

# **THE AFTERMATH OF THE ARAB SPRING AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE SAHEL AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

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## **Abstract**

The Arab Spring, which brought an end to the authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, was greeted with so much expectation, especially as it gave hope for the expansion of democracy. Unfortunately, however, the Arab Spring has only helped to bring about a period of political uncertainty in the affected countries and created the opportunity for political instability in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa. The fragility of states in Africa with the attendant governance deficits have also created the platform for non-state armed actors to penetrate the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa, which ultimately impacts negatively on the region. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the implication of the Arab Spring for peace and development in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa.

## **1. Introduction**

The Arab Spring that started in Tunisia, and quickly spread to other Middle East and North African (MENA) countries, is one of the greatest contemporary surprises of global political development, especially in the Arab world between 2010 and 2011. Borrowing from Huntington's 'Third Wave' democracy, one could conclude that the revolution that

inundated the Arab states could in effect be considered a 'Fourth Wave' democratisation process, except for the fact that the aftermath was a movement from revolution to political uncertainty and instability. Having been under dictatorial and authoritarian regimes for such a long time, the sudden revolts in these countries were not expected to have taken place so rapidly. Scholars of Middle East and North Africa did not envisage that an all-ravaging Arab Spring was imminent and would cut across the whole region, even when all factors pointed to this possibility; in fact, they were busy analysing factors that had sustained autocrats like Mubarak, Gaddafi, Ben Ali, Al-Assad and the like when the revolution started (Gause 2011). However, the unanimity of the action and the spread were understandable. Countries in the region, particularly the Arab nations, share similarities in language (Arabic) and religion (Islam) which have given them a unique and homogeneous identity, making them see themselves as one — a oneness that has been demonstrated on several occasions against the United States (US), Western and Israeli interests.

Further, the spontaneity of the Arab Spring has provoked academic interest with studies either addressing the collective Arab revolution, or individual state revolutions within the Arab states. For instance, Nwolise (2011) interrogated the causes and curses of the Arab Spring in five Arab states — Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen — and implications for Sub-Saharan African countries. Aday *et al* (2012) explored how the media was used to execute the revolution in four Arab states, namely Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain and Yemen. In turn, Honwana (2011) investigated the role of the youth and other factors responsible for the success of the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, while Sharqieh (2011) suggested imperatives that must guide a successful peace-building process in post-revolution Libya.

For years to come, the Arab Spring will continue to provoke academic interest and discourse, not only from the angle of the eruption and explosion of peoples' power that uprooted age long autocratic regimes when it was least expected, but also because there are many issues that scholarship is yet to unravel. For instance, while the revolution ended the most enduring autocratic regimes in the MENA region, the end of the regimes in some countries like Libya liberalised access to small arms and light weapons, which found their way to the Sahel and other parts of Africa. In most cases, weapons get into the hands of rebels and terrorist groups who have continued to use arms against

already fragile states. It is against this backdrop that this paper interrogates the implication of the aftermath of the Arab Spring for the peace, security and development of the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa.

## 2. The Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa

The Arabic word *sāhil* literally means the "shore", describing the appearance of the vegetation of the Sahel as a coastline delimiting the sand of the Sahara. The Sahel is the eco-climatic and bio-geographic zone of transition between the Sahara desert in the north and the Sudan Savannas in the south, having a semi-arid climate. It stretches across the north of the African continent between the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea. The Sahel spans some 5 400 km (3 400 miles) from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Red Sea in the east, in a belt that varies from several hundred to a thousand kilometers (620 miles) in width, covering an area of 3 053 200 km<sup>2</sup> (1 178 800 sq mi). The post-colonial Sahel states comprise Burkina Faso, Chad, D'Jibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. Drawing some inspiration from a report on the Sahel, it is noted that:

In a continent with many big problems, the Sahel is the part of sub-Saharan Africa that is facing some of the biggest. It is home to approximately 100 million of the world's poorest, most disempowered, and forgotten people. The Sahel is drought-stricken and famine-prone. Illiteracy and poverty are pervasive among the pastoralists and subsistence farmers who make up most of the population. Several countries in the Sahel rank on the lowest rungs of the Human Development Index (OASIA 2013: 7).

