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## The Global Terrorist Threat in the Sahel and the Origins of Terrorism in Burkina Faso


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**Abstract.** The article examines the reasons for the increasing terrorist activity in Burkina Faso after the revolution in 2014. For decades, the Sahel has been one of the most unstable regions in Africa and the Afrasian zone of instability. However, in the 2010s the Sahel has experienced a dramatic increase in terrorist activity: by 2015, the number of terrorist attacks there increased more than seven times compared to 2010. At the same time, the dynamics of terrorist activity in Burkina Faso had its specific characteristics compared to the rest of the Sahel. The growth of terrorism in this country was largely a consequence of the overthrow of the B. Compaoré regime. The new authorities were unable to maintain security at the same level. This can be explained, on the one hand, by the stable agreements that had been settled between Compaoré and terrorist structures. His resignation destroyed all the informal ties and agreements that the regime had established with regional jihadist organizations, freeing their hands to infiltrate Burkina Faso quickly and easily. On the other hand, the dissolution of the Regiment of Presidential Security (precisely the structure largely responsible for the fight against terrorism) after the failed military coup attempt of September 2015 played an important role. The new leadership stripped the country of the protection they had against jihadist organizations poised to infiltrate across the border into Burkina Faso. As a result, after 2015, a very safe country in terms of terrorism faced an unprecedented increase in terrorist activity.

**Key words:** Black Spring, Burkina-Faso, Sahel, terrorism, instability

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## Глобальная террористическая угроза в Сахеле и истоки терроризма в Буркина-Фасо


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**Аннотация.** В статье рассматриваются причины роста террористической активности в Буркина-Фасо после революции 2014 г. Регион Сахеля на протяжении десятилетий являлся одним из наиболее нестабильных в Африке и африканской зоне нестабильности. Однако в 2010-е гг. Сахель испытал на себе самый быстрый рост террористической активности: к 2015 г. количество терактов здесь выросло более чем в семь раз по сравнению с 2010 г. В то же время динамика террористической активности в Буркина-Фасо имела свои особенности по сравнению с остальными странами Сахеля. Рост терроризма в этой стране во многом стал следствием свержения режима Б. Компаоре. Новые власти оказались неспособны поддерживать безопасность на прежнем уровне. Объяснением этому могут служить, с одной стороны, устойчивые договоренности, которые сложились между Компаоре и террористическими структурами. Его отставка разрушила все неформальные связи и договоренности, которые режим налаживал с региональными джихадистскими организациями, развязав им руки для достаточно быстрого и легкого проникновения в Буркина-Фасо. С другой стороны, важную роль сыграл роспуск Президентской гвардии (именно эта структура в значительной степени отвечала за борьбу с терроризмом) после неудачной попытки военного переворота в сентябре 2015 г. Новое руководство лишило страну защиты, которую они имели против джихадистских организаций, готовых проникнуть через границу в Буркина-Фасо. В результате после 2015 г. весьма благополучная с точки зрения терроризма страна столкнулась с беспрецедентным ростом террористической активности.

**Ключевые слова:** черная весна, Буркина-Фасо, Сахель, терроризм, нестабильность

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### Introduction

Terrorism is a source of socio-political instability in the entire Afrasian zone of instability.<sup>1</sup> Our previous research has shown that the Arab Spring created favorable conditions for the spread of Middle Eastern terrorism outside the Arab world (Issaev et al., 2021; Issaev et al., 2020; Korotayev et al., 2019). One of the regions where the Arab Spring triggered an increase of terrorist activity was the Sahel.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For more information about the Afrasian zone of instability, see: (Korotayev et al., 2015).

<sup>2</sup> The Sahel countries are hereinafter referred to as the G5 Sahel group, which includes Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Mauritania and Niger.

As J. Dentice writes, “the Sahel is the source of numerous crises, in which various driving terrorist forces have created the conditions for the growth of new threats in the region” (Dentice, 2018, p. 1). It is noted that “the region is characterized by a number of problems, including instability within states, weak institutions, lack of social justice, unemployment and poverty” (Danjibo, 2013, pp. 18—19).

Many works devoted to terrorism in the Sahel single out the difficult internal political situation as the reasons, as well as the factor of external influence (Dentice, 2018, p. 1). As stated by I.N. Nyadera & Massaoud (2019), an important place in explaining the violence in the

Sahel is occupied by the theory of unmanaged space and conflicts, according to which the lack of effective action from the side of the government can lead to disintegration and political destabilization over time. In this regard, the population of such a state becomes vulnerable, which allows armed groups and terrorist organizations to get the support of people who feel isolated in the country. Thus, years of government mismanagement have created hearth of ungoverned territories in the Sahel that are exploited by armed groups (Nyadera & Massaoud, 2019).

