 4-6, accessed December 9, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep30931.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A943ff4d9bedf64c67f4dc0c441d9655b>

*Terrorist threat in Africa: a polymorphous asymmetric security deficit*

Jihadist's activities are a major challenge for human security; with heavy consequences for communities and civilians such as in the case of Boko Haram operating in northern Nigeria.<sup>31</sup> While terrorism is a source of threat to national security, it violates such important human rights, inter-alia, and the right to life, physical integrity and liberty.<sup>32</sup> In 2020, 7 of the 10 countries most affected by terrorism are African, led by Burkina Faso, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Niger and Ethiopia.<sup>33</sup> Moreover from 2007 to 2019, Libya, Somalia, Nigeria and Mali have suffered 68 percent of the total fatalities from terrorism in Africa.<sup>34</sup> Especially since it has a devastating cost on economic security, it causes direct material damage to the local economy, thus Nigeria has lost 142 billion dollars since 2007.<sup>35</sup>

There is a strong nebulous link between organized crime and terror networks in Sub-Saharan Africa. In particular, jihadist's activities continuum involvement in arms trafficking and the piracy phenomenon mainly led by the Somali groups "Al-Shabaab" as "social bandits,"<sup>36</sup> hence the spread of "Narco-Terrorism" threat.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Boko Haram

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<sup>31</sup> Israel Nyaburi Nyadera and Mohamed Omar Bincof, "Human security, terrorism, and counterterrorism: Boko Haram and the Taliban", *International Journal on World Peace* XXXVI, no.1 (March 2019): 33, accessed December 23, 2021, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333429718\\_HUMAN\\_SECURITY\\_TERRORISM\\_AND\\_COUNTER\\_TERRORISM\\_BOKO\\_HARAM\\_AND\\_THE\\_TALIBAN/link/5cf8e64c299b1fb185bc99b/download](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333429718_HUMAN_SECURITY_TERRORISM_AND_COUNTER_TERRORISM_BOKO_HARAM_AND_THE_TALIBAN/link/5cf8e64c299b1fb185bc99b/download)

<sup>32</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Twenty-fourth session, Draft report on negative effects of terrorism on the enjoyment of human rights. A/HRC/AC/24/CRP.1 (Geneva: Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, 22 February 2020), 9, accessed December 24, 2021, [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/AdvisoryCom/Session24/A\\_HRC\\_AC\\_24\\_CRP1.docx#:~:text=This%20report%20is%20produced%20by,as%20a%20result%20of%20diverting](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/AdvisoryCom/Session24/A_HRC_AC_24_CRP1.docx#:~:text=This%20report%20is%20produced%20by,as%20a%20result%20of%20diverting)

<sup>33</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism* (Sydney: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), November 2020), 14, accessed December 20, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GTI-2020-web-2.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2020*, 34.

<sup>35</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2020*, 36.

<sup>36</sup> Annette Hübschle, "From Theory to Practice: Exploring the Organized Crime-Terror Nexus in Sub-Saharan Africa", *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no. 3/4 (September 2011): 90, accessed December 24, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26298525.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Emma Bjoørnethed, "Narco-Terrorism: The Merger of the War on Drugs and the War on Terror", *Global Crime* 6, no. 3&4 (August–November 2004): 306, accessed December 24, 2021, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/drogue-terreur.pdf>

made an estimated USD 5–10 million, from kidnapping for ransom, smuggling of counterfeit cigarettes, and drugs.<sup>38</sup> As a result, the African quagmire becomes a “corridor of all dangers” and strip of all threats,<sup>39</sup> especially “Sahelistan”, where jihadism forms the “crescent of terror” and the “arc of crisis”<sup>40</sup> thus becoming a great hub as a harbinger of post-modern blitzkrieg war on a global scale.<sup>41</sup>

### **African Union counter-terrorism engineering: a regionalized prevention of violent extremism approaches**

The internationalization of the terrorist threat after 9/11 with the “Global War on Terror” (GWOT) has prompted the African Union to adopt legislative, institutional and preventive measures against violent extremism.

