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POLICY BRIEF SERIES

The Proliferation of Islamic State Franchises in Sub-Saharan Africa

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1. Africa After 9/11

The global war against jihádíst terrorism, which intensified after the September 11 attacks in the United States, has increasingly shifted toward Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel region. Recent counter-terrorism operations conducted by the United States in Somalia, Nigeria and other parts of the continent demonstrate the growing strategic importance of Africa within global security calculations. The increasing military engagement of external powers reflects the reality that Sub-Saharan Africa has become one of the principal theatres of violent extremism and insurgent expansion.[1] Across the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, East Africa, and parts of Southern Africa, Islamic State ('IS') franchises have established resilient operational networks.[2] Groups such as Islamic State West Africa Province ('ISWAP'), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara ('ISGS'), Islamic State Mozambique ('ISM'), and others have exploited fragile governance structures, socioeconomic inequalities, communal tensions, and ungoverned territories to expand their influence. These groups no longer operate merely as clandestine terrorist organizations; rather, they increasingly seek to establish parallel systems of governance, taxation, justice and social regulation in territories under their control.

The proliferation of IS franchises in Sub-Saharan Africa is rooted in multiple interconnected factors. These include the rise of Salafíst ideological currents, persistent governance failures, poverty, corruption, porous borders, arms proliferation following the collapse of Libya, and the return of foreign fighters from Middle Eastern conflict zones.[3] In many fragile regions, extremist organizations capitalize on the inability of states to provide security, justice and economic opportunities, thereby positioning themselves as alternative authorities capable of addressing local grievances.[4] Importantly, the expansion of IS franchises in Africa cannot be understood solely through military or security frameworks. These groups derive legitimacy not only from violence, but also from narratives of justice, anti-corruption, accountability and religious authenticity. Their survival depends heavily on their ability to embed themselves within local political economies and social structures. Consequently, understanding the relationship between insurgent governance, ideological narratives, and claims of Islámic legitimacy is central to explaining the endurance and spread of these groups across the continent.[5]

This brief examines the proliferation of IS franchises in Sub-Saharan Africa by analyzing the structural conditions that facilitate their expansion, the governance strategies they deploy, the ideological narratives they employ for legitimacy, and the responses of local communities and states. It argues that the persistence of these groups is fundamentally tied to crises of governance and state legitimacy in fragile African contexts. Therefore, sustainable responses must go beyond military solutions to include socio-economic reforms, community resilience, regional co-operation and ideological counter-narratives.

2. Governance Failure, Fragility and the Expansion of Islamic State Franchises

The proliferation of IS franchises across Sub-Saharan Africa is deeply connected to the crisis of governance and fragility confronting many states on the continent. While military explanations often dominate counter-terrorism discourse, the expansion of jihádíst movements in Africa cannot be fully understood outside this context which Islamic State affiliates have exploited to establish footholds in fragile societies. One of the major drivers of IS' expansion in Sub-Saharan Africa is the persistent failure of governments to fulfil their fundamental obligations to citizens. In many affected countries, such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria, governments have struggled to provide security, public services, infrastructure, and economic opportunities for large segments of their populations. This governance deficit has created conditions in which extremist organizations can project themselves as viable alternatives to the formal state. IS exploits these weaknesses by establishing parallel systems of governance in territories where state authority is weak or absent.

The governance crisis in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa is further compounded by widespread poverty and socio-economic exclusion. Areas heavily affected by IS insurgencies are often characterized by high levels of unemployment, underdevelopment, poor educational infrastructure, and chronic inequality. These socio-economic conditions create fertile recruitment grounds for extremist organizations.[6]

[1] Laura Sharman, "US and Nigerian forces kill senior ISIS commander, Trump says", *CNN News*, 16 May 2026; Idrees Ali, Phil Stewart and Jasper Ward, "Trump says U.S. carries out airstrikes on Islamic State in Somalia", *Reuters*, 1 February 2025; Spencer Ackerman, "The Largest and Bloodiest U.S. Battlefield in 2025? Somalia", in *Forever Wars*, 5 December 2025; Alexander Palmer and Erin Oppel, "Why Did the United States Conduct Strikes in Nigeria?", in *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 26 December 2025.