I. Attiya, in turn, claimed that terrorism and organized crime in the countries of the Sahel region appeared as a result of a long colonial rule (Attiya, 2017, p. 60). The struggle of the local population for independence led to uprisings, which subsequently led to the instability of the newly created independent states. Due to internal political instability, revolutionary and civil wars often broke out, which led to the intensification of terrorist activities. Thus, terrorism in these countries is a special form of violence and state exhaustion (Attiya, 2017, p. 60).

According to the authors of the report of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly,<sup>3</sup> the problem of terrorism in the Sahel stems from the internal destabilization of countries, which is a consequence of the inability of the state to control all the main functions of the state (economic management, service provision, and security). Moreover, the lack of resources resulting from the drought leads to local conflicts, which further increases the internal destabilization that leads to the emergence of terrorism.

However, despite the fact that the problem of terrorism in the Sahel has existed for several

decades, in the 2010s there has been a sharp increase in terrorist activity in the region (Fig. 1).

The graph shows that a sharp surge in terrorist detail occurred after 2010, i.e. since the start of the Arab Spring. A key characteristic of the Arab Spring is the collapse or significant weakening of authoritarian regimes that were quite effective in containing terrorist activity. Lingering internal conflicts began in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq and Egypt. It is worth noting that such a weakening of states was associated with an intensification of terrorist activity even before the Arab Spring (Testas, 2004; Vasiliev, 2011; Schumacher & Schraeder, 2021).

A similar picture can be seen in Fig. 2, which presents the number of major terrorist attacks recorded in the G5 Sahel countries by the CNTS system.<sup>4</sup>

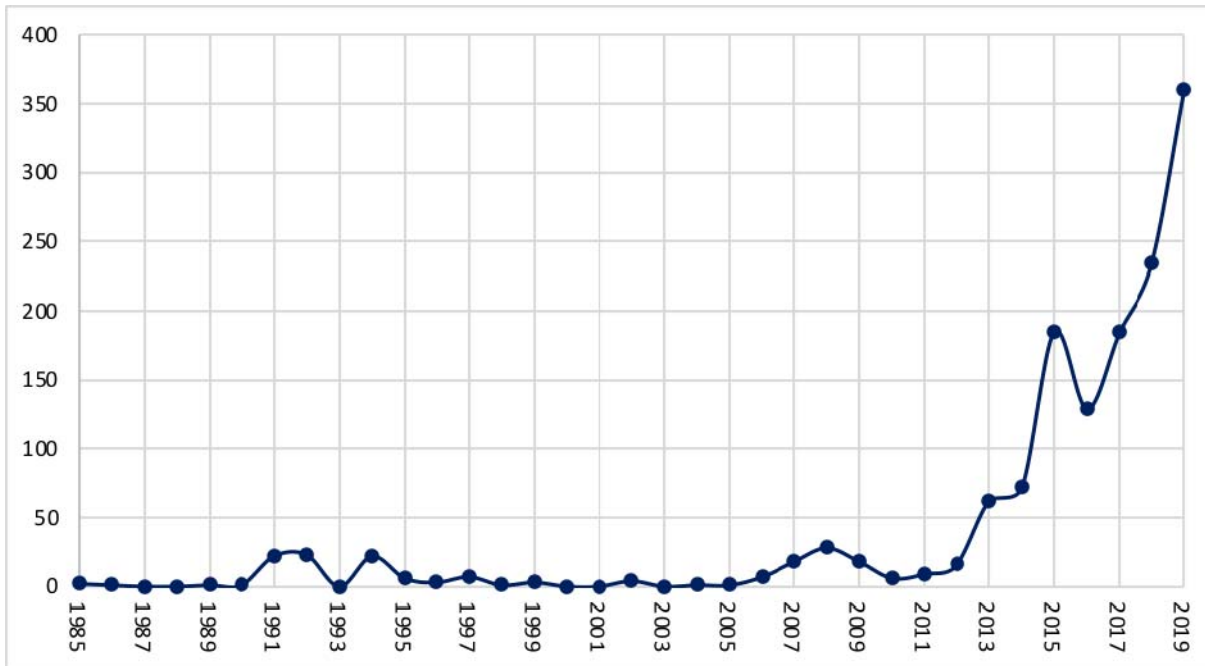
As shown by M. Schumacher and P. Schraeder (2021), the leaders of Islamist terrorist groups positively perceived the revolutionary events in the Arab countries, as they opened up an opportunity to intensify their activities. The fall of the ruling regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, the collapse of state structures in Libya and Yemen, the weakening of the central government in Syria and Iraq, created favorable conditions for the emergence of ISIS (IS, DAESH, Islamic State),<sup>5</sup> which cells soon began to appear in various countries of Asia and Africa.

