



Trends in Terrorist Activity in Africa (2012-2021)



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INTRODUCTION

The Project was developed to provide a better understanding of trends in terrorist activity in Africa. Of the many TGs whose activities affect the security, the focus of the first part of the project is on Al-Qaeda (AQ) and DAESH, and some of their affiliates, which have had significant security impacts and contributed to instability in the respective areas. The second part describes trends in terrorist activity based on the number of terrorism related incidents, fatalities and type of events.

The results are based on the use of limited, publicly available data from The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)¹ and other open sources. The NSD-S Hub produced graphs based on such data showing overarching views of terrorism activities in selected areas of Africa. Data from previously published NSD-S Hub publications^{2,3} was used in order to provide more complete insights and understanding of terrorism-related trends in these areas.

The data covers a 10-year period in Africa focusing on selected areas of the Horn of Africa (HoA), the Sahel and North Africa as these were the most affected areas. Nevertheless, some data regarding relevant events immediately prior to or post this period, which could have an impact on the estimation of trends, have been included for completeness.

¹ The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping project. ACLED collects the dates, actors, locations, fatalities, and types of all reported political violence and protest events around the world. The ACLED team conducts analysis to describe, explore, and test conflict scenarios, and makes both data and analysis open for free use by the public. ACLED is a registered non-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status in the United States, <https://acleddata.com/about-acled/>, accessed on 06 April 2022.

² NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub – Mapping the Terrorist Threat in the South – 2021 – <https://thesouthernhub.org/publications/nsds-hub-publications/mapping-the-terrorist-threat-in-the-south>, accessed on 05 May 2022.

³ NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub – Joint Reports on Terrorism in the Sahel – <https://thesouthernhub.org/publications/nsds-hub-publications/joint-report-on-terrorism-in-the-sahel>, accessed on 05 May 2022.

THE TERRORIST GROUPS

Despite international efforts, Terrorist Groups (TGs) persist, expanding their geographical outreach and posing a significant threat to regional and international security. Overall, this can be seen by an increase in terrorist activity on the African continent. In this section there is a list of the principal TGs and a brief summary of their activities.

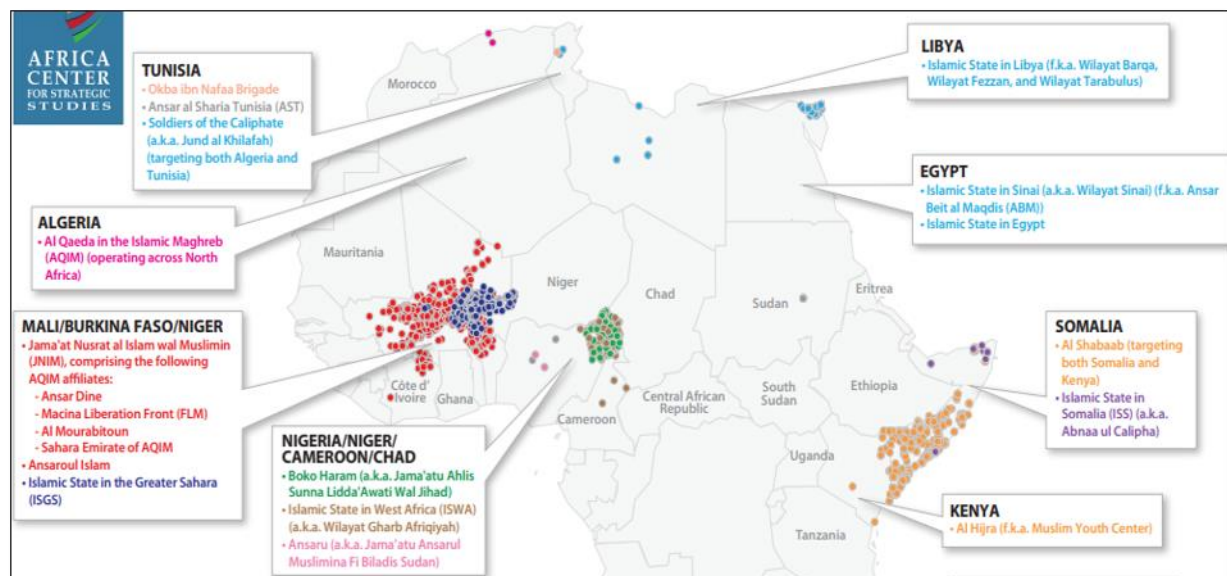


Fig. 1 : Terrorist Groups in Africa
(<https://africacenter.org>)

TGs will likely take advantage of the repercussions caused by the ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict. In Africa, there is limited scope to replace the imports from Ukraine and Russia which are now lacking, because regional production and supply of many commodities is comparatively small. In this context, and considering related issues such as: country-specific shocks, the effects of climate change, export restrictions and stockpiling to name but a few, there is considerable potential for food insecurity crises. This could provide TGs with fertile ground to exploit the difficulties local populations find themselves in and spread their doctrines and activity.⁴

Over the past decade, TGs affiliated to AQ and later DAESH have increased their focus on the continent of Africa. The foundation of DAESH in 2013 encouraged many African TGs, causing them to pledge allegiance to DAESH core principles and to become more active. Consequently, terrorist activities in Africa spread more quickly, particularly in the Sahel. It is likely that the counter-terrorism efforts of regional and international actors against DAESH in the Middle East contributed to this new geographical focus from the Middle East to Africa. (Fig 1)

To illustrate this point, in 2012, only two African countries – Nigeria and Somalia (fifth and seventh, respectively) were among the first 10 countries

⁴ United Nations – The impact on trade and development of the war in Ukraine, United Nations conference on trade and development – 2022 – https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/sginf2022d1_en.pdf, accessed on 27 April 2022.

on the Global Terrorism Index list,⁵ while a decade later, five (Afghanistan, Iraq, **Somalia**, **Burkina Faso**, Syria, **Nigeria**, **Mali**, **Niger**, Myanmar, Pakistan) were African.

Many North African countries were affected by the cascades of socio-political changes and economic challenges which, among many other drivers and multipliers, have made it far easier for TGs to expand their activities. Therefore, countries such as Libya, due largely to its geographical location bordering sub-Saharan Africa, has become a springboard for DAESH further expansion into the South.⁶

In the Sahel, AQ and DAESH affiliated TGs have become very active since 2017, which could be linked with foundation of Jama'at Nasr Al-Islam Wal Muslimin (JNIM) and the limitation of strength of DAESH in Iraq. Furthermore, the sharp incline in the number of events in African continent from 2019 might be connected to the successful fight against DAESH in Syria leading them to a change of focus towards Africa. Among some of the most active TGs in the Sahel are the AQ-affiliated JNIM and the DAESH-affiliated Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) followed by Boko Haram (BH) and the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP).

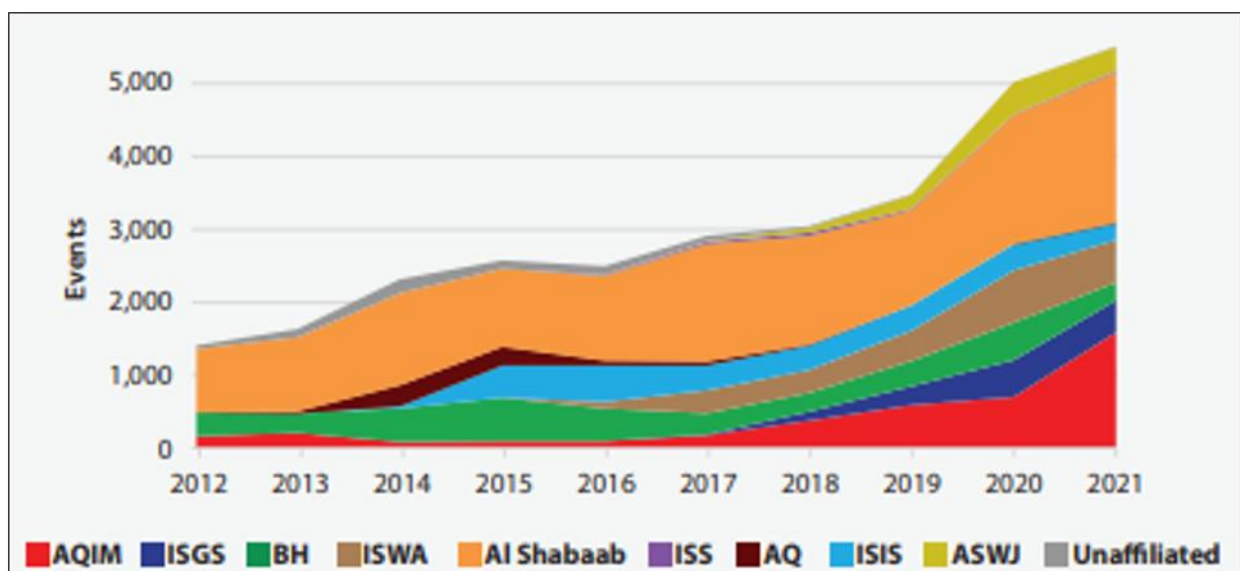


Fig 2: Terrorist activities by group in Africa 2012 – 2021
(<https://africacenter.org>)

Over the past 10 years, the HoA was a hotspot for the most active TG in Africa, Al-Shabaab (AS). Despite all counter-terrorist efforts, in 2020 AS's activities recorded almost doubled. (Fig 2)

⁵ Vision of Humanity – Global Terrorism Index – <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/#/>, accessed on 31 May 2022.

