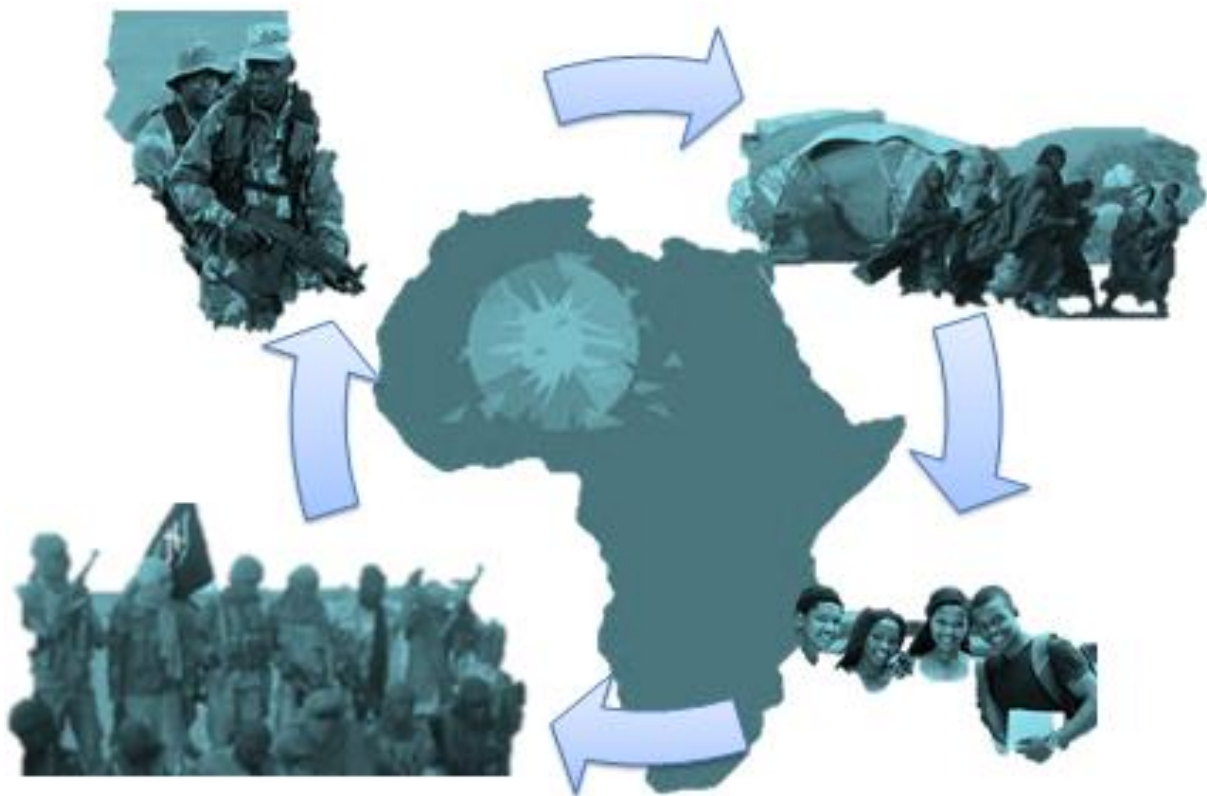




NSD-S HUB

February 2021

Counter-Terrorism: Best Practices in North Africa and the Sahel



The NSD-S HUB was established at Allied Joint Force Command Naples in order to improve NATO awareness and understanding of the opportunities and challenges from the South, while contributing to the overall coordination of NATO activities and efforts.

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In collaboration with the independent research, management and development firm Three Stones International, the NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub organized a Webinar on 24 November, 2020 following a pre-webinar survey.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Cooperation is the key for fighting terrorism. Cooperation is built with over time and with trust, and then we can work together at tactical levels. We cannot fight terrorism by ourselves; we need others”
(Webinar Panellist)

NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub (“the Hub”) hosted a live online Webinar on 24 November, 2020 at which it engaged and learnt from African experts sharing regional experience and audience comments. The discussion examined the root causes of terrorism and radicalization, the challenges of dealing with them at domestic and regional levels and the best practices in the region. While the panellists touched on matters related to the current situation, they also addressed the long-term implications of CT and Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) measures as well as the possible role of the international community. Additionally, the dialogue included suggestions by the experts as to how NATO might support CT efforts in North African and Sahel nations.

Panellists discussed the threat of terrorism as well as the CT response strategies governments have taken, the ways these strategies have impacted terrorism on the ground, and their limitations. Political instability and conflict are facilitating the growth of terrorism and, in the long-term, future demographic, climatic and socio-economic changes in North Africa and the Sahel could affect the radicalization of the youth. Concerning the human security approach, the SMEs also shared experience regarding human rights violations, the lack of national and regional coordination and transnational issues.

Regional and global coordination and collaboration, (collaboration between NATO, the EU, the African Union and the countries in North Africa and the Sahel) were seen as the keys to success for Africa’s response to terrorism and long-term solutions for stabilization, peace, security and development. The experts suggested that NATO continue and improve their effort in supporting capacity building and the sharing of best practices. They also suggested that NATO enlarge its cooperation programs in the Sahel due to the violent extremist threat emanating from there, mentioning the need for improved coordination among the various international missions in place in the Sahel.

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BACKGROUND

Terrorism in all its forms poses a direct threat to the security of the citizens of NATO countries and to international stability and prosperity. It is a persistent global threat which knows no borders, nationality or religion and is a challenge the international community must tackle together. Most effective Counter-Terrorism (CT) and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) strategies recognize terrorism not only as a complex security threat but also as a political, economic and social phenomenon. For this reason, CT strategies need to use a wide range of tools in order to tackle terrorist threats in a single comprehensive strategy at national and international levels.

Terrorism in North Africa and the Sahel

The end of the territorial Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in March 2019 did not stop “religious extremist” terrorism. Rather, it mutated from territorial control in the Levant region into new areas of proto-insurgencies, in particular North Africa and the Sahel, where Daesh tried to control territory in ungoverned spaces and increase radicalization.

Terrorist networks in North Africa and the Sahel comprise both al-Qaeda-aligned organizations and Daesh affiliated entities. The Al-Qaeda affiliated groups united in March 2017 to form a common group: *Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen* (JNIM) the official branch of Al Qaeda based in Mali but active in all of the Sahel and North Africa. This group includes Al Qaeda in Maghreb (AQIM), former Algeria-based Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), Macina Liberation Front, *Ansar Dine*, *Al Murabitoun*, and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). *Ansarul Islam* – deployed in northern Burkina Faso also has links to JNIM.¹

The Daesh affiliates are the *Islamic State* in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) which is active in North-Eastern Mali. The Islamic State also operates in Egypt and Libya (even though in Libya it is at one of its weakest points in a decade).² Boko Haram is affiliated with the Islamic State of West African Province. The Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) is active in Chad.³ The Islamic State’s newest name is “Central Africa Province” (ISCAP), composed of two, geographically distinct insurgencies—one in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and one

¹ “Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb”, Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC), Stanford University. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/aqim> [Accessed 25 November 2020].

² 9th quarterly report by the Lead Inspector General on the East Africa Counter-terrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counter-terrorism Operation, US Congress, November 25, 2020. <https://www.dodig.mil/Reports/Lead-Inspector-General-Reports/Article/2427451/lead-inspector-general-for-east-africa-and-north-and-west-africa-counterterrorism/> [Accessed 25 November 2020].