[2] United States, Department of State, "State Department Terrorist Designations of ISIS Affiliates and Leaders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique", 10 March 2021.

[3] Joshua Meservey, "Sahelian Islam's Shift Towards Salafism and Its Implications for Regional Terrorism", in *The Caravan by Hoover Institution*, 21 September 2021.

[4] Oluwole Ojewale, "Operationalising the Liptako-Gourma charter: *Alliance des États du Sahel* Unified Force, Sovereignty Imaginaries and the (Re)Making of Security Order in Central Sahel", in *Third World Quarterly*, 2026, pp. 1–13.

[5] Sebastian Elischer, "'Partisan Politics Was Making People Angry': The Rise and Fall of Political Salafism in Kenya", in *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 2019, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 121–136; Théo Blanc and Olivier Roy, "Post-Salafism: From Global to Local Salafism", in *Mediterranean Politics*, 2026, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 251–270; Franklin Charles Graham, "Abductions, Kidnappings and Killings in the Sahel and Sahara", in *Review of African Political Economy*, 2011, vol. 38, no. 130, pp. 587–604; "Extremism Spreads Across West Africa and the Sahel", in *Strategic Comments*, 2012, vol. 18, no. 8, pp. 1–3.

[6] Oluwole Ojewale, "Triad of Violence: Evolution and Dynamics of Conflict, Terrorism, Banditry and Armed Groups in Northwest Nigeria", in *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 2025, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 18–43.

For many marginalized youths, jihádíst groups provide not only economic incentives but also a sense of belonging, identity and purpose. IS franchises, therefore, capitalize on existing grievances and frustrations among populations who perceive the state as neglectful or exploitative. Poverty alone, however, does not explain the spread of extremist movements. IS affiliates also weaponize communal tensions, ethnic rivalries and political grievances to deepen local instability. In the central Sahel, longstanding tensions between farmers and herders – as well as disputes over land, resources and political representation – have created fractured social environments that jihádíst groups readily exploit.[7] In Mali, for instance, grievances among Tuareg communities concerning political marginalization and perceived injustice contributed to cycles of rebellion and instability that extremist organizations later infiltrated. Similarly, Fulani communities in parts of the Sahel have often expressed feelings of exclusion and victimization, conditions that jihádíst groups manipulate to expand their support base.[8]

The rise of IS franchises is also linked to the broader ideological spread of Salafísm across parts of Africa over the past several decades. The increasing prominence of Salafíst interpretations of Islám in countries such as Nigeria, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso has created environments in which extremist narratives can gain traction more easily. Although Salafísm itself is not inherently violent, jihádíst organizations often appropriate Salafíst rhetoric and symbols to legitimize their activities and frame their struggle as a defence of 'pure' Islám against corrupt political systems. This ideological environment allows extremist groups to present themselves as religious reformers confronting failed secular states.[9] Another critical factor contributing to the proliferation of IS franchises is the collapse of Libya following the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. The Libyan crisis had profound security implications for the wider Sahel region. The disintegration of state authority in Libya facilitated the large-scale proliferation of small arms and light weapons across porous desert borders. These weapons circulated freely through transnational smuggling routes stretching into Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso and northern Nigeria. Extremist groups, including IS affiliates, benefited immensely from this arms flow, acquiring sophisticated weaponry that enhanced their operational capabilities and territorial ambitions.[10]

Closely connected to the Libyan crisis is the issue of ungoverned and poorly governed spaces across the Sahara and the Sahel. Vast borderlands in these regions remain difficult for governments to monitor effectively due to weak infrastructure, limited state presence, and challenging geographic conditions. These ungoverned corridors provide safe havens for insurgent groups, arms traffickers, smugglers and transnational criminal networks. IS affiliates exploit these territories not only as operational bases, but also as logistical corridors for the movement of fighters, weapons and illicit goods. The porous nature of borders in the Sahel has enabled extremist organizations to establish transnational networks that transcend individual states and complicate national security responses.