⁶ EUROPOL – Inga Kristina Trauthig – Assessing the Islamic State in Libya – 2019 - https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/inga_trauthig_islamic_state_libya.pdf, accessed on 20 June 2022.

North Africa

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) - established in 2007, AQIM⁷ is aligned with the broader goal of establishing Sharia Law. AQIM specifically targets what it sees as continued Western influence in the region. Since its formation, AQIM has carried out hundreds of attacks, including bombings, ambushes and raids targeting Algerian nationals, foreigners and military installations.

In March 2017, AQIM merged with local extremist groups such as Al-Mourabitoun and Ansar Al-Dine to form JNIM. In Mali, it is known for its de facto war with the international presence, as well as its extensive history of kidnapping and extortion.

DAESH in Libya - was officially established in 2014. Regarding increasing its numbers, in addition to local extremist groups, DAESH also relied on Libyan recruits returning home from fighting in Iraq and Syria. Thus, the group has become the most powerful extremist group operating in Libya.⁸ By the spring of 2015, the terrorist group numbered around 6,500 fighters. It seems that DAESH hardly recovered from losing its footholds in Derna and Sirte in 2016. The defeat caused a shrink in ranks to somewhere between a few hundred and 2,000 fighters. It also failed to integrate into the largely tribal social structure in Libya. Some DAESH remnants have been scattered across major cities and have kept low profiles, others have waged a low-level insurgency in the south, in Fezzan province.⁹ The political instability affecting the Libyan security sector has allowed DAESH to operate with relative freedom of movement in the South.¹⁰

DAESH-Sinai Province - Ansar Bayt Al-Maqdis (ABM) – also known as the DAESH-Sinai Province – pledged allegiance to DAESH in 2014 and is the most active and capable terrorist group operating in Egypt. It seeks to establish territorial control and to implement Sharia in the Sinai Peninsula.¹¹ Nevertheless, sporadic activities have been seen in Egypt's Nile Valley. According to the United Nations, the TG is “resilient” and has between 500 and 1,200 fighters.

The Sahel

In the Sahel, AQ affiliated TGs are trying to expand their activities and influence other territories in competition with DAESH affiliates. A more recent example of the spread of AQ occurred in Nigeria when Jamaat Ansar Al-Muslimeen fi Bilad Al-Sudan, better known as Ansaru, repeated its

⁷ Counter Extremism Project – Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb – <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-qaeda-islamic-maghreb-aqim>, accessed on 10 February 2022.

⁸ Counter Extremism Project – Libya: Extremism and Terrorism, <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/libya>, accessed on 10 February 2022.

⁹ Libya 2021: Islamists, Salafis and Jihadis, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/libya-2021-islamists-salafis-jihadis>, accessed on 11 March 2022.

¹⁰ Counter Extremism Project – Libya. *Op.cit*

¹¹ Counter Extremism Project – Egypt: Extremism and Terrorism - <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/egypt-extremism-and-terrorism>, accessed on 20 June 2022.

declaration that it is part of AQ.¹² Ansaru is a relatively small group which is active in northern Nigeria and in the border regions towards Niger and Benin.

In the Sahel the most active TGs are the AQ affiliated JNIM, and the DAESH affiliated ISGS. Both groups are carrying out terrorist activities primarily in the tri-border area (Mali-Burkina Faso-Niger) with aspirations to enlarge their geographic areas of activities and influence southwards and westwards towards the littoral countries. In the Lake Chad Basin, DAESH affiliated ISWAP and BH are the most active and dangerous terrorist groups.

A high profile event which impacted the overall situation among TGs in Sahel was the elimination of three leaders of the most active TGs (ISGS, BH and ISWAP) in 2021. At the end of February 2022, during a French-led anti-terrorist military operation in central Mali, a senior AQIM, Yahia Djouadi was also killed. Djouadi, an Algerian also known as Abu Ammar Al-Jazairi, was responsible for finance and logistics.¹³

JNIM is one of the biggest and the most active TG in the Sahel. JNIM was founded in March 2017, as a coalition of AQ aligned groups: Ansar Al-Din, AQIM, Al-Mourabitoun and Katibat Macina. JNIM operates throughout Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, conducting complex attacks, assassinations, and improvised explosive device attacks on UN, civilians and French forces. Since the beginning of 2022, members of the Russian private military company Wagner, deployed in Mali, were also targeted by JNIM. JNIM has reportedly circa 2,000 fighters.¹⁴

ISGS is the local branch of DAESH and it was formed in May 2015 as the result of a split within the militant group Al-Mourabitoun. ISGS leader Adnan Abou Walid al-Sahrawi, who France believes ordered the execution of the aid workers, was killed in August 2021¹⁵ and eleven other people implicated in the murders have been arrested in Niger in recent months. Precise numbers of fighters are not available but were estimated at about 500 fighters in 2020.¹⁶

BH is a DAESH aligned group based in north eastern Nigeria, also active in Cameroon, Chad and Niger. In 2002, Mohammad Yusuf formed BH in order to oppose Western education and establish an Islamic state in Nigeria. The group has carried out numerous attacks since 2009, including the 2011 bombing of the UN headquarters in Abuja, but it is best known for the 2014 Chibok schoolgirl kidnapping, when the group abducted over 300 young Nigerian girls. Its primary base of operation is north-eastern Nigeria, but it has conducted limited operations in Cameroon, Niger and Chad. In March 2015, BH became an affiliate of DAESH. In May 2021, the leader of BH,

¹²France 24 – Nigeria terror threat: Growing concern over Ansaru, AQ new affiliate, <https://www.france24.com/en/video/20220103-nigeria-terror-threat-growing-concern-over-ansaru-al-qaeda-new-affiliate>, accessed on 08 March 2022.

¹³ Strategic Intelligence News – Senior AQ in the Islamic Maghreb Commander - Finance and Logistics Killed by French troops in Mali – 2022 – <https://intelligencebriefs.com/senior-al-qaeda-in-the-islamic-maghreb-commander-finance-and-logistics-killed-by-french-troops-in-mali/>, accessed on 08 March 2022.

¹⁴ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) – The World Fact Book: Terrorist Organizations - <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/references/terrorist-organizations/>, accessed on 17 February 2022.

¹⁵ France 24 – Sahrawi: The top Sahel jihadist killed in French “opportunistic hit” – 2021 – [Sahrawi: The top Sahel jihadist killed in French 'opportunistic hit' \(france24.com\)](https://www.france24.com/en/sahrawi-the-top-sahel-jihadist-killed-in-french-opportunistic-hit), accessed on 17 February 2022.

¹⁶ CIA. *Op.cit*

Abubakar Shekau was killed in a clash with ISWAP forces.¹⁷ According to late 2020 estimates, manpower strength was 1,500-2,000 fighters.¹⁸

ISWAP was a branch of the BH group that has been fighting in Lake Chad Basin for 12 years. In August 2016, DAESH leadership recognized and appointed Abu Musab Al-Barnawi as the de facto leader of ISWAP, which Shekau, leader of BH refused to accept. Due to infighting, ISIL-West Africa split into two factions, Al-Barnawi's faction (ISWAP) and Shekau's faction (BH). Since Shekau's death in 2021, ISWAP is trying to spread activities and fill gaps by expanding territorial control as well as attracting members of BH to join ISWAP (18 commanders have already joined ISWAP). In October 2021, according to the statement of Nigerian military, Abu Musab Al-Barnawi, leader of ISWAP was killed.¹⁹ ISWAP's estimated strength was between 3,500 and 5,000 active fighters in 2020.²⁰

The Horn of Africa

Al-Shabaab - Harakat Al-Shabaab al-Mujahidin, better known as AS was founded between 2004 and 2006 in Somalia. In Arabic the name means "the youth". It is the largest militant organization based in Somalia and is also active in neighbouring countries. The group's aim is to establish a theocracy in the HoA and their ideology does not have any national borders. AS has been identified as a major threat to international security by the international community, particularly focusing on its established links to AQ and the expansion of its area of activities beyond Somalia into Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia and beyond. In addition, AS controls large parts of central and southern Somalia and also has links with other terrorist groups like BH.²¹ One of AS's worst attacks to date was carried out at the Westgate Mall in Kenya in September 2013, when more than 70 people were massacred.²² In 2020, AS strength was estimated at between 5,000 to 10,000 active fighters.²³

Islamic State in Somalia (ISS) - in 2015, DAESH sent a proposal to AS to ally with DAESH core but it was rejected by the leader of AS by stating long-standing allegiance to AQ. In late 2015, a small faction broke off from AS's ranks and pledged allegiance to the then-DAESH leader. From that point onwards, the group was known as ISS. Since becoming a fully-fledged group, ISS is trying to counter AS's presence in its sphere of influence. Following in the footsteps of AS, ISS manoeuvred through clan politics to get recruits. Currently, there is still periodic conflict between ISS and AS. In 2020, ISS was estimated to have approximately 100-300 fighters.²⁴

¹⁷ BBC News – Abubakar Shekau: Nigeria's Boko Haram leader is dead, say rival militants – 2021 – <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57378493>, accessed on 21 April 2022.

¹⁸ CIA. *Op.cit.*

¹⁹ Counter Extremism Project – Extremist leaders: Abu Musab al-Barnawi – <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/abu-musab-al-barnawi>, accessed on 17 February 2022.

