

## IMPACT OF THE ARAB SPRING ON TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN THE SAHEL

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**Abstract.** *The article studies the influence of the Arab Spring on the rise of terrorist activity in countries of the Sahel. For decades this region has been one of the most unstable in Africa and in the Afrasian instability zone. However, in the 2010s the Sahel experienced unprecedented growth of terrorist activity: by 2015 the number of terror attacks in the region had multiplied 7 times in comparison with 2010 statistics. The aim of this research is to find factors and mechanisms of terrorism's spread in the region with quantitative methods. Conducted analysis has shown that there are several trajectories of the Arab Spring's influence on terrorist activity in the Sahel. For instance, collapse of government structures in Libya during Arab Spring was a trigger for activation of Tuareg and Islamist terrorist movements in Mali and Niger. In Chad sudden rise of terrorist attacks is connected to so called "ISIS factor" when groups pledging allegiance to ISIS (like Boko Haram) aim to prove their ability to fight and to be "useful". Finally, in Burkina Faso revolutionaries were able to repeat a classic Arab Spring scenario of 2011 and to overthrow the regime of Blaise Compaoré. However, the fall of an authoritarian regime in Burkina Faso in 2014, just like in Libya, Yemen, or Egypt, has led to the inability of new government to guarantee security. As a result, a previously very calm and peaceful nation experienced explosive rise of terrorist attacks.*

**Keywords:** *Arab Spring, Sahel, Terrorism, Instability, ISIS*

## Introduction

Terrorism is one of the sources of socio-political destabilization across all the Afroasian instability zone<sup>1</sup>. Previous studies have shown that Arab Spring created conditions for Middle Eastern terrorism to spread far beyond Arab countries (see, e.g., Issaev et al. 2020; Korotayev, Medvedev & Mescherina 2019; Korotayev, Mescherina & Katkova 2019; Schumacher & Schraeder 2021). One of the regions where Arab Spring acted as a trigger for terrorist activity is the Sahel (note that our analysis of the Sahel here is restricted to the G5 Sahel countries; G5 Sahel is an institutional framework for coordination of regional cooperation in development policies and security matters in West Africa that includes Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger).

As Dentice argues, “Sahel is the source of various crises where numerous terrorist powers created conditions for the rise of new threats in the region” (Dentice 2018: 1). Scholars also note that “the region is characterized by many problems at once including instability in states, weak institutes, lack of social justice, unemployment and poverty” (Danjibo 2013: 18–19).

Many works dedicated to Sahel’s terrorism highlight internal and external reasons (Dentice 2018: 1). As Nyadera and Massaoud note (Nyadera & Massaoud 2019), in explaining violence in Sahel a big role is played by the theory of ungoverned space. According to it the absence of effective actions from the government leads to the disintegration of the population and to the political destabilization. Therefore, the population of such “ungoverned” state is vulnerable, which allows for militias and terrorist groups to get support from the people who are the most vulnerable and isolated. Thus, years of ineffective rule in Sahel created many uncontrolled territories which are exploited by militias (Nyadera & Massaoud 2019).

Attiya notes that terrorism and organized crime in Sahel have appeared as a result of long colonial rule in these countries (Attiya 2017: 60). The struggle of local population for independence led to uprisings, and uprisings led to the instability of newly created independent states. Internal instability was usually followed by revolutions and civil wars, which, in turn, triggered terrorist activity. Therefore, terrorism in those countries presents a very specific form of state’s devastation (Attiya 2017: 60).

