



The militant groups in the Sahel Region in Africa... Saudi role and efforts



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"Jamaat al-Islam" Or "Islam group" an organization follows al-Qaeda in the Sahel. This group active in the Sahel and Sahara region, targeting French, African forces in Mali, On 3 March 2018, it claimed responsibility for two attacks in Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso.

Who is "Jamaat al-Islam"?

This group was founded on March 1, 2017 by the integration of four armed movements in Mali and the Sahel: Ansar al-Din, Masina Battalions, Al-Murabitun Battalion, Greater Sahara Emirate, in carrying out blows to its opponents.

By the end of 2017, French intelligence had estimated the number of members of the group at about 500

The group was founded less than a month after the decision of the five Sahel countries (Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso) to establish a joint military force to combat terrorism.

The organization aims to strengthen its influence in the Sahel and Sahara through the implementation of qualitative operations that send messages to the forces concerned with the war against terrorism, led by France.

During the declaration of establishment in March 2017, the organization's leader stressed that the merger was aimed at standing united against the French and their allies. Also announcement of the birth of that group was also considered a message from al-Qaeda to its rival, ISIS that it was still on the scene

Since its establishment, the group has carried out several operations targeting the French and French financial forces. On March 5, 2017, it adopted an attack that

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killed 11 members of the Malian army. And then adopted another attack in April of the same year that resulted in the death of a French soldier.

Armed operations:

-In January 2016: Islamist militants attacked a hotel in Ouagadougou, killing 30 people, including Western nationals.

-In December 2016: 12 soldiers were killed after an attack by Islamic militants near the border with Mali.

-March 2017: Three people were killed in attacks on two police stations in the north.

-On July 2, 2017, the group broadcast a video of six Western hostages, as well as in another tape, broadcast in October 2001, of 11 military abductors

-On March 2, 2018, the Group for the Victory of Islam and Muslims claimed responsibility for the Wagadogograd attacks, which targeted the headquarters of the army's chief and the French embassy and left eight dead.



As operations by armed groups, most residents of Burkina Faso believe that the government is not doing what it takes to counter Ansar al-Islam's threat. The streets of Ouagadougou and the social networking platforms are frustrated by the state's response to this threat.

Officials have consistently condemned the attacks, but critics say the restructuring of the defense and security ministries is not enough. Nevertheless, the government's hands are constrained by a lack of financial and human resources.

After the March attacks, officials seemed to have come up with a clearer plan: withdrawing Burkina Faso's peacekeeping forces in areas such as Sudan and Mali to fight Ansar al-Islam in the north.

Burkina Faso will also benefit from a Western African multinational force targeting jihadists in the Sahel, but the new force will not be operational before late this year.

Saudi Arabia role

At the end of 2017, at the initiative of President Emmanuel Macron, France hosted a summit of the five Sahelian countries, namely Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad.

The five Sahel forces, made up of troops from Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad, launched a symbolic military operation in October amid growing unrest in the Sahel, And ISIS.

The summit discussed means of assisting and supporting the joint military force of the five Sahelian states, whose establishment has been agreed to fight terrorism in these countries.

The summit also discussed how to make the joint military force of the five African Sahel countries able to replace the mission of the UN and French forces stationed in these countries to counter terrorism.

The European Union promised 50 million euros, but such a force needs 400 million euros, according to experts. A source in the Mauritanian delegation confirmed that the budget of the force is close to 500 million euros.

In this context, Mali Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Dioub announced that the Heads of State of the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad) have recently decided to increase the number of troops expected to be doubled, from 5,000 to 10,000.



Macron supported the force personally and asked Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to contribute to its funding when he met him

Riyadh has said it will provide 100 million euros to the force while the UAE will provide 30 million euros, bringing the total pledges to more than half of the target amount.

The pledges came during special conference hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron outside Paris to discuss the fight against terrorism with the presidents of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad.

The so-called Group of Five (G5) Sahel countries came together in 2014 to form a common military force to battle Islamist rebels, terrorist militias and organized crime in their region.

The Sahel G5 force got a financial boost from the pledges of 100 million dollars from the Saudis, 30 million from the UAE, and 60 million from the U.S.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called for a swift start to German and international aid during the special talks, held in a castle in the south-western Paris suburb of La Celle-Saint-Cloud.

Particularly after the ascension of King Salman. Riyadh poured investments into the public and private sectors in West Africa and the Sahel. But Saudi Arabia penetration also extended into the religious realm, with a focus on the Maliki Muslims who compose the majority of West African population.