Previous studies showed that the Arab Spring played the role of a trigger for the wave of global socio-political destabilization that began in 2011 (Korotayev et al., 2016; Akaev et al., 2017; Grinin et al., 2019; Grinin et al., 2015). It resulted in protests, revolutions and bursts of terrorist activity in various countries. Such a chain reaction was possible due to several mechanisms. First of all, media and social networks had influence on the rapid dissemination of information about the Arab Spring, its motives and methods. In particular,

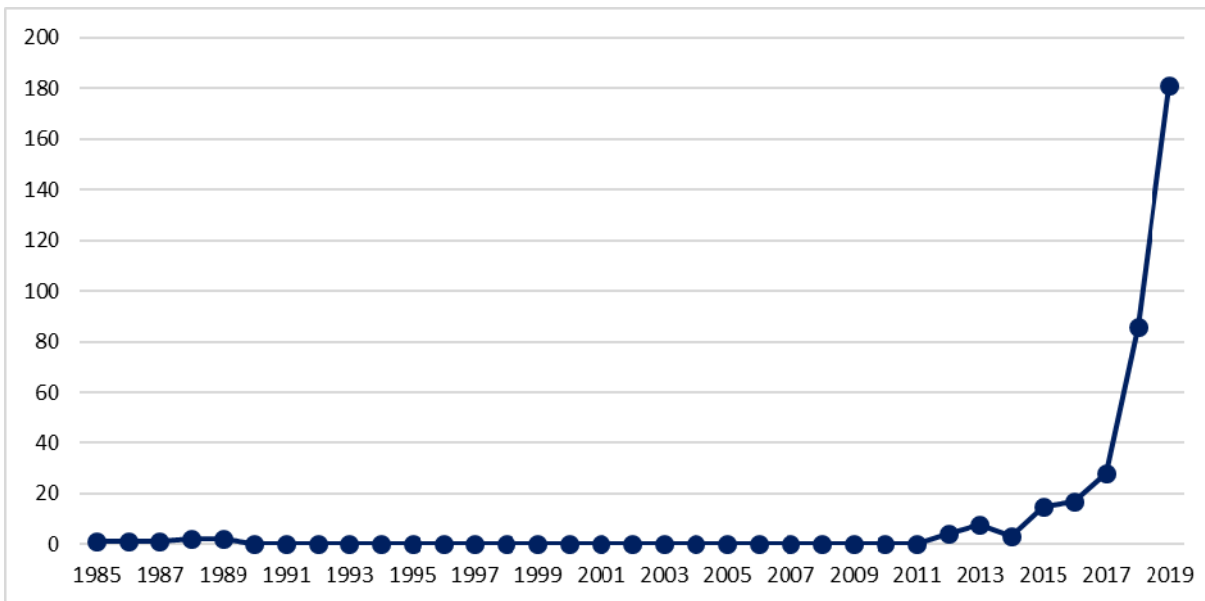
<sup>3</sup> Çonkar A. B. Development and Security Challenges in the Sahel Region // Draft Report. Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group (GSM). NATO Parliamentary Assembly. 2020. URL: [https://www.nato-pa.int/download-file?filename=/sites/default/files/2021-02/042%20GSM%202020%20E%20rev%202%20fin%20-%20DEVELOPMENT%20AND%20SECURITY%20CHALLENGES%20IN%20THE%20SAHEL%20REGION\\_0.pdf](https://www.nato-pa.int/download-file?filename=/sites/default/files/2021-02/042%20GSM%202020%20E%20rev%202%20fin%20-%20DEVELOPMENT%20AND%20SECURITY%20CHALLENGES%20IN%20THE%20SAHEL%20REGION_0.pdf) (accessed: 31.08.2021).

<sup>4</sup> Cross-National Time-Series Data Archive. Databanks International. URL: <http://www.databanksinternational.com> (accessed: 31.08.2021).

<sup>5</sup> The organization is banned in the Russian Federation.



**Fig 1. Dynamics of terrorist activity in the G5 Sahel countries according to Global Terrorism Database, 1985—2019**  
 Source: compiled by the authors. Global Terrorism Database 2021. URL: <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/> (accessed: 29.05.2021).