³ NSD-S HUB 2020. Joint NSD S HUB & ACSRT four monthly Report: “Terrorism in the Sahel: facts and figures” September 2020. [Online] Available at: https://thesouthernhub.org/resources/site1/General/NSD-S%20Hub%20Publications/20200909_NU_NSDS_HUB_ACSRT_Joint_Report_Terrorism_in_the_Sahel.pdf [Accessed 25 November 2020].

in northern Mozambique. The Islamic State's province in Algeria remains defunct, while the Islamic State affiliate in Tunisia, though it has failed to conduct major attacks, remains active. Daesh provides some coordination and material assistance to affiliates, but for the most part they act autonomously.⁴

Militant extremist groups expanded in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin at a record pace in 2019. The Africa Centre for Strategic Studies and the 2019 Global Terrorism Overview by START (University of Maryland) identified emerging trends in the Sahel.⁵ Boko Haram, for example, increased terrorist activity in Cameroon, Chad and the Sahel (specifically in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) and saw the most rapid increase in violent extremist activity of any region in 2019. The Combating Terrorism Centre at West Point reported that both wings of ISIS - the new Central Africa Province as well as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara wing of the Islamic State's West Africa Province - escalated their violent campaigns following the 2019 defeat of territorial Daesh in Syria and Iraq.⁶ In general, according to the 2019 Global Terror Index from the Institute for Economics and Peace, between 2002 and 2018, South Asia, MENA and sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 93 per cent of all deaths from terrorism and the largest number was recorded in MENA, with more than 93,700 fatalities.⁷ Africa's active militant groups are further depicted in Figure 2.

⁴ Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. CTC SENTINEL, Vol. 13, Issue 11, Nov/Dec 2020. Sentinel Jason Warner, Ryan O'Farrell, Héni Nsaibia, and Ryan Cummings, "Outlasting the Caliphate: The Evolution of the Islamic State Threat in Africa". [Online] Available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/outlasting-the-caliphate-the-evolution-of-the-islamic-state-threat-in-africa/> [Accessed 25 November 2020].

⁵ University of Maryland, START Background report, July 2020. Global Terrorism Overview: Terrorism in 2019. [Online] Available at: https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_GTD_GlobalTerrorismOverview2019_July2020.pdf [Accessed 25 November 2020].

⁶ Combating terrorism center at West Point. CTC SENTINEL, Vol. 12, Issue 11, Nov/Dec. 2020. [Online] Available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/> [Accessed 25 November 2020].

⁷ Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, Sydney, November 2019. [Online] Available at: <https://www.hsdl.org/c/measuring-the-global-impact-of-terrorism-in-2019/> [Accessed 25 November 2020].

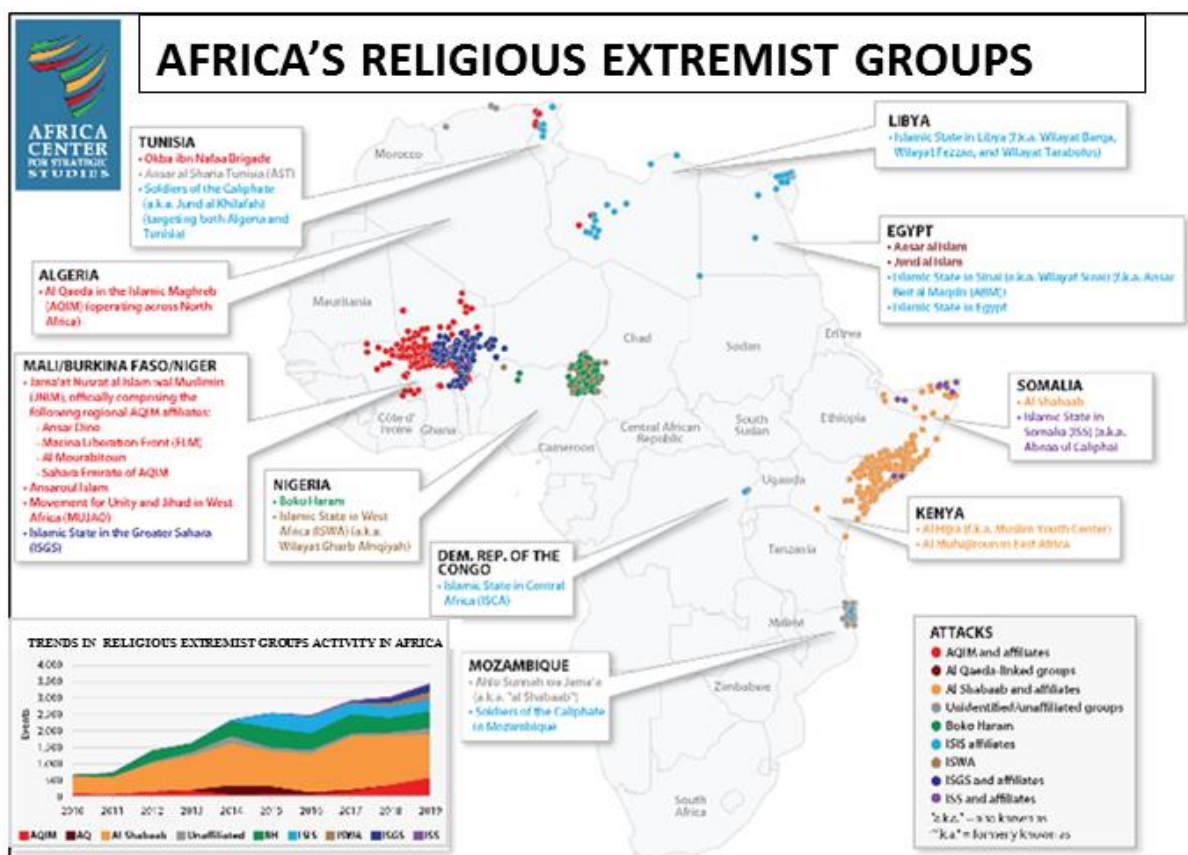


Figure 2: Produced by Africa Center for Strategic Studies in January, 2020 (elaboration by NSD-Hub)

Terrorism in north and sub-Saharan Africa does not only result in violence and insecurity, it also manifests itself in great limitations to economic growth, political stability and societal peace. According to the Global Terror Index, the economic impact of terrorism in 2018 is estimated at 13 billion USD in sub-Saharan Africa and 12 billion USD in the Middle East and North Africa. In parallel, funds for terrorist groups have increased. Among other criminal actions, as explained by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, the trafficking of weapons including Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) has been used by terrorist organizations as a source of finance.⁸

In order to better understand the dynamics of the terrorist groups it is necessary to highlight the evolving division among them. Al Qaeda and ISIS, for example, recently clashed in Mali and Burkina Faso, showing in-fighting among violent extremist groups and a general lack of unity.⁹ So far, this absence of cooperation has hampered their ability to achieve their final goal of weakening state authorities in order to control parts of national territory,

⁸ Méryl Demuyneck, Tanya Mehra, & Reinier Bergema, ICCT Situation Report: The Use of Small Arms & Light Weapons by Terrorist Organisations as a Source of Finance in the Middle East and North Africa, 3 June 2020

⁹ BBC News 2020. Africa's Sahel Becomes Latest Al-Qaeda-ISIS Battleground. [Online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52614579> [Accessed 25 November 2020].

resources and populations.¹⁰ At the same time these groups exploit regional government mistakes, including human rights abuses and a failure to invest in vulnerable communities. According to a 2018 working paper, the resilience of terrorist organizations is influenced both by their own strength and by the weakness of their opponents, in particular the states which are responsible for controlling their territory and thus preventing or containing the spread of violent extremist organizations.¹¹

While North African countries (excluding Libya) are more stable and better positioned to control their borders and therefore contain these groups, the Sahel states are unable to check the expansion and empowerment of those groups.¹² States have difficulty controlling the propaganda of terrorist groups at media level and social media is increasingly used for recruitment. The influence of social media on the spread of violent extremist narratives and online radicalization has been studied for some time now,¹³ but today there are new techniques, including WhatsApp as a means of spreading footage to visually amplify the impact of pledges of allegiance.¹⁴

In consideration of these complex and intertwined issues the active involvement and engagement of national authorities, supported by international actors, is crucial to address the terrorist problem. CT and P/CVE strategies will need to improve quickly in order to combat terrorism and prevent possible increased radicalization as a result of the economic and political issues arising from future demographic explosion and climate change in Africa.