²⁰ CIA. *Op.cit.*

²¹ NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub – The spread of Al Shabaab from Somalia to Kenya and beyond – 2021 – [20210303 The Spread of Al Shabaab.pdf \(thesouthernhub.org\)](https://thesouthernhub.org/20210303-The-Spread-of-Al-Shabaab.pdf), accessed on 17 February 2022.

²² Waagacusub Media – Ali Adnan – US Designates Kenya's Al- Hijra As A Terrorist Group – 2021 – [US Designates Kenya's Al- Hijra As A Terrorist Group \(waagacusub.com\)](https://waagacusub.com/US-Designates-Kenya-s-Al-Hijra-As-A-Terrorist-Group), accessed on 17 February 2022.

²³ CIA. *Op.cit.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Al-Hijra was established in 2008 and is organizationally and operationally interconnected with AS.²⁵ Al-Hijra uses AS's allegiance to AQ to advertise itself and to amplify the effect of its prolific insurgency against Somali forces and their international allies. The USA State Department's terror designation for AS has been amended to include Al-Hijra.²⁶

²⁵ Waagacusub Media. *Op.cit.*

²⁶ Strategic Intelligence News – Al-Hijra terror group – [Al-Hijra terror group – Strategic Intelligence Service \(intelligencebriefs.com\)](https://intelligencebriefs.com), accessed on 04 April 2022.

TRENDS IN TERRORIST ATTACKS

Over the past decade, despite international efforts in the Fight Against Terrorism (FAT) in Africa, TGs have succeeded in increasing their activities and expanding their geographical reach, thereby spreading their influence. From 2012 to 2021, the total number of TG activities increased by more than fourfold. The biggest jump in the total number of TG activities was recorded from 2019 to 2021. (Fig 3)

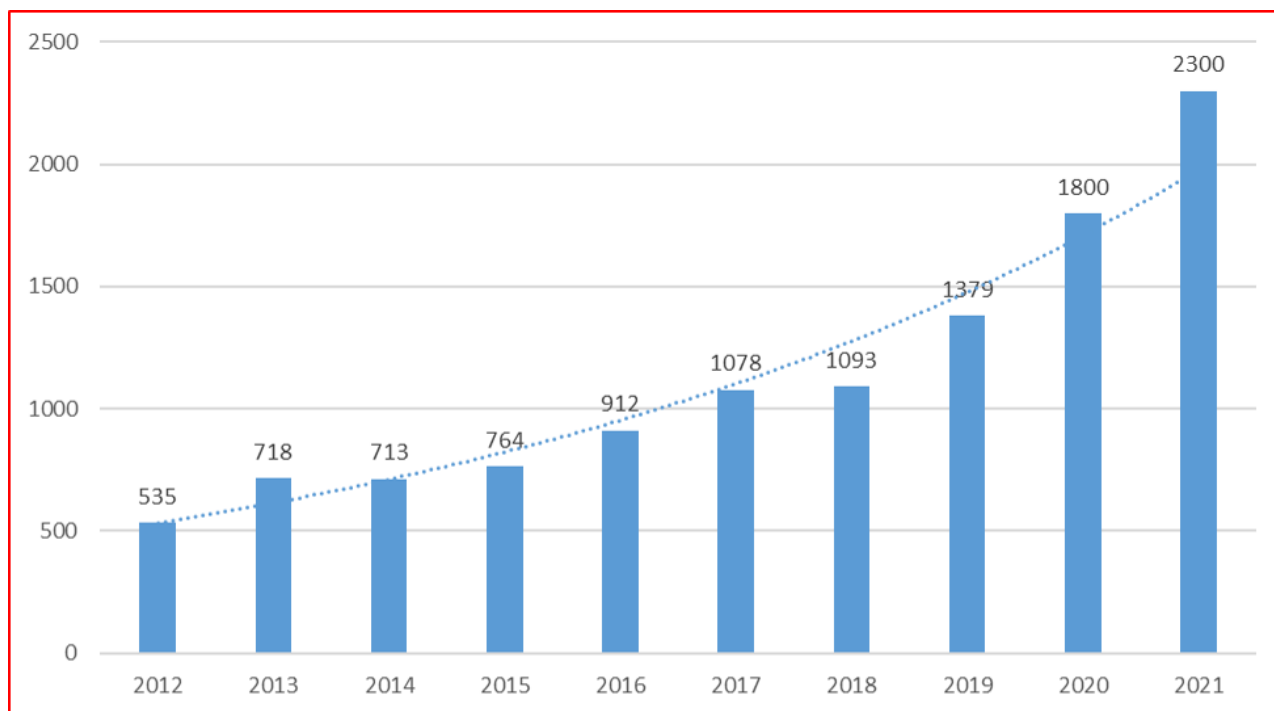


Fig 3: Total number of terrorist activities in Africa 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

On the African continent, from 2012 to 2021, TG activities were mostly conducted in the HoA, the Sahel and North Africa. The biggest number of TG activities was recorded in Somalia and, more recently in the Sahel region, particularly in the tri-border area.

North Africa

While Sinai remains a hotspot for DAESH, more sporadic attacks have been observed in Libya, which continues to be of concern due to the lack of proper security sector reforms, which pose a significant challenge to national efforts to counter terrorism. (Fig 4)

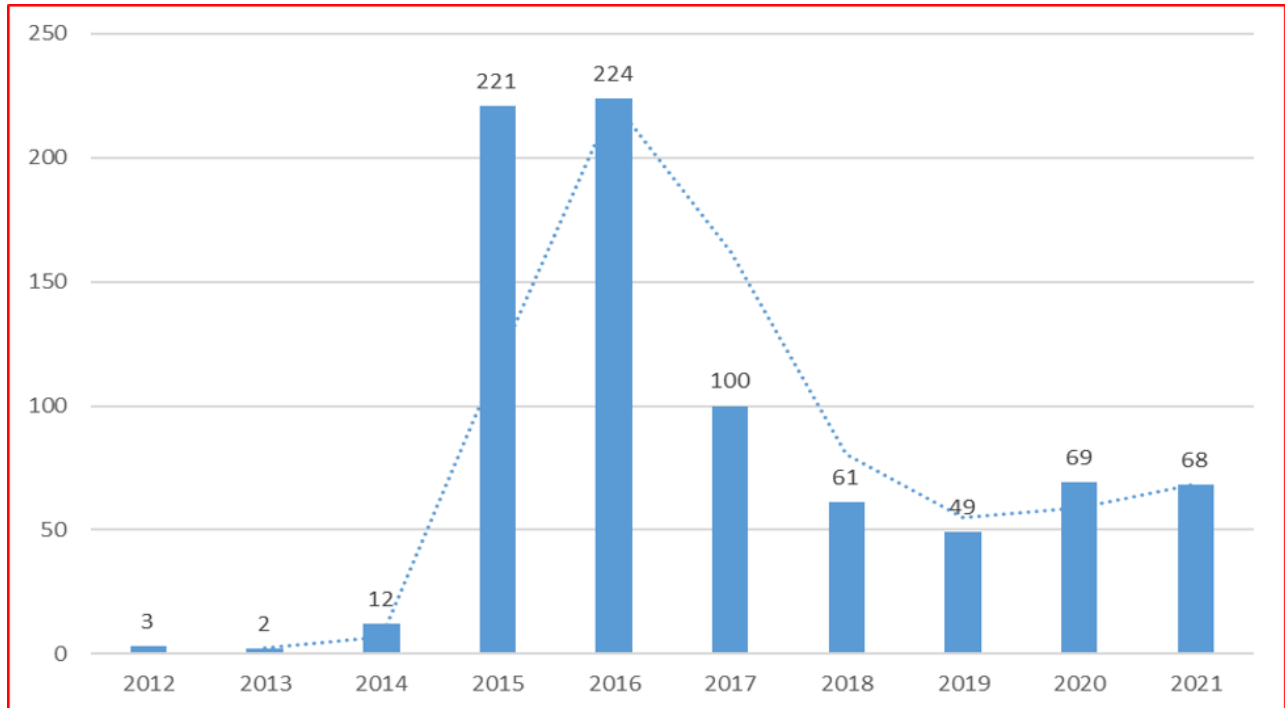


Fig 4: Total number of terrorist activities in North Africa 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

The drastic rise of terrorism related incidents, attributed mainly to DAESH affiliates in North Africa, especially in 2015 and 2016, was driven by the global rise of the terrorist group, which at that time controlled a large swathe of territory in Iraq and Syria. Currently, DAESH is far less active in North Africa, with the exception of the Sinai Peninsula, where it does not administer territory but rather conducts a low-level insurgency war of attrition.²⁷

Nearly all terrorist attacks in Egypt took place in Sinai and mostly targeted security forces. The rise in numbers followed the pledge of allegiance by DAESH-Sinai Province to the then DAESH leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.²⁸ However, a change came when the terrorist group adopted a more aggressive approach to the tribes. As a result, some of the largest clans, such as the Tarabin, Sawarka and Ramailat, jointly declared war on terrorism. Seizing the opportunity, Egypt launched Operation “Sinai-2018”. The shift, coupled with the decrease in smuggling after Hamas cracked down on DAESH supporters

²⁷ Wilson Center – Cole Bunzel – Explainer: The Islamic State in 2021 – 2021 – <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/explainer-islamic-state-2021>, accessed on 15 February 2022.