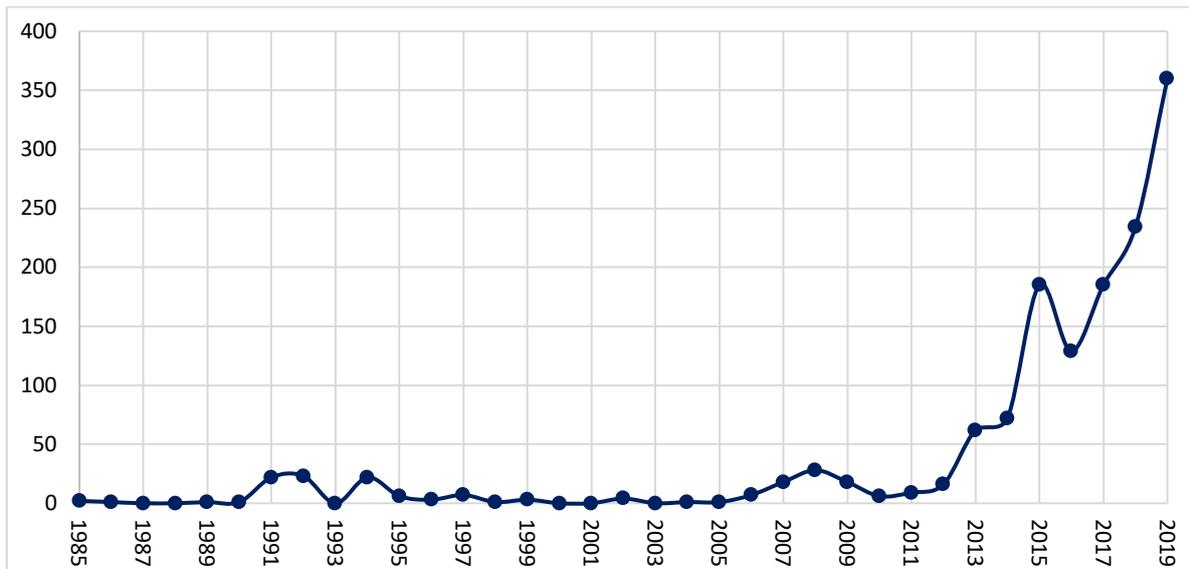
In opinion of authors of NATO Parliamentary Assembly report (NATO Parliamentary Assembly 2020: 2–6), the problem of terrorism in Sahel takes root in internal destabilization, which is following the inability of the state to execute its main functions (managing economics, public service, security). Moreover, the lack of resources caused by recent catastrophic droughts leads to numerous local conflicts, which intensifies the threat of terrorism even more.

Despite the fact that the problem with terrorism existed for several decades in the region, the rise of terrorist activity in 2010s is exceptional (see Fig. 1):

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<sup>1</sup> For more information of the “Afroasian” instability zone see: Korotayev et al. 2015; Korotayev et al. 2016.

**Figure 1. Number of terrorist attacks in G5 Sahel, 1985 – 2019**



Data source: Global Terrorism Database 2021

Figure above shows that an explosive rise of terrorist activities in the Sahel started in 2011, against the background of the Arab Spring events. The key characteristic of Arab Spring was the collapse and significant weakening of authoritarian regimes, which were effective at limiting terrorism. Long-term internal conflicts started in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, and Egypt. It is worth mentioning that even before the Arab Spring the state failures were found to be related to the intensification of terrorist activities (see, e.g., Testas 2004; Piazza 2007, 2008a, 2008b; Campos & Gassebner 2009, 2013; Gassebner & Luechinger 2011; Vasiliev 2011; Schumacher & Shraeder 2021).

As Schumacher and Shraeder (Schumacher & Shraeder 2021) have shown, leaders of Islamist groups have seen revolutionary events in Arab countries in positive light from the very beginning since they presented an opportunity to intensify terror attacks. The fall of regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, the collapse of state structures in Libya and Yemen, the weakening of central power in Syria and Iraq—all these processes created perfect conditions for the birth of ISIS, branches of which soon spread across Asia and Africa.

Previous research has shown that the Arab Spring became a trigger for the wave of global socio-political destabilization (see, e.g., Korotayev, Issaev, Shishkina 2016; Akaev et al. 2017; Korotayev, Meshcherina, & Shishkina 2018; Ortmans et al. 2017; Grinin et al. 2015, 2019; Turchin & Korotayev 2020). This wave led to protests, revolutions, and terrorist attacks in different countries all around the world. This chain reaction was possible due to several mechanisms. Firstly, the influence of media and social networks should be highlighted. Social media played a crucial role in spreading information on the Arab Spring, its motives, and methods. For instance, it has led to the growth of the “Occupy” movement throughout the world. However, in the Middle East and neighboring regions the most salient aspect of this destabilization wave was its terrorist component. Events of the Arab Spring triggered the birth of many new terrorist groups (ISIS in the first place), and other terrorist groups started to pledge allegiance to them. Moreover, old terrorist groups also became more active.

In this study we attempt to find mechanisms related to Arab Spring which provoked the growth of terrorist activity in the Sahel.

### **Algerian Islamism and Libyan Tuaregs**

Speaking about factors of terrorist activity growth in Sahel, first of all, it is essential to look at the external aspects. The situation in neighboring countries (mainly in Northern Africa) significantly affected the destabilization in the Sahel. In particular, the civil war in Algeria and long civil conflict in Libya together influenced Sahel's terrorism. Mainly, it happened due to radicalization of Tuareg and Islamist groups and diffusion of their activities across the countries of Sahel.

The beginning of "pluralism era" in Algeria in 1989 was followed by unprecedented democratic developments in the country and by the appearance of many new political parties including Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) with Abbassi Madani and Ali Belhadj as leaders. In the beginning of 1990s FIS had around 3 million members including both official party members and activists. At the municipal and parliamentary elections in 1990-1991 candidates from FIS got almost 50% of votes (Willis 1997). In these conditions FIS had all chances to get more than 2/3 of seats in National Assembly in the second round of parliamentary elections which would have allowed them to conduct constitutional changes (Vasiliev 2009).

