

## **Why Have France, the USA and Russia Failed to Fight Against Terrorism in Africa ?**

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## **Abstract**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Islamic terrorism emerges as a very important security and stability threat for many countries all over the world. Jihadist terrorism which is a global terrorism targeting everyone who does not adopt the tendency of Islamic fundamentalism poses a very significant security threat not only for underdeveloped countries but also developed ones. Today, Africa is a continent where Islamic terrorism has been extending and causing many casualties. According to Global Terrorism Index, Burkina Faso has the GTI score of 8.564 and second on the list of Overall Terrorism Index Score. Somalia is the third with the score of 8.463, Mali is the fourth with the score of 8.412 ( Global Terrorism Index, 2023). France, the USA and Russia have been the main countries fighting against the jihadist terror organizations in Africa. The aim of this study is to examine the reasons of failures of these three global powers for combatting terrorism in Africa.

Key words: Africa; France; Islamic terrorism; Russia; the USA

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## INTRODUCTION

### What is terrorism?

Terrorism, no matter how it is defined, has been an important phenomenon that threatens the security of individuals and the stability of societies throughout history. The need for security is extremely important for individuals, societies and states, and terrorism is one of the most important factors that threaten this need to be safe in the twentieth century.

In the fight against terrorism, which has gained a global dimension today, the existing strategies of the countries are insufficient and the states have to develop new strategies and, above all, to develop a common security understanding by going through inter-state cooperation. For this reason, it is of great importance to create global counter-terrorism strategies in order to cope with this complex situation, which poses a significant security threat in our modern world. In order to create effective counter-terrorism strategies in a global sense, the definition of the concept of terrorism gains importance inevitably.

It is clear that a legal common international definition of terrorism has great importance in struggle with terrorism. The absence of such a definition causes countries to develop combat strategies in line with their own definitions in the fight against terrorism, and the failure to adopt a legal common international counterterrorism strategy makes an effective fight against terrorism impossible. For instance in Africa, although the counterterrorism strategies are mostly military and security centric, there are differences between the strategies of the states struggling with terrorism on the continent. The absence of an internationally accepted legal common counterterrorism strategy causes countries to develop strategies based on their own approaches to the phenomenon of terrorism and their national interests while fighting against terrorism. Additionally, it is impossible to develop operative and influential counterterrorism strategies without understanding the concept of terrorism with its fundamental elements.

Although the necessity and importance of a common definition has been emphasized by many scholars in the fight against terrorism in the global sense, there is no complete consensus on the definition of terrorism among academics, politicians and scholars of international law. Unfortunately, the fact that terrorism is a very comprehensive phenomenon that transforms with

many changing dynamics in the globalizing world makes it very difficult to agree on a common definition.

There are also some views that there is no need for a common definition of terrorism, and the basis of these views is that states do not limit themselves to a common definition, but make their own assessments of the acts of violence they encounter and fight them in this direction (Gönül, 2021 : 21). Both the different political policies that the states have followed, the different priorities and preferences they have, and the fact of the states' right to self-determination explain why some states are not willing to reach a common definition in the international sense (Gönül, 2021:21).

The word terror is derived from the Latin word “terrere” which originally means causing to tremble and extreme fear ( Karağaç, 2020 :2).

When the literature is reviewed, it can be seen that many definitions of terrorism include “the use of violence” or “the threat of violence”. Martha Crenshaw (2011) argues that the concept of terrorism is a combination of both use and threat of violence. She claims that terrorist acts indicate a possible threat in the future for the groups represented by the victims of the act. So, terrorism is not only the use of violence but also it includes the threat of violence (Crenshaw, 2011:23 ).

Terrorism can be defined as a form of violence used for political purpose. So, it is a way of political violence. The political violence has a very large scope including the actions such as civil wars, wars, holocaust, uprising against an authority or government, ethnic struggles, terror applied by the states and non-state terror attacks. They are all the ways of struggle in order to get political aims. Yet, terrorism differs from other forms of political violence with its distinctive features of how it operates. For most of the ways of political violence stated above , the attackers use violence against the targets in order to obtain their political aims. But for terrorism, direct targets of violence are used to affect the attitudes of the third-party targets such as governments, groups and individuals in order to achieve their political aims (Yamamoto, 2017: 1).

Marcos Degaut ( 2014) defines terrorism as “the systematic and intentional use of violence--- or the threat of use of violence----against civilian populations (including non- combatant military personnel ) and targets in order to pursue political objectives” (p.37). Terrorism causes fear and sense of insecurity by terrifying the population so it can be considered as a form of

psychological warfare. The frightened public opinion may cause the government or authority to negotiate with the terrorists and make concessions. Meanwhile, there is a distinction between “terrorism” and “terror acts”. If a violent action against civilians lacks a political aim and a permanent and systematic line of action, it cannot be considered in the scope of terrorism. It is only the act of terror or criminal act. The aim of terrorism is always political such as to collapse the government, to affect and change the decisions of government, to cause the separation of a territory from the present governmental existence, and to change the regime of government (Degaut, 2014 : 37).

Englund and Stohl (2016) also define terrorism as “ Terrorism is violence that evokes a visceral, psychological response in order to coerce compliance. It is the indirect application of force such that the pain and suffering of its victims is intended as a means to some other end” (p.33). Terrorism may be employed by both states and non-state groups. Terrorism is a purposeful and organized action which is based on rational goals ( Englund & Stohl, 2016).

### **The Causes of Terrorism**

Today, terrorism is a phenomenon that threatens national and international security in almost all regions of the world, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. It is certain that there is no single cause of terrorism. Identifying the causes of terrorism is also a complex matter such as the problem of defining it. Both an agreed international definition of terrorism and the causes of it are very important in combatting terrorism all over the world.