²⁸ The Washington Institute for Near East Policy – Ido Levy – Egypt’s Counterinsurgency Success in Sinai – 2021 – <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/egypts-counterinsurgency-success-sinai>, accessed on 15 February 2022.

in Gaza,²⁹ contributed to a decline in terrorist activities in Sinai by approximately 55% in 2017 and then by around 80% in 2019 compared to 2016. The expanded military presence has generally precluded large scale attacks, while most incidents consist of kidnappings or sniper shootings.³⁰ (Fig 5)

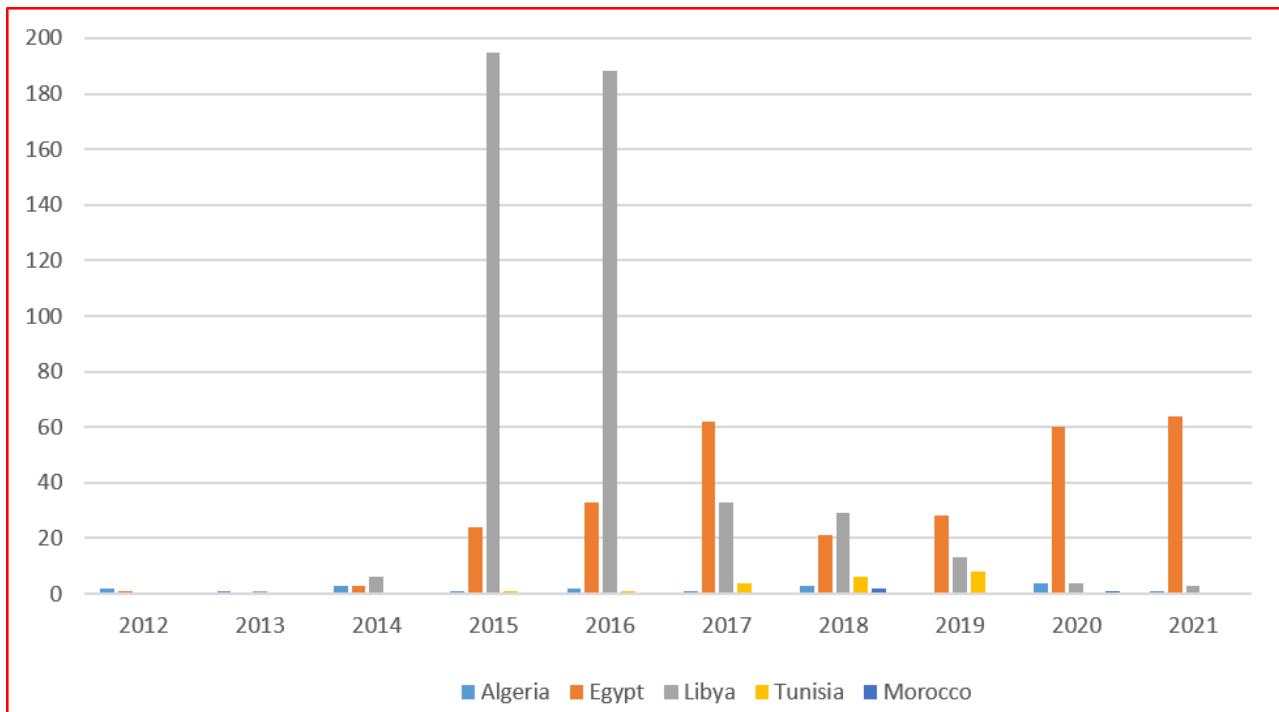


Fig 5: Terrorist activities in North Africa by country 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

While Sinai remains a hotspot for the DAESH, more sporadic attacks can be observed in Libya. Nonetheless, the sustained instability as a result of the political and social fragmentation continues to provide the terrorists with fertile ground to develop their activities. The recent complex attacks against the Libyan National Army's units in southwest Libya (Fezzan Province) may indicate that DAESH's strategy of patience has allowed it to regroup and to partially rebuild its strength and capabilities. More likely, however, is that Libya will retain its significance as a transit hub for fighters and weapons in support of DAESH's affiliates in the Sahel.

Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia have experienced fewer terrorism-related attacks over the last 10 years. However, they have faced internal threats from al-Qaeda and DAESH linked groups.³¹ With regional and international support, these countries have successfully amended the legislative base and reformed their security apparatus to address the terrorist threats. Additionally, in recent years Algeria has invested in counter-extremism efforts tailored to tackle groups' underlying ideologies.

²⁹ Middle East Institute – Grace Wermenbol - Disrupting a delicate status quo: The Hamas crackdown on Salafi-jihadists – 2019 – <https://www.mei.edu/publications/disrupting-delicate-status-quo-hamas-crackdown-salafi-jihadists>, accessed on 15 February 2022.

³⁰ The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. *Op.cit.*

³¹ Counter Extremism Project – Morocco: Extremism and Terrorism – <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/morocco>, accessed on 15 March 2022.

A comparison of the number of terrorism related incidents in North Africa and the death toll shows that they followed the terrorism landscape dynamics. Specifically, the skyrocketing number of fatalities followed the high operation tempo of DAESH between 2014 and 2017. The biggest increase in fatalities was logged in Egypt and Libya in 2015 and 2016. Since then, and especially after the loss of the so-called “last bastion” in Al-Baghuz, Syria, fatalities have plummeted. In 2021, the number of fatalities in Egypt represented about 10% of those killed in 2017. In Libya it was less than 1% of the fatalities inflicted in 2015, the year of DAESH’s apogee in Libya. (Fig 6)

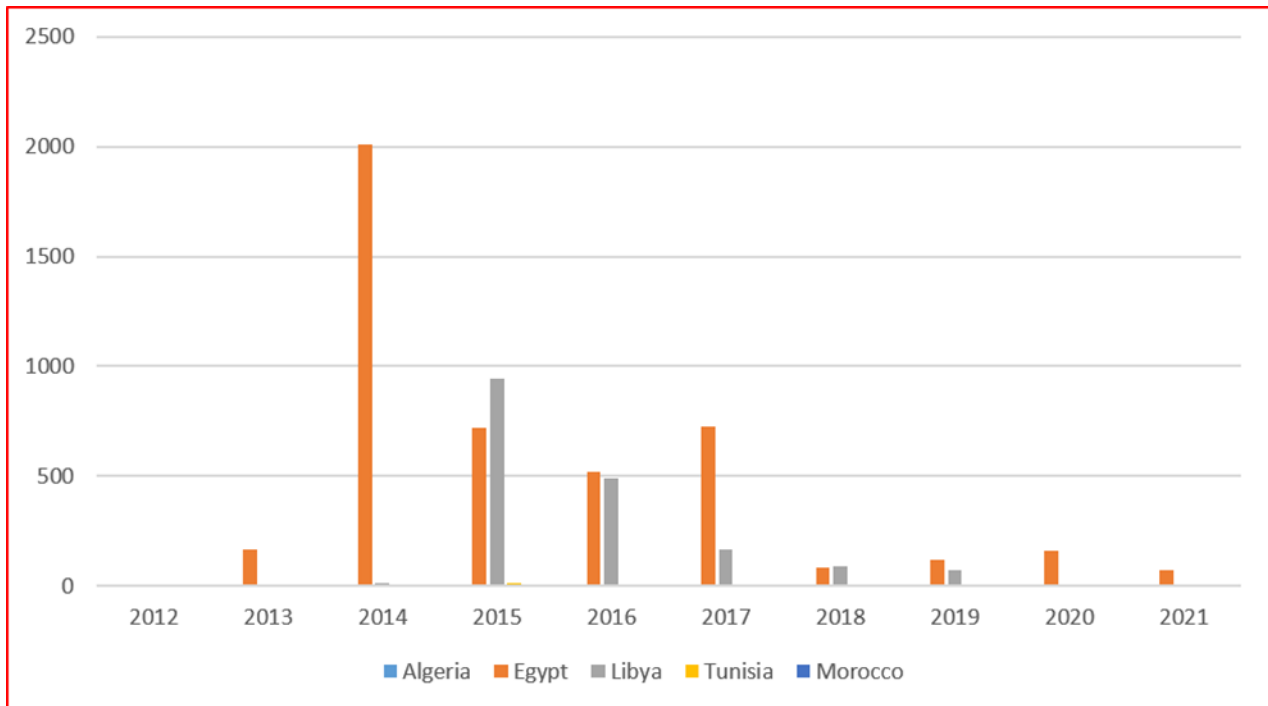


Fig 6: Fatalities by country in North Africa 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

Over the past decade, violence against civilians has taken the biggest share in North Africa (Fig 7); approximately 40% of the total number of incidents. It was followed by explosions/remote violence and battles, which also reached their peak numbers during the same period, 2015 - 2017.