#### *The African Union's Counter-Terrorism Policies: legislative and institutional framework*

The AU's legislative framework on counter-terrorism has been initiated with the “AU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism” in July 1999. The Algiers Convention, reflecting the first continental agreement on counter-terrorism, refers in its Article 1, 3rd paragraph, to “terrorist acts,”<sup>42</sup> as well as its 2004 “Additional Protocol”, which defines the role of AU institutions in the fight against terrorism and implements international

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<sup>38</sup> International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), “Crime underpins major conflicts and terrorism globally”, (26 September 2018), accessed December 23, 2021, <https://www.interpol.int/News-and-Events/News/2018/Organized-crime-underpins-major-conflicts-and-terrorism-globally>

<sup>39</sup> H. Zoubir Yahia, “The Sahara-Sahel quagmire: regional and international ramifications”, *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no.3 (25 October 2012): 452, accessed December 20, 2021, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13629395.2012.725307>

<sup>40</sup> Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, “Boko Haram and “Sahelistan” Terrorism Narratives: A Historical Perspective”, *Afrique contemporaine* 255, no.3 ( 2015): 21, accessed December 23 , 2021, <https://www.cairn-int.info/journal-afrique-contemporaine-2015-3-page-21.htm?WT.tsrc=pdf>

<sup>41</sup> François Heisbourg, “A Surprising Little War: First Lessons of Mali”, *Survival* 55, no.2 (April-May 2013): 7, accessed December 24, 2021, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00396338.2013.784458?needAccess=true>

<sup>42</sup> Abdelssami Gasmi et Joslain Djeria, “La Problématique de L’implication des Jeunes Africains Dans le Terrorisme et L’extrémisme Violent: Entre les Complexités de la Réalité et la Nécessité de la Solution”, *Revue Africaine sur le Terrorisme* 7, no.2 (Décembre 2019): 73, accessed December 15, 2021, [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39186-doc-revue\\_africaine\\_sur\\_le\\_terrorisme\\_fr.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39186-doc-revue_africaine_sur_le_terrorisme_fr.pdf)

and regional counter-terrorism instruments.<sup>43</sup> Also, “The Plan of Action of the African Union High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting on Terrorism”, adopted in September 2002 in Algiers, has included the “classical” terrorist acts, in addition, to their new transnational security dimensions,<sup>44</sup> mainly emphasized the fight against the root causes of terrorism, through intergovernmental cooperation and coordination in the areas of police and border control, legislation and the judiciary.<sup>45</sup> From this sense, in 2011, the AU Assembly adopted the “African Model Law on Counter Terrorism” to assist states in harmonizing legislation on terrorism.<sup>46</sup>

At the institutional level, the agencies and organs of the AU, are responsible for combating terrorism, including the Assembly, Executive Council, and Pan-African Parliament.<sup>47</sup> As such, the CT is exclusively under the authority of the “AU commission” and it provides technical assistance on counterterrorism legislation and law enforcement,<sup>48</sup> which has set up a “Peace and Security Department” (PSD)<sup>49</sup> to enhance regional mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of counterterrorism decisions.<sup>50</sup> The “Peace and Security Council” (PSC) is charged with the responsibility to prevent and combat terrorism and to harmonize and coordinate efforts at the regional and international levels<sup>51</sup> under the umbrella

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<sup>43</sup> Lalloux Aurelle Sarambe, “Les mécanismes de lutte contre le terrorisme en Afrique de L'Ouest: quel impact? ”. (Thèse de Doctorat, Université d'Ottawa, Faculté de Droit, 2018), 18, accessed December 18, 2021, [https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/38197/1/Sarambe\\_Lalloux\\_Aurelle\\_2018\\_the%CC%80se.pdf](https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/38197/1/Sarambe_Lalloux_Aurelle_2018_the%CC%80se.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Gasmi and Djeria, “La Problématique de L’implication des Jeunes Africains,” 74.

<sup>45</sup> Kathryn Sturman, “The AU plan on terrorism. Joining the global war or leading an African battle?”, African Security Review 11, no.4 (2002): 103-104, accessed December 20, 2021, <https://issafrica.org/ctafira/uploads/The%20AU%20Plan%20on%20Terrorism%20-%20Joining%20the%20global%20war%20or%20leading%20an%20African%20battle.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> United Nations Office to the African Union, “Counter Terrorism”, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, accessed December 20, 2021, <https://unoau.unmissions.org/counter-terrorism>

<sup>47</sup> Martin Ewi and Kwesi Aning, “Assessing the role of the African Union in preventing and combating terrorism in Africa”, African Security Review 15, no.3: 40, accessed December 20, 2021, [http://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/EW115\\_3.PDF](http://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/EW115_3.PDF)

<sup>48</sup> Ewi and Aning, “Assessing the role,” 40.