The return of foreign fighters from conflict zones in the Middle East has also strengthened jihádíst expansion in Africa. Fighters returning from Syria, Iraq and other theatres of jihád brought with them operational experience, ideological training and transnational networks that contributed to the sophistication of African jihádíst movements. Countries such as Somalia, Mozambique, Mali and Niger became attractive destinations for these fighters because of existing instability and weak state control. Their presence facilitated the transfer of tactical knowledge, recruitment strategies and propaganda techniques associated with global jihádíst movements. In addition, the geographical proximity of parts of East Africa and the Sahel to the Middle East has enhanced linkages between African jihádíst groups and global IS structures. These transnational connections provide African affiliates with ideological guidance, propaganda support, financial resources and strategic legitimacy. IS' global brand, therefore, strengthens local insurgencies by embedding them within a wider transnational jihádíst movement.

3. Data-Based Revelations on the Proliferation of Islamic State's Franchises in Africa

The data on incidents and fatalities associated with IS franchises in Africa between 2015 and the first quarter of 2026 reveal the transformation of Sub-Saharan Africa into the principal theatre of jihádíst insurgency. IS-linked violence in Africa is no longer peripheral to the organization's global strategy; rather, the continent has become central to its operational survival, territorial ambitions and ideological expansion. Nigeria stands out overwhelmingly as the epicentre of this violence, recording the highest number of incidents and fatalities by a significant margin (14,595 fatalities and 3,363 incidents, compared to 5,920 fatalities and 2,272 incidents in second-highest Mozambique). This reflects the enduring strength of ISWAP and the persistence of insurgency dynamics in Lake Chad Basin. The scale of fatalities in Nigeria indicates not merely frequent attacks, but a prolonged and deeply entrenched conflict environment characterized by attacks on civilians, military confrontations, territorial contestation and cross-border insurgent mobility.

The data from Mozambique and third-highest Niger (5,776 fatalities and 2,178 incidents, compared to 3,496 fatalities and 2,359 incidents in fourth-highest Cameroon) further demonstrate that IS' African expansion is geographically diverse and adaptive. Mozambique's high fatality figures, despite the relatively recent emergence of insurgency in Cabo Delgado, reveal how quickly local grievances can escalate into large-scale militant violence when state institutions are weak and communities feel marginalized. The Mozambican case suggests that resource-rich but politically neglected regions are especially vulnerable to extremist penetration. Similarly, Niger's figures underscore the growing regionalization of insecurity across the Sahel, where porous borders and fragile state presence enable insurgent groups to move fluidly across national boundaries.

The figures from fifth-highest Burkina Faso (3,347 fatalities and 1,126 incidents) and sixth-highest Mali (2,976 fatalities and 989 incidents) reinforce the argument that jihádíst violence in Africa thrives most effectively in contexts of political instability and governance failure. In both countries, the combination of weak rural administration, communal tensions, military coups, and declining public trust in state institutions has created fertile ground for insurgent expansion.

One of the most important implications of the data is that the severity of insurgency cannot be measured merely by the number of incidents. Seventh-highest Chad, for example, records comparatively few incidents but very high fatalities relative to attack frequency (1,274 fatalities and 164 incidents). This suggests that violence in Chad tends to occur in concentrated but highly lethal episodes, possibly involving attacks on military installations or large-scale confrontations around the Lake Chad region.

Eighth-highest Democratic Republic of the Congo (1,038 fatalities and 280 incidents) and ninth-highest Somalia (693 fatalities and 440 incidents) reveal additional dimensions of the evolving IS landscape in Africa. In eastern Congo, violence associated with the Allied Democratic Forces demonstrates how local insurgencies can become absorbed into broader transnational jihádíst networks. In Somalia, however, the relatively lower figures suggest that IS affiliates remain overshadowed by Al-Shabaab, limiting IS territorial and operational expansion. This illustrates that jihádíst competition and local militant ecosystems shape the trajectory of extremist groups differently across African contexts.

Trends as to conflict density provide longitudinal insights regarding the evolution, escalation and transformation of IS-linked violence across the continent. One of the most important insights from this data is the dramatic escalation of violence beginning around 2018 and intensifying sharply between 2019 and 2023. This period represents the peak expansion phase of IS violence in Africa. The upward trajectory

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7 Signe M. Cold-Ravnkilde and Boubacar Ba, "Jihadist Ideological Conflict and Local Governance in Mali", in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2025, vol. 48, no. 3, pp. 300–315; Muhammad Dan Suleiman, "Journeying to Jihadiphate: A Vehicle Framework of Jihadist Conflicts in West Africa", in *African Security Review*, 2024, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 449–475.