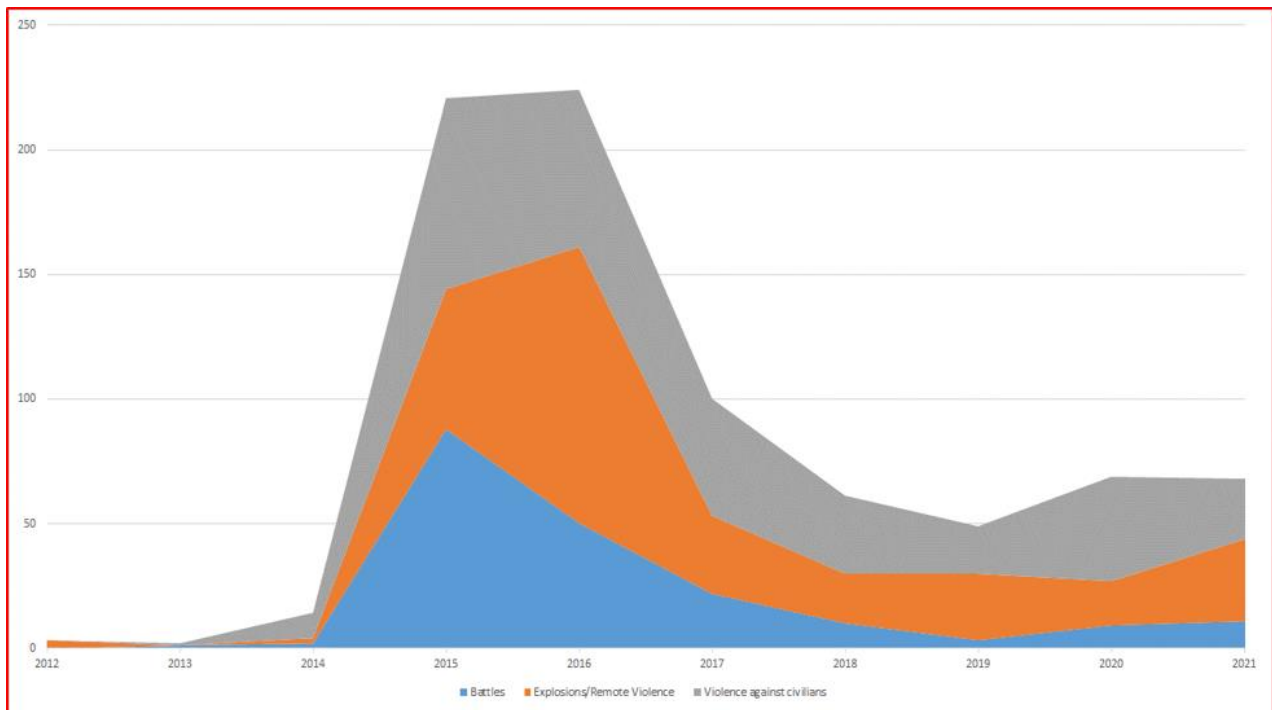


Fig 7: Events by type in North Africa 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

One possible reason for the reduction of all these variables, which reached the lowest point in 2019, could be the loss of human and technical capacity as a result of DAESH's general decline in the Middle East at that time, organizational decentralization and strategic change that led to the subsequent expansion in the Sahel.

The Sahel

Over the past decade, the total number of TG activities has increased across the Sahel, particularly since 2017. From 2012 to 2017 most of the terrorism related incidents occurred in Mali, which served as a centre of insurgency at that time. From 2017 to 2018, the Sahel, especially the tri-border area, saw a drastic increase in terrorist activities by over 200%, and have continued to grow exponentially. (Fig 8)

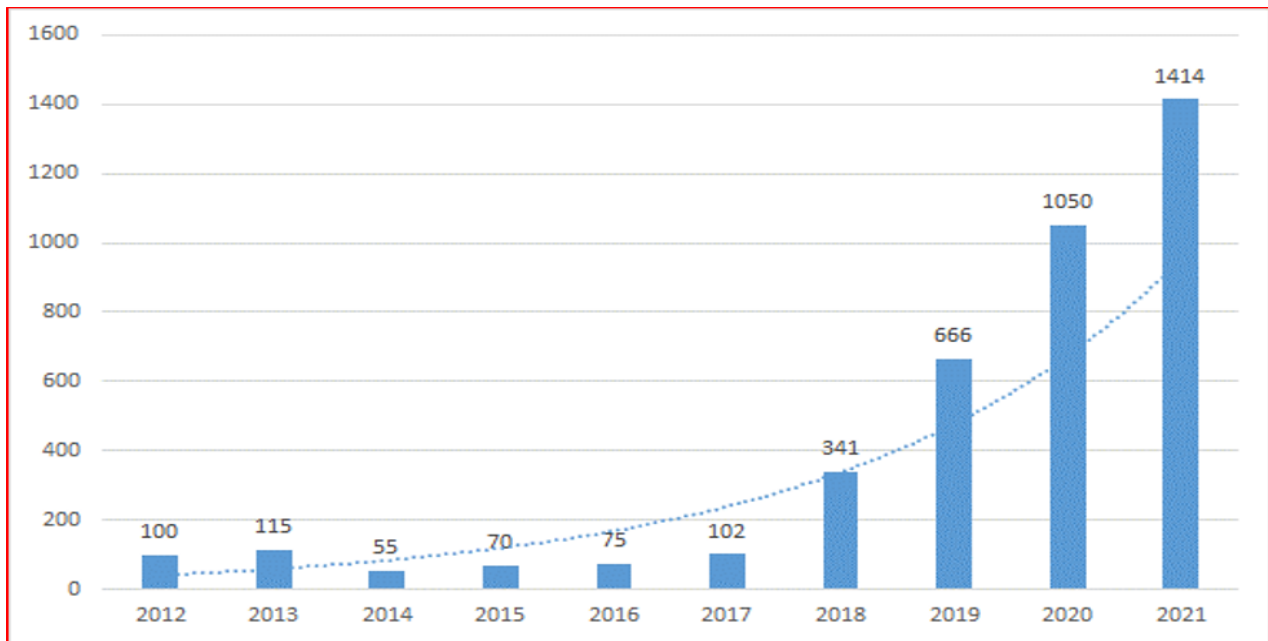


Fig 8: Terrorist activities in Sahel by year 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

Since 2019, the situation in the Sahel has become even more dramatic and is worst in Burkina Faso, where since 2019 the number of TG activities has been exceptionally high. 2022 has seen a similar increase in the Sahel. It is clearly visible that Burkina Faso in 2019 was a focus of TGs' activities. (Fig 9)

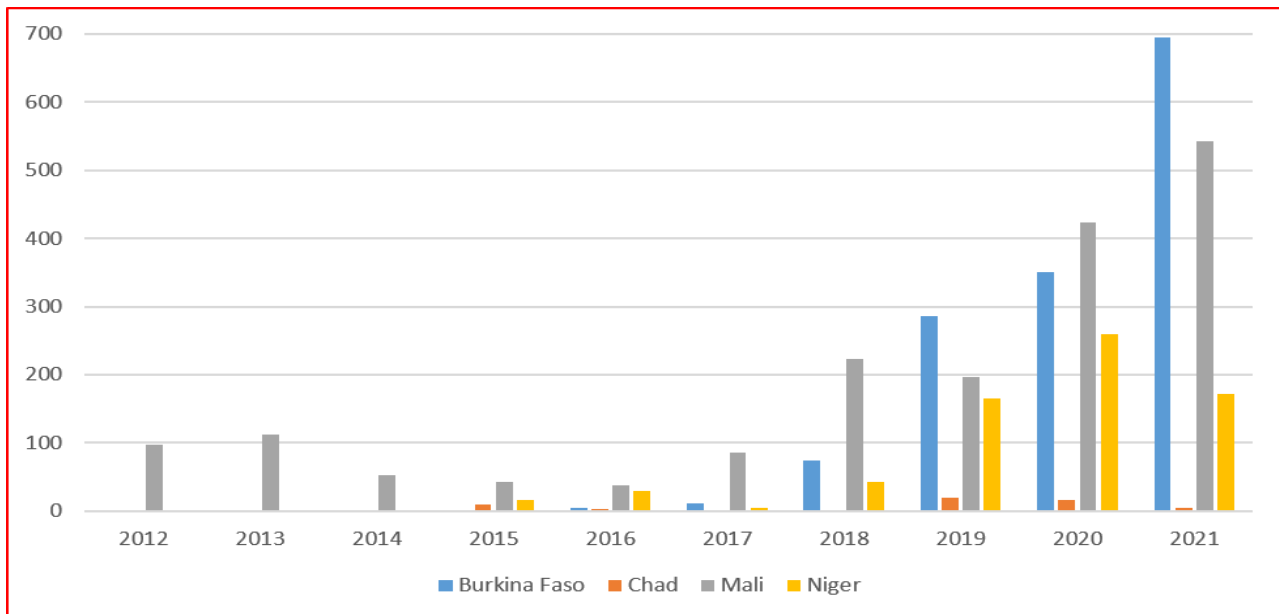


Fig 9: Terrorist activities in Sahel by countries 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

Some of the most significant attacks in Burkina Faso during the first quarter of 2022 were:

- 13 March 2022 - At least 13 Burkina Faso soldiers were killed and several others went missing in an ambush near Taparko, a mining town in the northern part of the country plagued by frequent and deadly terrorist attacks;³²
- 14 March 2022 - At least seven people were killed in the fifth attack in northern Burkina Faso in under a week;³³
- 21 March 2022 - At least 13 soldiers were killed and eight others wounded in Burkina Faso's eastern Gourma province in an ambush.³⁴

Also of serious concern is the recent spread of terrorist activities to neighbouring countries in the Sahel region, with Benin as an example. It is among the West African coastal countries considered most vulnerable to a spill over of TG violence from the landlocked Sahel countries, where groups linked to AQ and DAESH exert influence over vast tracts of territory. In December 2021, two soldiers were killed and several others wounded in an attack on border security post in northern Benin. Then, in February 2022, TG conducted the deadliest attack, when five rangers and a soldier were killed and 10 others wounded in an ambush by unnamed militants.³⁵

³² Africa News – Dominic Wabwireh – 13 soldiers killed in an ambush in Burkina Faso – 2022 – <https://www.africanews.com/2022/03/14/13-soldiers-killed-in-an-ambush-in-burkina-faso/>, accessed on 25 March 2022.