At present, the Sahel and sub-Sahara are the hot beds of sectarian crises in Africa, culminating in terrorist activities. Inter- and intrastate wars are common in the region. These conflicts have contributed to aggravating a situation of gross insecurity of lives and livelihood. It is currently estimated that there are more than 10 million small arms and light weapons (SALW) circulating in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa, which create a situation of instability in the region. The region is also characterised by a whole host of challenges, including state fragility, weak institutions, the lack of development, the lack of social justice, non-participatory political processes, the lack of transparency

and accountability, weak bureaucratic structures, youth unemployment, rural-urban migration, environmental hazards and poverty.<sup>1)</sup>

### **3. The Sahel as a complex region**

The Sahel remains one of the most complex regions in the world in terms of ethnic configuration, religion, colonial experiences, the environment and geography. Countries in the region have been beset with age-old complex problems ranging from ethnicity, to religion and the environment. Nigeria alone harbours more than 450 ethnic groups while countries like Mali, Senegal, Niger, and even Nigeria, that apart from the configuration of plural identities, also share mixed ethnicity across boundaries and borders. In Mali, Sudan (before the creation of South Sudan), Chad, Mauritania and Niger, the population has been divided between those of Arab descent and mostly nomadic, and those of African origin, who are mostly sedentary (Carbonari, nd).

In countries such as the former Sudan, the Arabs have been the dominant privileged group to the exclusion of the groups in the south; in Mali, Niger and Chad, the Tuaregs and people of Arab descent have always claimed they are victims of marginalisation. The neglect of blacks in Sudan brought about a long lasting civil war which eventually led to the creation of South Sudan in 2011, as the perceived marginalisation of the Tuaregs in northern Mali and Niger led to the quest for a new state of Azawad and incessant rebellions. The complex nature of the Sahel region makes it extremely difficult to track criminal agents and their activities, as people can easily claim multiple identities across boundaries. Geographically, the harsh weather conditions in the Sahel also make it practically impossible for people to inhabit the desert with landlocked areas not suitable for human existence, thereby making the belt difficult to secure. Criminal gangs engaged in arms sales, drugs and narcotics and human trafficking usually take advantage of the vastness of the Sahel and its harsh environment to perpetrate their criminal activities. For a long time, even before the formation of modern states, the Sahel was a transport belt that linked Sub-Saharan Africa to the Maghreb, the Middle East and Europe. In addition, terrorism in the Sahel region has made it possible for all kinds of criminal activities to thrive in the region. Carbonari (nd) observed that:

The terrorist groups and guerrillas that operate in the Sahel are

often also involved in illegal activities such as drug or human trafficking or tobacco smuggling in league with purely criminal organizations. Their role is often to ensure the safe passage of convoys across the Sahara desert.

In 2004, a report of the United Nations on Sub-Sahara observed that:

- a) Cross-border instability as a result of violent conflicts, armed groups, refugees, internally displaced persons, returnee or deporting migrants, all have profound consequences for host communities;
- b) Porous borders, limited security personnel and the inaccessibility of many border regions make borders vulnerable to the trafficking of drugs, small arms, mercenaries, child soldiers and women for sexual exploitation.