In January 1992 after resignation of president Chadli Bendjedid military cancelled the second round of elections and proclaimed the foundation of High Council of State as a new supreme political institution. FIS was proclaimed illegal while its leaders and activists were arrested. Starting war against Islamists, High Council aimed to get rid of radicals while co-opting moderate Islamists. However, before reaching this goal a lot of time had passed. In the first years of war, number of radical Islamists was only growing because in the eyes of Algerian population the military rule at first just seemed like a self-proclaimed junta.

In the first half of the 1990s, first armed Islamist groups started to appear in Algeria: for example, the Islamic Armed Movement (MIA) and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). The former was the reaction to the arrest of FIS' leadership in 1991. The latter proclaimed the "resurrection of caliphate in Algeria" as its main goal, and in 1994, it transformed into the Islamic Salvation Army (Landa 1999). In turn, this led to the radicalization of Islamists. Extremist forces started an armed conflict with the government, which was going on from 1992 to 2000.

Nevertheless, Algerian president in the 1990s, Liamine Zéroual was able to consolidate around himself the most moderate powers in Algeria and to gradually stop the civil conflict. When radicals had felt that their positions were too fragile, they changed tactics. In the beginning of 1990s, the target of their attacks was Algerian military and its leaders. Starting from the middle of the 1990s, they chose the tactics of total terror which led to the decline of their popularity among the Algerian population.

Loss in the civil war meant that positions of Algerian Islamists were severely weakened. After huge losses GIA decided to turn to internationalization in 2000-2002 inviting radicals from neighboring countries to become a part of organization. However, this only put them even further from the Algerian society. In the end they were forced to move to neighboring countries including those in the Sahel (see, e.g., Vasiliev 2009; Vidyasova & Orlov 2019).

In the early 2000s, a splinter group from GIA was formed—Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat. In 2007 the group was renamed into Al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). It proclaimed the spread of its influence across all Northern Africa. During 2000s this group remained the most powerful terrorist organization in Algeria, however, at the end of the decade, AQIM started to move its activities to neighboring countries. The most plausible countries for terrorism were the Sahel countries (mainly Mali and Niger) since, in comparison with Northern African states, the Sahel states in the 2000s were characterized by a weak central power and the lack of their control over the periphery. In 2009 AQIM fully moved to Mali in order to continue its operations in the Sahel's territory. AQIM planned to improve its image with local population, to conduct illegal business and to support Tuaregs' movement (Dentice 2018). However, not only AQIM moved from Algeria. For example, in 2013 militia commander Mokhtar Belmokhtar, who was a supporter of Algerian radicals, created a group "Al-Mourabitoun". The aim of "Al-Mourabitoun" is to create Islamic state from Nile to Atlantic, and it possesses a threat to all Maghreb and Sahel (Nechitaylo 2012). Evidence above shows that first preconditions for terrorist activities growth appeared in the 2000s while in the 2010s they received a powerful impulse to grow even more.

Some scholars argue that a significant input to the destabilization in Sahel was produced by the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya (Makariusová & Ludvik 2012; Danjibo 2013). The key element of this influence are the tribes of Tuaregs who live across Maghreb and the Sahel. In the second half of 20th century many Tuaregs left Sahel (especially Mali and Niger) in order to escape drought and political persecution. For many Tuaregs the country of destination was Libya. The flow of Tuareg migrants was at its peak from the 1970s to the 1990s (Makariusová & Ludvik 2012). Muammar Gaddafi was quite welcoming Tuaregs, and they were easily provided with residence permits. Many Tuaregs went straight to Libyan army and starting from the 1970s around 12 thousand Tuaregs were in the army (Danjibo 2013). Moreover, until 1987, Libya had a special Tuareg military unit (called Islamic legion) which was created to fight against Mali and Chad (Larémont 2013). In addition, it is also worth noticing that many Tuaregs got into Libya in 2011 during the Libyan Revolution as mercenaries on Qaddafi's side. When the regime lost the battle, all these mercenaries and Tuareg soldiers began to return home, especially to Mali.