Counter-terrorism in North Africa and the Sahel

Most experts agree that a CT strategy cannot only be focused on security operations and stabilization attempts. It must also include long-term solutions for socio-economic and political root causes and de-radicalization processes. This means a focus not only on national security but also on human security including a regional outlook.¹⁵ National security initiatives can include important CT strategies, such as the deployment of national troops in

¹⁰ Washingtonpost 2020. [Online] Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/al-qaeda-islamic-state-sahel-west-africa/2020/02/21/7218bc50-536f-11ea-80ce-37a8d4266c09_story.html [Accessed 25 November 2020].

¹¹ Lounnas, Djallil, MENARA Working Papers: Jihadist Groups in North Africa and the Sahel: Between Disintegration, Refiguration and Resilience, No16, October 2018

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See: Ogbondah C.W., Agbese P.O. "Terrorists and Social Media Messages: A Critical Analysis of Boko Haram's Messages and Messaging Techniques", in: Mutsvairo B. (eds) The Palgrave Handbook of Media and Communication Research in Africa, 2018, Palgrave Macmillan.

Or: Elise Vermeersch, Julie Coleman, Méryl Demuyneck and Elena Dal Santo, "The role of Social media in Mali and its relation to violent extremism: a youth perspective", ICCT and UNICRI, March 2020.

¹⁴ Menastream.com 2019. Sahelian Militants pledged allegiance to the Islamic state. [Online] Available at: <https://menastream.com/sahel-pledges-of-allegiance-in-mali-and-burkina-faso-to-the-islamic-state/> [Accessed 25 November 2020].

¹⁵ Un.com. What is Human Security? [Online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/what-is-human-security/> [Accessed 10 November 2020].

counter insurgency operations, SSR and capacity building of the security forces.¹⁶ Regional cooperation and a multilateral approach are crucial as nations alone cannot deal with such complex and transnational threats. In particular, porous borders have long allowed terrorist groups to move freely, benefiting from a contraband economy of arms and human smuggling.¹⁷

Initiatives in counter-terrorism include the “Group of 5 for the Sahel” initiated in 2014 and composed of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger forming an institutional framework for cooperation in development policies and security issues, including terrorism.¹⁸ Military operations supported by European countries also contribute efforts in CT in North Africa and include Operation Barkhane in the Sahel, supported mostly by France since 2014 with currently more than 5,000 troops, and other initiatives such as the Coalition for the Sahel¹⁹ and Operation Tacouba.²⁰ All of these initiatives aimed at fighting terrorism in the Sahel are also relevant for their impact on extremism in North African countries.

The EU Security Union Strategy²¹ and the Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy²² for the EU also work in cooperation with MENA on counter-terrorism. The role of the international community is important for implementing legal and legislative instruments. The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, for example, is a unique global instrument to enhance national, regional and international efforts in counter-terrorism.²³ Through its adoption in 2006, all UN Member States agreed for the first time on a common strategic and operational approach, based on strengthening state capacity and better coordinating the

¹⁶ Emadeddin Badi, “Exploring Armed Groups in Libya: Perspectives on Security Sector Reform in a Hybrid Environment”, Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, DCAF, Nov. 2020. [Online] Available at: <https://www.dcaf.ch/exploring-armed-groups-libya-perspectives-ssr-hybrid-environment> [Accessed 9 November 2020].

¹⁷ Querine Hanlon and Matthew M. Herbert, Border Security Challenges in the Grand Maghreb, Peaceworks N. 109, USIP, 2015.

¹⁸ <https://www.g5sahel.org/>

¹⁹ Coalition Sahel. 2020. The Coalition For The Sahel. [Online] Available at: <https://www.coalition-sahel.org/en/> [Accessed 10 November 2020].

²⁰ “Takuba is a task force, integrated to the command of operation Barkhane, aimed at tackling the terrorist groups in the Liptako region. This task force will be mainly composed of European Special Operation Forces supported by key enablers providing a high level of autonomy. It will advise, assist and accompany Malian Armed Forces, in coordination with G5 Sahel partners, the UN mission (MINUSMA) and EU missions (EUTM Mali, EUCAP Mali and EUCAP Niger).” Defense.gouv.fr. 2020. [Online] Available at: <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/actualites/articles/task-force-takuba-declaration-politique-des-gouvernements-allemand-belge-britannique-danois-estonien-francais-malien-neerlandais-nigerien-norvegien-portugais-suedois-et-tcheque> [Accessed 10 November 2020].

²¹ Migration and Home Affairs - European Commission 2020. Internal Security - Migration And Home Affairs - European Commission. [Online] Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/security-union-strategy_en [Accessed 27 November 2020].

²² Eeas.europa.eu. 2016. [Online] Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf [Accessed 27 November 2020].

²³ Undocs.org. 2006. UN A/RES/60/288. [Online] Available at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/60/288> [Accessed 5 November 2020].

UN Counter-Terrorism system activities. Finally, the support of the African Union (AU) has been important, with the deployment of a 3,000 AU force in the Sahel at the beginning of 2020.²⁴ However, these efforts may not be enough, as countries need to solve the root causes of terrorism and internal conflicts in order to arrive at long-term solutions. A recent example of this is Mali who recently adopted a strategy of negotiation with the rebel groups, though France does not agree with the approach.²⁵

Regarding addressing the root causes of terrorism, human security and de-radicalization, not all countries are in the same situation. Studies indicate the extent and level to which strategies and operations vary significantly between the North Africa and Sahel regions.²⁶ While Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt developed a comprehensive strategy of prevention and countering of radicalization and terrorism, Sahel countries still lag behind. Morocco provided a good example of best practice for national strategy when it launched its first CT strategy after the 2003 Casablanca attacks. This strategy included three criteria: strengthen security measures, control the religious sphere and reduce socio-economic inequalities. Despite this robust strategy, many foreign fighters mobilized in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings from Morocco, therefore highlighting the critical need to continuously address socio-economic inequalities and address human security issues in order to ensure future stability.

To address root causes of terrorism and radicalization, literature suggests that the youth and women must be included and their needs addressed through involvement in the peace and development processes. Socio-economic investment, the empowerment of civil society organizations and fighting against human rights abuses, remain at the core of counter-terrorism measures. In this sense, as a recent EU publication explains,²⁷ there is a role for the sub-national authorities and, as another EU and UN report on radicalization shows,²⁸ while underlying problems are similar in the Sahel and Maghreb countries, the approaches

²⁴Aljazeera.com 2020. African Union to Deploy 3,000 Troops in Restive Sahel Region. [Online] Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/27/african-union-to-deploy-3000-troops-in-restive-sahel-region> [Accessed 26 November 2020].

²⁵Aljazeera.com 2020. Mali, France differ over holding talks with armed. [Online] Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/26/mali-france-at-odds-over-talks-with-al-qaeda-linked-fighters> [Accessed 26 November 2020].

²⁶Marinone Lorenzo, Cesi-italia.org 2019. The Evolution of Radicalization in the Maghreb in the Aftermath of the Defeat of Daesh. [Online] Available at: <https://cesi-italia.org/contents/Analisi/The%20evolution%20of%20radicalisation%20in%20the%20Maghreb%20in%20the%20aftermath%20of%20the%20defeat%20of%20Daesh.pdf> [Accessed 26 November 2020].

²⁷Cor.europa.eu 2017. The Role of the Sub-National Authorities from the Mediterranean Region in Addressing Radicalisation and Violent Extremism of Young People. [Online] Available at: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/Radicalisation-Violent-Extremism-Young%20People.pdf> [Accessed 25 November 2020]

²⁸Unicri.it 2020. [Online] Available at: <http://unicri.it/sites/default/files/2020-11/Hands.pdf> [Accessed 25 November 2020].

to addressing them have to be contextualized and informed by local power dynamics, cultures and traditions.

The Role of NATO

NATO stands firm in its commitment to the fight against terrorism and has identified key areas where the Alliance should implement initiatives to enhance the prevention of, and resilience to, terrorism.

