

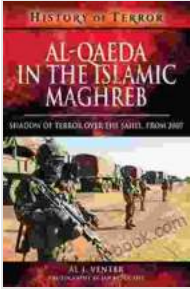
# Shadow of Terror Over the Sahel: A Historical Account of Terrorism from 2007 Onwards



The Sahel, a vast and arid region spanning the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, has emerged as a hotbed of terrorist activity in recent years. This article delves into the complex history of terrorism in the Sahel, tracing its origins, major events, and the devastating impact it has had on the region.

## **Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Shadow of Terror over The Sahel, from 2007 (History of Terror)**

by Sarah Maddison



★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

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## Historical Roots

The seeds of terrorism in the Sahel were sown in the early 2000s, following the Algerian Civil War (1991-2002). Remnants of the defeated Islamist groups fled into neighboring countries, including Mali, Niger, and Mauritania, where they found fertile ground for recruitment and expansion.

The region's poverty, chronic unemployment, and weak governance provided an ideal breeding ground for extremism. Disaffected youth, lured by the promise of a better life or a sense of purpose, joined militant groups that exploited their grievances.

## 2007: A Turning Point

The year 2007 marked a significant turning point in the history of terrorism in the Sahel. In January, a coalition of Islamist groups, including Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), launched a surprise attack on a military barracks in Lemgheity, Mauritania. The assault, which left dozens of soldiers dead, sent shockwaves throughout the region.

This attack signaled the emergence of a new, more brazen and sophisticated terrorist threat in the Sahel. It also marked the beginning of a prolonged period of violence that would claim thousands of lives and destabilize entire nations.

## **AQIM and Its Affiliates**

AQIM became the dominant terrorist group in the Sahel, expanding its reach across Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. The group carried out numerous attacks against military and civilian targets, including kidnappings, assassinations, and suicide bombings.

AQIM's brutality and ability to operate across borders made it a formidable threat. It established alliances with other terrorist groups, including the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM), further strengthening its grip on the region.

## **Impact on the Region**

The scourge of terrorism has had a devastating impact on the Sahel region. Thousands of civilians have been killed, injured, or displaced from their homes. Schools and hospitals have been attacked or closed, depriving communities of essential services.

Terrorism has also crippled the economy in many Sahel countries. Tourism, once a bright spot, has plummeted as foreign visitors fear for their safety. Investment and development projects have been halted, deepening the region's already dire economic situation.

## **Counterterrorism Efforts**

In response to the growing threat of terrorism, the Sahel countries have launched a series of counterterrorism initiatives with the support of international partners. These efforts have included military operations, intelligence sharing, and community outreach programs.

However, the challenges facing the Sahel are immense. The vast and sparsely populated terrain makes it difficult to control borders and track down terrorist groups. Corruption and weak governance in some areas have hampered counterterrorism efforts.

### **International Cooperation**

The international community has recognized the threat that terrorism poses to the Sahel region and beyond. The United Nations has launched a peacekeeping mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which has been operating since 2013.

France has also deployed troops in the Sahel under Operation Barkhane, a regional counterterrorism initiative. Other countries, including the United States, have provided training and logistical support to Sahel forces.

### **Ongoing Challenges**

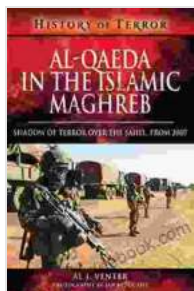
Despite these efforts, terrorism remains a persistent threat in the Sahel. The region's underlying social and economic problems continue to fuel instability and provide fertile ground for extremist groups to operate.

Climate change and environmental degradation are also contributing to the crisis by exacerbating poverty and food insecurity, making communities more vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist organizations.

The shadow of terror has cast a dark cloud over the Sahel region for nearly two decades. Terrorism has brought untold suffering to its people, destabilized governments, and crippled economies.

While counterterrorism efforts have helped to contain the threat, the underlying causes of instability in the Sahel need to be addressed to achieve lasting peace and development. This requires a comprehensive approach that includes poverty reduction, improved governance, and addressing the root causes of extremism.

The future of the Sahel hangs in the balance, and the international community must continue to support the region's efforts to combat terrorism and build a more stable and prosperous future for its people.



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