Harsh economic conditions, widespread corruption, conflict and post-conflict scenarios, porous borders, failing national administration, demographic expansion, poverty, underdevelopment, youth unemployment and the culture of impunity both by governments and armed non-state actors feed the development of criminal activities in the Sahel region.<sup>2)</sup>

## 4. The Arab Spring

The term 'Arab Spring' is a name used to designate popular revolutions that have taken place in the Arab world to liberate and liberalise the states, ensure change of autocratic governments, and institute socio-economic and political reforms. However, the extent to which the name can be applied to the revolutions that have swept the whole of the Arab and the non-Arab world has been greatly contested. For some, using the name because of the geographical proximity of the states that experienced the revolution is inappropriate, not only because the countries affected are not all Arab countries, but also because the factors that motivate protesters are different from one country to the next, and have shaped variations in the intensity of the conflict.<sup>3)</sup> Others are of the view that it is appropriate to give the single name 'Arab Spring', not only because of the unity in geographical proximity, but also because the revolutionaries are united in their quest for democracy, corrupt-free governments accountable governance, and better economies. However, the Arab Spring here will be limited to traditional revolutions which uprooted autocratic regimes in Tunisia,

Egypt and Libya, with the emphasis on the Libyan uprising because of international intervention, and the explosion of arms after the conflict.

Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution sparked the crisis in parts of North Africa and the Middle East which is popularly referred to as the Arab Spring. The revolution started on 17 December 2010 when a 26-year old young man named Mohammed Bouazizi set himself ablaze in Sidi Bouzid because the state confiscated his wares. For a long while since Bouazizi graduated from high school, he had no job and so decided to become self-employed. To survive, he raised some money to sell fruit in a wheelbarrow. The police confiscated his vegetables on account that he was yet to get a government permit to sell. Angel (nd: 11) captured the issues leading to the Jasmine Revolution thus:

As Bouazizi made his journey to the souk, a policewoman confiscated his vegetable cart, along with his scales and all of his goods. Bouazizi, accustomed to this type of harassment, offered to pay a ten-dinar fine, equivalent to about seven US dollars, or a day's wages. The policewoman responded to his offer by slapping Bouazizi and spitting in his face. Angered by the interaction, the merchant attempted to file a complaint with the municipal government, but was refused an audience with an official. The daily frustrations and humiliations overwhelmed the 26-year-old merchant, so he doused himself in paint fuel and set himself aflame in front of the municipal government office.

The tragic death of the 26-year old infuriated young Tunisians who recalled past deeds of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the high corruption profile of the government, and the insensitivity of the government to the plight of the people. At the funeral of Mohammed Bouazizi, the angry youth chanted:

Farewell Mohammed, we will avenge you. We weep for you today; we will make those who caused your death to weep (Ogunbayo and Ochai 2011: 29-30).

The revolution led to the resignation of President Ben Ali after 23 years in power. The success recorded in Tunisia inspired and sparked popular uprisings throughout the Middle East and North Africa. The countries affected included Egypt, Libya, Syria, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. The uprising in Egypt, Libya and Yemen succeeded in ousting from office their

dictators while the battle to remove Bashir Al Asad is still raging in Syria.

The revolution started and spread across the countries with the help of social media. Although governments used police brutality in an attempt to contain the protesters who were mostly young people, it was not enough to break the uprisings. The success of the Jasmine Revolution inspired the Egyptian youths. Through the use of instant communication and electronic information technologies such as smart mobile phones, laptops, satellite television, internet and social media, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, the Egyptian youths were reminded of the incident in June 2010 when the Egyptian police beat Khaled Said to death. Thus, the Egyptian Revolution started on 25 January 2011, a day set aside for the celebration of the institution of the police in Egypt. There were several attempts by the government to quell the revolution. At first, Mubarak's government employed the service of the police and the *baltagiyya*<sup>4)</sup> but when that could not quell the revolution, he began offering concessions such as a cabinet reshuffle, and the promise of a free and fair election. When still he could not assuage the protesters, he resorted to the use of sentiment, as can be deciphered from his last national address when he said:

... Hosni Mubarak who speaks to you today is proud of the long years he spent in the service of Egypt and its people. This dear nation is my country, it is the country of all Egyptians, here I have lived and fought for its sake and I defended its land, its sovereignty and interests and on this land I will die and history will judge me and others for our merits and faults. The nation remains. Visitors come and go but ancient Egypt will remain eternal, its banner and safekeeping will pass from one generation to the next. It is up to us to ensure this in pride and dignity.<sup>5)</sup>

However, this was still not enough to halt the revolution that led to the dethronement of President Hosni Mubarak after serving as the President of Egypt for 30 years. The cost of the revolution in Egypt at that stage amounted to the loss of more than 800 lives.