NATO plays a key role in the fight against international terrorism and has done for many years, such as its operational engagement in Afghanistan, and since 2017 as a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. NATO's work on counter-terrorism is based on improving awareness, developing capabilities and increasing engagement with partners.²⁹ NATO does this through a Terrorism Intelligence Cell at its HQ, as well as a Joint Intelligence and Security Division, which benefits from increased sharing of intelligence with the member's services and with partner countries. NATO also has a Centre of Excellence for Defence Against Terrorism (COE DAT) and a Centre of Excellence on Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defence. NATO works in crisis management and prevention, through civil emergency planning and critical infrastructure protection for building resilience and ensuring appropriate preparation for response to and recovery from terrorist acts. Counter-terrorism is one of the five priorities of the NATO Science for Peace and Security Program.³⁰ NATO recently launched a Counter-Terrorism Reference Curriculum to support Allies and partners in improving national skills for counter-terrorism strategies.³¹

Regarding partnerships, NATO cooperates with the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate as well as with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and many of its component organizations. NATO collaborates with the EU, in particular with the European External Action Service's Counter-terrorism section and with the Counter-terrorism Coordinator's office. Furthermore, NATO partners almost all North African countries and Mauritania in the fight against terrorism through the Mediterranean Dialogue program which includes security force assistance and capacity building.³² The program includes courses for partner nations' military personnel on counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency and crisis management. In April 2019, NATO and the African Union held their first joint counter-terrorism training in Algiers and the first dialogue on counter-terrorism

²⁹NATO Review 2019. Working with Partners to Counter-Terrorism. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/05/16/working-with-partners-to-counter-terrorism/index.html> [Accessed 3 December 2020].

³⁰NATO 2020. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/78209.htm> [Accessed 3 December 2020].

³¹NATO 2020. NATO Launches Counter-Terrorism Reference Curriculum. [Online] Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohg/news_176304.htm [Accessed 10 November 2020].

³²NATO 2019. Mediterranean Dialogue. [Online] Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohg/topics_52927.htm [Accessed 3 November 2020].

cooperation in Brussels in December 2019, which investigated the potential co-development of a fully-fledged civilian-military partnership to fight terrorism in the near future.³³

³³NATO 2019. NATO and African Union exchange views on Furthering Counter-Terrorism Cooperation. [Online] Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_172328.htm?selectedLocale=en [Accessed 25 November 2020].

THE WEBINAR

Goals and Format

The Hub hosted a live online Webinar on 24 November, 2020, supplemented by secondary data review and an online survey. The goal of the webinar discussions, combined with the results of the pre-webinar survey, was to obtain a greater understanding of states' and organizations' responses to terrorism in North Africa and the Sahel, identify and share best practices and assess perceptions on how governments are tackling the threat of terrorism at national and regional levels. High level experts involved in CT and P/CVE in North Africa and the Sahel were identified to participate as panellists in the dialogue. The experts presented their experience in their respective countries and regions and commented on whether they felt the strategies were effective and efficient in combatting the threat of terrorism and radicalisation. Discussions went on to deal with their experience of contributions towards de-radicalization. The panel was composed of ten SMEs from across North Africa and the Sahel as well as global experts.

Panellist and Survey Respondents' backgrounds and areas of expertise:

- CT and P/CVE activism, research and legislation
- Counter radicalization processes
- National security and defence
- Transnational illicit trafficking
- Human security
- Armed groups and political violence
- Security Sector Reforms (SSR)
- Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR)
- Development and security
- Regional integration
- Gender perspective
- Conflict resolution
- Empowerment of Women and the Youth
- Community work

Ahead of the live webinar, the following dialogue prompts were posed to the panellists:

1. *What are the roots causes that the national and international community could address to reduce the risk of youth radicalization and violent extremism?*
2. *What are the best practices in CT and P/CVE which should be applied at national and international levels?*
3. *How can future demographic, climatic and socio-economic changes in NA/Sahel affect the radicalization of youth coming from Africa?*

Each panellist answered these general questions as well as a series of questions specifically tailored to their expertise. Key thematic areas and insights were brought forward during the dialogue from panellists and audience members in regards to CT and P/CVE. Following the

shared initial insights, NATO representatives put forward specific questions to specific panellists based on their area of expertise and experience. Finally, panellists made suggestions for NATO to consider for future engagement and strategy development.

A diverse audience took part in the dialogue session, comprised of over 50 members from international institutions and civil society organizations, participating from various locations across the globe. Audience members were invited to pose questions and comments within the sidebar chat. These questions were answered by panellists within the chat and brought into the discussion as appropriate.

Countries represented by the survey and webinar:



Figure 1: Countries represented by webinar participants

Topics of Discussion

During the webinar discussions, the following four topics were discussed at length.

Root Causes of Terrorism

“Youth in Libya have been marginalized by the central government, and this pushed youth to look for income opportunities, such as joining the extremist groups but also joining the smuggling and migration networks. Youth provide these groups with petrol, gas and other necessary items” (Webinar Panellist)

The fundamental complexity of the root causes of terrorism in North Africa were highlighted during the webinar. While there are common themes and drivers which motivate civilians to join terrorist organizations and groups to carry out terrorist acts, it also varies in cause and effect for each state and the experience of the panel indicated how much the interplay of historical conflict and current economic instability influence cases of violent extremism.

The numerous root causes of terrorism are inter-related. Many arise from the persistent low level of human security in countries in North Africa and the Sahel. Among the root causes which play a role are: structural motivators such as economics, politics, social issues and identity exclusion; enabling factors and group dynamics such as religious radicalization or identity recuperation; and individual incentives such as the desire for a more exciting or better quality of life.

The most important root cause indicated during the webinar was economic marginalization, especially in more isolated areas where the youth have difficulty building a stable life. Marginalized groups are therefore affected by radicalization, not so much because of ideology or religious radicalization like in Iraq or Syria, but for economic reasons. In the Sahel the demographic growth without broad economic opportunities is making life difficult for all and in particular for the youth.

Ethnic and political identities are also important in understanding the creation of criminal and terrorist groups. In Mali terrorism is more related with a history of struggle over territory and power. In Libya there is a deep struggle within and between tribes and therefore it is the history of identities and conflicts that is important. In the Sahel the criminal economy space and ethnic and political identity are interrelated and this is also impacting drivers of terrorism.

“Socio-economic grievances are one of the factors that push our youth, one of the structural motivators, but not only that. For example, in two villages in Morocco with the same socio-economic grievances from one village nobody joined Daesh, in the other village which is ten kilometres from that village 60 people joined Daesh. Why? The question here is the enabling factors: the presence of a

charismatic leader recruiter who used not only economic incentives but also ideology, sense of belonging, values and norms”
(Webinar Panellist)

Radical religious beliefs and lack of tolerance between multiple beliefs are also present, exacerbated by the return of foreign fighters. In both North Africa and the Sahel, terrorists attempt to exploit social conflict situations to bring radicalization from outside with propaganda and misrepresentation of Islamic religion values.

Domestic Level Challenges

“North African countries have {supplied} around 8 thousand foreign fighters, many of them died and many of them are trying to come back to the countries, which is important to take care of. Then we have local autonomous cells, which are loosely connected to Jihadist organizations,³⁴ without formal links, they are very dangerous as they are difficult to trace” (Webinar Panellist)

The relative strengths and weaknesses of a nation’s governance structures and institutions play a key role in its ability to handle home-grown terrorist issues. The panellists discussed how unprepared military and security forces, lack of good governance and even the presence of ungoverned spaces increase the risk of recruitment, which is based on radicalization and sometimes through force. The presence of mercenaries and returning foreign fighters also show an inability to control territory and people by the state.

One main domestic challenge is the lack of preparation of armed forces both at defense and security level, because of structural problems with planning. This is interrelated to the lack of efficient control of terrorist finance and funding, as well as terrorist ability to recruit, collect weapons and radicalize which is enabled by the fact that intelligence and information sharing is still limited to security bodies within nation states.