8 Lawrence E. Cline, "Jihadist Movements in the Sahel: Rise of the Fulani?", in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2023, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 175–191.

9 Shoujun Cui and Joshua Glinert, "Jihadi-Salafi Ideology: The Suspension of Dialectic and Radicalization of Thought", in *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia)*, 2016, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 101–120.

10 Oluwole Ojewale, "Borders, Bandits and Limited Statehood in Frontier Regions: Evidence from Southwest Niger and Northwest Nigeria", in *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 2025, vol. 83, p. 23.

of both incidents and fatalities during this period reflects the consolidation of multiple IS franchises across the continent, especially in Lake Chad Basin, the Sahel, Mozambique and parts of Central Africa. The convergence of the incident and fatality curves during these years suggests that the increase in attacks was accompanied by a corresponding rise in lethality, indicating not merely more frequent violence but more destructive operations.

The data further reveals that the African theatre became increasingly central to IS' global strategy after its territorial decline in Iraq and Syria. As IS lost physical control in the Middle East, its operational gravity shifted toward Africa, where weak governance structures, porous borders, communal conflicts, and peripheral marginalization created favourable conditions for insurgent expansion. More broadly, the data reflects a major geographical shift in global jihádísm. Africa has evolved from a secondary arena of militant activity into the primary frontier of IS expansion. While both incidents and corresponding fatalities have sharply declined since 2023, their sustained density indicates that the future of global jihádíst violence may increasingly be shaped by developments in Sub-Saharan Africa rather than the Middle East alone.

The geographical spread, concentration, and diffusion patterns of IS franchises across Africa additionally reveal a highly clustered but transnational insurgent landscape stretching from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa and down to Southern Africa, along spatial logics shaped, as we have seen, by weak governance and existing militant ecosystems among other factors. One of the clearest patterns visible is the emergence of the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin as the principal epicentre of IS activity in Africa. The dense concentration of attacks and militant presence across north-eastern Nigeria, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso reflects the operational reach of ISWAP and ISGS. These regions form a contiguous zone of insurgent diffusion extending across poorly governed borderlands where state authority is limited and security forces struggle to maintain territorial control.

The clustering around north-eastern Nigeria is particularly significant because it highlights Lake Chad Basin as the strategic nucleus of IS expansion in Africa. The region's geography – marked by porous borders linking Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon – facilitates terrorist mobility, weapons trafficking, recruitment and cross-border attacks. This spatial configuration explains why Nigeria records the highest number of incidents and fatalities in the dataset. Violence in this region is not confined to national borders, but operates through a regional insurgent ecosystem that transcends state boundaries. The western Sahelian corridor stretching across Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger represents another major zone of diffusion.

A second major pattern is the emergence of East and Central Africa as interconnected secondary hubs of IS activity. In eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and parts of Uganda, the presence of the Allied Democratic Forces demonstrates how pre-existing insurgent movements can become incorporated into IS' global architecture. The concentration of activity around eastern Congo reflects the strategic importance of remote forested terrain, weak border governance, and chronic state fragility in sustaining militant operations.

The Horn of Africa represents a more geographically concentrated but strategically important node of IS activity. Somalia witnesses heavy presence of and incidents linked to Islamic State Somalia Province. Unlike the broad territorial spread observed in the Sahel, the Somali franchise appears more localized and constrained. This is partly because Al-Shabaab remains the dominant jihádíst actor in Somalia, limiting the territorial and organizational expansion of IS affiliates. Nevertheless, the Somali node remains significant because of its proximity to major maritime routes in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, giving it broader strategic value beyond its territorial size.

Lastly, there is also notable southern diffusion of IS violence into Mozambique through ISM. This is one of the most analytically important developments because it demonstrates the adaptability of IS franchises to entirely different political and socio-economic contexts. The concentration of militant activity in Cabo Delgado reflects how resource-rich but marginalized coastal regions can become vulnerable to insurgent penetration.[11] The insurgency's proximity to offshore gas infrastructure further underscores the growing intersection between jihádíst violence and strategic economic assets in Africa.