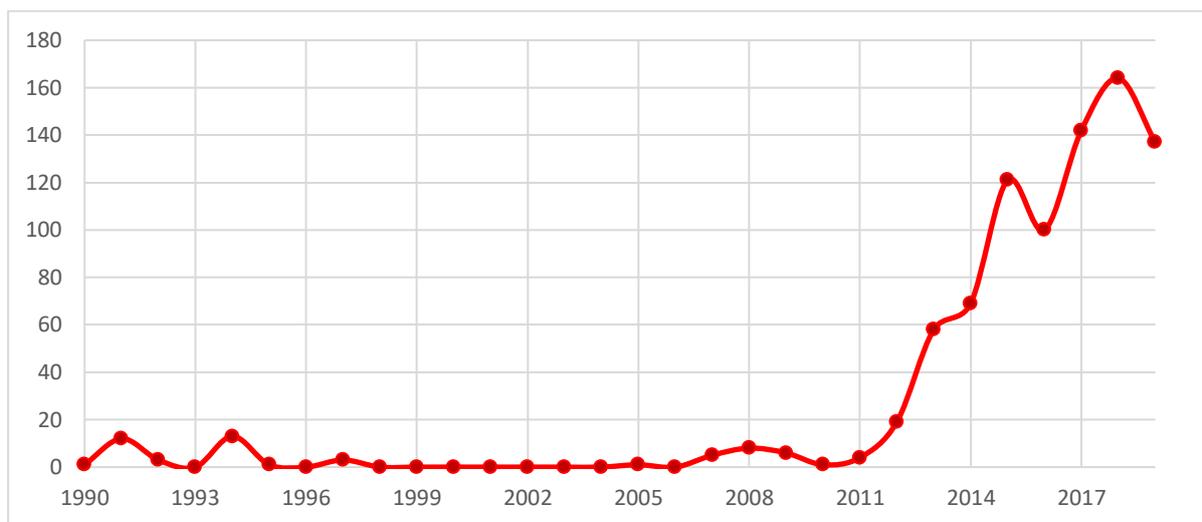
Mass return of armed Tuaregs in 2011 and later led to a pronounced increase in political violence and terrorist activity in Sahel (Larémont 2013). Arms and ammunition from Libya were quickly spread across the whole region. Political weakness of Sahel's countries and the spread of arms became preconditions for new Tuareg uprisings against local regimes (Danjibo 2013). Therefore, the collapse of Libyan regime became an

important factor of destabilization in the region. Together with the influence of the Algerian Islamists, mass return of Tuaregs was a factor that promoted the emergence and development radical groups to appear in the Sahel region.

### Mali and Niger: Rise of Islamist and Tuareg Terrorism

After independence in 1960, the power in Mali was under military control which had become the potential factor of socio-political destabilization (Francis 2015). Weak economy and social tensions also negatively affected the overall situation in the country. Starting from the 1960s, Tuareg rebellions commenced, and in the 1990s rebellions became armed (Larémont 2013). In addition, in the 1990s, Tuareg attacks against individuals were being fixed in Mali (Global Terrorism Database 2021). One of the main causes for rebellions and attacks was social and economic discrimination of the Tuareg minority (Keita 1998). Among numerous Tuareg groups which appeared in the 1990s, one should mention such groups as “Azawad National Movement”, “Revolutionary Liberation Army of Azawad”, “Revolutionary Liberation Fund of Azawad”, etc. (Keita 1998: 38–39). A lot of fighting took place between Tuaregs and military in the 1990s, and this became a fundament for future instability.

**Figure 2. Dynamics of terrorist activities in Mali, 1990–2019**



Data source: Global Terrorism Database 2021

As can be seen in Figure 2, terrorist activity in Mali started to grow dramatically in 2011. In particular, in October 2011, in the north of the country the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad emerged with Bilal Ag Acherif as a leader. The emergence of this organization was impossible without the Arab Spring and destabilization in Libya. Firstly, after the fall of Gaddafi’s rule armed Tuaregs started to return to Mali and Niger. Many of them were political refugees who were dissatisfied with Malian and Nigerien policies towards Tuareg minority (Kamara 2019: 155). Secondly, the leader of the movement himself was Bilal Ag Acherif—a Tuareg who left Mali for Libya in the 1990s and returned only during the Arab Spring. In addition, one should also pay attention to the chief of staff of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad army Mohamed

Ag Najem. Ag Najem is a classic example of the participant of the Tuareg rebellion of the 2010s. He participated in the rebellion of 1990, then he moved to Libya where he turned out to be capable enough to become a colonel of Libyan army. The Arab Spring and revolution in Libya forced him to return to Mali, where he quickly became one of the leaders of new rebellion. Thus, due to the Arab Spring key leaders and a critical mass of fighters of the Tuareg movement returned to Mali.