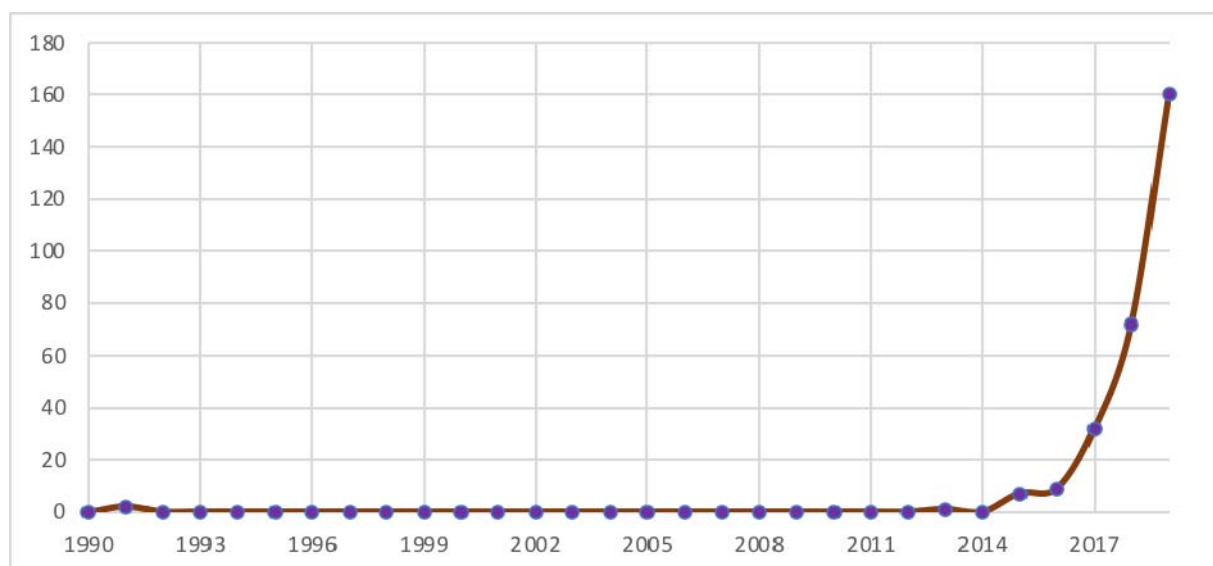
**Fig 2. Dynamics of terrorist activity in the G5 Sahel countries according to Cross-National Time-Series Data Archive, 1985—2019**

Source: compiled by the authors. Cross-National Time-Series Data Archive. Databanks International. URL: <http://www.databanksinternational.com> (accessed: 31.08.2021).

this led to the growth of the Occupy movement around the world. However, when it comes to the Middle East countries and neighboring regions, the most noticeable manifestation of destabilization is the wave of terrorism. The events of the Arab Spring led to the emergence of new terrorist groups (primarily ISIS). Terrorist

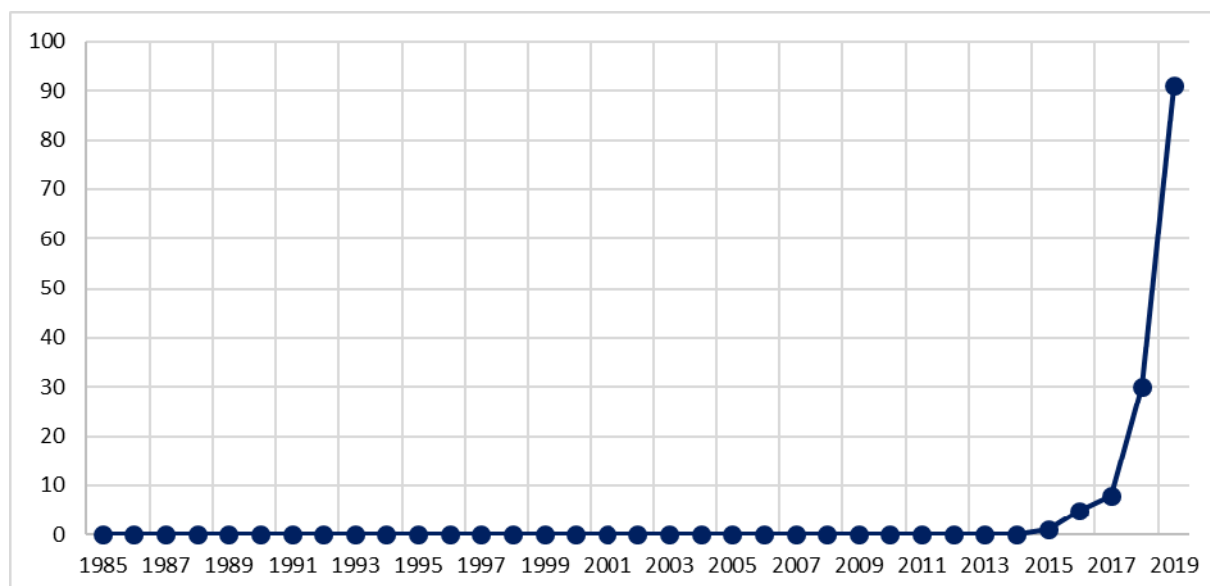
organizations began to swear allegiance to them throughout the “African” zone of instability. Furthermore, it was possible to see to the revitalization of the old terrorist groups.