After the overthrow of Mubarak, a democratic process was initiated and elections were held. Mohammed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood emerged as the President of the country. Morsi's short reign was tumultuous and controversial. He first embarked on the process of constitutional review, and eventually appropriated powers to himself that

could not be questioned, even by the courts. Egypt, although a secular state, was tilting towards an Islamic state. A second round of revolution in Egypt started in June 2013 with the anti-Morsi protesters who gathered in large numbers to demand the resignation of Morsi. In July 2013, the military in Egypt, led by General Sisi, ousted the government of Morsi through a military *coup* that the American government preferred rather to call a 'military intervention' because the military did not stay in power but handed over to an instituted interim government that would see to the conduct of new elections. Pro-Morsi supporters trooped out in large numbers protesting against the removal of Morsi from office.

The military and the interim government in Egypt issued a series of warnings to the Muslim Brotherhood and pro-Morsi supporters to disperse but the warnings fell on deaf ears. In August 2013 there was a heavy crackdown on pro-Morsi supporters, leading to the death of about 2 000 people, as claimed by the Muslim Brotherhood. As far as our analysis can decipher, Egypt has moved from revolution to the period of political uncertainty as there is no doubting the likelihood that the Muslim Brotherhood will resort to the use of violence to destabilise any new government in Egypt.

On 16 January 2011, after President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali had fled Tunisia to Saudi Arabia, Muammar Gaddafi appeared on Libyan television and publicly condemned the Tunisian uprising which ended Ben Ali's government (Weaver 2011). A month later, precisely on 15 February 2011, riots erupted in Benghazi during which the state, through the police, arrested a human rights activist. Some Libyans protested and demanded the release of the activist who was illegally arrested and detained. The Libyan police responded by clamping down on the protesters, leading to the death of many. This shifted the focus of the protests from the release of the activist in police custody, to demanding the ousting of Gaddafi from office, which Gaddafi bluntly rejected. The protesters formed the Transition National Council (TNC) with headquarters in Benghazi. In a televised speech delivered on one of the Libyan television stations, Gaddafi urged his loyalists to fight back as he would rather "die a martyr" than step down from office. In the televised address, he said:

I am a fighter, a revolutionary from tents ... I will fight to the last drop of my blood ... You men and women who love Gaddafi get out of your homes and fill the street. Leave your homes and attack



them in the lairs. The police cordon will be lifted, go out and fight them. Forward, forward, forward!<sup>6)</sup>

Thus, Gaddafi deployed the full arsenal of the state under the command of Faisal Islam, one of his sons<sup>7)</sup> to the military and militia forces and authorised them to shell the protesters in Benghazi into submission. The continuous crackdown of the protesters by pro-Gaddafi forces, which climaxed in the gross violations of human rights and humanitarian principles, attracted the attention of the international community and the need for intervention. The principle of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was invoked and the intervention came in the form of military and arms support for opposition forces and the enforcement of a no-fly zone. Some of the military and arms support for the rebels came from the US, but mostly from France and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). France took the lead in bombing the strongholds of Gaddafi. For some time, there had been consistent hostility between the US and Libya under Gaddafi, with several unsuccessful attempts made to get rid of Gaddafi. The US and the West saw an opportunity in the people's revolt and the crudity with which Gaddafi's regime responded, and pushed for his removal from office.

The US and the West provided arms support to the protesters secretly *en route* to Qatar and Saudi Arabia. This further worsened the situation as more arms flooded into Libya. Thus, after the death of Gaddafi in October 2011, the arms continued to be in the hands of the civilians, particularly the Islamic militants or the Jihadists (Risen *et al* 2012) who now use them to perpetrate various forms of crimes and criminalities in the state, even against the US with the killing of the US Ambassador and four others in September 2012.