<sup>49</sup> Le mécanisme de coopération policière de l'Union africaine (AFRIPOL), “À propos du Département Paix et Sécurité (PSD) de la Commission de l'Union africaine (CUA)”, accessed December 22, 2021, <https://afrapol.africa-union.org/permanent-secretariat/?lang=fr>

<sup>50</sup> Sarambe, “Les mécanismes de lutte contre le terrorisme,” 18.

<sup>51</sup> Richard, Iroanya. “The Role of the African Union in Combating Terrorism .” Africa Insight 37, no.1 (April 2007): 69, accessed December 22, 2021,

of the “African Peace and Security Architecture”(APSA), including the “Defence and Security Division” (DSD), as well as a subcommittee on counterterrorism.<sup>52</sup>

Consequently, the “African Centre for Study and Research on Terrorism” (ACSRT) was established in 2004 to assist AU member states in building their counter-terrorism capacity, conducting research, analysis and studies on terrorism, as well as maintaining a database, centralizing, sharing and evaluating information.<sup>53</sup> That’s why it cooperates closely with the Committee on Intelligence and Security Services in Africa (CISSA), and the operationalization of the fight against “criminal- Salafists” with the establishment of the African Union police cooperation mechanism (AFRIPOL).

*African Union soft Measures: prevention and counter violent extremism (P/CVE)*

The African Union's counterterrorism strategy includes “soft measures” that focus on aspects of democratization, education, and mechanisms to prevent African youth from being radicalized,<sup>54</sup> with amnesty programs and reintegration. As such, “Journey to extremism: the Tipping Point” is based on interviews with members of Boko Haram, Al Shabab.<sup>55</sup>

Therefore, the “African Union Transitional Justice Policy” (AU TJP) has been implemented to apply best practices and to respond to violent extremism as a non-military approach, including phases of prevention, intervention and management, as well as

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[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269947238\\_The\\_role\\_of\\_the\\_African\\_Union\\_in\\_Combating\\_Terrorism](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269947238_The_role_of_the_African_Union_in_Combating_Terrorism)

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Léa Nkalow Ngoula, “ L’Union Africaine à l’épreuve du terrorisme : forces et challenges de la politique africaine de sécurité”, Thinking Africa, Note d’analyse politique, no.35 (Avril 2016), accessed December 12, 2021, [http://www.irenees.net/bdf\\_fiche-analyse-1076\\_fr.html?fbclid](http://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-analyse-1076_fr.html?fbclid)

<sup>53</sup> Henry Kah, “ACSRT: promoting a balance between counterterrorism and human rights in Africa.” African Journal for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism 16, no 1 (December 2017): 12. accessed December 12, 2021,

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328880117\\_African\\_Centre\\_for\\_the\\_Study\\_and\\_Research\\_on\\_Terrorism\\_ACSRT\\_African\\_Journal\\_for\\_the\\_Prevention\\_and\\_Combating\\_of\\_Terrorism\\_Vol\\_6\\_N\\_1](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328880117_African_Centre_for_the_Study_and_Research_on_Terrorism_ACSRT_African_Journal_for_the_Prevention_and_Combating_of_Terrorism_Vol_6_N_1)

<sup>54</sup> Gasmi and Djeria, “La Problématique de L’implication des Jeunes Africains,” 85-86.

<sup>55</sup> United Nations Development Programme (PNUD), How UNDP can help to prevent violent extremism (New York: UNDP 50TH anniversary, 2016), 10, accessed December 24, 2021, <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/norway/undp-ogc/documents/PVE%20special%20news%20update%20of%20GP%20cluster.pdf>

post-intervention and resolution phase.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, the African PVE efforts are based on sustainable development and human rights guarantees, through De-radicalization in prisons targeting women under the project “Invisible Women: Gendered Dimensions of Return, Reintegration and Rehabilitation 2019.”<sup>57</sup>

Simultaneously, the African CVE implemented at the national and regional levels transnational coordination, thus AU international engagement with UNDP’s, adopted harmonized strategies on PVE, thereby enhancing service inter-State cooperation.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, AU plays a major role in the elaboration of the instruments for the drying up of sources of support for terrorism, through the adoption of resolutions: (256) 2009 and (136) 2014 on countering the financing of terrorism and criminalizing of payments of ransoms to terrorist groups,<sup>59</sup> with the efforts of the regional workshop on implementing the recommendations of the “Algiers memorandum” under the guidance of the ACRST.<sup>60</sup>

The Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTR’s) reflect the spread of violent extremism, increased through the nationals from African countries leaving to join terrorist groups, but

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<sup>56</sup> Melvis M. Ndiloseh and Hafsa M. Maalim, “Transitional justice in crisis situations: addressing violent extremism, beyond a militarized approach,” Policy Paper, (June 2021): 4-8, accessed December 23, 2021, <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Policy-paper-TJ-in-Crisis-Situations-Addressing-Violent-Extremism-2021.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Africa, Countering terrorism and extremism in Africa, by M. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, UN Assistant Secretary General and Special Adviser to the UNDP Administrator ( New York: United Nations Development Programme Regional Office for Africa, 11 March 2020), accessed December 24, 2021, <https://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/presscenter/speeches/2020/countering-terrorism-and-extremism-in-africa.html>

<sup>58</sup> United Nations Development Programme (PNUD), Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa: A Development Approach. Regional and Multi-Country Project Document (New York: United Nations Development Programme Regional Office for Africa, 2016), 14-15, accessed December 24, 2021, [https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Local%20Governance/UNDP\\_RB\\_A\\_Preventing\\_and\\_Responding\\_to\\_Violent\\_Extremism\\_2016-19.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Local%20Governance/UNDP_RB_A_Preventing_and_Responding_to_Violent_Extremism_2016-19.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> African Union Peace and Security Council, 455 th meeting at the level of heads of state and government, Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on terrorism and violent extremism in Africa. PSC/AHG/2 (CDLV) ( Nairobi: Peace and Security Council, 2 September 2014), 11, accessed December 22, 2021, [https://au.int/sites/default/files/speeches/25397-sp-psc-rpt-terrorism-nairobi-2-09-2014-pdf\\_0.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/speeches/25397-sp-psc-rpt-terrorism-nairobi-2-09-2014-pdf_0.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Algeria welcomes UN adoption of Resolution condemning abduction, hostage-taking”, (13 January 2014), accessed December 12, 2021, [http://www.mae.gov.dz/news\\_article/1891.aspx](http://www.mae.gov.dz/news_article/1891.aspx)

also jihadists returning to their countries of origin.<sup>61</sup> In 2017, the AU estimated that 6,000 African fighters returned home, as did the same number who joined the Middle East as foreign fighters, mainly from the Maghreb and Tunisia.<sup>62</sup> In this way, The PSC of the African Union (AU) has adopted reinforced legislation on counter FTR's, including effective control borders, with the facilitation of cooperation between AU Counter-Terrorism institutions, namely, the AU Commission, the AFRIPOL and the ACRST,<sup>63</sup> as such AU has adopted the resolution on the withdrawal of all foreign fighters and forces and mercenaries from Libya.<sup>64</sup>

*African Union and international anti-terrorism cooperation policies*

At the regional level, the AU's main focus is the establishment of sub and trans-regional mechanisms of anti-terrorism cooperation through the role of "Regional Economic Communities" (RECs). As such, the AU's counterterrorism efforts incorporate coordination of national, continental, and international measures,<sup>65</sup> primarily with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which has established the Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the "Early Warning System" instruments.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, sub-regional initiatives include the "Lake Chad Basin Commission" (LCBC),

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<sup>61</sup> Adja Khadidiatou faye, "Africa must confront its foreign terrorist fighters", Institute for Security Studies. ISS today, (02 August 2019), accessed December 23, 2021, [http://www.irenees.net/bdf\\_fiche-analyse-1076\\_fr.html?fbclid](http://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-analyse-1076_fr.html?fbclid)

<sup>62</sup> The African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC), "Africa needs a continental strategy on Foreign Terrorist Fighters", Peace and Security Council Report 118 (October 2019):2, accessed December 22, 2021, [https://media.africaportal.org/documents/peace\\_and\\_security\\_council\\_report\\_118.pdf](https://media.africaportal.org/documents/peace_and_security_council_report_118.pdf)