Another important challenge is the existence of ungoverned spaces where state power is not present or is weak with limited governance capacity which leads to a designation of “fragile states”. When there is a security vacuum, or a lack of cohesion between national military and security bodies, terrorist groups can take the initiative and build leadership and group affiliations. This is coupled with the lack of good governance and high levels of corruption and inefficiency, which provides other challenges. The problem is often not with

³⁴ The NSD-S Hub is reporting the panellist’s quote verbatim. In accordance with the terminology used in this paper, “jihadist organisation” should be read as “religious extremist organization” without referring to any religion specifically.

the government CT strategy in place but rather good governance to implement it. For example in Tunisia the national CT strategy since November, 2016 (the former National Counter-Terrorism Strategy was adopted in January 2015) is based on “Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Response”, but sits within the framework of a good governance and respect of rule of law which is currently weak.

“Jihadist forces exploit the conflict situation such as in Libya, as well as long standing low intensity local conflicts and they bring actions associated with local jihadist actors,³⁵ including propaganda and misrepresentation of religions, as well as strategic support for local cells. In some cases we have seen the transfer of technical knowledge from ISIS to its African affiliates, including the use of weaponized drones, for example” (Webinar Panellist)

The arrival of mercenaries from other countries together with the risk of the return of foreign fighters pose a serious threat to internal security. Collaboration between criminal and terrorist groups is also an issue. According to one of the experts, in Libya illegal smuggling and immigration networks are strongly interlinked with terrorist groups.

Finally, violent extremist recruitment is based on a process of radicalization through propaganda or coercion including cases of child abduction and subsequent brainwashing. States have difficulty combating propaganda as it is present at the community level and in social media. There are some cases where the middle class and educated people join terrorist groups for political motivation and this has to be seen in relation to internal power struggles among political elites.

Transnational Issues

“Porous borders in the region make tracking of movement and cash flows difficult. Al Qaida affiliated groups are controlling some of the passages and taxing them, in particular the Southern border pass between Libya, Algeria and Niger. UNODC estimates that human trafficking between West Africa and North Africa generated between 760 million and 1.1 billion US\$ in illicit funds. Part of that revenue is definitely taxed by terrorist organizations so there is no shortage of resources for them” (Webinar Panellist)

There was a consensus among panellists that terrorism cannot be fought only at a national level but that it must be dealt with at a regional level, and possibly continentally. The presence of few regional mechanisms is not enough to tackle all the issues of porous

³⁵ The NSD-S Hub is reporting the panellist’s quote verbatim. In accordance with the terminology used in this paper, “jihadist” should be read as “religious extremist” without referring to any religion specifically.

borders, spill-over of conflicts, illegal smuggling and terrorist movements. There is a need for more cooperation. As previously mentioned, international community support is not considered sufficient. The EU, UN and other international organizations can be of greater help in supporting the countries in the region. In addition, transnational cooperation and exchange between national stakeholders is crucial. Panellists affirmed how North Africa, the Sahel and West Africa cannot be separated when considering CT, as the root causes of terrorism are common and challenges they face are similar. Porous borders allow for the spill-over of internal conflicts and the passage of terrorist cells and illegal smuggling from one country to another.

The panellists highlighted that regional mechanisms are urgently needed as the few in place are still inefficient or limited. The G5 Sahel for example, is important but is limited to military focus of only 5 countries. Other regional multilateral mechanisms, such as the 5+5 Dialogue created in 2004, are not yet cooperating in practice and are not particularly efficient in the fight against terrorism and insecurity. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), since its establishment in 2007, has been committed to fighting terrorism, and upgraded its Special Task Force on CT in 2019 to deal with returning foreign fighters. There is opportunity for these mechanisms to be reinforced and coordinated in order to improve CT strategies.

“The G5 Sahel is a core element of international EU support, but it remains very difficult for the partners to simply coordinate their actions. The approaches and questions, whether we are talking about development with the satellites or SSR or other fields, remain far too technical, and the focus remains on product implementation, the kind of measures used in monitoring and evaluation, but relatively less on the political context. It is really only now that the EU is trying to define what a Good Governance focus in the Sahel might mean, so we are very far behind on these questions that are absolutely central to try to mitigate threat from violent extremism and armed groups in general” (Webinar Panellist)

External support from the international community is still considered to be insufficient or conflicting by the majority of panellists as well as survey respondents. It was also indicated that international mechanisms need to be reinforced. The UNSCR 1267 Committee on ISIL and Al-Qaida provides a global threat assessment of ISIL and Al-Qaida and controls the UN sanctions which assist states in implementing sanctions on assets freeze, arms embargos and travel bans. Countries that have not yet implemented it now have an opportunity to embed UNSCR instruments against terrorism into their national policies. The EU has some important military and civilian missions to train military and security forces as part of its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Examples are the Training Mission (EUTM) since 2013 and the Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP Sahel Mali) since 2014 in Mali, as well as the Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP Sahel Niger) since 2012 in Niger. However, the

panellists considered that the EU could increase this support as well as reinforce the best practices of good governance in the region to address the root causes of instability. France is the EU country with the most prominent role in the Sahel. A positive action worth noting has been the support of the US in Libya by helping the National Libyan Forces to eliminate Daesh.

Reinforce Best Practices

The need for reinforcement of existing instruments, structures and best practices operating in counter-terrorism was frequently cited by the panel as critical to improving human security. How this might come about was considered through different facets and best practices were discussed. Among them were the recent military operations in the Sahel, the joint coordination among military and security forces in Algeria and Tunisia, the CT laws in Egypt and Morocco and noted mechanisms at the regional level. These interventions do require improvement, however. In particular, requiring further consideration are engagement with grassroots level actors and communities in order to address the root causes and for CT strategies to become more inclusive of the youth and women.

There are cases of an operational CT strategy with military and security forces which serve as an example for how best practices can occur in the region. In the Sahel, operations Barkhane and the Takuba Task Force were mentioned by a panellist as strong operations, yet not without room for improvement. Internal coordination among security bodies for intelligence and cooperation is crucial, as well as more capacity building, SSR and DDR. Through DDR, the process of reintegration of former combatants including prisoner's rehabilitation and programs of de-radicalization is a key issue. In North Africa the situation is somewhat better than in the Sahel, with the caution that Libya needs more cooperation among security bodies which have been fragmented and lacking a clear chain of command. In Algeria, for example, there is an efficient CT Joint Coordination Centre which coordinates between intelligence and security operations. In Tunisia, military and security forces have good integration and coordination which can serve as an example of good practice for other countries.

“There is urgency in assuring that there is internal coordination among those collecting intelligence but also among those that act upon the collection and analysis of that intelligence. Basically, you need to have coordinated structure in the form of fusion centres. In Algeria, the turning point at operation level was when we combined all forces into one joint command and control centre, we called it the CT Joint Coordination Centre. Basically they collected the intelligence but were also able to coordinate the action on the ground” (Webinar Panellist)

Good governance is noted as fundamental to CT. National institutions should be empowered to support national and human security. Legislation should, in each country, consolidate the national legal framework on CT in a single law and should include a comprehensive CT strategy, designed not only for law enforcement and security agencies. It should be developed beginning with a clear definition of terrorism and then establish a clear line for the coordination of national effort, taking into consideration respect for human rights. In Egypt, for example, CT law is part of the Constitution. Law and justice must protect human rights and, according to the expert panellists, justice provision is very important to enforce condemnation of human rights abuses and needs to be a central national concern which encourages international engagement. Beyond legislation, good governance means the efficient enforcement of the law. Therefore, those in charge of implementing legislation need to be trained to put it into practice with the formation of judges, investigators and the supporting structures.

The root causes of conflict and violence must be addressed in the long-term, as the trends of demographic growth, economic poverty and democratic demands, coupled with climate change and environmental crisis, will likely increase instability and insecurity. Development actions should address poverty, marginalization and exclusion, in particular of the youth. Political processes of inclusiveness and peace processes for conflict resolution are also fundamental and must include negotiations with armed or terrorist groups when needed. Promoting dialogue with alienated groups and reintegrating them into society is necessary and should include professional training for the youth. Grassroots level engagement is needed to support social community stabilization, working with tribal leaders and NGOs. Building trust between people and security forces is paramount. When the population feels they have a role to play in supporting security this impacts their outlook greatly and leads to increased impact on the ground. Developing CT narratives by governments and civil society, including religious counter narratives working with faith-based organizations, will play a critical role in countering terrorism.