## **5. The Tuareg factor and the flow of arms and narcotics**

It is impossible to discuss the Libyan uprising and the circulation of arms without considering the role of the Tuaregs. The Tuaregs are semi-nomadic pastoralists of Berber origin in Northern Africa. Before the French colonisation of North Africa, the Tuaregs occupied a distinct territory and lived in a loose confederation with traditional rulers who directed the affairs of the people. However, in the late 19th century, the Tuaregs, although having resisted the French colonial invasion of their

territory, were defeated by the French army. Thus, their territory was taken over and their confederacy dismantled. When African states became independent in the 1960s, the traditional Tuareg territory was divided among a number of modern African states like Niger, Chad, Algeria, Mali, Libya, Morocco, Burkina-Faso and Nigeria.

The creation of these modern states resulted in the Tuaregs becoming minorities in many countries. Further, the competition for resources, especially land in the Sahel, led to conflict between the Tuaregs and other groups. The inability of the Tuaregs to gain sufficient territory, coupled with an increase in the population, placed tight restriction on their nomadic lifestyle which they have consistently fought to protect. These struggles brought about the quest for political self-determination and cultural recognition in Mali and Niger since the independence of these countries in the 1960s. For a long time, the struggle for political independence in the Sahel had been supported by Gaddafi financially and militarily. In order to reduce the plight of the Tuaregs in the Sahel, Gaddafi accorded unlimited residence permits to all Nigerien and Malian Tuaregs in Libya in 2005. Many of the Tuaregs were in fact enlisted into the Libyan army since the 1970s.<sup>8)</sup>

When the rebellion against the Gaddafi regime started in 2011, the Tuaregs, in part out of a feeling of indebtedness, volunteered to fight to preserve the regime of Gaddafi by mobilising the support of other Tuaregs from neighbouring Mali and Niger. It is estimated that about 12 000 Tuareg fighters were enlisted by Gaddafi to consolidate his army.<sup>9)</sup>

After the defeat of Gaddafi by the internationally-supported Libyan anti-Gaddafi forces, their aggression was transferred onto the Tuaregs for supporting Gaddafi's regime. This led to the dispersal of the group across the Sahel and Sub-Saharan African, particularly in Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Algeria and Morocco. The dispersion provided the opportunity to transfer large catchments of arms and ammunitions across the Sahel and Sub-Sahara. It also provided the opportunity for the Tuaregs, in Mali especially, to stockpile large quantity of arms in preparation for the secession plan. Commenting on how the invading Libyan Tuaregs fomented trouble in Mali, Henry Derek Flood stated that:

Although much has been made of the Tuaregs rebels' return from Libya via northern Niger following the collapse of the Gaddafi regime,

this circumstance more helped to reinvigorate a stalemated conflict than was itself the *raison d'être* for the present war. Although Tuaregs fighters returned from Libya with fresh stocks of small-arms, ammunition, fighting vehicles, and anti-aircraft weaponry, they also accessed weapons stockpiled from previous outbreaks of political violence and raided arms depots abandoned by retreating Malian troops ... There is evidence that the weapons that rebels either never surrendered in previous bouts of secessionism or gained in the years leading up to the 2012 war was also likely to form a significant amount of arms in the current conflict in Mali (Flood 2012: 3).

The implication of the availability of arms in Libya, with which the pro-Gaddafi Tuareg fighters escaped following the death of Gaddafi, is that it provided impetus for renewed armed insurrection against the state in Mali and Nigeria. Many other states in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa are likely deposits of large catchments of arms and ammunitions circulating in the region, making these countries potential grounds for conflicts and instability. Unfortunately, many of these states are not internally strong; in fact, most are very fragile. In other words, these states often do not have the capability to confront armed insurrection of non-state armed actors, because of the sophistication of their arms and the employment of guerrilla tactics in their fight against the state. This, in most cases, has propelled international intervention to assist these states in pushing armed groups out. The intervention of France in Mali's confrontation with the Asar Dine, Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) and other terrorist cells is a classic example.