³³ France 24 – Seven killed in new Burkina attack – 2022 – <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220315-seven-killed-in-new-burkina-attack>, accessed on 25 March 2022.

³⁴ Africa News – Suspected militants kill 13 soldiers in eastern Burkina Faso – 2022 – <https://www.africanews.com/2022/03/21/suspected-militants-kill-13-soldiers-in-eastern-burkina-faso/>, accessed on 25 March 2022.

³⁵ France 24 - Death toll in Benin national park attacks rises as France opens terror probe – 2022 – <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220211-death-toll-in-benin-national-park-attacks-rises-as-france-opens-terror-probe>, accessed on 24 March 2022.

Since 2017, following the number of TG activities, the number of fatalities has increased rapidly as well. The greatest jump in number of fatalities is recorded from 2019 to 2020 with an increase of approximately 180%. (Fig 10)

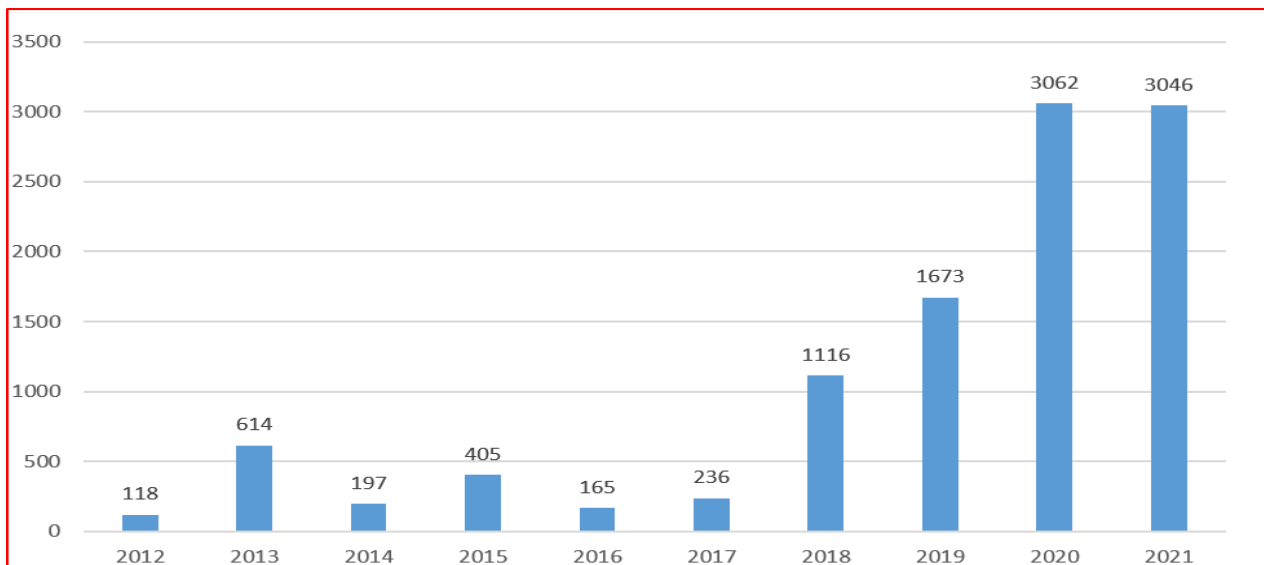


Fig 10: Total fatalities in Sahel by year 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

The highest number of fatalities was recorded in Mali. Since 2017, Burkina Faso has suffered a significant increase in fatalities. From 2017 to 2021 a twentyfold increase was also recorded. In June 2021, one of the most brutal terrorist attacks in the country occurred, when armed group killed at least 160 people and wounded at least 40 others. Also, there was a significant increase in the number of fatalities in Niger from 2020 to 2021 by more than double. (Fig 11)

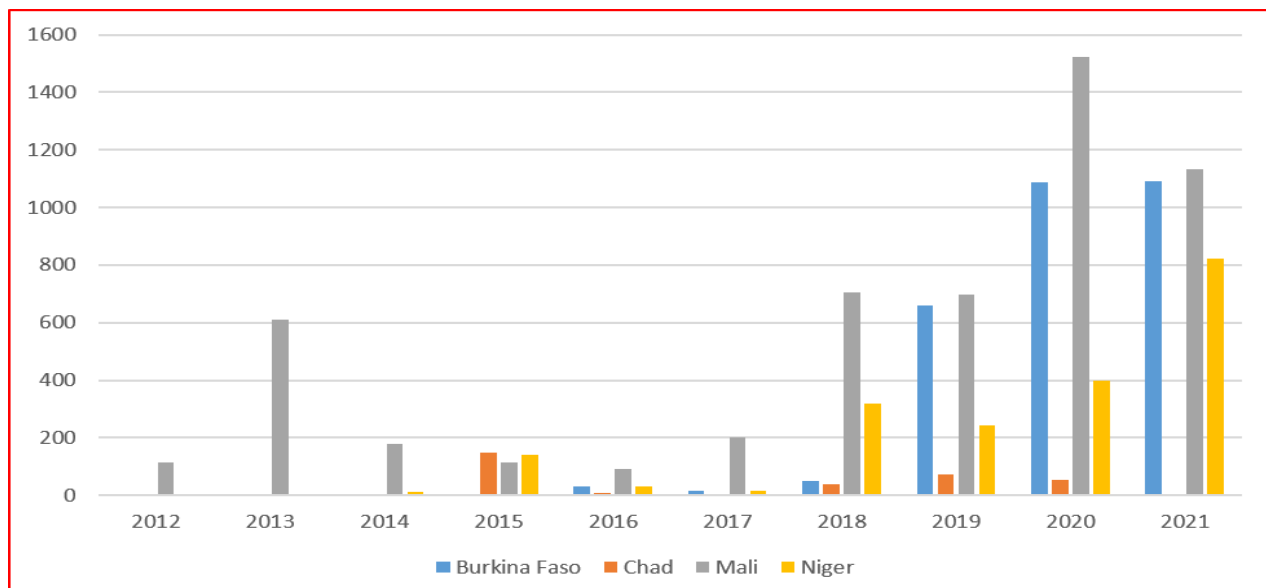


Fig 11: Fatalities in Sahel by countries 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

During the last decade in the Sahel, violence against civilians took the biggest share in type of events – approximately 55% of the total number of events. It should be emphasized that the greatest increase in violence against civilians

was recorded in Burkina Faso in 2021 with an almost threefold increase compared to 2020. (Fig 12)³⁶

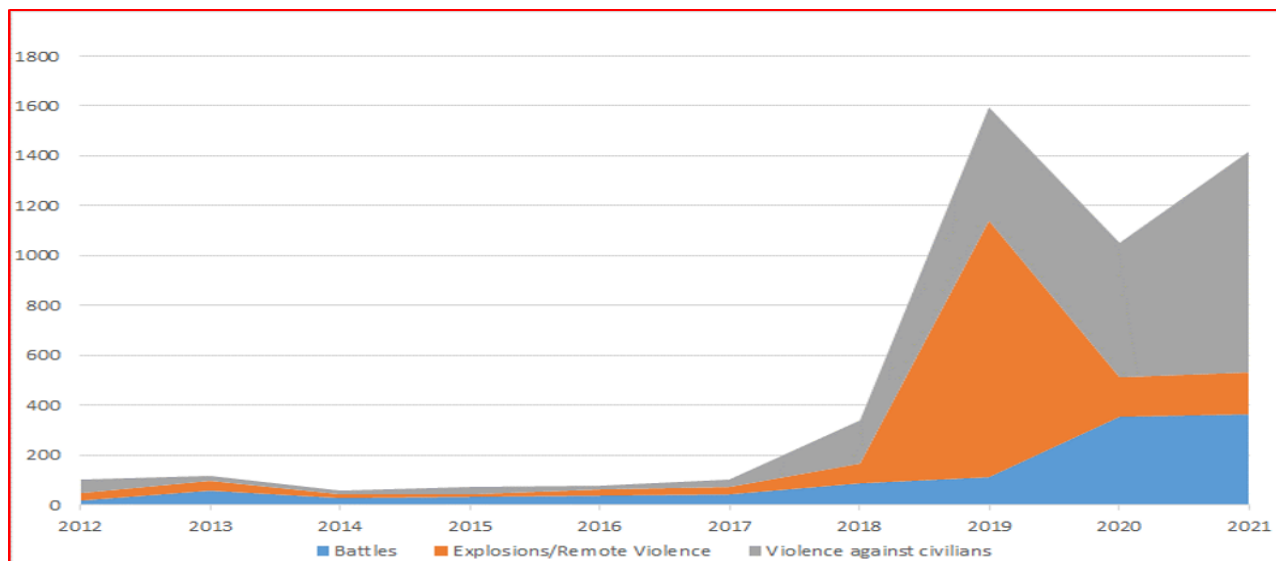


Fig 12: Events by type in Sahel 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

³⁶ Vision of Humanity - According to the Global Terrorism Index 2022, among the countries most impacted by terrorism in 2021 Burkina Faso was placed on fourth place (year before on sixth place) in front of Mali on sixth and Niger on eighth place. Institute for Economics & Peace, Global Terrorism Index 2022 – [GTI-2022-web.pdf](https://www.economicandpeace.org/gti-2022-web.pdf) (visionofhumanity.org).