The causes of terrorism which is a form of violence is generally analyzed as internal and external factors. The internal factors originate from the internal dynamics of society. These factors are ethnic, religious, ideological, socio-cultural and socio- economic. The external factors include the geopolitical features of the state itself and the political interests of the other states. Meanwhile, the internal factors of a society may prompt the external factors of that society to have a threat of terrorism (Gönül, 2021:34).

Brian Burgoon (2006) claims that “.... the roots of terrorism vary widely -nationalist struggle, ethnic strife, religious strife, separatist struggle, political-governance dispute, economic dispute, and anticolonial revolt ”(p.178).

The fundamental reason of terrorism is to attract attention and to get publicity. Gaining recognition is very important for terrorist groups ( Crenshaw, 2011:40). Terrorists try to weaken the governments through direct attacks on the regime by the creation of insecurity and demoralization. Besides, terrorism is applied as a strategy by a minor group who decides that there is no other means in order to achieve their political aim ( Crenshaw, 2011:41).

The decision to use terrorism as a method in order to achieve a political aim is the basic cause of terrorism. Yamamoto ( 2017 ) claims that “ The decision to use terrorism is a deliberate choice from among alternatives.... The many “ root causes” of terrorism that have been offered do not cause terrorism, but can be factors affecting the selection of terrorism as a method ”(p.70). For instance, poverty does not necessarily cause terrorism as several studies indicate no important correlation between poverty and terrorism. The terrorists may have all levels of wealth. Both democratic and autocratic states are in danger of terrorism which indicates the forms of government are not the cause of terrorism. Moreover, ideologies , regardless of secular or religious, do not cause terrorism. Only a very few people who have radical ideologies prefer to use terrorism on behalf of their secular or religious ideologies. Thus , the cause of terrorism is the decision to employ it in order to get a political aim whereas neither conditions nor political goals are the cause of terrorism ( Yamamoto, 2017 ).

The acts of terrorism are political rather than based on psychopathology or material deprivation. Poverty, lack of education or other kinds of deprivation have no significant influence as a reason of terrorism. A typical terrorist may come from a prosperous part of the world and motivated by political and ideological reasons rather than economic ones (Turk, 2004). Political conditions of a country has impact on the reason of terrorist attacks. Democracy, civil liberties and the rule of law are the important factors that determine the political conditions of a country (Savun & Tirone, 2018). Savun and Tirone (2018) support the idea that “political repression and weak rule of law reduce state legitimacy, radicalize political moderates, and push the aggrieved individuals towards terrorism by not providing peaceful channels to express discontent ”(p.1608 ).

Heather S. Gregg (2014) defines religious terrorism as:” the threat or use of force with the purpose of influencing or coercing governments and/or populations towards saliently religious goals”(p.39 ). Some religious terror groups have apocalyptic reasons such as destroying the world and creating a new world and they are inspired by desire for the coming of the messiah. There is also another religious terror groups who employ the terror acts in order to create a

religious government. These groups employ terrorism to establish a government based on sharia law. Yet another group of religious terrorism uses it in order to establish a religiously pure state which can be accepted as religious cleansing. They struggle not only with the other religious groups but also with the ones who have the same religion with different interpretations of faith (Gregg, 2014 ).

The researchers usually tend to assume that the root causes of terrorism are based on social, economic and political grievances rather than religious reasons. Yet religion has great significance as a motivator for the religious terrorists. Religiosity, especially Islam, plays a significant role as a motivator for religious terrorism with the other factors such as political ones ( Dawson, 2021). Lack of religious liberty is also a significant motivator for religious terrorism. Religious restrictions foster radicalization and cause the extremists to claim that their faith is under threat and they use this argument to justify their applying to the acts of terror (Saiya & Scime, 2015).

The radicalism has a significance effect in motivating and justifying the violent actions of terrorism. Yet, it is not enough to explain the radical terrorist violence by only depending on the extreme faith and views. There are also many people with radical beliefs who do not employ terrorism. Thus, religious terrorism cannot be explained by only the extremist religious faith and values. Religious radical faith is a very important factor for the involvement in these Islamic terror organizations, but political, economic and personal grievances together with a desire to belong to a group with having a common goal are also significant motivators for being involved in these terror organizations (Schuurman, 2021).

## **RESULTS**

### **Terrorism in Africa**

Africa, the second largest continent in the world, has the world's second largest population with 54 countries. The history of the continent is full of human and material exploitation, and the countries are still struggling with many problems such as weak and autocratic regimes, military coups, civil wars, tribal and ethnic wars, human rights violations, hunger, famine, drought, poverty, lack of education, unemployment and terrorism.

Although the continental countries gained their independence during the decolonization period, the socio-economic, cultural and military hegemony of the imperialist states still continues over

the countries they colonized during the colonial period. So, from this point of view, it can be seen that the independence of these countries is not a complete independence. While African countries, which still bear the traces of the colonial period, are struggling with problems that threaten human security such as hunger, famine, drought, poverty, diseases and civil wars, jihadist terrorist acts have become an important security threat for the peoples of the continent. In spite of the fact that terrorism has not been seen universally as the most important security challenge that African states and their citizens face, terrorism as a form of political violence threatens the continent as being an important security challenge (Forest & Giroux, 2011).

Africa has been suffering from terrorism with its various forms based on time and space for many decades. So, terrorism is not new to the continent. On the African continent, terrorism can be examined in four categories in respect to historical evolution. Makinda (2007) states these as “ the pre-independence nationalist movements; the post- independence civil war problems; the transplantation of the Israeli-Palestinian issue to the continent; and the emergence of the al-Qaeda network, with its headquarters in an African country (Sudan) in the 1990s”(p.16).

With respect to the root causes of terrorism in Africa, there is a direct connection with the socio-economic conditions and extremism in the continent, because the poverty and desperation fuel both religious extremism and political fascism. Although there are some arguments developed by the scholars that not all poor people get involved in terrorism, it is important to differentiate between the leaders of the terrorist groups and the foot soldiers who come from poor socio-economic conditions pre-dominantly (Botha, 2007).