Against the general background of the Sahel, the dynamics of terrorist activity in Burkina Faso has its own characteristics (Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3. Dynamics of terrorist activity in Burkina Faso according to Global Terrorism Database, 1990—2019**

Source: compiled by the authors. Global Terrorism Database 2021. URL: <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/> (accessed: 29.05.2021).



**Fig. 4. Dynamics of terrorist activity in Burkina Faso according to Cross-National Time-Series Data Archive, 1985—2019**

Source: compiled by the authors. Cross-National Time-Series Data Archive 2021. Databanks International. URL: <http://www.databanksinternational.com> (accessed: 31.08.2021).

The same trend is recorded by CNTS (Fig. 4).

As we can see, the growth of terrorist activity in Burkina Faso did not occur immediately after the Arab Spring, but only after 2014. At the same time, it began to grow at a particularly rapid pace after 2015. In our study, we will attempt to comprehend the dynamics of a rather specific terrorist activity in Burkina Faso and answer the question why the

growth of terrorism in Burkina Faso was observed in these years.

### Dynamics of Terrorist Activity in Burkina Faso

The number of terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso began to rise immediately after the fall of the Compaoré regime. In Burkina Faso, where for the entire period 1990—2014, only three

terrorist attacks were witnessed by the authoritative international database Global Terrorism Database, seven terrorist attacks were already recorded in 2015.<sup>6</sup> Three major terrorist groups are responsible for nearly two-thirds of violent extremist incidents in the Central African Sahel region, the Masina Liberation Front (MLF; in 2017, part of the Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wa-l-Muslimin (JNIM) alliance, affiliated with al-Qaeda<sup>7</sup>), the Ansar-ul-Islam group (also part of JNIM), and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, which are concentrated in Central Mali, Northern and Eastern Burkina Faso, and Western Niger (Hassan, 2020).

The first terrorist attack since 2013 took place in Burkina Faso on April 4, 2015, when a Romanian security officer was kidnapped in northern Burkina Faso, near the border with Mali and Niger in the Liptako Gourma region.<sup>8</sup> On August 23, 2015, in the same region, a gendarmerie brigade was attacked, one of the fighters was killed. On 9 October in Samorogane, in western Burkina Faso, near the Malian border, three other gendarmes were killed when their barracks were stormed by terrorists in retaliation for the arrest of one of their men.<sup>9</sup>

From January 15, 2016, the date of the first major terrorist attack in the center of Ouagadougou on Kwame Nkrumah Avenue, to December 10, 2017, Burkina Faso was the target of 102 large-scale attacks by violent extremists.<sup>10</sup> Most of the terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso are carried out by foreign

organizations linked to al-Qaeda, usually from neighboring Mali. Such organizations, as a rule, are focused on the creation of an “African Caliphate”<sup>11</sup> and anti-Western sentiments. However, some organizations also target Burkina Faso due to popular dissatisfaction with the lack of economic development, which gives them the opportunity to recruit people in the country.<sup>12</sup>

Until 2017, most of the attacks were carried out by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM),<sup>13</sup> the North African branch of al-Qaeda based in Mali.<sup>14</sup> AQIM carried out attacks across the Sahel,<sup>15</sup> so AQIM and its affiliate, al-Murabitoun, claimed responsibility for the Ouagadougou Attacks in 2016,<sup>16</sup> when the city was hit by an Islamist terrorist attack. Armed militants carried out a 15-hour siege of hotels and cafes in the center, leaving 28 people dead and 56 injured.<sup>17</sup>

Other organizations loyal to al-Qaeda that are involved in terrorist activities in Burkina Faso include: Ansar-ul-Islam (“Defenders of

<sup>6</sup> Global Terrorism Database. URL: <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/> (accessed: 29.05.2021).

<sup>7</sup> The organization is banned in the Russian Federation.

<sup>8</sup> Roger B. *Attentat de Ouagadougou: pourquoi le Burkina a été frappé?* // Jeune Afrique. Janvier 29, 2016. URL: <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/296480/politique/attentat-de-ouagadougou-burkina-a-ete-frappe/> (accessed: 31.08.2021).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Sakande M. *105 Attaques Terroristes Contre Le Burkina Faso: Le G5 Sahel, La Solution à Petite Vitesse* // Événement. Mars 29, 2018. URL: <https://www.evenement-bf.net/105-attaques-terroristes-contre-le-burkina-faso-le-g5-sahel-la-solution-a-petite-vitesse/> (accessed: 30.07.2021).

<sup>11</sup> Bassou A., Guennoun I. *Le Sahel Face aux Tendances Al Qaeda et Daech: Quel Dénouement Possible? Al Qaeda vs. Daech in the Sahel: What to Expect?* OCP Policy Center, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Shryock R. *Burkina Faso Plagued by Terror Attacks, Rights Allegations* // VOA. February 7, 2019. URL: <https://www.voanews.com/a/burkina-faso-plagued-by-terror-attacks-and-human-rights-allegations/4777150.html> (accessed: 30.07.2021).