Speaking about terrorist activity in Mali, it is impossible not to mention the Islamist factor which added significantly to the Tuareg rebellion. The example of combination of Islamism and Tuareg separatism is the terrorist group “Ansar al-Din” founded by Iyad Ag Ghaly. Iyad Ag Ghaly is also a Malian Tuareg who migrated to Libya. In the early 1990s, he was one of the leaders of the Tuareg movement. In Libya he was a soldier as many other Tuaregs. After the fall of Qaddafi, he returned to Mali but instead of joining secular National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad he founded radical Islamist organization “Ansar al-Din” (Nechitaylo 2013). Ag Ghaly and “Ansar al-Din” have an aim to spread Sharia law across all of Mali and to form a new independent state in Azawad. In 2012, “Ansar al-Din” signed a treaty with two other Islamist organizations: Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb and “Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa”. Together these organizations planned to fight for power in the north of the country. Thus, the region of Azawad (that neighbors Libya) became the epicenter for Tuareg and Islamist activities.

In 2013–2014 with the active participation of French and Chadian military the positions of rebels and Islamists in Azawad were significantly weakened. However, despite losing most of the region, Tuareg rebels managed to capture the city of Kidal (BBC 2014) and to keep it under the control until 2020. The loss of territories by Islamists and rebels eventually led to their switch to guerilla tactics.

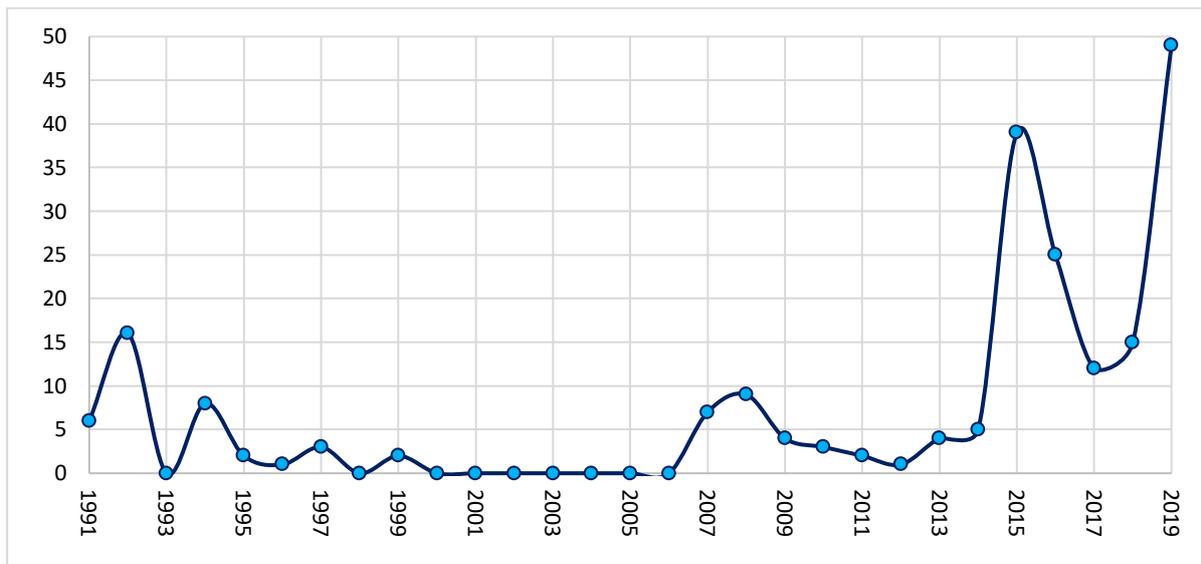
Nowadays, it is hard to adequately assess the situation in Mali: because of the pandemic, many groups stopped their activities. In 2020 Kidal was returned to government’s control but it is too early to talk about the stabilization of the situation. Potential for the growth of terrorist activities in Mali is still very high. Relatively recently, in 2017, groups “Ansar al-Din”, “Al-Mourabitoun” and the Macina Liberation Front proclaimed that they are united into one big organization—Nusrat Al-Islam, which is officially a branch of AQIM (TRAC 2017).

It should be noted that the dramatic rise of terrorist activities and Islamist groups in Mali is not just a result of Al-Qaeda’s work, but the ISIS has also made a significant contribution to it. Just like Al-Qaeda, Islamic State has its own branch in Sahel—“Islamic State in the Greater Sahara” (IS-GS). Branches of IS started to massively appear in Mali after the split in “Al-Mourabitoun” which happened in 2015. The center of IS activities in Mali is the region of Gao in the north-east of the country. However, radicals’ activities were not limited to one region. The attack on American special operations forces near the village of Tongo-Tongo, which is situated in a completely different part of the country, is a good example of how strong the influence of the Islamic State in the country is. Currently, there is an ongoing competition between Al-Qaeda and IS in Mali, which only leads to a bigger number of terror attacks.

The Tuareg terrorism in Mali became a bigger threat with the appearance of many Islamist groups which moved here in the early 21st century. After the Arab Spring started, activities of many radical groups in the country intensified. AQIM and other groups used the dissatisfaction of local population in order to strengthen their influence. An important factor of the intensification of Malian Islamists activities was the existence of the IS. The birth of the IS itself was possible due to destabilization which followed the Arab Spring, thus, making Islamic State a part of Arab Spring’s “echo” (see, e.g., Korotayev et al. 2018). In sum, it was the Arab Spring which led to the intensification of activities of numerous terrorists in Mali, and this is confirmed both with facts and with statistics.