Panellists mentioned some best practice mechanisms at the regional level while noting considerations for how these mechanisms could be more effective or reinforced. The Coalition for the Sahel, recently created to promote a comprehensive approach, is off to a good start. It brings together all countries, International Organizations (IOs) and institutions supporting security, stability and development in the Sahel, with four goals: fight terrorism, build armed forces capacities in the region, support the return of the state and administrations in the territory and assisting development.³⁶ The Judicial Regional Platform

³⁶France Diplomacy - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs 2020. The International Coalition for the Sahel. [Online] Available at: <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/security-disarmament-and-non-proliferation/terrorism-france-s-international-action/article/the-international-coalition-for-the-sahel> [Accessed 27 November 2020].

of Sahel created jointly in 2010 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Terrorism Prevention Branch and Organized Crime and Illicit Trafficking Branch shows the importance of considering terrorism as a crime, as part of the penal code. Again, though, for it to be successful it has to be enforced.

Tunisia is also part of a good system called the G7+ mechanism (Group of G7 plus 7 other countries) which strengthens the capacity of the national security sector with a multilateral exchange almost every week in 4 fields (CT cooperation, border control, protection of tourist sites, and protection of critical infrastructure).

Another instrument is the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF) which has a collaborative approach. However, most of the countries involved are not the most terrorist targeted countries - there are working groups in West Africa and East Africa but not yet in North Africa.

“There is a complex nature of the role of women in the violence of conflict. Their participation in medical aid, in armament factories, in prostitution, accompanying their husbands, looking out for all the socio-economic conditions etc. show that women are not only victims of violence today but also sometimes becoming producers of this violence, directly or indirectly. This will be important to analyse for the future of terrorism.”
(Webinar Panellist)

It was emphasized by panellists that having a nuanced gender perspective remains a fundamental component of CT, not only because women and the youth are the core of communities and therefore need to be involved in any CT or de-radicalization strategy, but also because they are often the victims of violence. The increased number of violent sexual attacks, other forms of sexual violence and abduction from schools are tactics of systematic terror unleashed on civilian populations where the primary victims are girls and women. In addition, CT efforts need to consider the possibility that women are also at risk of being radicalized and could in some cases be considered indirect producers of violence though supporting terrorist groups, taking care of families of terrorists, as well as aiding and participating in recruitment (Daesh, for example, incorporated 700 women from Tunisia). One commendable initiative which places importance on women in conflict resolution is the AU “FemWise Africa”, the network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, because as the UN highlights, women-led, locally owned peace processes are crucial to preventing conflict in Africa.³⁷

³⁷UN.org 2019. Women-Led, Locally Owned Peace Processes Key to Preventing Conflict Across Africa, Speakers Tell Security Council, Stressing Important Role of Regional Partners | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. [Online] Available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13973.doc.htm> [Accessed 11 December 2020].

RESULTS OF THE WEBINAR

Key thematic areas and insights were brought forward during the dialogue from panellists and the audience and the resounding comment was that CT efforts must be increased in the North Africa and Sahel regions. Effective implementation of CT efforts requires a comprehensive approach to ensure that overall activities and effects are complementary, mutually supportive and synchronized among stakeholders. Webinar participants agreed on the need for both multi-dimensional, national coordination and extensive international cooperation and then proceeded to make suggestions along these lines.

Insights

The insights garnered from the webinar dialogue showed that implementing a comprehensive CT strategy and improving coordination of partners in the region may facilitate efforts in preventing conflicts and mitigating their adverse impact while consolidating stability. To help fight the root causes of terrorism in the long-term, NATO can play a crucial role together with the international community and regional organizations, such as G5 Sahel and the African Union.

The webinar discussion provided four key insights:

- 1) The root causes of terrorism are complex and interrelated. There are structural motivations which include economic marginalization, political and social exclusion, underdevelopment and chronic conflicts. Then there are group dynamics and enabling factors such as identity recuperation, religious radicalization and individual incentives. It is also important to consider and acknowledge ethnic and political identities and work towards human security for all, in order to achieve long-term conflict resolution. Criminal groups, and the criminal economy related to terrorist groups, must be actively fought and measures and practices put in place to halt illicit terrorist funding activities.
- 2) The Sahel, in particular, struggles to deal with this issue. It was stated that national institutions are often weak; in many cases countries are fragile and at risk of collapse. Therefore, countries such as Mali are unable to give sufficient vital economic support to the youth, are home to ungoverned spaces, lack good governance and rule of law, and cohesion between domestic security bodies is often absent. States are also failing to counter the illicit smuggling of weapons, money laundering and the arrival of mercenaries from outside their borders. Finally, propaganda and recruitment for terrorist groups have to be dealt with in a more efficient way by domestic institutions, including at an educational level.
- 3) Transnational issues must be addressed utilizing a regional perspective. Terrorism needs to be fought at a regional level, more so than nationally, as countries have

similar terrorism-related challenges and in many cases share porous borders which are inadequately controlled. Some regional mechanisms are in place but they are often insufficient and generally lack a holistic approach. The participation of the wider international community is crucial to assist in finding regional solutions that North Africa can adopt and also to provide support to the existing CT strategies of organizations like G5 Sahel and the AU.

- 4) Best practices in CT must be reinforced and the strengthening of political will for a regional response using best practices is required. At strategic, tactical and operational levels, best practices in North Africa have been developed, where each country (excluding Libya) has developed a comprehensive national CT and P/CVE strategy. But these need to be strengthened and expanded to the Sahel because the main threats to northern African countries come from there. Good governance should address the root causes through economic and political inclusion, with particular focus on the youth.

Panel Suggestions

Following the discussions, the panellists were asked to provide suggestions. It was agreed that the key issues to be considered should be based on the four pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in the form of UN resolution (A/RES/60/288) and its Plan of Action (PoA), namely: to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; to create measures to prevent and combat terrorism; to build states' capacities to prevent and combat terrorism; and finally, to create measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism. Panellists also discussed ways in which NATO and other IOs could support countries in North African and the Sahel during the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery.

Address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism

As said, the causes of terrorism are deeply rooted in structural factors (such as economic, political, social and identity exclusion). According to the panel, NATO is not in a position to directly act on them to support the countries in their implementation of a comprehensive CT strategy. What the Alliance can do across all international related boards, is to underline the importance of: maintaining a holistic approach in the development/implementation of these policies; the need for foreign support to these countries; and the growth of essential regional cooperation.

Create measures to prevent and combat terrorism

Sharing of Best Practices

Given that terrorism is an innately complex and pervasive phenomenon, North Africa and the Sahel would benefit from expert guidance on proven best practices for counter-

terrorism which can be adapted to the local context and deliver results. An important role NATO can play could be to facilitate and support the sharing of best practices in the region from both NATO's own experience and that of other countries in the network to:

- Facilitate the sharing of best practices through a coordinating role for North Africa and Sahel;
- Support the human security approach, primarily with multi-stakeholder partnerships with expertise and resources including a wide range of actors such as IOs, the private sector, governments, civil society etc.

Coordination of Strategies and Operations

Counter-terrorism policies require the coordination of strategies and operations first of all at national and then regional level and the webinar discussion underlined the importance of considering centres for coordination. According to the Panel, NATO can be a beneficial forum for helping centralize best practices in CT. Two specific suggestions were made:

- According to the panel, NATO could serve as a forum for coordination and harmonization of strategies and operations. The integration between the strategic aspect of CT and operational sides is of utmost importance;
- According to the panel, capitalizing on NATO Command and Control experience, by supporting the creation of joint centres which allow military and security bodies to better coordinate, could prove highly beneficial.