<sup>13</sup> The organization is banned in the Russian Federation.

<sup>14</sup> *Al-Qaeda Carves Out Its Own Country in Mali* // USA Today. December 31, 2012. URL: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2012/12/31/al-qaeda-mali/1800787/> (accessed: 30.07.2021).

<sup>15</sup> *Burkina Faso Arrests Six Over Deadly Militant Attack in January* // Reuters. June 2, 2016. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-burkina-arrests-id-USKCN0YN5WD> (accessed: 30.07.2021).

<sup>16</sup> Guitta O. *The Re-emergence of AQIM in Africa* // Al-Jazeera. March 20, 2016. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2016/3/20/the-re-emergence-of-aqim-in-africa/> (accessed: 30.07.2021).

<sup>17</sup> Benedikter R., Ouedraogo I. *Extremist Expansion in Burkina Faso: Origins and Solutions* // IPI Global Observatory. May 12, 2017. URL: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/05/burkina-faso-extremism-al-qaeda-ansarul-islam/> (accessed: 30.07.2021).

Islam”), led by a radical preacher from Burkina Faso, the Masina Liberation Front, an organization from Mali, which has worked with AQIM, and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, a splinter group from AQIM, on the other hand the Islamic State in Greater Sahara acts at odds with al-Qaeda.<sup>18</sup> Particular attention should be paid to the Ansar-ul-Islam group, since more than half of the terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso from 2016 to 2018 were conducted by its members.

For more than a year, Ansar-ul-Islam, along with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, was trying to spread terrorism in northern Burkina Faso. This could come in handy in building new jihadist alliances, preparing parts of the country to become a potential recruiting and training haven and transnational hub after the possible defeat of radical Islamists in Syria and Iraq.<sup>19</sup> In its early stages, Ansar-ul-Islam, founded by M. I. Diko, a preacher from Sumy, was a manifestation of widespread dissatisfaction with the social order in that province. It can be described as an internal terrorist group in Burkina Faso, which retains sufficient support to continue the low-intensity uprising against local and national authorities.<sup>20</sup>

Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wa-l-Muslimin (JNIM) was formed in March 2017 as a result of the merger of AQIM, Ansar al-Din and al-Murabitun. DNIM remains under the control of AQIM and is based in Mali.<sup>21</sup> Since its

inception, DNIM has carried out several attacks in Burkina Faso. For example, they claimed responsibility for the attacks in Ouagadougou, in 2018.<sup>22</sup> JNIM poses a particularly serious threat because of its wide range of capabilities, including high lethality of terrorist attacks, defeating armed targets, and coordinating several attacks at the same time (Zimmerer, 2019).

It is also worth noting that there is a rivalry between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, which is also joined by local groups. Islamic State (IS) activities in Burkina Faso have been limited compared to those of AQIM.<sup>23</sup> Its main branch near Burkina Faso, the Islamic State in the Great Sahara, was formed in May 2015 from the al-Murabitun splinter faction that swore allegiance to IS (Warner, 2017). Another Islamic State affiliate, Boko Haram, also operates in Burkina Faso (but on a much more limited scale (Warner, 2017).

By 2019, violence had spread from the north of the country to the east. Burkina Faso never formally had a civil war, but H. Nsaybia notes that the current conflict has many of its key characteristics.<sup>24</sup>

### Echo of the Libyan Crisis

The fact that terrorist attacks were extremely rare before 2014 is due in large part to the former President of Burkina Faso, B. Compaoré, whose activities were the direct reason of keeping extremists out of the country. As seen above in Fig. 2, in Burkina

<sup>18</sup> Burkina Faso: Extremism and Terrorism // Counter Extremism Project. URL: <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/burkina-faso> (accessed: 30.07.2021).

<sup>19</sup> Benedikter R., Ouedraogo I. Extremist Expansion in Burkina Faso: Origins and Solutions // IPI Global Observatory. May 12, 2017. URL: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/05/burkina-faso-extremism-al-qaeda-ansarul-islam/> (accessed: 30.07.2021).

<sup>20</sup> The Social Roots of Jihadist Violence in Burkina Faso’s North // International Crisis Group. October 12, 2017. URL: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/burkina-faso/254-social-roots-jihadist-violence-burkina-fasos-north> (accessed: 30.07.2021).

<sup>21</sup> Foreign Travel Advice Burkina Faso // GOV.UK. URL: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/burkina-faso/terrorism> (accessed: 30.07.2021).