4. Islamic State's Governance and the Search for Legitimacy

The governance ambitions of IS franchises are rooted in their broader ideological objective of replacing secular state systems with their own interpretation of Islámic rule. In fragile regions where state institutions are weak or absent, extremist organizations exploit governance vacuums by presenting themselves as capable providers of order, justice and social regulation. They portray existing governments as corrupt, ineffective and disconnected from the realities of ordinary citizens while simultaneously framing themselves as morally superior alternatives. In this sense, insurgent governance becomes both a political strategy and an ideological project aimed at displacing formal state authority. IS affiliates in Africa have therefore invested heavily in creating systems of social regulation and administrative control within captured territories. These groups impose rules governing economic activities, religious conduct, taxation and community life.[12] In parts of Lake Chad Basin controlled by ISWAP, local populations are often required to pay taxes before engaging in farming, fishing or trade activities. Farmers and fishermen operating in insurgent-controlled territories must remit levies, often framed as *zakát* or religious taxation, in exchange for permission to continue their livelihoods and receive protection from insurgent violence.[13]

Beyond taxation, IS affiliates frequently emphasize themes of justice, accountability, anti-corruption and social equality in their messaging. These narratives resonate strongly in fragile societies where citizens have experienced decades of political corruption, elite predation and unequal access to state resources. Extremist groups exploit these frustrations by portraying themselves as defenders of marginalized populations against unjust political systems. In doing so, they capitalize on deep-seated grievances that governments have failed to address. The emphasis on justice and accountability is particularly significant in regions where communities perceive state institutions as corrupt or discriminatory. In Mali and parts of the central Sahel, for example, some marginalized communities view formal justice systems as inaccessible, politicized or biased toward dominant ethnic or political groups. IS affiliates exploit these perceptions by offering simplified systems of adjudication and dispute resolution, which they frame as more efficient and equitable than state institutions. Although these systems are often enforced through violence and coercion, they nevertheless appeal to communities frustrated by state neglect and impunity.

The search for legitimacy by IS franchises also reflects their recognition that military force alone cannot sustain long-term territorial control. To survive and expand, insurgent groups require some level of civilian compliance, accommodation or acquiescence. Consequently, they adopt governance strategies aimed at embedding themselves within local social structures and everyday life. In some communities, civilians acquiesce to IS' authority not necessarily out of ideological support, but because co-operation becomes essential for survival in areas where the state has collapsed or withdrawn. Communities living under their rule, therefore, develop different forms of negotiation and adaptation. Some populations accept the authority of IS affiliates and comply with their rules to avoid violence. Others negotiate coexistence by paying taxes while maintaining their economic activities. In certain cases, communities strategically co-operate with insurgents while simultaneously maintaining covert links with state authorities. These complex relationships demonstrate that insurgent governance is not sustained solely through fear but also through varying forms of social interaction, accommodation and pragmatic survival needs.

5. Community Responses, Regional Security and the Limits of Military Solutions

The expansion of IS franchises across Sub-Saharan Africa has generated

[11] Emily Estelle and Jessica Trisko Darden "Assessing the Northern Mozambique Insurgency", in *Combating the Islamic State's Spread in Africa: Assessment and Recommendations for Mozambique*, American Enterprise Institute, 2021, pp. 5–16.

[12] David Doukhan, "The Rise of the Islamic State in Africa: In the Sahel, West, and East Africa", in *Commentaries*, International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 26 October 2025.

[13] Kunle Adebajo, "New Info on Zakat Collection, Distribution Throws Light on ISWAP's Revenue Model", *HumAngle*, 28 May 2021.

profound consequences for local communities, state security institutions and regional stability.[14] As extremist groups consolidate their influence in fragile regions, civilians are compelled to develop different strategies of survival, resistance, negotiation and adaptation. At the same time, governments and international actors continue to rely heavily on military responses despite mounting evidence that kinetic approaches alone are insufficient to address the structural foundations of violent extremism. The persistence of IS insurgencies across the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin and East Africa, therefore, highlights the need for broader multidimensional responses that combine security operations with governance reforms, socio-economic interventions and regional co-operation. Communities living under the influence or control of IS affiliates often adopt pragmatic survival strategies shaped by fear, coercion and the absence of state protection. One of the most common responses is acquiescence, whereby local populations comply with insurgent rules and regulations to avoid violence and ensure survival. In areas where extremist organizations have established parallel governance systems, many civilians simply adapt to insurgent authority because resisting openly may lead to severe punishment, displacement or death. Under such conditions, local populations become subordinated communities compelled to live according to the dictates of insurgent groups.