## **6. Aftermath of the Arab Spring and the development of Islamic terrorist networks in the Sahel and Sub-Sahara**

One of the reasons why the US and the West were consistently against Gaddafi's regime in Libya was because of its alleged instigation of terrorist attacks. One such act of terrorism was the 1986 attack on US soldiers who were in an off-duty night club in Germany. A second was the Lockerbie bombing of 1988. For the US, the end of authoritarian regimes in the MENA regions, especially that of Gaddafi, would be a

serious blow to international and transnational terrorism. To the chagrin of observers, this has not been the case. For example, since the ousting of President Ben Ali in 2011, Tunisia has witnessed the resurgence of the domestic radical Sallafists who have carried out a number of violent attacks against the state. According to Wolf (2013: 2),

Since the revolution in 2011, ultraconservative Muslims have obtained arms and clashed with security forces throughout the country. In May 2012, Salafi-jihadist and regular criminals attacked a police station as well as bars selling alcohol in the governorate of El Kef. In June, they firebombed several offices of Tunisia's biggest trade union, the Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT). That same month, an attack on an arts exhibition in La Marsa killed one, injured 65 policemen and led to the arrests of more than 160 people. In September, violent Salafist mobs took to the streets to protest against an American film ridiculing the Prophet Muhammad and stormed the U.S. Embassy in Tunis and an American school — leaving three dead and causing the U.S. Embassy to recall its unessential staff from Tunis. Moreover, two Tunisian Salafi-jihadis were arrested in October 2012 for their alleged involvement in the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Libya that led to the death of its ambassador ... Most recently, on December 21, Tunisian authorities uncovered a terrorist cell affiliated with AQIM, leading to the arrests of 16 people, including three Libyans, while an additional 18 other cell members are still being pursued. The members of the group, known as the Militia of Uqba Ibn Nafaa in Tunisia, reportedly received training and weapons in Algeria and Libya. They sought to establish a Tunisian branch of AQIM to overthrow the government by force.

This occurrence in Tunisia has been blamed on long years of former regimes' repression of Islamists. While Tunisia is battling the Sallafist insurrection, Libya and Egypt after Gaddafi and Mubarak have become highly unstable. In fact, post-revolutionary radical insurrection has proven to be more intense in Libya than any other state in the region. It is reported that:

Beginning in late July 2012, there have been a string of assassinations in Benghazi ... Some of the attacks involved car bombs, while in other instances victims were shot. It is not known who carried out the attacks, but it is thought that possibly one or more local militias with grievances against the Qadhafi regime were responsible.

On August 19, 2012, for example, three car bombs exploded in Tripoli. The car bombs targeted administrative offices of the Ministry of the Interior and a building used by the Defense Ministry to detain and interrogate Libyans suspected of being supporters of the former Qadhafi regime. The bombings killed two Libyans. Local officials attributed the attacks to a group of men loyal to Qadhafi. (Porter 2012: 2)

As noted earlier, the US is also not spared in the Jihadist insurrection as its Consulate in the city of Benghazi was attacked in September 2012 resulting in the death of four US citizens, including the Ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, who in no small measure helped bring about the collapse of Gaddafi's authoritarian regime.

The abrupt end of authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, though commendable on one hand because of renewed hopes of democratisation, has on the other hand rather expanded the operation of terrorist groups who took advantage of the fragility of states in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, the porous boundaries and borders and fragile nature of the Sahelian states have allowed AQIM to link up with other terrorist groups such as the Movement for Unity of Jihad in West Africa (*Mouvement pour l'unicité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest*, MUJAO) and Ansar Eddine, while giving Boko Haram the opportunity constantly to transit from Nigeria through Niger to Mali, and to link up with AQIM for financial and logistic support.