<sup>22</sup> Jihadist Group Claims Attacks on Military, French Embassy in Burkina Faso // France24. March 3, 2018. URL: <https://www.france24.com/en/20180303-jihadist-group-jsim-claims-burkina-faso-attacks-ouagadougou> (accessed: 30.07.2021).

<sup>23</sup> Burkina Faso: Extremism and Terrorism // Counter Extremism Project. URL: <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/burkina-faso> (accessed: 30.07.2021).

<sup>24</sup> Wilkins H. How Has Burkina Faso Changed Since the ‘Insurrection’? // Al-Jazeera. November 21, 2020. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/21/how-has-burkina-faso-changed-since-the-insurrection> (accessed: 30.07.2021).



Faso, the incidence of terrorist attacks began to rise first after the 2014 revolution, and especially after the failed military coup in 2015. Several factors can explain this phenomenon. First of all, the emergence of terrorism in Burkina Faso happened due to its proximity to Mali. One of the most important reasons for the spread of terrorism and rebel movements in West Africa was the collapse of the regime of M. Gaddafi in Libya. At the start of the Tuareg uprising, Islamic factions including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the Unity and Jihad Movement in West Africa, and Ansar al-Din fought alongside the rebels.<sup>25</sup> The key role here was played by the Tuareg tribes, who live throughout the Maghreb and in the Sahel region. In the second half of the 20th century, many Tuaregs fled the region to escape drought and political persecution. Some Tuareg settled in Libya. The Tuareg influx peaked between the 1970s and 1990s (Makariusová & Ludvík, 2012). Since the 1970s there were about 12,000 Tuareg in the Libyan army (Danjibo, 2013). Moreover, until 1987, there was a special Tuareg military unit (called the “Islamic Legion”) in Libya, which was established to fight against Mali and Chad (Larémont, 2013). In addition, it should also be noted that many Tuaregs entered Libya in 2011 during the Libyan revolution as mercenaries on the side of M. Gaddafi. When the regime lost the battle, all these mercenaries and Tuareg soldiers began to move back to the Sahel.

The mass return of the armed Tuareg, which began in 2011, has led to an increase in political violence and terrorist activity in the Sahel (Larémont, 2013). Weapons and ammunition from Libya quickly scattered throughout the region. The political weakness of the Sahel countries and the proliferation of weapons have become prerequisites for new

Tuareg uprisings against local regimes (Danjibo, 2013). Therefore, the collapse of the Libyan regime has become an important destabilizing factor in the region. Together with the influence of the Algerian Islamists, the massive return of the Tuaregs became a contributing factor to the emergence and development of radical groups in the Sahel region.

### **Impact of the Burkinian Revolution on the Rise of the Terrorist Threat in the Sahel**

At the same time, as noted above, an important role in containing the terrorist threat until November 2014 was played by the internal factor associated with the name of President B. Compaoré himself. Under him, there was an intelligence apparatus of Burkina Faso, which consisted of the Coordinating Center for Internal Intelligence, established in 2011.<sup>26</sup> The Center was responsible for collecting and clarifying information transmitted by intelligence units in the army, gendarmerie and police. The head of the intelligence apparatus of Burkina Faso was General J. Diendere. And since he was also in charge of the Presidential Guard, it became the main military unit associated with the intelligence network of Burkina Faso.<sup>27</sup>

In September 2015 the Presidential Guard was disbanded after an unsuccessful military coup that effectively tried to give B. Compaoré an opportunity to return to power. As a result, the new leadership deprived the country of the protection they had against jihadist organizations that were ready to infiltrate Burkina Faso across the border. The guards

<sup>26</sup> Bamouni D. Fighting Terrorism in Burkina Faso // Defense WEB. February 15, 2017. URL: <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/joint/diplomacy-a-peace/fighting-terrorism-in-burkina-faso/> (accessed: 29.08.2021).

<sup>27</sup> Ben-Zur B., Toole G. Burkina Faso Security: Threats, Challenges, Response // IDC Herzliya. March 24, 2020. URL: [https://www.ict.org.il/Article/2521/Burkina\\_Faso\\_Security#gsc.tab=0](https://www.ict.org.il/Article/2521/Burkina_Faso_Security#gsc.tab=0) (accessed: 29.08.2021).