Control of illicit trafficking and funds

Illicit trafficking and the flow of arms and funds was seen by the panellists as one of the most relevant reinforcing elements of terrorism. Institutions are failing to stop money laundering and the illicit smuggling of weapons and people. According to the panel, NATO should consider supporting the control of illicit trafficking and terrorist funding, in particular:

- By controlling the flow of arms, with arms tracing instruments and implementation of best practices in stockpile management, without excluding explosives usually designated for civilian use (e.g. mining);
- As a multilateral organization with many member states, by focusing on counter-terrorist funding and finance through national and international instruments and consider capacity building of member states and North Africa partners to address this issue.

Improve National Capacity Building

It was confirmed by webinar panellists that official forces are often ill-prepared for the fight against terrorism and lack the training and capabilities to improve technical and tactical elements which would help them to overcome this challenge. NATO could increase its support through providing capacity building, in particular:

- Training of defence and security sector, for example in accordance with the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue partnership, also supporting the reinforcement of border control to prevent the proliferation of terrorism from the Sahel;
- Support SSRs, which could include a number of DDR projects to deal with militia problems, which are fundamental for lasting peace.

Create measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law

Local Solutions/Ownership

According to the panel, NATO should welcome open discussion at the national level and avoids pushing specific NATO member states' agendas or interests. There are countries in the region with efficient strategies and those countries best practices should be considered. To achieve this NATO can/should:

- Continue to engage in learning and information exchange with local NGOs, involving Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and communities, in particular the youth and women, who have a serious role in CT;
- Support local approaches in developing national and regional strategies and initiatives with a more highly prioritized gender perspective in CT;
- Design CT practices which combine development and peace building so that conflict with CT responses based on local dimensions could be avoided, ensuring that communities are appropriately consulted and vulnerable populations are not left behind.

Peace negotiations

According to the panel, NATO should consider how to support peace negotiations to stabilize the region in the long-term. Researchers and activists conducting field work understand the many drivers of terrorism and recognize the importance of negotiations - even though their assessment does not always match the western policy of "no negotiating with terrorism". According to the panellists, in particular NATO could:

- Support national decisions to conduct in-country negotiations with criminal groups by utilizing inclusive platforms along with the integration of political, social and economic aspects of negotiation. This can assist in reaching a point of unification and a shift towards peaceful coexistence;
- Consider the post-war situations which are necessary to ensure stability and prevent failed and fragile states. This includes post-conflict resolution and sustainable stabilization which is crucial, as the Libyan case has shown.

CONCLUSIONS

The root causes of terrorism and radicalization, the related challenges at domestic and regional levels and CT and P/CVE best practices in the North Africa and Sahel regions, including the long-term implications, as well as the possible role of the international community are matters of great importance.

Regional cooperation mechanisms are urgently needed as the few in place are still either ineffective or too limited. Political instability and conflicts are facilitating the growth of terrorism and, in the long-term, future demographic, climactic and socio-economic changes in North Africa and the Sahel could affect the radicalization of the youth. Unified coordination and collaboration, (between NATO, the EU, the African Union and the individual countries in North Africa and the Sahel) is seen as the key to success for Africa's response to terrorism and long-term solutions for stabilization, peace, security and development.

While Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt have developed comprehensive national CT and P/CVE strategies, Sahel countries still tend to lag behind. Considering the substantial extremist threat emanating from the Sahel and the levels of the states' presence and capabilities there, Sahelian countries would benefit from capacity building programmes. This could represent an excellent opportunity regarding long-term plans aimed at sharing and reinforcing the implementation of identified best practices.

A great challenge, but also a great opportunity, is the reinforcement of existing instruments and structures taking advantage of current best practices in counter-terrorism. Necessarily, protecting borders, public spaces and critical infrastructures is paramount. Public perception about how governments are tackling the threat of terrorism is quite negative. Areas requiring improvement include better professional guidelines for military, security and the judiciary sectors.

When dealing with national rule of law and respect for human rights across North Africa and the Sahel, the approach taken must be aware of local cultures, identities, values and principles, even when they are not always completely aligned with international law, whether implemented into national legislation or not. An exclusively western mind-set must be avoided.

Having a nuanced gender perspective remains a fundamental component of CT and P/CVE, as does a constant focus on the inclusion of the growing youth population. It is not only because women and youths are the most vulnerable, but also because they are the core of communities and therefore need to be involved in any strategy.

ANNEX A: Biographies of Panellists

Abdulhadi Soliman is the CEO of Fezzan Libya Organisation, an NGO based in the south of Libya that works on media, research and development since 2012. Abdulhadi has directed several development projects in the south working with youth, women, tribes and marginalised groups as well local government institutions in partnership with international partners such as UNDP, WFP, IOM and USIP. Abdulhadi has also provided strategic planning to international organisations for social initiatives, dialogue and reconciliation projects in conflict areas in the south with experience in conflict analysis and conflict management. Abdulhadi has also worked as a regional advisor and consultant writing reports and analysis on the political, security, economic and social situation of southern Libya since 2014. Abdulhadi has presented at roundtables for international organisations on events in southern Libya and recently presented for the Institute of Middle Eastern Studies on Libya as a Hub for Migration, Smuggling and Terrorism.

Ahmed El Buckley is an independent expert serving on the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team supporting the UN Security Council 1267 Committee on ISIL and Al-Qaida. Within the Monitoring Team, he co-designed and delivered trainings on sanctions implementation and compliance to national authorities, financial institutions, as well as to trainees at NATO's Centre of Excellence- Defense against Terrorism. Previously, he served as Deputy Director of the Counter-terrorism Unit at Egypt's Ministry of Foreign Affairs where he worked with Egypt's National Council for Counter-terrorism, and liaised between national agencies and international partners on counter-terrorism issues. During his diplomatic career, he delivered international cooperation programs on P/CVE, and supervised the implementation of development projects and technical assistance programs in Afghanistan, and South Sudan.

Andrew Lebovich is a policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. His research focuses on North Africa and the Sahel. Lebovich is currently a doctoral candidate in African History at Columbia University in New York, where he studies religion, politics, and society in North Africa, the Sahara, and the Sahel. He previously worked for the Open Society Initiative in West Africa (OSIWA) as a Sahel consultant, advising the organisation on political, social, and security issues in West Africa and the Sahel, and for the New America Foundation. He has lived and conducted field and archival research in France, Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Mali, and Niger. His writings have appeared in Foreign Policy, The Atlantic, and the Combating Terrorism Center's publication Sentinel, among other outlets.

Beatriz Mesa holds a PhD in Political Science/IR, University of Grenoble Alpes, (France). Thesis dissertation: The transforming role of armed groups in North of Mali : from dhijadiste and secessionniste ideologies to organised crime (2017). Professeur-Researcher at the Internationale University of Rabat (UIR) and Researcher at LASPAD Laboratory of Senegal. My work has been focused in Western Africa, Sahel and Maghreb; The topics at the center of my agenda: conflicts, political violence; terrorism, security; critical security; critical geopolitics; borders and migrations; Author of "The False Jihad. The Drug Trafficking Business in the Sahel" (February 2014) and very soon: "The armed groups in Sahel" (December 2020). Author of the collective book: «Energy and geostrategy 2018» published

in May 2018 by the Spanish Committee of the World Energy Council, Spanish Energy Club and the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies of the Ministry of Defense (IEEE).

Djallil Lounnas holds a PhD in International Security from Université de Montréal. He has been teaching at the American University Al Akhawayn in Ifrane since 2013. His research, since 2011, has focused on Jihadi organizations³⁸ in North Africa and the Sahel where he has conducted numerous field works and over two hundred interviews with various actors involved in this issue. He is the author of the book *Le Djihadisme en Afrique du Nord/Sahel: d'AQMI à Daech* published in L'Harmattan/ Les Presses de la Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique as well as of numerous publications in academic journals including *Political Violence and Terrorism*, *Mediterranean Politics*, *Middle-east policy*, *Maghreb-Machreck*, *Politique Etrangere*. From 2015 to 2019, he led an Al Akhawayn research team part of the Middle-East and North African Strategic Architecture (MENARA) consortium part of the European Union H2020 research program. He currently leads another research Al Akhawayn team part of the Preventing Violent Extremism (PREVEX) research consortium within the framework of European Union H2020 program as Published work.