High population growth together with high unemployment, urbanization associated with poor living conditions and government's inability to deal with these conditions create an environment for the terror groups to flourish and become active. While governments are insufficient to solve the socio-economic problems of their people, terrorist groups are providing essential humanitarian services such as education, health, welfare and employment which enable them to establish and develop their illegal activities ( Botha, 2007).

Moreover, the corruption both in the governments and the civil services in many African countries also cause the terror groups to flourish in these states. Unless African States are ruled by the powerful, accountable, responsible and trustworthy governments, they will continue to be exploited by the non-state actors including terror groups (Makinda, 2007). For the global



terrorists, Africa is a very suitable haven since the many countries in the continent have been criminalized and have totalitarian governments with poor governance (Yoroms, 2007).

The terrorist groups have also found Africa fertile for their aims since the continent has a vast landscape that allows the free flow of immigrants, arms and crimes and this factor also encourages terrorism to spread in Africa easily (Yoroms, 2007).

In Africa, government institutions are mostly weak, failing and fragile and so have poor capacity to combat terrorism (Forest & Giroux, 2011). Moreover, Africa is a multi-religious continent where the conditions has prepared a ground for the development of fundamentalist and extremist conditions for both Christianity and Islam and so terrorism is mainly based on religious ideologies (Botha, 2007).

### **France in Africa**

After the geographical discoveries in the 15th century, France became stronger in the region with its colonial policies, which were further strengthened by the exploration activities of French explorers on the continent. In a short time, it established military forces in the region to protect its interests in the African countries it colonized.

In the decolonization period, France, which did not want to give up its colonial policies in Africa, tried to maintain its presence in the continent with new policies created within the framework of neocolonialism (Çinar, 2018 :312). France has been making great efforts to maintain the influence it had before the period of decolonization in this region consisting of its former colonies, and the most important dimension of these efforts has been military interventions ( Akbaş, 2021). France, being the former colonial power in the Sahel and the Maghreb region, can be said to be the most influential external actor especially in the Sahel region where the most important jihadist terrorist incidents occur in Africa. Since 2013, France has been trying to struggle with the increasing threat from jihadist terror groups through its own foreign policy in this region (Boserup & Martinez, 2018). Jihadist terrorist organizations pose a significant security threat for France both at home and abroad (Renard, 2017).

France has maintained military units in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Chad and Djibouti through the defense agreements it signed with many African countries. Based on these defense agreements, since 2000 France repeatedly carried out military interventions in the region. These are Operation Licorne in Ivory Coast, Operation Sangaris in the Central African Republic,

Operation Harmattan in Libya and Operation Serval in Mali and Operation Barkhane in the Sahel region ( Savaş, 2020).

In January 2013, the French government found itself involved in a war against jihadist terror militants and Tuareg separatists in Mali, a former French colony, by the order of President François Hollande. This military intervention is called as Operation Serval (Hashim, 2013:2). Operation Serval can be accepted as the beginning of the war against jihadist terrorism by France ( Savaş, 2020 ).

At the beginning of January 2013, the fact that jihadist groups began to advance towards the center of the country created great fear in the Malian government (International Crisis Group, 2013 :13). The Malian government and the armed forces of Mali lacked the capacity to deal with the new Tuareg rebellion and the advance of jihadist terrorist groups to Bamako (Francis, 2013). The Malian government, relying on the military protocols signed with France, demanded urgent military assistance from France. Upon taking over the town of Konna by the jihadist coalition, France launched Operation Serval on January 11, 2013 at the request of the government of Mali ( International Crisis Group, 2013:6).

David Francis (2013) stated that the aim of French-led military intervention was to prevent the “ Afghanistanization of Mali “ because Mali was under the serious threat of becoming a haven and controlled by the extremist jihadist terror groups and of being ruled by sharia laws like Afghanistan under the Taliban regime (Francis, 2013).

With the Operation Serval, the main towns under the control of jihadist terrorist groups were rescued and the jihadist terror groups were weakened by causing heavy losses. The sharia rules enforced by these jihadists were abolished and security was increased for the general population (Bere, 2017). As a result of this, France had been successful in the short- term aim of military intervention in Mali. The jihadist terrorists could not take over Bamako and establish a shariah regime. The government in Mali could re-establish its control in the region and the conflict in Mali ended in the short term (Francis, 2013).

The claim of French government that the reason of military intervention in Mali has the only aim to combat terrorism is controversial because there are some arguments that the motivation of France while intervening in the crisis in Mali has depended on the economic interests of France in the Sahel region, especially in Niger. France largely imports uranium from Niger for

its energy security. The main source of electricity in France is supplied from nuclear power and this nuclear power industry is based on the uranium heavily found in Niger. These uranium mines in Niger are operated by a French-led consortium with regard to the interests of France. Thus, the security and the stability of Sahel region has great significant for the national security of France. In this context, the foreign policy of France in the Sahel region has been determined by its national financial interests (Francis, 2013).

Despite French-led military operation in Mali preventing the advance of Islamist terror groups, it could not be successful in preventing the expansion of jihadism in the Sahel region. Jihadism is expanding in the Sahel involving the untouched areas near northern Mali and northern border regions of Burkina Faso rapidly. Besides, jihadist groups came together under the formation of new allies called the Group of Support for Islam and Muslims. So, four al-Qaeda organizations and affiliates came together under one umbrella organization consisting of Ansar Dine, the Macina Liberation Front, Al Mourabitoun and AQIM (Boserup & Martinez, 2018:41-42).

After the military engagement of France in the Sahel region upon the request of Malian government in 2013 and Operation Serval, the G5 Sahel bloc including Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad was established in order to organize the regional coordination and to handle the security and stability issues in the Sahel region in 2014. Meanwhile, the military engagement of France in Mali had been extended to the five countries included in the G5 Sahel bloc with the aim of fighting against Islamic terrorism and the Serval Operation was replaced by Barkhane Operation in a cooperation with G5 Sahel local joint task force in 2014 .