<sup>63</sup> African Union Peace and Security Council, the 957<sup>th</sup> PSC Meeting, the Impact of Foreign Terrorist Fighters on Peace and Security in Africa. PSC/PR/COMM.(CMLVII) (Addis Abeba: Peace and Security Council (PSC), 20 October 2020), 4, accessed December 23, 2021, <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/eng-psc-communique-for-the-957th-psc-meeting-on-impact-of-foreign-terrorist-fighters-20-10-2020.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Conseil de Paix et de Sécurité (CPS) de l'Union africaine (UA), 1035<sup>ème</sup> réunion, au niveau Ministérielle, Impact prévu du Retrait des Forces étrangères et des Mercenaires de Libye sur le Sahel et le reste de l'Afrique. PSC/MIN/COMM (Addis Abeba: Conseil de paix et de sécurité (CPS) de l'Union africaine (UA), 30 septembre 2021), 3, accessed December 24, 2021, <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/fr-final-psc-communique-1035th-psc-meeting-mercenaries-and-foreign-fighter-s-30-sept-2021.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> Ewi and Aning, "Assessing the role," 40.

<sup>66</sup> Abdurrahim Siradag, "Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations' Security Policies: Challenges and Prospects", Journal of Academic Inquiries 7, no. 2 (2012): 243, accessed December 12, 2021, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/17755>

with the operationalization of the “Regional Intelligence Fusion Unit” (RIFU).<sup>67</sup> Moreover, AU cooperates in East Africa with the “Intergovernmental Authority on Development” (IGAD), through the “Capacity Building Program against Terrorism” (ICPAT).<sup>68</sup> Also, with the “Southern African Development Community” (SADC), actively engaged in CT activities related to operational capacity, control, law enforcement agencies<sup>69</sup> and information exchange under the “Inter-State Defence and Security Committee” (ISDSC).<sup>70</sup>

The AU inter-regional CT strategy includes the Nouakchott process on regional security,<sup>71</sup> AU Standby Force<sup>72</sup> and CT operationalization with the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHÉL), mainly the AMISOM Joint Operations Coordination Centre (JOCC)<sup>73</sup> in the field of counter-insurgency and capacity-building,<sup>74</sup> through the G5 Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S) supported collective security organizations (AU-ECOWAS - UN).<sup>75</sup> The AU trans-regional CT cooperation with the European Union (EU), through EU policy and rule of law mission (CIVCAP-Sahel) and EU military training mission (EUTM).<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Nna- Emeka Okerke, “Better late than never: the imperative of a sub- regional counterterrorism strategy in the Lake Chad Basin area”, *African Journal for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism* 6, no. 1 (December 2017): 157-160, accessed December 21, 2021, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328880117\\_African\\_Centre\\_for\\_the\\_Study\\_and\\_Research\\_on\\_Terrorism\\_ACSRT](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328880117_African_Centre_for_the_Study_and_Research_on_Terrorism_ACSRT)

<sup>68</sup> Siradag, “Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations’ Security Policies,” 240-241.

<sup>69</sup> Lethekga Ignatius Palmers Kgomo, “Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in South Africa: National Security and Regional Strategy”, *North American Academic Research (NAAR) Journal* 4, no. 4 (April 2021): 116, accessed December 27, 2021, [https://twasp.info/public/paper/9.%20110-119%20Terrorism%20and%20Counter-Terrorism%20in%20South%20Africa%20National%20Security%20and%20Regional%20Strategy%20\(1\).pdf](https://twasp.info/public/paper/9.%20110-119%20Terrorism%20and%20Counter-Terrorism%20in%20South%20Africa%20National%20Security%20and%20Regional%20Strategy%20(1).pdf)

<sup>70</sup> See note 68.

<sup>71</sup> Okerke, “Better late than never,” 161.

<sup>72</sup> Siradag, “Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations’ Security Policies,” 248.

<sup>73</sup> Nkalow Ngoula, “L’Union Africaine à l’épreuve du terrorisme”

<sup>74</sup> Bruno Charbonneau, “Counter-insurgency governance in the Sahel”, *International Affairs* 97, no.6 (November 2021): 1805, accessed December 27, 2021, <https://academic.oup.com/ia/article/97/6/1805/6412468>

<sup>75</sup> Nicola Desgrais, “La force conjointe du G5 Sahel ou l’émergence d’une Architecture de défense collective propre au Sahel”, *Les Champs de Mars* 30, no. 1 (2018): 211-212, accessed December 27, 2021, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-les-champs-de-mars-2018-1-page-211.htm>

<sup>76</sup> Morten Bøås, “Rival priorities in the Sahel: finding the balance between security and development”, Policy Note. The Nordic Africa Institute (NAI), no. 3 (April 2018): 4, accessed December 25, 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Policy%20Note%20on%20Sahel\\_Final%20Version.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Policy%20Note%20on%20Sahel_Final%20Version.pdf)



