TERRORISM IN WEST AFRICA AND NATIONAL SECURITY OF STATES. A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT
Islamic extremism and terrorism are twin-devils of West Africa countries in the 21st Century. Acknowledging this fact, this paper re-examined the severity of these threats to national security of sovereign countries in view of current realities. From the perspective of Causal Design, secondary source and non-participant observational method of data collection, the discourse revealed the alarming scale of jihadist terrorism in Sahel and Lake Chad Basin regions of West Africa as seen in the onslaught of Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidals Awati WaL-Jihad (Boko Haram), Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISIL affiliate), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara and Jama’a Nusral Ul-Islam WaL al Muslim(affiliate of AL-Qaida). Beside the fatalities in thousands of lives, 5.3 million people were internally displaced in Sahel region while 6.9 million people were faced with acute food insecurity and 457 thousands children (under 5 years of age) were exposed to severe malnutrition in Lake Chad Basin. The offensives and humanitarian crisis have persisted amid the efforts of coalition forces such as the G5 in Sahel and Multinational Joint Task Force in Lake Chad Basin. In furtherance to methodological perspective, textual method is applied to analyze these events and illuminate underlying causes and interventions from ECOWAS protocols and United Nations Office for West Africa and Sahel, UNOWA and the West. From these findings, the paper recommend measures to strengthen coalition forces in Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, review of national security strategy of Sahelian and LCB countries, national empowerment scheme and national deradicalization programme in Sahel and LCB sovereign states as among the fundamentals to complement ongoing efforts to stem the tides of terrorism in West Africa.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this century, terrorism is undoubtedly the most potential threat to global security and advancement. The unpleasant situation had over the last two decades taken a more frightening dimension. In this vein, Report of Global Terrorism Index (2020) embellished that after the attacks on September 11, 2001, most terrorist activities globally was concentrated in Iraq and Afghanistan for nearly a decade. After the event of the Arab Spring and emergence of the ISIL there was a surge of terrorism across the Middle East, most ably in Syria and Iraq with a concurrent surge in Nigeria. At this peak in 2014, over 33,000 people were killed in a single year. In the West, terrorist attacks and deaths from terrorism reached their highest point slightly after the global peak with incidents peaking in 2015 when 340 attacks were recorded and deaths peaking in 2016.

At the regional scene, the battle against terrorism has been a challenge Africa has faced long before the international call for a “war against terror” in 2001 which have come to be acknowledged as a watershed moment in international concern with terrorism. These terrorist events did not occur in isolation where terror had previously been an uncomfortable
adjunct to anarchism, liberation wars, counter–insurgency campaigns and the battle fields of the cold war, the events of the day propelled terrorism to a new global level. Today, modern terrorism threatens African political, social and economic security, creating a continental dilemma (African Union Report, 2015:5). Invariably, the intensity and spread of Islamic extremism in the continent in the last two decades had entrenched vicious circle of indigence, provocations and hostilities which has over the years undermined national security of sovereign countries.

In attempt to establish the trend of cross regional terrorism in Africa, it was argued that the euphoria and turmoil of Islamic fanaticism in North region created fertile ground for explosive extremism in West Africa. It further revealed that over 50 million civil population across Maghreb and Sahel regions are vulnerable to terrorism and $ 12.5 billion economic impact of terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa while 13 million people in the Lake Chad Basin are currently in need of aid (Madubuegwu, e tal, 2021: 1). The vortex of Islamic extremism and terrorism in West Africa resonate in Sahel region and Lake Chad Basin where thousands of lives have been lost and millions internally displaced occasioned with the proliferation of IDP Camps and influx of refugees to neighboring countries. The unpleasant development seem to have overwhelmed national security efforts underscoring the emergence of coalition force at the level of state and sub-regional interventions to stem the tides of Islamic extremism and restiveness.

Consequently, the prestige and leadership status of Nigeria in Africa region and, most importantly in West Africa has over the years plummeted by the ceaseless onslaught of Boko Haram and Islamic State of West Africa Province in Kanuri states of North-East region. In reference to the Report of Global Terrorism Index in 2020, Nigeria in Lake Chad region ranks 3rd in global terrorism. In a more specific sense, Madubuegwu (2017) noted that the unabated bombings and killings by the dreaded Sect, Boko Haram in the North East and Federal Capital Territory had led to loss of thousands of lives and infrastructures worth over 5 billion US dollars since the bombings of the Sect began in 2011. Subsequently, Burkina Faso in Sahel region of West Africa had the largest increase in deaths from terrorism, rising by almost 593 deaths from 2018 to 600 in 2019. Although, the majority deaths were attributed to other unknown groups or unspecified Muslim extremists, it is suspected that a large number of these attacks were the work of Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (IGS).

There were 94 fatalities and deaths attributed to this group in 2019. The increase in terrorist activity in Burkina Faso is part of a larger increase across the Sahel region with similar surges in Mali and Niger over the past few years (Report of Global Terrorism Index, 2020: 50).