At the beginning, the main objective of the military intervention of France in Mali was to abolish the jihadist groups and to rescue Malian government from falling down and build security and stability in Mali. However, following Operation Serval, France wanted to continue the struggle with the jihadist groups in Sahel region within partnership with the countries in the region. Thus, fighting against with Islamic terrorism and the assistance for the training of G5 Sahel armies continued in Operation Barkhane. With the involvement of Operation Barkhane, France had the aim of providing counterterrorism support to the armies of G5 Sahel countries (Boserup & Martinez , 2018).

In spite of the fact that France continued its military presence in Sahel region since 2013 to combat terrorism and provide stability and security, the conflict in the region spread from Mali to other countries, Niger and Burkina Faso (Powell, 2022). Nathaniel Powell (2022) states that

“ indeed violence levels in the three countries have risen each year since 2017, reaching over 2500 incidents in 2021 and nearly 6000 deaths” (paragraph 4).

France failed in Mali because of the combination of some factors such as failure in understanding the structure of local conflicts and severe political and operational mistakes. Although France used the importance of democratization and state-building in rhetoric, its involvement in the Sahel region mainly focused on military centric policies and prioritizing of the military efforts to combat terrorism. France and its local partner states could not address the root causes of insurgency and conflicts in the fight against terrorism. France could not establish successful strategies to restore the legitimacy of the local governments which would enable these governments to deal with the underlying causes of the civil conflicts. Thus, these conflicts caused the expansion of jihadist radical violence from Mali to the other border countries such as Niger and Burkina Faso. Moreover, the partnership with the armed groups in regional countries was also a failure with regard to the fact that these armed groups caused the weakening of the authority of local governments and the ethnic conflicts to get worse in the region (Powell, 2022).

France also lost the trust of public with its unsuccessful counterterrorism policies in Sahel. The security problems caused by mainly ineffective counterterrorism strategies of France created an anti-French sentiment amongst the local populations. Moreover, France followed a strategy that lacked transparency about civilian casualties resulting from its military interventions and this situation also caused Malian people to lose their trust of France (Doxsee et al., 2022).

French military intervention in Mali ended on August 15, 2022 with the final military unit of Operation Barkhane leaving the border of Mali through Niger. This situation has created a security void in the country and Mali is now dealing with both jihadist terror groups especially in the border region between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, ethnic conflicts and displaced populations with increasing number of fatalities (Moreno-Cosgrove, 2022).

### **The United States of America in Africa**

The foreign policy of the U.S. during the period of the cold war was focused on the ideological struggle for the hegemony of the world between the United States and the Soviet Union. In this respect, the primary policy of the United States on the continent of Africa was the containment of communism. American political leaders considered Africa as being an unstable region struggling for anticolonial nationalism under the Western imperial colonization and open to the

ripe for Soviet ideological expansion. So, in the period of the cold war, the major aim of American policy in Africa was to prevent the penetration of the African states ideologically and politically by communism (Ohaegbulam, 1992).

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the geopolitical world was transformed into a unipolar system. Eastern Europe and Central Asia gained importance in the international arena after becoming free of Soviet control. Major Western and American attention and resources were given to the states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. So, Africa received less attention from the United States (Kraxberger, 2005).

For the post-Cold war era, the policy of securitization gained importance for Africa. In this era, the national policies of the United States in Africa ignored the basic principles such as democracy and development. Clinton administration (1993-2000) claimed its policy for Africa as being increasing democratic governments but the administration often supported the autocratic regimes in the continent such as the ones in Rwanda, Uganda and Ethiopia (Daniel & Nagar, 2016).

Under the presidency of George W. Bush, the policy of the U.S. in Africa was focused on “war on terrorism” after the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Daniel & Nagar, 2016). Bush administration gave significant attention to Muslim populations, failed and failing states in Africa after the terror strikes in September 11. The failed and failing states had been seen as real or potential haven for terrorist organizations by the American foreign policy elites. Since many states in Africa had been failed or were failing ones, the continent of Africa became a hallmark of attention during the period of Bush presidency. Thus, the course of military decentralization began throughout African continent by the Bush administration (Kraxberger, 2005).

Moreover, the raw material and energy resources that began to be discovered in the African continent in the early 2000s caused the continent to become the focus of attention of many important actors in the international arena, especially China (Çelik, 2022).

In spite of the fact that Africa has never been a top national security issue in the foreign policy of the United States, the existence of the state and nonstate actors that threaten US interests on the continent has affected the U.S. policy of security and economy in Africa. The global competitors of America - China and Russia, and the jihadist terror organizations such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic state have been increasing their power on the continent (Zimmerman, 2020).

The African continent has become an important region in the fight against global terrorism due to reasons such as the rapid increase in terrorist organizations and their actions, the weak security structure in many countries, economic and political instability, civil wars, the continent's proximity to the Middle East region, its rich energy, raw material and mineral resources, and its location on energy transit routes ( Aydın, 2020).

After the declaration of war against terrorism by the Bush administration, the Horn of Africa became a significant region and it has increasingly been securitized by both U.S. and other external powers. A set of security engagements were established in the region for fighting terrorism. These engagements included multilateral establishments with the regional security organizations (Melvin, 2019).

The United States and its coalition partners, especially the United Kingdom and France, have given significant importance to security cooperation organizations with regional states and military presence in their efforts to struggle with terrorism, insurgencies, civil wars and state collapses that have threatened the stability of East Africa (Rabasa, 2009).

The policy of the United States in counter terrorism in Africa is defined primarily by indirect actions. The special operation forces of U.S. supported the operations of counterterrorism by other partners such as African Union in Somalia, France and their partners in the Sahel region, the Ugandans struggling with the Lord's Resistance Army, and a multinational West African force having a fight with Boko Haram in Cameroon. The campaigns were mostly successful. Those operations caused real destructions of the capabilities of al-Shabaab, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Lord's Resistance Army (Wechsler, 2017).