<sup>25</sup> Mali: Extremism and Terrorism // Counter Extremism Project. URL: <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/mali> (accessed: 29.08.2021).



were trained by French and US forces and even had their own counter-terrorism unit.<sup>28</sup> Besides the fact that the Presidential Guard in Burkina Faso was the most trained counter-terrorism force, B. Compaoré also forged a unique relationship with the jihadists in Mali. In fact, B. Compaoré and his senior advisers, J. Diendere, D. Bassole and M. Chafi, had had direct contact with al-Qaeda-linked organizations in the past. Both M. Chafi and J. Diendere acted as intermediaries between al-Qaeda-linked militant groups and the West to secure the release of Western hostages.<sup>29</sup> In 2009, B. Compaoré's personal adviser, M. Chafi, negotiated with AQIM on the release of Canadian hostages.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, in 2012, J. Diendere coordinated the release of Italian and Spanish hostages.<sup>31</sup> B. Compaoré himself acted as an intermediary between ECOWAS and Ansar ad-Din during the crisis in Mali in 2012. Twice B. Compaoré received members of Ansar ad-Din in Ouagadougou for negotiations.<sup>32</sup> In addition, D. Bassole once visited Mali in 2012, where he met with I. Ag Ghali, the founder of Ansar ad-Din.<sup>33</sup> The resignation of B. Compaoré

destroyed all the informal ties and agreements that the regime was establishing with regional jihadist organizations, giving them a free hand for fairly quick and easy penetration into Burkina Faso.<sup>34</sup>

## Conclusion

Burkina Faso represents a rather peculiar case of destabilization in the Sahel. The rise in terrorist activity in the country differs from other Sahelian cases, as the country essentially experienced its own Arab Spring with a delay of several years from the main wave.

For a long time, there was practically no terrorist activity in Burkina Faso. In many ways, this was facilitated by the relative ethnic homogeneity (the majority of the population is the Mosi people) and, as a result, the absence of acute interethnic conflicts. It can be noted that there were no significant bursts of terrorist activity in Burkina Faso until 2015.

In 2014, protests began in Burkina Faso against the rule of President B. Compaoré, who by that time had been in power for 27 years.<sup>35</sup> The protests were triggered by attempts to amend the country's constitution, which were supposed to increase the presidential term. These protests ended at the end of October 2014 with the revolutionary overthrow of the Compaoré regime. An attempted military coup in September 2015 increased the destabilization in the country.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Penney J. Blowback in Africa: How America's Counterterror Strategy Helped Destabilize Burkina Faso // *The Intercept*. November 22, 2018. URL: <https://theintercept.com/2018/11/22/burkina-faso-us-relations/> (accessed: 29.08.2021).

<sup>29</sup> Ben-Zur B., Toole G. Burkina Faso Security: Threats, Challenges, Response // *IDC Herzliya*. March 24, 2020. URL: [https://www.ict.org.il/Article/2521/Burkina\\_Faso\\_Security#gsc.tab=0](https://www.ict.org.il/Article/2521/Burkina_Faso_Security#gsc.tab=0) (accessed: 29.08.2021).

<sup>30</sup> Thurston A. Escalating Conflicts in Burkina Faso // *RLS Research Papers on Peace and Conflict Studies in West and Central Africa*. June 30, 2021. URL: <https://rosalux.sn/en/escalating-conflicts-burkina-faso-alex-thurston/> (accessed: 29.08.2021).

<sup>31</sup> Bonkougou M. Freed Italian, Spanish Hostages Head for Europe // *Reuters*. July 19, 2012. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-hostages-idUSBRE86I0JQ20120719> (accessed: 29.08.2021).

<sup>32</sup> Thurston A. Escalating Conflicts in Burkina Faso // *RLS Research Papers on Peace and Conflict Studies in West and Central Africa*. June 30, 2021. URL: <https://rosalux.sn/en/escalating-conflicts-burkina-faso-alex-thurston/> (accessed: 29.08.2021).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Ben-Zur B., Toole G. Burkina Faso Security: Threats, Challenges, Response // *IDC Herzliya*. March 24, 2020. URL: [https://www.ict.org.il/Article/2521/Burkina\\_Faso\\_Security#gsc.tab=0](https://www.ict.org.il/Article/2521/Burkina_Faso_Security#gsc.tab=0) (accessed: 29.08.2021).

<sup>35</sup> Patinkin J. Could Burkina Faso Protests Signal End of President's 27-year Rule // *The Christian Science Monitor*. October 30, 2014. URL: <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2014/1030/Could-Burkina-Faso-protests-signal-end-of-president-s-27-year-rule> (accessed: 29.08.2021).

<sup>36</sup> Coup Leaders Closed Burkina Faso's Borders [Лидеры государственного переворота закрыли границы Буркина-Фасо] // *TASS*. September 17, 2015. URL: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/226982> (accessed: 29.08.2021). (In Russian).

In 2014—2015, Burkina Faso engaged in essentially the same mechanisms of socio-political destabilisation as the Arab Spring countries in 2011. As a result of the fall of the authoritarian regime of B. Compaoré, Burkina Faso faced problems similar to those of Egypt, Yemen and other countries of the Arab Spring,

including the inability of the post-revolutionary authorities to effectively fight terrorism.

Thus, despite several different scenarios for the spread of terrorism in the region, it is worth noting that in all cases the events of the Arab Spring served as the starting trigger.

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