The Horn of Africa

In the period from 2012 to 2021, the HoA saw an increase in terrorist activities of approximately 60% (Fig 13). Almost all of the attacks occurred in Somalia (Fig 14), but recently a trend of spreading terrorist activities has been observed in Ethiopia and beyond (for example in Mozambique).

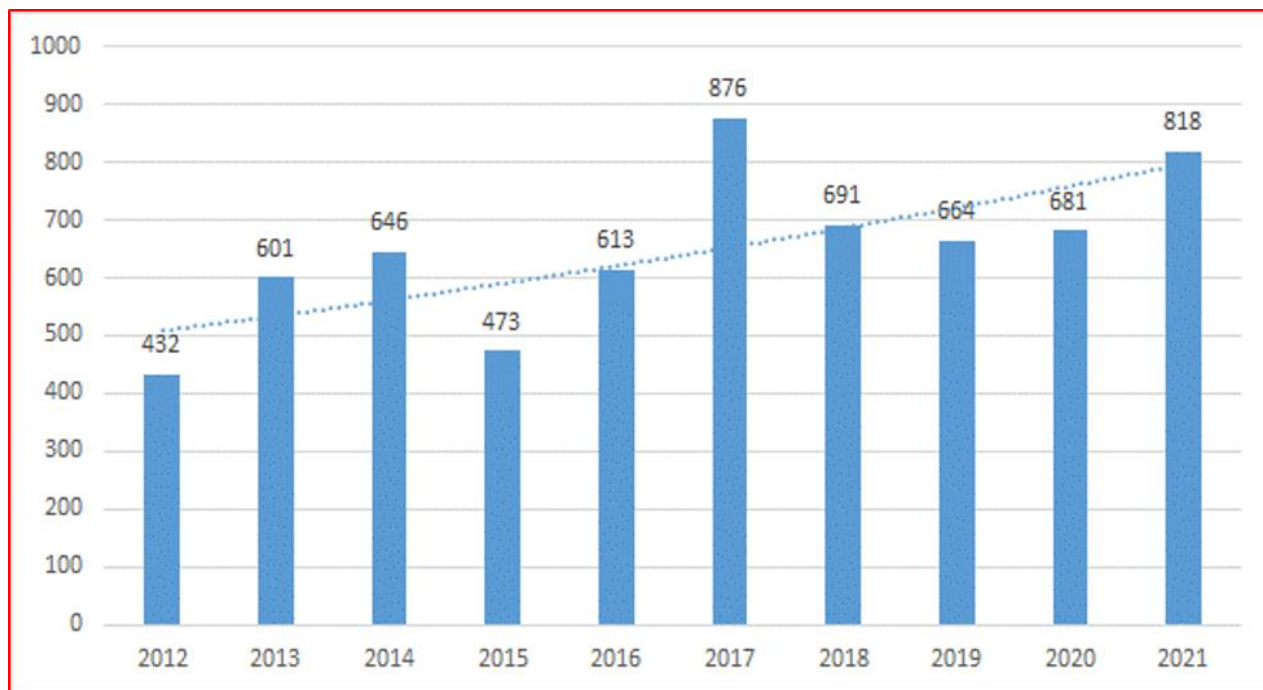


Fig 13: Terrorist activities in Horn of Africa by year 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

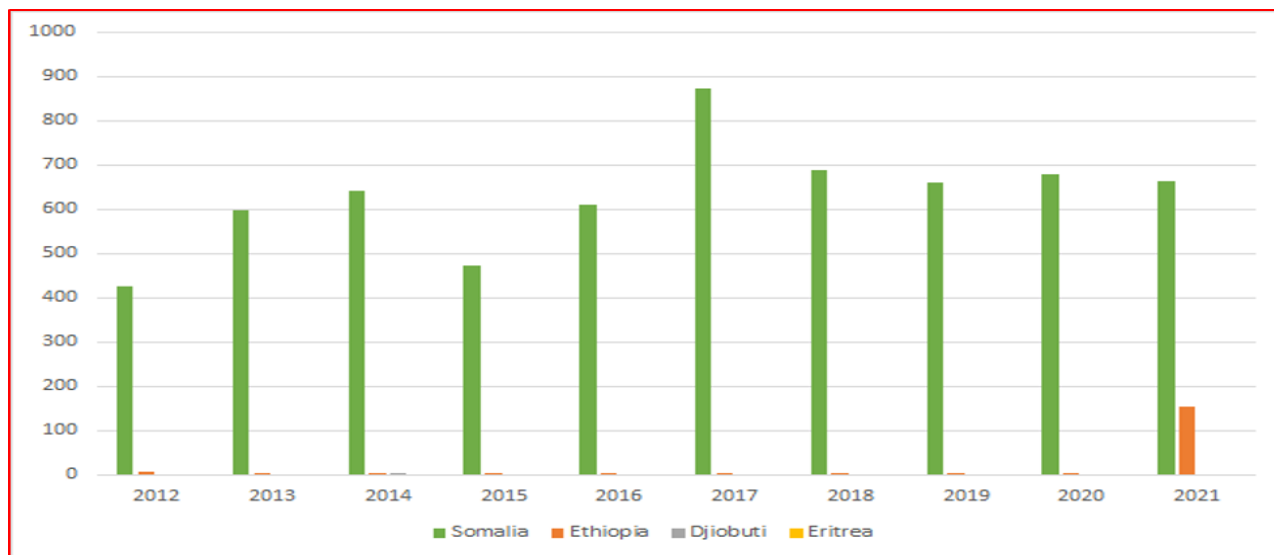


Fig 14: Terrorist activities in Horn of Africa by country 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

In the first quarter of 2021 the terrorists (DAESH's affiliates attempting to establish an Islamic state) in northern Mozambique, Cabo Delgado province, conducted over a hundred attacks with about 200 people killed. However, Mozambique recorded the largest drop in total terrorism deaths in 2021, approximately 80% decrease from the previous year. The fall was likely driven by successful counterterrorism measures against DAESH performed by the Mozambican forces in conjunction with Rwanda, the Southern African

Development Community,³⁷ Portugal and European Union Military Training Mission (EUTM Mozambique) as well.

Although HoA can be called as one of the stability-seeking regions in the world, it should be stressed that recently Djibouti and Eritrea have recorded no attacks. Nonetheless, in 2014 AS claimed responsibility for the only terrorist attack in Djibouti, when one Turkish citizen was killed and more than 20 others were injured. AS stated that it targeted Djibouti because the country hosts foreign militaries and contributes troops to the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM)³⁸. However, in 2021 AS called for the spread of terrorist activities in the country, saying that international community assets should be the highest priority targets.³⁹

From 2012 to 2021 trend in fatalities varied year by year. The highest number was recorded in 2017 with the lowest respectively in 2020. Significant change in fatalities was recorded from 2020 to 2021. (Fig 15)

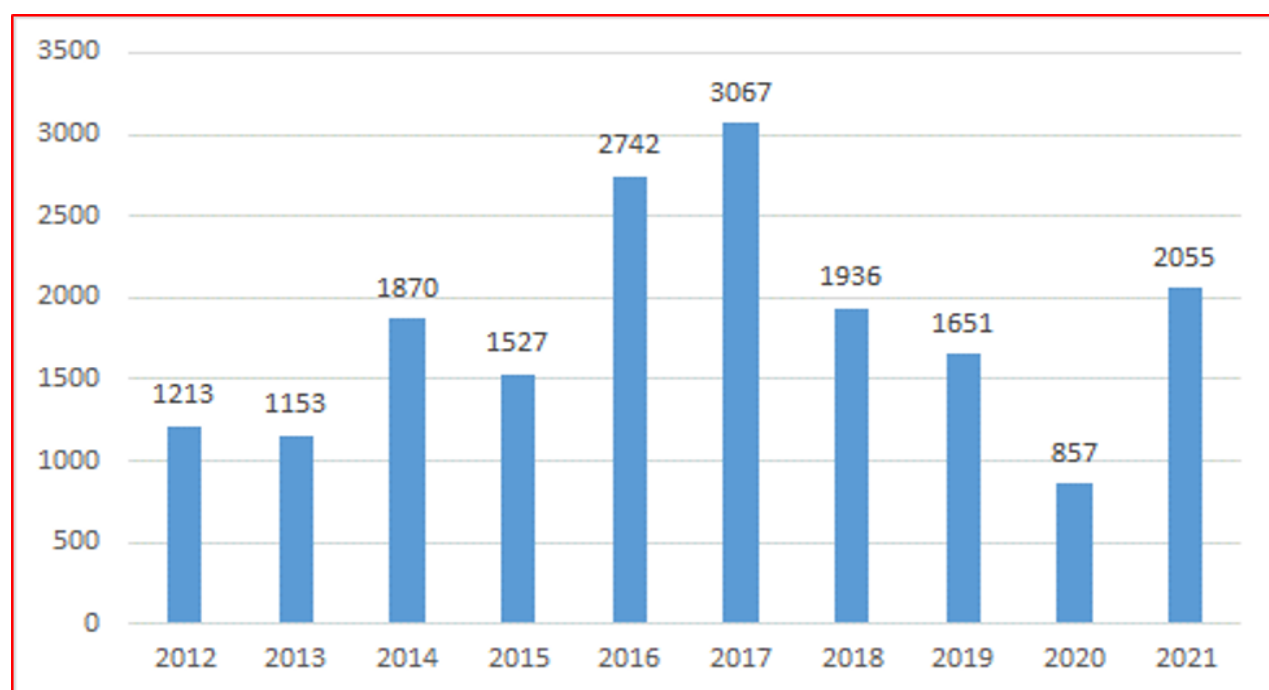


Fig 15: Fatalities in Horn of Africa by year 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

From 2017 to 2021, there has been recorded a significant decline in the number of fatalities in Somalia, which could be linked to FAT efforts primarily by the USA. In 2017, the first wave of USA troops were deployed and airstrikes were carried out in Somalia to fight against AS. There was no terrorist attack recorded in Ethiopia from 2018 to the first half of 2021. But in the second half of 2021, the number of TGs attacks starts to rise as well as

³⁷ Global Terrorism Index 2022 report. *Op.cit*

³⁸ The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2628 has authorized the African Union Peace and Security Council to reconfigure AMISOM and replace it with the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), with effect from 1 April 2022 – <https://amisom-au.org/>, accessed on 31 May 2022.