Aning, Jaye and Atuobi argued ( 2008 ) in their article that the engagement of the U.S. in Africa was largely militaristic and state-centric which was essentially organized according to the strategic interests of US instead of African security matters such as human security and development.

AFRICOM is the acronym for the United States Africa Command and it was created by the authorization of president George W. Bush in 2007. AFRICOM became operational in October 2008 and afterwards US military operations in Africa was consolidated under a single command, AFRICOM. The establishment of AFRICOM was an indication of US recognition of the strategic importance of Africa (Clemente, 2011).

In the period of the Cold War, Africa had low-security priority for the United States. In the post-cold war period, two significant geopolitical changes caused the United States to establish AFRICOM. These were the rise of nonstate actors including terrorists and criminals on the African continent, especially after the 9/11 attacks, and increasing economic importance of the continent as being a considerable source of strategic natural resources such as oil, gas and minerals (Brown, 2013).

The current activities of AFRICOM are based on three general categories. One of them is the traditional mission of building partnership capacity involving supporting the security forces and defense institutions of African partners in order to improve their abilities to respond to threats through Theater Security Cooperation Programs (TSCP). These programs include military training, building of capacity and programs of humanitarian aid. AFRICOM supports regional military exercise operations such as Operation African Lion (Zimmerman, 2020).

Another mission of the command is that the Command leads direct-action operations against jihadist terror organizations and supports the allies and partners in counterterrorism operations. Almost all of these direct action operations consist of drone strikes that target the leaders of the terrorist organizations and their camps in Somalia and Libya. For instance, under the command of AFRICOM, the U.S. forces that are deployed in Kenya and Djibouti and accompanied by Somali Security Forces and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) lead counterterrorism operations in East Africa. The Command also has provided AMISOM training in order to build up their operational capacities in the fight against al-Shabaab (Zimmerman, 2020).

Africom also has supported the G5 Sahel Joint Force, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), France and the other partners in the Sahel region in West Africa in the fight against terrorism. The Command also provides equipment, training, intelligence and surveillance to the units in the region. For instance, in the Intelligence Fusion Center in Nigeria, a small unit of U.S. worked with Nigerians in the fight against Boko Haram and the West African branch of Islamic States (Zimmerman, 2020).

The strategy of the United States in Africa has focused on short-term security instead of long-term stability for a long time through providing primarily military and security support. The United States has prioritized military assistance and partnerships at the expense of the factors which will support the long term steadiness such as good governance and rule of law. The base of this policy is mainly effected by the hope that military and security support will strengthen

the capacity of partner countries to combat the extremist groups and so to reduce the possibility of instability that these terrorist groups will cause in the region and of creating a security threat for interests of US both at home and abroad. But this policy has not decreased the security threat on the African continent. Partnerships and military assistance to the countries which have illiberal and undemocratic regimes cause little achievement in counterterrorism in Africa. Besides, US security policy in Africa has enabled the countries to be involved in more instability and violence through building the capacity of the offensive security forces of the host countries (Shackelford et al., 2023).

The security policies of US for African continent have brought some gains especially in the context of health and humanitarian relief. Yet, these policies could not expand democracies or stability in the region. Whereas the security assistance of US has been based on struggling with violent nonstate actors and the security threat and instability they cause in the continent, this assistance has helped the abusive security forces of the partner countries to become effective. This situation proves that prioritization of military and security assistance to weak, fragile and illiberal countries can have dangerous consequences (Shackelford et al., 2023).

The foreign policy of the United States in Africa today has been mainly established by the concept of America's global war on terrorism. The military solutions such as military partnerships, sales or transfers of military equipment, military training are not sufficient and do not address the root causes of terrorism involving poverty, failed or weak institutions and corruption. This policy is not focused on supporting democracy, good governance, development and human rights as required. This kind of strategy which is mainly based on hard power policies rather than soft power causes the terrorist organizations to recruit more easily. The violence of terrorism on the African continent has increased rapidly, especially in the Sahel region and Somalia which are the two regions that receive the largest military assistance of US throughout the continent (Shackelford et al., 2023).

The strategy of security assistance can be influential and operative in the more-developed countries with the good governance in combatting terrorism, but in Africa involving mostly weak governments, this strategy that the United States primarily has applied is not effective. After the security assistance to these weak states, the United States do not control how this assistance is used as it is supposed to be. These governments that are given security support by U.S. frequently have been making use of this assistance in order to oppress and terrorize the minority of population that do not support these governments. In conclusion, this security



assistance causes more violence and instability which fuel terrorism in the country (Shackelford et al., 2023).

Nick Turse (2020) stated in his article that despite all the military and security assistance given by the United States, violent radicalism and the insecurity throughout African continent increased rapidly. He has claimed that there are nearly 25 jihadist terrorist organizations operating in the continent whereas the number of them was 5 in 2010 according to the records of Defense Department's Africa Center for Strategic Studies (Turse, 2020).

### **Russia in Africa**

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation has been trying to establish its place as a leading international power in the new world order by employing formative policies. The foreign policy of the Russian Federation has adopted proactive policies rather than reactive ones to preserve its interests and global power in the new world order. In this sense, for Russia, Sub-Saharan Africa has an important place for the contest of being a global power not only for the potential for economic growth of the region but also for the rich national resources. Thus, Russia tries to establish a presence and influence on the continent of Africa in order to achieve its goals regarding its foreign policy (Giles, 2013 :1-2).

Russia's interest in the continent of Africa dates back to the Tsarist period. In the period of Josef Stalin, the relations between the Soviet Union and the states in Africa were not important or influential since African states were under the governance of the colonial powers. For this reason, Africa was thought to be a part of capitalism and unsuitable for the socialist system by Stalin and so for the USSR (Giles, 2013:3).