Again, in the development of domestic and transnational extremist groups, the proliferation of arms after the fall of regimes is a major factor. These arms were either bought at very low prices from criminal or terrorist networks in North and West Africa, or they are given freely as dividends of loyalty to a superior group like AQIM. This is particularly true of Boko Haram's interaction with AQIM and other terrorist networks in West Africa. The Nigerian Chief of Army Staff noted on 11 September 2012 that:

The involvement of foreigners in Boko Haram's terrorist activities in Nigeria is certain. It is definite that the group receives training and possibly funding from some foreign elements ... This is evident from the type of weapons we have captured from them, from the type of communication equipment we have captured from them and from the expertise they have displayed in the preparation of improvised explosive devices. These are pointers to the fact that

there is foreign involvement in the terrorism going on in Nigeria (cited in Ali and Ogunwale 2011: 12).

At a two day seminar on security and development in the Sahel and Sahara, organised by the International Peace Institute in Niamey on 15-16 February 2013, Chadian delegates to the conference confirmed that Mohammed Shekau, who is the present leader of the Boko Haram sect, was sighted in Mali with some of the sect members who were in Mali to support the activities of AQIM. The discovery of large arms caches and ammunition in a house belonging to a Lebanese linked to the Hezbollah in Kano city in the first week of June 2013 further corroborates the view that Boko Haram has some links with external terror groups. Discussing the possibility of Boko Haram's use of high-tech arms acquired from Libya against aircrafts in Nigeria, Zenn noted that:

There is also concern that Boko Haram could use Libyan-made man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS) to shoot down commercial airlines flying into Niger, Chad and Nigeria — a tactic employed in 2002 by an al-Qa'ida-linked Somali terrorist cell on a Mombasa-borne Israeli El Al airlines flight (Zenn 2013: 11).

When in June 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria declared a state of emergency in the three northern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe and ordered full military operations against the Boko Haram sect, the latter was said to have used man-portable air defense systems to launch attacks on gun helicopters mounted by the Nigerian military.

What this implies is that the common interest in the missions of these groups will always bring them together, even if their enemies are not the same. They can always lend a helping hand to one another, with support including financial, moral, logistic, technical and arms support across the countries in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Terrorism is a tactic for getting one's way in a struggle involving nations, non-state groups and even individuals (Fotion 2007: 3). The major impetus for terrorism is the feeling of injustice suffered by an identified individual or group. Before resorting to terrorism, the terrorist tries to reason with the opponent and when that fails, propaganda will be tried after which social and political pressure might be applied. Where all these fail, the 'victim' might feel compelled to resort to violence in order to get his/her way. Therefore, religious and ethnic persecution,

deprivation and abuse of fundamental human rights, to mention a few, are some of the reasons advanced for engaging in terrorist acts. In the case of Nigeria and other African countries, poverty, unemployment and under-development have offered major excuses for engaging in terrorist activities (Abbink and Kessel 2005; Abbink, de Bruiju and Waltraven 2003; Rogers 2004).

Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, the Governor of Nigeria's Central Bank, views the spate of terrorism in northern Nigeria as a consequence of the level of poverty in the region (*The Punch*, 5/5 2012). Maier (2003) believes that other factors must be present for poverty to transform to terrorism. These include a mobilising and unifying idea such as religion or ethnicity, and committed agitators ready to organise a powerful terrorist force against a common enemy. The consequences of terrorism are too destructive for any society to endure. That is why all attempts must be made to prevent it. However, corruption perpetuated by African leaders, and the attendant poverty, unemployment and deprivation it brings, seems to make terrorism inevitable.

## **7. Implication for peace and development of the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa**

Certainly, the development of domestic and transnational terrorism and the ready availability of arms in the aftermath of the Arab Spring have serious implications for peace and development of the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa. As at 2012, the failed state index revealed that most of the states in the region are vulnerable because of the loss of control of their territory, the erosion of the legitimate authority for collective decisions, and the inability to provide basic public service to the people (Feng 2003). Thus, there is a disconnect between the citizens and the state. In this type of situation, the citizen may respect the authority of groups seen to protect their interest more than the state that has failed to protect them (Nafaiger 2006). This was the situation in northern Nigeria where the government deployed a Joint Task Force (JTF) to secure the lives and property of the people. The inability of the security forces to arrest members of Boko Haram after attacks on their convoys made the JTF crack down on the people with the belief that they were aligning with the sect, and providing information and a safe haven for its members.