³⁹ The International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) – Dr. Shaul Shay – Djibouti the next target of Al-Shabaab - 2021 – <https://www.ict.org.il/images/Djibouti%20the%20next%20target%20of%20Al-Shabaab.pdf>, accessed on 17 March 2022.

number of fatalities, most likely due to the instable security situation in the country. (Fig 16)

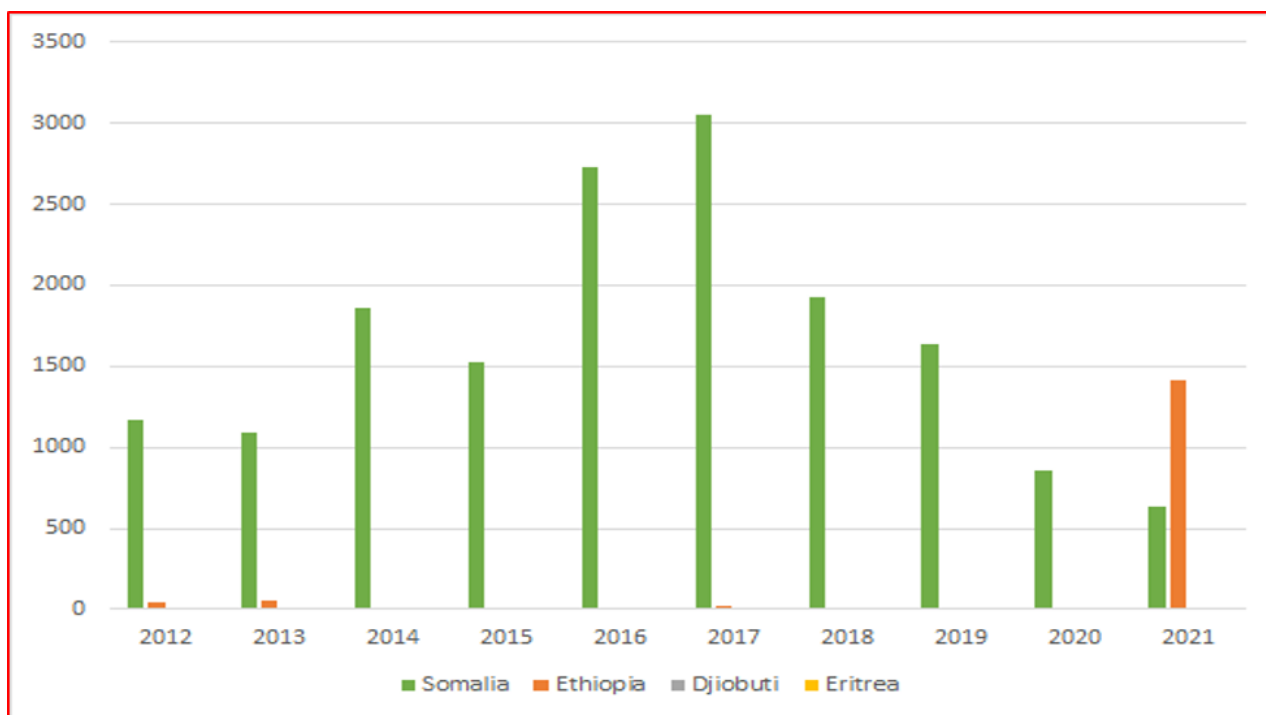


Fig 16: Fatalities in Horn of Africa by country 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

From 2015 to 2017 there was a sharp increase in violence against civilians as well as explosions/remote violence. Contrary to that negative trend, since 2017, likely due to the international efforts in FAT a decrease of the aforementioned variables was observed. However, since 2020 an upward trend in all terrorist activities has returned. (Fig 17)

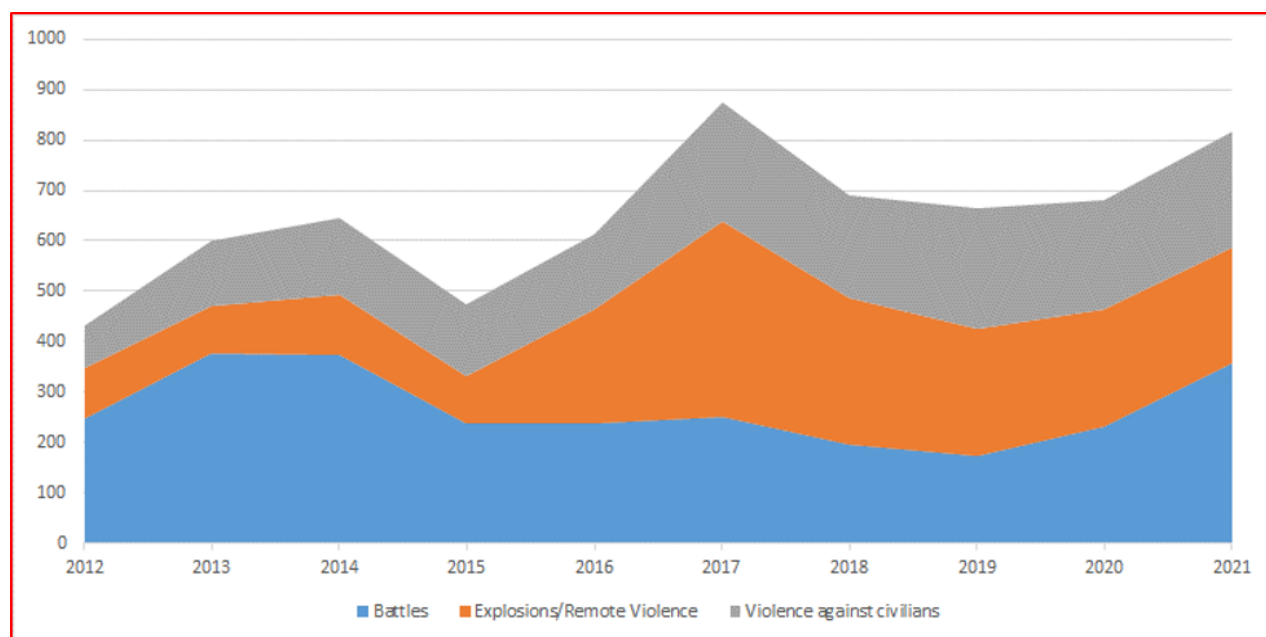


Fig 17: Events by type in Horn of Africa 2012 – 2021
(NSD-S Hub visual developed using ACLED data, www.acleddata.com)

CONCLUSIONS

The terrorism remains one of the main security challenges in Africa. Although it is not a new phenomenon, during the past decade a significant increase of terrorism related activities has been observed in the region.

The foundation of DAESH in 2013 is often considered a watershed for terrorism in Africa. This event encouraged many African TGs, which pledged allegiance to DAESH, to become more active. In addition, AQ-affiliates, particularly JNIM, continued expanding their geographic reach. Along with the traditionally unstable HoA, over the past decade the Sahel has turned into a hotspot for terrorist activities. Of serious concern might be the potential spill over of terrorism toward West African littoral countries.

The positive efforts of the international community in FAT have, as yet, not completely succeeded in suppressing, reducing or preventing terrorism. However, TGs in the Middle East have certainly been adversely affected and their freedom of movement has been limited. It is likely that such efforts, combined with the existing drivers of instability in Africa, have had an effect on terrorists who have shifted their focus from the Middle East to Africa.

The general trend might keep its upward trajectory in Africa. Due to TG's ability to adapt and evolve, they might continue presenting a serious threat to international security. The ongoing war in Ukraine which is having a highly negative effect on the availability of food and energy supplies, is likely to continue to adversely affect Africa. Consequent issues such as famine, unemployment and other socio-economic problems are likely to create conditions for the further spread of terrorism.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
AMISOM	African Union Mission to Somalia
ABM	Ansar Bayt Al-Maqdis
AS	Al-Shabaab
AQ	Al-Qaeda
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
BH	Boko Haram
DAESH	al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq wa-al-Sham (Arabic name of Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham)
EU	European Union
FAT	Fight Against Terrorism
HoA	Horn of Africa
ISGS	Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISS	Islamic State in Somalia
ISWAP	Islamic State's West Africa Province
JNIM	Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin
NSD-S	NATO Strategic Direction-South
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
TG	Terrorist Group



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