After the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, during the reign of Nikita Khrushchev, and with the influence of the independence movements in Africa, the policy of the Soviet Union about the continent changed (Giles, 2013 :3). In the time of Khrushchev, Africa became another important battleground of cold war between the colonial powers of the West and the Soviet Union. The USSR maintained the policy of being actively involved in the political and security issues in Africa by providing generous economic and security assistance especially to Marxist and anti-colonial groups. The Soviet Union tried to influence the countries on the continent of Africa such as Algeria, Egypt, Angola and Mozambique by giving support to independence movements in a period of colonial conflicts (Droin & Dolbaia, 2023:2).

In their study Droin and Dolbaia ( 2023 ) state that “ the Kremlin supplied those states with weapons and equipment, provided military training and advisers, and developed relations between the Soviet and various African intelligence communities, ultimately creating a long-term legacy of Soviet hardware and operational culture throughout Africa” (p.2).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, newly established Russian Federation was obliged to handle the political and socioeconomic problems in its territory and so the economic and military assistance programs for Africa came to an end. Thus, nearly two decades after the dissolution of the USSR, Russia was not involved in Africa (Droin & Dolbaia, 2023:3). In this period, Moscow stopped the military and economic aid, closed down the diplomatic representations and cultural centers and ended its political support for African nations (Faleg & Secieru, 2020 :1 ).

The first attempts of Russian Federation to reengage in Africa began in the mid-2000s under the presidency of Vladimir Putin. He visited the Republic of South Africa in 2006 and after his trip , Egypt, Angola, Nigeria and Namibia were visited by Medvedev in 2009 (Droin & Dolbaia, 2023 :3).

Russian policy of being involved in Africa has been primarily based on making money and benefiting from the situation of rising Africa. While the relations between Russia and the West are corrupted and there is an increased competition between them, involving politically, economically and militarily in Africa has gained importance for Russia. Russia is aware of Africa’s future potential like the other competitors in the continent. The enormous reliable raw materials, the demographic profile of the continent, large future potential of consumer market , the request of the Africans for investing in infrastructure and electricity influence the strategy of Russian Federation for Africa which is a valuable future market for all competitors for the continent (Olivier, 2020 :19-21).

Russia has been trying to revive historical bilateral relations of the era of the Soviet Union, construct new ties and advance the existing ties with the countries in Africa under the government of Putin. Russia’s aims in Africa are to proclaim itself as a global power against the hegemony of the United States and NATO, build bilateral diplomatic relations with the nations in Africa, get political support of African nations primarily in the international organizations such as the United Nations, increase commercial activities in the continent and promote the business activities, primarily in extractive and military industries. In this sense, the security strategy of Russian Federation in Africa is based on the achievement of all these aims

and focused on the formal mutual agreements with the African nations and the deployment of state-linked private security forces on the continent. On the other hand, Russia has also become a player together with partners on the issues of security in Africa by acting independently of the formal agreements (Daly, 2023:2).

Russia's economic goals in Africa are accessing natural resources such as oil, gas and diamonds, exports of agricultural products such as grain, fertilizers and also selling the technologies of digital, nuclear and space together with arm sales. In the sense of access to natural resources, for instance, Rosneft which is an important Russian oil company, is searching for business issues in Angola and Mozambique. In Angola, Russian Federation is mainly active in the sector of diamonds with a state-linked company named Alrosa that dominates the diamond extraction market by the partnership with local state companies. In Sudan, Gazprom and Rosgeologia are dealing with exploring gas and oil deposits. Some Russian companies such as Severstal, Norilsky Nickel and Renova are active in the area of resource extraction -refinement in South Africa. Moreover, Rosatom which is a Russian state company deals with the second nuclear power plant in South Africa ( Faleg & Secrieru, 2020:2).

Militarily, Russian state presents itself as a force that is struggling with the Islamist terror groups and tries to build bilateral relations with the armies of African nations on the area of security and by this way, the Kremlin also wants to get secure access to infrastructure for the resupply and maintenance of its navy ( Faleg & Secrieru, 2020:2).

The fact that the USA reduced its efforts to combat terrorism in Africa during the Trump era, despite the increasing terrorist threat, encouraged Russia to re-engage in the African continent (Droin & Dolbaia, 2023:3). Russia immediately took action to close this gap in the security field in Africa. In 2019, the first Russian-African summit was held in Sochi. Russia hosted 54 states of the African continent and 43 states of them were represented by their leaders. It was one of the most expensive conferences that Russia had hosted so far (Magen et al., 2019:4). With this summit, Russia aimed to indicate to the African nations that Russia could be a trustworthy strategic partner on the continent. In July 2023, the second Russian-African summit was held in St. Petersburg. 17 leaders of African countries participated in this summit despite the sanctions and Western pressure on Russia. The participants signed bilateral agreements with Russia on the fight against terrorism on the continent in addition to several agreements on other subjects. In this summit, the Kremlin also undertook to write off additional debts (Droin & Dolbaia, 2023:3-4).

Russia is trying to establish building strong business ties with the countries in the continent but the economic relations with African nations can be accepted as modest when they are compared with the ones of United States, European Union and China. Droin and Dolbaia (2023 ) state in their study that “ While trade revenue between Russia and African countries comprises around 17.7 billion USD, Africa’s trade value with the European Union, China, and the United States currently stands at 295 billion USD, 254 billion USD, and 65 billion USD, respectively. Russia also invests little in Africa, representing less than percent of total foreign direct investment (FDI) going to the continent”( Droin & Dolbaia, 2023:5). Thus, the main advantage of Russia, which is competing for power with other global competitors in Africa is that it can best achieve this by providing cheap security and military services (Droin & Dolbaia, 2023 :5).