Niger is the second country which was fully exposed to Tuareg and Islamist terrorism. In the 1970s and 1980s military in Niger tried to organize several coups in connection with economic problems and drought. Just as Mali, in the 1990s Niger experienced terrorist activities organized by Tuareg national movements. Tuareg rebellions started in 1995 when Nigerien government did not fulfill its promise to decentralize the power and to create Tuareg autonomy in the north (Bouhleb-Hardy, Guichaoua, Tamboura 2008). Also, in 1994 the first Islamist attacks were recorded (Global Terrorism Database 2021).

**Figure 3. Dynamics of terrorist activities in Niger, 1991 – 2019**



Data source: Global Terrorism Database 2021

Figure 3 shows an explosive increase in number of terrorist attacks soon after the Arab Spring. In 2011 and after, Niger experienced the same problems as Mali. Mass return of Tuaregs from Libya triggered new attacks on the part of Tuareg movements. At the same time, Islamists also became active. Niger also experienced a destructive influence of IS-GS. In addition, “Boko Haram” is also present on the territory of the state, and it is also a part of IS after pledging allegiance to it in 2015.

Boko Haram is one of the biggest threats to Niger’s safety. Known mostly for being a Nigerian organization, Boko Haram also spreads its influence on Niger and Chad. In 2015, the group pledged allegiance to IS and got its second name “West African Province of Islamic State”, thus, becoming another branch of IS in the region. One of the main goals

of the organization in Niger and in other countries is the spread of Sharia law and the fight against any signs of Western culture. In Niger Boko Haram and IS are responsible for many attacks.

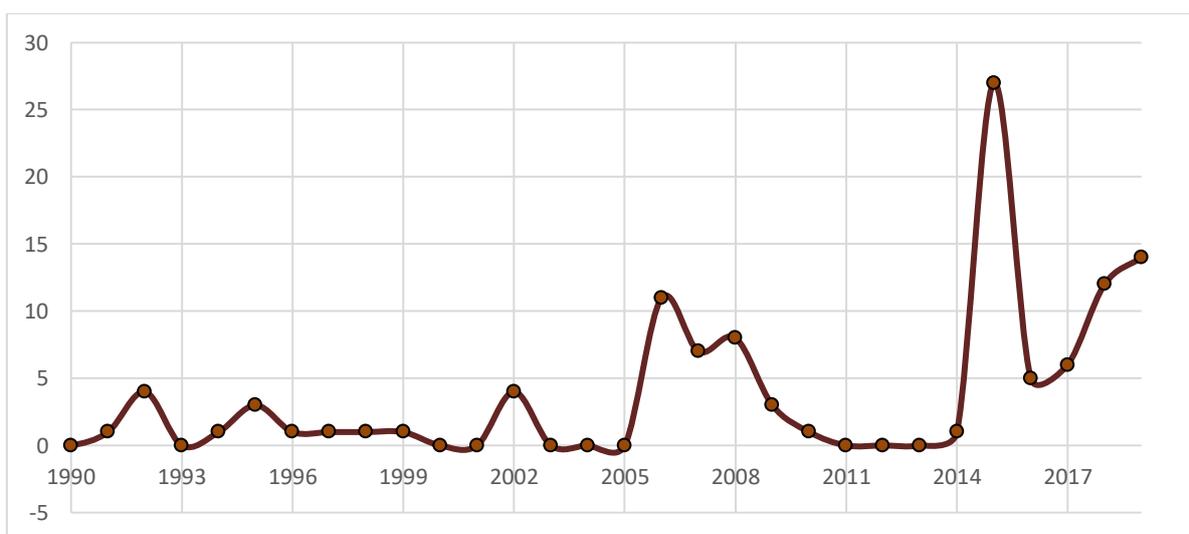
In Niger, just like in Mali, Islamism and Tuareg issue are connected. In Niger, it can be seen in two aspects of country's destabilization. Firstly, terror attacks in the country are often organized by groups from Mali, which are filled with Islamist Tuaregs, for instance, by "Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa", which is in alliance with "Ansar al-Din" and AQIM (Koepf 2013). Secondly, the terrorist threat now is concentrated in the north region of Agadez and areas bordering Mali and Algeria. This region is traditionally a region of the Tuaregs. Therefore, terrorist activity in Niger is the continuation of Malian case, but it is also complicated by the presence of Boko Haram.