The AU international cooperation is enhanced through high-level consultations with a number of United Nations bodies, including the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee (UN-CTC), and UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch,<sup>77</sup> similarly to UN agencies, including the UN Office for West Africa especially the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to assist efforts against Boko Haram.<sup>78</sup> In doing so, the “UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy” has assisted the African REC’s to develop regional CT strategies more adapted to their specific needs and conditions.<sup>79</sup>

### **Assessment of the African Union's policies to preventing and combating terrorism**

Despite the efforts of the AU to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism, there are gaps including legal and institutional levels that limit an integrated approach against global jihadism.

#### *AU's counter-terrorism challenges: disparate legal and institutional mechanisms*

The AU counter-terrorism poses a challenge for the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, with the instrumentalization of the definition of “acts of terrorism” according to the interests of the states and the recourse to its use against their enemies, political opponents thus legitimizing the use of force and repression.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, the dominant problem with AU CT policies remains the preference for national measures over collective agreements<sup>81</sup> that suffer from without strong enforcement mechanisms. Indeed, the AU adopts resolutions without an appropriate follow-up process, thus, the challenge of institutional organs instruments to implement relevant decisions.<sup>82</sup> Also, AU's CT

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<sup>77</sup> African Union Peace and Security Council, Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on terrorism and violent extremism in Africa, 11.

<sup>78</sup> Okerke. “Better late than never,” 161.

<sup>79</sup> African Union Peace and Security Council, Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on terrorism and violent extremism in Africa, 12.

<sup>80</sup> Sarambe, “Les mécanismes de lutte contre le terrorisme,” 43-44.

<sup>81</sup> J. Tochukwu Omenma and Moses Onyango, “African Union Counterterrorism Frameworks and Implementation Trends among Member States of the East African Community”, *India Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (2020):113, accessed December 27, 2021, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0974928419901197>

<sup>82</sup> Ewi and Aning, “Assessing the role,” 42.

operationalization lacks innovation, mainly based on a systematic and methodical approach, with a multiplication of regional mechanisms of limited effectiveness and efficiency, absence of coordinated strategy and lack of financial resources.<sup>83</sup>

*The dilemma of heterogeneous agendas: between africanization and internationalization*

AU counter-terrorism is confronted with several obstacles, due to, sub-regional, transregional and international contending measures, non-complementary and counterproductive effects.<sup>84</sup> Especially since the non-conformity of African interests with those of foreign and international actors<sup>85</sup> linked to the French military involvement in the Sahel limits tactically counter-terrorism operations.<sup>86</sup> In contrast, the U.S. agenda favors sustained military assistance under the U.S. Africa Military Command (AFRICOM).<sup>87</sup> Consequently, the Africanization of counter-terrorism policies is confronted with major shortcomings, including a false appeal of the European model of counter-terrorism<sup>88</sup> that does not incorporate African geopolitical contexts and limit AU's high-level CT integration, namely African states attached to national sovereignty<sup>89</sup> and faced weaknesses in intra-regional cooperation.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Nkalow Ngoula, "L'Union Africaine à l'épreuve du terrorisme"

<sup>84</sup> Ibrahim Olamide Nurudeen, "Paved with good intentions? the African Union counter terrorism agenda," University of Pretoria, (31 October 2012), 22-23, accessed December 27, 2021, [https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/36787/Olamide\\_Paved\\_2012.pdf;sequence=1](https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/36787/Olamide_Paved_2012.pdf;sequence=1)

<sup>85</sup> Iratni, "Les défis et enjeux sécuritaires," 17.

<sup>86</sup> Lounnas Djallil, "The transmutations of jihadi organizations in the Sahel and the regional security architecture", Middle East and North Africa Regional Architecture: Mapping Geopolitical Shifts, Regional Order and Domestic Transformations, Future notes, no. 10 ( April 2018): 5, accessed December 27, 2021, [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/menara\\_fn\\_10.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/menara_fn_10.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> See note 85.