Russian Federation has important security and defense relations with many countries in Africa on the basis of selling arms to them, organizing joint military training programs and activities of Russian PMC. For instance, nearly 40 percent of African nations imports of weapon systems have been supplied by Russia between 2018 and 2022 Moreover, Moscow does not stipulate the supply of weapons and military equipment on the principles of democracy and protection of human rights like the United States and its allies. (Droin & Dolbaia, 2023 :5).

In addition to the supply of weapons and military equipment, Russia has been involved in the continent with its official and state-linked military armies. Whereas the official military presence of Russian Federation on the continent has been limited, the PMCs have a wide range of activities on the continent ( Droin & Dolbaia, 2023:6). Droin and Dolbaia (2023) state that “ available reporting shows that there have been at least seven Russian PMCs that have carried out at a minimum 34 operations in 16 African countries since 2005” (p.6). Russia is employing several mercenaries for fighting against the terror groups in Africa. The basis of Russia’s use of mercenary groups lies in Russia’s desire to decrease military and political expenses, official losses and lessen the casualties and potential for tension that will occur due to intervention beyond its own borders. This situation enables Moscow to deny its involvement beyond its own borders (Guzansky et al., 2020:1).

The most important one in these Russian private military companies taking place in Africa is the Wagner Group (Droin & Dolbaia, 2023 :6). Wagner is a private military company (PMC) which has close relations with the Russian political elite and so with the Kremlin. Russia tries to have influence on the continent of Africa by deploying the Wagner Group throughout the

continent. Actually, the Wagner Group has no official legal status in Russia. But it has become a tool of Russia's suspicious deployments all around the world (Larsen & Hansen, 2022).

Taking advantage of the anti-French sentiment that emerged after the 2020 and 2021 military coups in Mali, the Kremlin presented itself as a new security partner to the junta administration. This initiative of Russia neutralized France's pressure on the military junta administration regarding the return to democratic regime in Mali (Daly, 2023:3). After the coup in June 2021, France began to decrease its military presence in Mali and stopped its counterterrorism operations with the Malian army (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2022). The transitional government of military junta in Mali concluded a military agreement with the Wagner Group for both training of Malian state forces, protection and also to combat violent jihadist terrorism. Upon this agreement, Wagner deployed nearly 1000 troops to Mali for the assistance of the Malian army to fight against terrorism in December 2021. Meanwhile, France announced the end of Operation Barkhane in August 2022 (Daly, 2023:3).

Wagner and the Malian military conducted joint operations against jihadist militants but while they were engaged in these increased military counterterrorism operations, the Wagner Group and the Malian army caused many civilian deaths in the core areas of the jihadist terror organization. The deadly attacks on civilians by Wagner mainly focused on Fulani communities since the Fulani community was marked for having relations with Islamist extremists through JNIM( Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin) and its affiliates (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2022:10-11). Killing hundreds of civilians in Mali by the operations of the Wagner Group with the Malian army has the potential to increase the Islamic radicalism and jihadist terrorism in the country. Besides, with the deployment of the Wagner Group who is smaller and less experienced than the French troops, it seems to be impossible to solve the problem of violent Islamic radicalism in the region. Despite all these failures in combat terrorism, Russia has been gaining influence in Burkina Faso and other neighboring countries (Daly, 2023:3).

The military strategy of the Kremlin in Africa is mainly based on the advancing of both official and unofficial means of defense-security agreements with the countries in Africa and this kind of military presence has been a cost-effective way for Russia to have significant political and economic influence on the continent in the goal of becoming a global power (Droin & Dolbaia, 2023:7).

Russia continues to conduct new security and economic agreements with the states on the African continent (Daly, 2023:14). However, the presence of Russia with its strategies and all these agreements can increase the levels of terrorism in these regions including the Wagner Group. According to Global Terrorism Index in 2022, 48 percent of deadly terrorist attacks in the world happened in Sub-Saharan Africa and Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger where there was Wagner, it was on the top ten in the list (Droin & Dolbaia, 2023 :11).

Russia is not interested in the strong and sustainable development of African states. Besides, Russia has not the capacity to encourage these kinds of developments in Africa with its military strategies that lack significant aid and capacity building. Instead, these strategies may increase the challenges that African states are facing and create greater risks (Droin & Dolbaia, 2023:9).

## **DISCUSSION**

France as being one of the most influential state in the continent of Africa does not want to give up its colonial policies and France tries to preserve its political, economic and military interests through the policies within the framework of neocolonialism in Africa. France is still trying to have influence over its former colonies in Africa within the scope of political power struggles in the international arena, and it is trying to achieve this aim mostly through its military presence on the continent.

Politically, although Hollande and Macron had claimed that they would adopt new policies based on democratic and egalitarian foundations for Africa and abandon the politics of “Françafrique” in the continent, all these statements were presented only in rhetoric. Economically, France has very important interests primarily in Sahel region. The nuclear power industry, the main source of the production of electricity in France, is mostly based on the uranium in northern Niger. So, the secure access of the uranium mines in this region has great significance for the energy security of France. France also have investments in Africa. Thus, the protection of these investments and also strategic supplies such as uranium has significance for France.

Moreover, especially after the deadly jihadist terror attacks in 2015 and 2016, the religious terrorism mainly based on the jihadist extremism become the most important national security threat for France. Thus, the protection of French interests and nationals both at home and abroad has become the strategic priority of France nationally and internationally. France has

maintained the policy of struggling with the jihadist terrorist groups in Africa that became a haven for them in order to ensure the security and stability of the region and Europe.

After the Cold War, the United States had limited political, economic and security interests on the African continent at the beginning. Yet, the raw materials and energy resources that were discovered at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century attracted the attention of the many actors including the United States to the continent. For the United States, Africa has gained importance as having both natural and human resources. The administrations of the United States has adopted the policy of importing of energy products from Africa, supplying the increasing energy need of America from the continent, strengthening the free trade network and increasing the investments on the continent. Moreover, Africa has gained importance with regard to energy security and as being on energy transit routes.