Furthermore, the inability of democratic regimes of countries in that axis to contain the excesses of armed groups may invoke *coup d'états*. In 2012, two countries — Mali and Guinea-Bissau — became victims of the 'Khaki boys'. In Mali, the reason for a military take-over was because of the inability of the democratically elected President to handle the armed groups in northern Mali. Unfortunately, the taking of power by the 'Khaki boys' has not changed the situation; in fact, it has rather worsened it. The state under the military men lost control of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal considered to be the three most important places in northern Mali for controlling the armed groups. Thus, these ungoverned spaces became used by the armed groups, including Boko Haram, as their training ground and the people living there, as human shields against the French military forces. As Van Vliet (2012) has observed, the consequent underdevelopment of the region compared to the south is greatly responsible for the crisis in Mali. However, the emergence of groups and their access to arms has wreaked havoc in places such as Timbuktu, and destroyed traditional monuments, with serious implications for the overall development of Mali.

## 8. Conclusion

The position of this paper is that while the Arab Spring presents an obvious moment in history to rejoice over the end of long standing authoritarian regimes, and the opening of spaces for democracy and political participation, it has also created situations of political uncertainties in North Africa, the Sahel and the Sub-Saharan Africa. This can be substantiated by the current situation in Mali, and the spread of terrorist networks and activities in the Sahel and Nigeria, coupled with the inability of most states in Africa to provide quality governance to their people. As long as African states remain fragile, and as long as they are unable to meet the basic demands of their citizens, the stability of states in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa will continue to be threatened.

## Endnotes

1. Information borne out of a two-day seminar on security and development of the Sahel and Sub-Sahara by the International Peace Institute, held in Niamey, February 15-16, 2013.



2. Outcomes of a two-week seminar on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Border Security Management (BSM), organised by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping and Training Centre (KAIPTC), held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Hotel d' Sahel, 11-26 July 2013.
3. For instance, while the term seems to be more applicable in the cases of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya because of the success in lifting long standing autocratic regimes, it is however more difficult to apply in the case of Syria, given the dimension of civil war between the rebel group and the Assad and the Assad regime, or to other minor civil disturbances such as in Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, Algeria, Saudi Arabia that did not have any significant impact.
4. These were proletariats who were prepared to do anything for money. More than 3 000 were employed by the government to crush the protesters when the military had promised a neutral role between the protesters and the government.
5. Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/02/president-hosni-mubarak-egypt-speech>, accessed 13 March 2013.
6. Available at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1358972/Libya-protests-Gaddafis-rambling-TV-address-ill-die-martyr.html>, accessed 13 March 2012.
7. Years before the uprising against his regime, Gaddafi had been amassing large quantities of small arms and light weapons from the West. For instance, between 2007 and 2008, Ukraine supplied more than 100 000 rifles to Libya, and in 2009, an Italian company supplied 10 000 handguns to Libya. Similarly, Belgium also authorised the supply of large containers of high-tech rifles which, in their alibi (Belgium authority), were intended for use by the Libyan troops to protect humanitarian aid envoys in Darfur, while the United Kingdom allowed the sale of large quantities of sniper rifles to Libya. For a comprehensive review of arm deals between Gaddafi's Libya and the rest of the world, see P D Wezeman (nd), "Libya: Lessons in Controlling the Arms Trade". (Available at <http://www.sipri.org/media/newsletter/essay/march11>.)
8. See <http://libyasos.blogspot.com/2011/09/tuareg-fighters-supprot-gaddafi.html>, accessed 14 March 2013.
9. See <http://www.debka.com/article/21335/>, accessed on 14 March 2013.

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