Rear Admiral (Ret.) Kamel Akrouf is a chairman and founder of the think-tank IPASSS (Institute for Prospective and Advanced Strategic and Security Studies) and former National Security Senior Adviser to the President of Tunisia and the permanent Secretary of Tunisia National Security Council from January 2015 to November 2019. Rear Admiral Akrouf's career in the Tunisian Navy spanned over three decades, including service on board of several Navy Units, as a head of Operation, Intelligence, logistic bureaus of the Navy headquarters, as Dean of the Tunisian Naval Academy as well as Defense Attaché to the Tunisian Embassy in Abu Dhabi, and culminating his military career as a head of the Military Intelligence. He is also a lecturer in Geopolitics, Security and Counterterrorism at Tunisia's War College, Institute of National Defense, and Internal Security Forces College. He also regularly delivers conferences in Security at several foreign institutions and wrote several articles mainly on security, defense, cybersecurity and national security. Rear Admiral Akrouf holds a M.A. in International Security Affairs and Counter-Terrorism from the College of International Security Affairs in Washington, D.C., a M.A. in Defense and Strategy from the International War College in Hamburg, Germany, and a Graduate Diploma in Defense and Security from Tunisia's National Defense Institute.

Mr. I. M. Lallali, is the Acting Director and concurrently Deputy-Director of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT); Member of a Multidisciplinary Team designated by the AU to launch the Centre. Among his primary responsibilities are: leading the design and development of the Centre's Counter-Terrorism Early Warning System, managing a team of analysts that conduct policy analysis, studies, synthesis, and audits on terrorism in Africa; he provided assistance to consultants appointed by the AU to

³⁸ This biography has been included verbatim as received from Three Stones International. In accordance with the terminology used in this paper, "jihadi organisation" should be read as "religious extremist organization" without referring to any religion specifically.

the African Anti-Terrorist Model Law; managed the Focal Point Community Database, led the Monitoring Process of ratification of the African and Universal Counter-terrorism Instruments; Representing the ACSRT in the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate's CTC/CTED country visits in Africa.

Mr. Lallali is also leading a team of experts that evaluate the Counter-terrorism capacity of African Union Member States. He has taken part in the Joint UN-AU Evaluation Mission to the Sahel to assess the consequences of the Libyan Crisis, a mission whose report has been discussed at the UN Security Council and which forms the basis upon which the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel was developed. Mr. Lallali represented the Centre in various High-Level Meetings and worked closely in the preparation, organization and facilitation of an important number of seminars, workshops and training programs on the prevention and combating of terrorism.

Mr. Lallali is also Member of the Editorial Board of the African Journal for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, the AU Africa Terrorism Situation Analysis Report and the Joint ACSRT-NATO Sahel Terrorism Analysis Report. He is also a guest Lecturer on Counter-terrorism at the National Defense College of Nigeria (NDC) and on Conflict Management at the National Higher Institute of Political Science of Algiers (ENSSP). He is also a Member of the Academic Advisory Board of the Faculty of Political Science at the University of the Free State, South Africa. Mr. Lallali a Postgraduate Diploma in Corporate Security Management from the Cranfield University (Royal Military College of Science: RMCS) in the United Kingdom; A MBA in International Business from Regent's College in London; A MA Security Management from Webster University in the United States of America; And a BSc. of Finance from the University of Algiers. Mr. Lallali has presented papers and participated as keynote speaker, moderator and facilitator in an important number of seminars, conferences and High-Level meetings, including in preparation for the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and published regularly in the Public and Private Sector Partnerships Journal.

Isel van Zyl joined the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in 2017 and is currently a Research Officer in the Complex Threats in Africa Programme in Pretoria. Before joining the ISS, she did a traineeship at the European Parliament in Brussels. Isel also worked as a junior analyst at Terrorism Research and Analyst Consortium (TRAC), focusing on the prevention and countering of violent extremism and counter-

terrorism in West and North Africa. She holds a Master's degree in advanced European and international studies from the Centre International de formation européenne (CIFE) in Nice, France.

H. E. Doctor Engineer Marianne Amir Azer is a member of the Egyptian Parliament, member of Telecommunications, and Foreign Affairs Committees in the Parliament. Member of the International Parliament for Tolerance and Peace (IPTP). Chair of Women and Youth Committee in the International Parliament for Tolerance and Peace. Vice President of Information Systems Audit and Control Association (ISACA) board in Egypt. President of (ISACA) board in Egypt 2018-2020. Member of the Global Advisory Board for Facebook Community Leadership Program 2018-2019. Associate Professor, Nile University (NU), Areas of Research and Lectures Include but are not limited to: Security (Internet ad all

types of networks), Privacy, Cloud Computing Wireless Networks, Governance, Policies, Ethics and Legal Issues, Incident Handling and Disaster Recovery. Associate Professor, and the director of Information Center at the National Telecommunication Institute.

Before joining the parliament, she was the Advisor to the Minister of Communication and Information Technology for Strategic Initiatives. Dr. Azer obtained her BSc, MSc, and PhD in the Electronics and Communications Engineering. She has more than 18 years of experience in Communications and Information Technology. Throughout her career, she held several positions, either academic or managerial in several universities and organizations. To mention a few, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, the National Telecommunication Institute, Nile University, Cairo University, the American University in Cairo, the French University, the Arab Academy for Science and Technology and Maritime Transport. Dr. Azer is an author/ co-author of over 70 publications in refereed international journals and/or conference proceedings. She has received awards, certificates, and fellowships from different international institutions. To name a few, the US Department of State, Academy of Science, Research, and Technology, Google, the University of Michigan Dearborn, The British Council. She is also an alumni of the 12th Leaders in Governance Program (LGP), Singapore.

Zineb Benalla is an international expert and consultant in P/CVE, CT and Peace Building who spent years working in VE hotspots in the Maghreb, Sahel, and the Middle East. Zineb Benalla has a long experience working with International organizations, civil society, communities, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and policy makers across countries and Continents. She was nominated for the international Women of Courage Award in 2015 for her work in preventing and countering violent extremism and building peace in the Sahel and Maghreb region. She was awarded Alumna of the Year by Alakhawayn University for her outstanding career after graduation. She won The International Studies Association Peace Section and Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies Global South Peace Award in 2020 for her work and research on gender equality and Preventing and countering violent extremism in the Maghreb and Sahel. Zineb Benalla is the CEO and Founder of Eirene Associates. Int which is the first international development and security company in Morocco, she is also the co- founder of a civil society organization working on transnational violence and P/CVE and a Co-founder of a peace building network (a civil society network). Zineb Benalla is a visiting professor at the intersession unit at Alkhawayn University where she teaches Rethinking Counter-terrorism in Africa: Lessons in Prevention. Zineb Benalla holds a bachelor degree in International Relations from Alakhawayn University in Morocco and Georgetown University in the US, She holds a law Degree in International Law from Kent Law School and Brussels School of International Studies, and a diploma in Terrorism studies from St Andrews University in Scotland. She is NESAFRICOM Programs Alumna.

ANNEX B: Acronyms

African Union	AU
Al Qaeda in Maghreb	AQIM
Counter Terrorism	CT
Preventing/Counting Violent Extremism	P/CVE
Demobilization Disarmament and Reintegration	DDR
Global Counter-Terrorism Forum	GCTF
Group of Five for the Sahel	G5 Sahel
International Organizations	IOs
Islamic State in Central Africa Province	ISCAP
Islamic State in Greater Sahara	ISGS
Islamic State in West Africa	ISWA
Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen	JNIM
Jihad in West Africa	MUJAO
Middle East and North Africa	MENA
Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat	GSPC
Small Arms Light Weapons	SALW
Security Sector Reforms	SSR
United Nations Security Council Resolution	UNSCR
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	UNODC