To compete for influence, then, Saudi Arabia has gone beyond economic projects and religious programming. That's why it has created an unofficial coalition with Mauritania and Senegal and is also preparing a new coalition with Libya and Chad.

The presidents of Senegal and Mauritania travelled to Riyadh in April 2015, and Senegal has committed to sending hundreds of troops to the Asefah Al-Hazm military operation under Saudi command.

Riyadh has contributed to the joint military force of the Sahel to further its political and economic interests in West Africa and countering Iran

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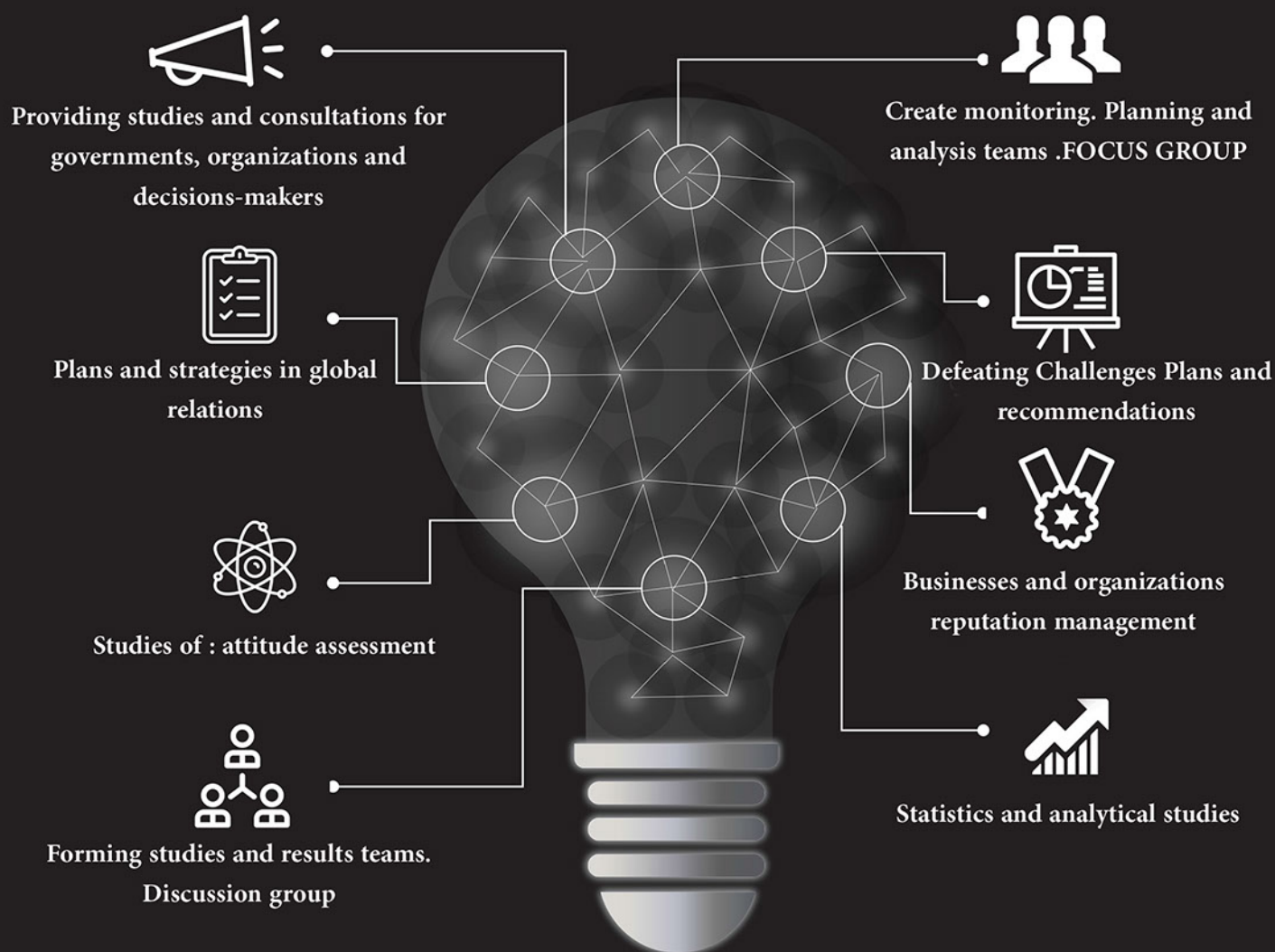
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