After the deadly terrorist attacks of September 11, the policy of the United States in Africa was focused on the military decentralization. The existence of the state actors which are the global competitors in the international arena such as China, Russia and EU on the continent and the non-state actors such as the Islamist terror organizations has begun to threaten the interests of America in Africa. Thus, the United States has adopted primarily security policies mainly based on combat terrorism in order to protect the American interests in Africa.

After the dissolution of Soviet Union, in the post -Cold War period, Russia has been trying to have a position of being a global power in the new multipolar world order. In the context of this object, Russia has been employing the strategy of expanding influence on the African continent. Africa as being rich in raw materials, natural and energy resources, having large future potential of consumer market and needs of investing infrastructure provides Russia to support its national and international interests. Thus, the policy of Russia in Africa is mainly based on economic interests and making use of the economic sources of Africa in the way of being a global power.

Besides, with regards to both economy and the politics, the problematic and corrupted relations between Russia and West push Russia to have good relations with the states in Africa. The sanctions by the West against Russia and the need to get political support of African states especially in the international organizations like the United Nations have caused the Kremlin to build mutual diplomatic relations with African countries. In the respect of all these political and economic interests, Russia has been presenting itself as an actor struggling with the jihadist terror organizations which is one of the most important security problems in Africa. Russia, whose trade volume and investments are modest compared to China, the United States and EU

countries, employs building military presence in order to achieve its national strategies including safe access to natural resources such as oil, gas and diamonds and the other interests stated above.

The counterterrorism strategy of France was mainly focused on military strategies rather than supporting humanitarian assistance, development, democracy, human rights and good governance in the continent. The counterterrorism strategy of the United States has prioritized military assistance and partnerships rather than supporting development, good governance, human rights and democracy. Since Russia is the weakest one between other competitors with regard to economic relations and investment on the continent, Russia has adopted the policy that it can achieve this through military presence in Africa. The strategy of Russia is to provide cheap security and military services to the states in the continent. The counterterrorism strategy of Russia lacks of capacity building, development, democracy, protection of human rights and good governance.

The counterterrorism strategies of all three countries are focused on military assistance and partnerships rather than supporting good governance, democracy, developments and protection of human rights which are the most important elements in order to prevent radicalism which causes the Islamic terrorism to become stronger and expand throughout the continent.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, modern terrorism is one of the main threats to security and stability all over the world. Although terrorism has been a threat to the security of nations throughout history, today, especially radical jihadist terrorist organizations have become a greater threat to world security than in the past. As the extent of terrorism's threat to the world security and stability increases, terrorism studies have also gained importance in the literature. In this research, the counterterrorism approaches of France, the USA and Russia for combatting Islamic terrorism in Africa has been studied in order to contribute to terrorism studies in literature.

Today, Africa is the continent that is most exposed to Islamist terrorist attacks along with the Middle East in the world. Whereas the continental countries are struggling with famine, hunger, poverty, unemployment, lack of education, weak, fragile and corrupted autocratic regimes, civil wars, military coups, instability, violation of human rights, transnational crimes such as human, drug and arm trafficking, Islamic terrorism poses great security threat for the states on the continent. Considering these conditions of the continent, it seems that the continent contains



many elements that are included in the studies on the causes of terrorism in the literature and lead to the strengthening of terrorism. All these conditions along with the continent's geopolitical situation, rich natural resources and the religious elements of the continent make Africa a suitable haven for the terrorist organizations. Besides, all above mentioned socio-economic and political conditions cause grievances which enable the radical terrorist groups to justify their employing to terrorist strikes on the continent.

In Africa, France adopted military and security based hard power strategies, lacking effective soft power approaches having an important place in the fight against radicalism. France, that achieved short term success with Operation Serval, could not ensure long term security and stability in the region since the counterterrorism strategies that it adopted had significant political and operational mistakes and were largely military and security centric lacking of operational soft power policies addressing the root causes . Thus, France has lost the trust of African people, caused the anti-French sentiment also originated from the colonial era in the region and to expand of the Islamic terrorism in Sahel region rather than demolishing or weakening it.

In the context of global war on terrorism rhetoric, the USA is also fighting Islamic terrorism in Africa. Although US presidents emphasized the importance of fighting against the root causes of jihadist based terrorism in their rhetoric, the US's counterterrorism strategies in Africa have been military and security centric focused on short- term success rather than long term security and stability in the region. Thus, the counterterrorism policies based on prioritizing military and security assistance and operations and are lacking of effective and influential soft power strategies combatting with violent extremism has caused the Islamic terrorism to flourish and expand on the continent.

Russia has adopted a counterterrorism strategy including mainly unofficial mercenaries and has pursued short term military based policies through unofficial private military companies rather than ensuring long term security and stability and these counterterrorism strategies have not taken into considerations the rule of law, protection of human rights, democratic principles, compliance with sanctions and combatting with radicalism. As a result, the counterterrorism approaches employed by Russia have caused the violent extremism to increase by supporting radicalism among the population and also to increase the level of terrorism in the region.

In this research, it has been seen that the foreign policies towards Africa and national interest and strategies of France, the USA and Russia have great influence on their counterterrorism strategies for African continent. All three countries have adopted primarily short term military and security based repressive and muscular hard-power policies rather than the soft power policies that produce solutions for the social, economic and political grievances of the populations which will reduce the radicalism and participating in terrorist groups.

The short term military and security based hard power strategies adopted by France, the USA and Russia have not provided long term security and stability in Africa. The anti-jihadist strategies that prioritizing military and security supports to the regional armies and protecting the national interests rather than the interests of the continental countries have become unsuccessful in the fight against Islamic terrorism in Africa.

For Africa, multifaceted, comprehensive and sustainable counterterrorism strategies should be developed in the fight against Islamic terrorism to ensure the long term security and stability on the continent.

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