In Lake Chad Basin and parts of the Sahel, civilians often negotiate their co-existence with IS affiliates through systems of taxation and conditional co-operation. Farmers, fishermen, traders and herders operating within insurgent-controlled territories are frequently required to pay levies before carrying out their economic activities. For example, communities may pay *zakát* taxes before harvesting crops or fishing in areas controlled by ISWAP. These arrangements reflect the emergence of insurgent political economies in which extremist groups regulate livelihoods while civilians comply to maintain their economic survival. Such forms of negotiation do not necessarily indicate ideological support for extremist organizations. Rather, they demonstrate how civilians navigate complex environments where state authority is weak or absent. Many communities engage with insurgent groups out of necessity, seeking protection and stability in contexts characterized by insecurity and institutional collapse. These dynamics reveal the complicated relationship between civilians and extremist actors, where survival often takes precedence over political or ideological considerations.

Alongside accommodation and negotiation, some communities actively resist insurgent domination through collaboration with state security institutions. In several conflict-affected regions, civilians provide intelligence to military and law enforcement agencies concerning the movements, hideouts and operations of extremist groups. Such co-operation has become an important aspect of counter-insurgency efforts, particularly in environments where local knowledge is essential for tracking insurgent activities. Community-based intelligence networks, therefore, play a crucial role in strengthening state security responses against IS affiliates. In other contexts, communities have adopted more confrontational forms of resistance through the establishment of vigilante and self-defence groups. Faced with persistent insecurity and limited government protection, local populations in parts of Nigeria and the Sahel have organized armed vigilante structures to defend their communities against jihádíst attacks. These groups often possess intimate knowledge of local terrain and social networks, which enhances their ability to challenge insurgent movements. Vigilante mobilization reflects both community resilience and the broader crisis of state capacity, as civilians increasingly assume security responsibilities traditionally associated with formal governments.[15]

However, community resistance to IS affiliates also carries significant risks. Civilians and local leaders who oppose extremist organizations frequently become targets of retaliation, abduction or assassination. Islámic clerics who publicly challenge jihádíst ideology are particularly vulnerable because they threaten the religious legitimacy claimed by extremist groups. Consequently, communities resisting insurgent influence often operate under constant fear and insecurity. Another major consequence of IS' expansion in Sub-Saharan Africa is large-scale displacement. In many conflict-affected regions, civilians abandon their homes, farms and villages to escape violence and insecurity. This displacement has contributed to rising numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. Forced migration not only produces humanitarian crises but also undermines agricultural production, local economies and social cohesion. Entire communities become uprooted, increasing long-term vulnerability and weakening already fragile state structures.

Despite the severity of the threat posed by IS franchises, military responses have produced only limited and often temporary successes. Poverty, unemployment, inequality and educational exclusion continue to provide fertile recruitment grounds for extremist organizations. Large populations of unemployed and out-of-school youths remain vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment by jihádíst groups. Addressing these conditions, therefore, requires investments in education, employment creation, infrastructure and social welfare programmes capable of reducing vulnerability and restoring public confidence in state institutions. Ultimately, the responses of communities, states and regional actors to IS' expansion reveal the complexity of the insurgent challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa. Local populations navigate insurgent rule through a mixture of accommodation, negotiation, resistance and displacement, while governments continue to struggle with the limitations of military-centred strategies. The persistence of extremist violence demonstrates that sustainable solutions instead require meaningful governance reforms, socio-economic inclusion, community resilience and regional co-operation. Given the transnational nature of jihádíst networks across the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin and East Africa, African states must adopt co-ordinated and collaborative approaches to security governance.

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[14] Daniel Basabe, "Ghost of the Caliphate: How Africa Became the Global Epicenter of the Islamic State", *Geopolitical Monitor*, 19 August 2025.

[15] Kelvin Ashindorbe, Fortune Afatakpa and Saheed Babajide Owonikoko, "Civilian Joint Task Force and Nigeria's Counter-Terrorism Operation: A Critique of the Community-Based Approach to Insecurity", in *African Security*, 2021, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 286–305.

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