<sup>88</sup> Imani Jaoko, "Implementation Remains the Achilles Heel of the African Union: A Study of the African Peer-Review Mechanism (APRM)", Strathmore Law Review, (January 2016): 12-14, accessed December 27, 2021, [https://press.strathmore.edu/uploads/journals/strathmore-law-review/SLR1/1SLR1-03%20Implementation%20Remains%20the%20Achilles%20Heel%20of%20the%20African%20Union--A%20Study%20of%20the%20African%20Peer%20Review%20Mechanism%20\(APRM\)%20by%20Imani%20Jaoko.pdf](https://press.strathmore.edu/uploads/journals/strathmore-law-review/SLR1/1SLR1-03%20Implementation%20Remains%20the%20Achilles%20Heel%20of%20the%20African%20Union--A%20Study%20of%20the%20African%20Peer%20Review%20Mechanism%20(APRM)%20by%20Imani%20Jaoko.pdf)

<sup>89</sup> Nurudeen, "Paved with good intentions?," 23.

<sup>90</sup> Iratni, "Les défis et enjeux sécuritaires," 18.

*The AU's limits on counter-terrorism: the Geometry of politicization and militarization*

The AU counter-terrorism strategies have constructed jihadism as an existential threat, so that the legitimacy of CT measures, under securitization process, as well as the politicization<sup>91</sup> of institutional practices, using fear and moral panic to maintain power, due to the deliberate construction of a discourse of danger.<sup>92</sup> From this regard, African countries have used counter-terrorism measures and legislation to consolidate their power, and exaggerate or play down the seriousness of terrorism, especially to gain favors from the western and being at the vanguard of the “Global War on Terror” (GWOT).<sup>93</sup> But, the failures to ratify and domesticate AU Counter Terrorism protocols are indications of political unwillingness.<sup>94</sup> On the other, there are limitations to militarized responses to violent extremism<sup>95</sup> and therefore the need for soft approaches, notably reconciliation and inclusive dialogue with non-jihadist organizations.<sup>96</sup> However, the emergence of the Wagner group<sup>97</sup> as a key military actor in Africa, especially in Mali, presents a new challenge in the privatization of counter-terrorism.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the argument in favor of this work continued with the analysis of the African Union's counter-terrorism strategies; between globalized jihadism and regionalized

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<sup>91</sup> Francesca Galli, “The legal and political implications of the securitization of counter- terrorism measures across the Mediterranean”, Centre of International studies of the University of Cambridge, Euro MeSCo paper 71 (September 2008): 5, accessed December 28, 2021, <https://www.euromesco.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/200809-EuroMeSCo-Paper-1.71.pdf>

<sup>92</sup> Richard Jackson, “Security, Democracy, and the Rhetoric of Counter-Terrorism”, Democracy and Security 01, no. 02 (September 2005): 157, accessed December 28, 2021, [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/langage\\_guerreauteurisme-2.pdf](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/langage_guerreauteurisme-2.pdf)

<sup>93</sup> Ibrahim Olamide, “Paved with good intentions?,” 23.

<sup>94</sup> Omenma and Onyango, “African Union Counterterrorism Frameworks,” 112.

<sup>95</sup> Ndiloseh and Maalim, “Transitional justice in crisis situations,” 2.

<sup>96</sup> Djallil, “The transmutations of jihadi organizations,” 5.

<sup>97</sup> Tanguy Berthemet, “ Mali : les mercenaires de Wagner se déploient ”Le Figaro, (25 Décembre 2021), accessed December 27, 2021, <https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/le-mali-dement-tout-deploiement-de-mercenaires-du-groupe-russe-wagner-20211225>

response, particularly with the transnationalization of the jihadist threat in Africa including Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, which is mainly due to state failure, ethnic conflicts and the involvement of foreign actors, with double impact; on national and regional security, but also as factors that limit the effectiveness of the collective counter-terrorism measures led by the African Union.

On the one hand, the contextual knowledge that accompanied and deepened the analysis provided a pertinent perception of the African Union's role in counter-terrorism under the emergence of the "Global War on Terror" at the high level of international political agenda, which have deeply influenced it. Thus adopting legal mechanisms against Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTR's), institutional architectures as the "African Centre for Study and Research on Terrorism" (ACSRT) and specialized operational coordination, in addition to anti-terrorism initiatives including sub-regional, transnational and international cooperation with the various UN and EU agencies. On the other hand, the African Union's responses in the fight against terrorism at the international level are mainly based on hard aspects and militarization mechanisms, as well as on securing and operationalizing with the cooperation of multinational forces, especially in the Sahel. Hence the need to rethink counterterrorism by integrating soft approaches to effectively prevent the root causes of radicalization and violent extremism.

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## Annex