### Chad: Islamic State Factor

Even though all the countries of Sahel have common problems, in some of them terrorist activity is not too intense. This is true for Chad where Islamist groups are present and the situation is generally instable, but there are not as many terrorist attacks as in Niger or Mali. In case of Chad, small numbers of terrorist attacks can be related to the consolidation against the external threat. It is also worth mentioning that the Tuareg rebellions are not a problem in this country. On the other hand, in Chad there are many different ethnicities, which can be a precondition for inter-ethnic conflicts.

After the independence in 1960, in the north of Chad there were protests against president Tombalbaye (Alusala 2007). Destabilization of Chad intensified during the war with Libya in the 1970s and the 1980s. During this period, the first terrorist attacks were recorded. This can be a consequence of arms and ammunition from Libya flowing into the country (Alusala 2007). However, a total number of attacks was not very high (Fig. 4).

**Figure 4. Dynamics of terrorist activities in Chad, 1974–2019**



Data source: Global Terrorism Database 2021

Sudden increase of attacks can be observed in 2015. The rise of terrorist activities here is tied with the so-called Islamic State factor, when groups pledging allegiance to IS were trying to prove their capabilities and loyalty by conducting attacks (in this case it was Boko Haram).

For a long time, Boko Haram was present in Chad near the lake of the same name. However, in 2015, after Boko Haram became affiliated with the Islamic State, a radical escalation of violence began. It was not only because of the allegiance; it also can be seen as a response to Chad's military intervention in Mali where Chadian soldiers took part in operations against Islamists. Among the wave of attacks two suicide bombings in N'Djamena can be highlighted in addition to numerous attacks of villages and military bases. The situation in the country quickly became unstable, and, in November 2015, the state of emergency was proclaimed. It was proclaimed again several times since (Crisis Group 2017)

Boko Haram remains the main threat to Chad's security, but it is not the only one. Another terrorist threat is coming from the north where, after the Arab Spring, Libyan fighters were freely crossing the Chadian border (Lederer 2021). Their presence negatively affects the situation in the country. These are former Libyan fighters from different groups who are the basis for the organization "Front for Change and Concord". This rebel group conducts active military fighting against Chadian government, and it was even able to kill president Idriss Deby during one of the clashes (Bissada 2021).

Therefore, destabilization of Chad is another consequence of the Arab Spring. Boko Haram became much more hostile after the allegiance to Islamic State. Rebels in the north are directly connected to the destabilization in Libya.

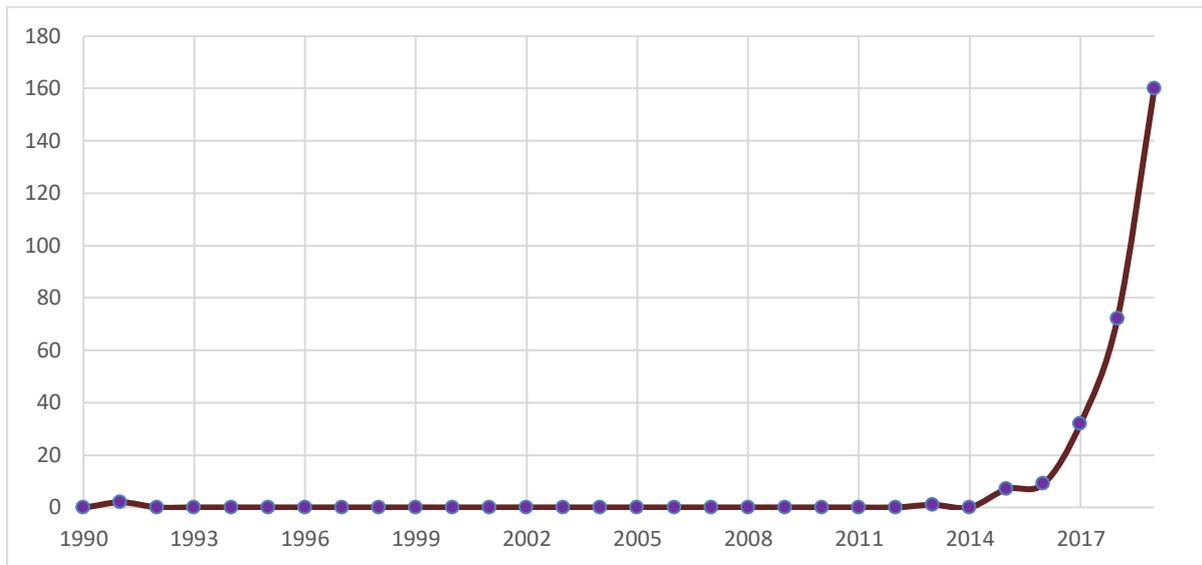
### **Burkina Faso: Arab Spring in Sahel**

Burkina Faso is a very specific case of destabilization in Sahel. Increase in terrorist activities in the country has a different mechanism from previously mentioned cases. The country basically experienced its very own Arab Spring three years after the main wave.

For a long time, terrorism was almost inexistent in Burkina Faso. This is partly the result of a relative ethnic homogeneity with one dominant ethnicity which prevented inter-ethnic conflicts. In 1987 a military coup happened in Burkina Faso which ended the rule of Thomas Sankara (Zhambikov 2015), and there were no big shocks until 2014.

In 2014 people of Burkina Faso started to protest against the power of President Blaise Compaoré, who was ruling the country for 27 years (Patinkin 2014). Amendments to the constitution of the country which were aimed at expanding the president's term became the trigger for protests. It is also worth to mention difficult economic situation. The level of unemployment in 2014 was at its highest for ten years (Knoema 2021). At the same time in 2014 the growth of GDP was the slowest (Knoema 2021). This resulted in the Burkinabé Revolution (October–November 2014) that followed a general pattern of an Arab Spring revolution (Harsch 2017). Military coup in 2015 intensified the destabilization in the country even more (TASS 2015).

**Figure 5. Dynamics of terrorist activities in Burkina Faso, 1984–2019**



Data source: Global Terrorism Database 2021

Destabilization in Burkina Faso was followed by an unprecedented rise of terrorist activity (Figure 5). There were two key actors in this process: AQIM and IS. For example, Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb took responsibility for the 2016 Ouagadougou attacks (Reuters 2016). AQIM's branch Nusrat Al-Islam which was already mentioned above took responsibility for the 2018 Ouagadougou attacks (France 24). Thus, AQIM once again played a major role in the regional destabilization. Islamic State is also present in Burkina Faso and it is responsible for numerous attacks in the north of the country. In 2018 the government was forced to declare the state of emergency in several northern regions of the country, since the terrorist activity in the border area in Mali reached a critical level.

Such a sudden rise in terrorist activity after the collapse of the regime is similar to the cases of Libya, Yemen and other Arab countries where the weakening or the fall of strong authoritarian regimes immediately led to the activation of terrorist organizations. This can be explained by the fact that authoritarian regimes in the region were generally effective in suppressing terrorists. The same can be said about Burkina Faso: according to various sources, Blaise Compaoré had certain agreements with terrorist groups, specifically, with Al-Qaeda and various Tuareg groups from Mali (Penney 2018). Moreover, Compaoré was welcoming activities of American and French special forces in the country (Chouli 2015). When the regime fell, all those connections disappeared which led to a very fast rise of terrorist activities.

Therefore, it should be noted that the Burkinabé Revolution of 2014 which was influenced by the Arab Spring (protesters from Burkina Faso were calling it "The Black Spring" and "Revolution 2.0" drawing parallels with the Arab Spring)<sup>1</sup> led to the explosion of terrorist activities. Just like in Libya, Syria and Yemen authoritarian regime despite all disadvantages was capable of suppressing terrorism. After the Blaise Compaoré regime fell, terrorist activities immediately rose.

<sup>1</sup> See: Telegraph 2012.

## Conclusion

The Arab Spring had several channels of influence on terrorist activities in the Sahel in the 2010s. Firstly, it led to intensification of Islamist and Tuareg factors, which for a long time were a latent threat to security of several Sahel countries. It relates to Mali and Niger in the first place. On the one hand, after their independence Mali and Niger have never found a solution to the Tuareg issue. On the other, these countries are important centers of Islam in the Sahel, thus, they are a very important target for Islamist groups.

Secondly, an important role in intensification of the terrorist threats was played by the Islamic State, and the so-called Islamic State factor is very important. Rampant birth and development of Islamic State was a major factor of the increase in terrorist actions all over the world. Sudden “success” of IS was followed by the numerous terrorist groups pledging their allegiance to the organization. This, in turn, was followed by rising terrorist activities which was a way to show loyalty to the IS. A salient example here is Chad where around 60% of terrorist actions was conducted by Boko Haram. Moreover, the growth of terrorist activities took place in 2015 when Boko Haram became affiliated with IS and changed the name to Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP).

Finally, the third case is Burkina Faso, which experienced its own Arab Spring. Burkina Faso was the most stable and secure state in the Sahel in terms of terrorism. In 2014-2015 in Burkina Faso the mechanisms that were at play are the same as in the Middle East and Northern Africa in 2011. As a result, the fall of authoritarian regime of Blaise Compaoré lead to similar consequences. Just like Egypt, Yemen and other countries destabilized during Arab Spring, post-revolutionary government of Burkina Faso was unable to deal with terrorism.

Therefore, despite so many different scenarios of terrorism spread in the region, in all the cases Arab Spring and its consequences played an important role.

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