Reflecting on the dynamics and effects of sub regional terrorism, and the rationale for coalition response, Tejpar and Adriana (2018) remarked that maintaining peace and security is a primordial concern in all regions of the world. Threats to security often begin at national levels and before long spreads to the entire region. To these regional threats, only regional responses will mitigate or solve the crises. This has been the case with one of the most deadly terrorist groups in the world, Boko Haram, which originated and has its base in the Sambisa forest of Nigeria and later spread its heinous tentacles to countries in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) sub region. The gains resulting from regional integration within the sub-region was thus greatly threatened by the sporadic attacks on both military and non-military targets perpetrated by Boko Haram. Similarly, the stability of Sahelian countries and the capacity of their governments to manage emerging tensions of extremism and insurgency have major implications for migration flows, economic development, and health concerns. The rise of violent religious extremism in the region and varied efforts to curtail its spread have raised international alarm and prompted resources to be invested by both domestic governments and foreign partners (Eizenga, 2019:4). Beyond the efforts of government, the sub regional intervention becomes expedient to complement security measures initiated by states against extremism and terrorism in West Africa. However, Maiangwa, (2014), stressed that inspite of various interventions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the region is still stifled by emerging security threats, especially as new waves of terrorism threaten the legitimacy and territorial integrity of some member states, with more obvious and painful evidence in Nigeria and Mali.

This blistering development has become more frightening as Marc (2021) revealed that the very fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban is bringing the nightmarish thought that global Jihadist terrorist groups will again find a haven where they can reorganize and thrive. It also draws attention to Africa, where Jihadi groups have been on the rise. Twenty years after 9/11 they are expanding their war of terror in large portions of the continent. Reflecting on the lessons of Afghanistan for Africa is urgent as Western nations becomes extremely reluctant to increase engagement in fighting these insurgents after Afghanistan fiasco.

These hellish scenarios therefore elicit fundamental questions on the conditions that exacerbate intensity of terrorism in the sub-region amid efforts (kinetic and non-kinetic) to mitigate its inferno and effects. Hence, the need to re-examine critically the spectre of terrorism in West Africa states in bid to illuminate recent dynamics and trends. This is has become imperative in view of growing concerns on sub-regional security and development. The discourse is therefore streamlined in six sections obvious in this introduction, conceptual discourse, volatility of terrorism in West Africa, responses to terrorism in West Africa, conclusion and recommendations.
1.1 Conceptual Discourse

Terrorism is a polemical concept replete with myriad of interpretations and conceptions from sovereign states, intergovernmental organisations, security practitioners and scholars. The vagueness of what constitute the “act of terror”?, is further underscored by the inability of United Nations to establish universally accepted definition amid its successive declarations obvious in decisive resolutions of General Assembly and Security Council in 1994 and 2004 respectively. In this regard, Module of Unite States Institute of Peace Education (2004) documents that terrorism is both complex and emotive. It is complex because it combines so many different aspects of human experience, including subjects such as politics, psychology, philosophy, military strategy, and history, to name a few. Terrorism is also emotive because experiences of terrorist acts arouse tremendous feelings, and because those who see terrorists as justified often have strong feelings concerning the rightness of the use of violence. Without a doubt, terrorism evokes strong feelings whenever it is discussed.

To further illustrate the difficulty in the conceptualization of terrorism, perhaps terrorism has been coined to refer to protesters in Thailand, Tunisia and Libya to the Israeli attack on a flotilla of ships attempting to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza, to the US invasion of Iraq and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, to US drone attacks in Pakistan, to Western and NATO airstrikes against Libya, to Syrian rebels attempting to overthrow the Assad regime, and to Wikileaks founder Julian Assange who was described by US Senator Mitch McConnell as a ‘high-tech terrorist’. Whether or not any or all of these should be classified as terrorism (or terrorists) the point is that the label is all too often used without any real rigour as to what terrorism is and what its parameters are. The failure to craft an agreed definition of terrorism has left a vacuum for actors, whether they be state or non-state, to define terrorism in ways that serve their own perceived political and strategic interests, and, in the case of state responses, remits of ‘counter-terrorism’ are often determined accordingly. As one observer has noted 'the more confused a concept, the more it lends itself to opportunistic appropriation (Schmid, 2011:8; Chittal e tal, 2010 and UN, 2018:24). It seem that the attempt to define and interpret terrorism ostensibly stem from the prejudices of the state and non-state actors neither to justify nor condemn motive and impact of this peculiar acts of violence. However, resolutions of inter-governmental organisation and scholarly definitions are useful to grapple with discernible indices establishing acts of terrorism.

Terrorism is commonly understood to refer to acts of violence that target civilians in the pursuit of political or ideological aims. In legal terms, although the international community has yet to adopt a comprehensive definition of terrorism, existing declarations, resolutions and universal “sectoral” treaties relating to specific aspects of it define certain acts and core elements. In 1994, the General Assembly’s Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism, set out in its resolution 49/60, stated that terrorism includes “criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes” and that such acts “are in any circumstances unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other nature that may be invoked to justify them.” Ten years later, the Security Council, in its resolution 1566 (2004), referred to “criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act.” Later that year, the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change described terrorism as any action that is “intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or noncombatants, when the purpose of such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act” and identified a number of key elements, with further reference to the definitions contained in the 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and Security Council resolution 1566 (2004). The General Assembly is currently working towards the adoption of a comprehensive convention against terrorism, which would complement the existing sectoral anti-terrorism conventions. Its draft article 2 contains a definition of terrorism which includes “unlawfully and intentionally” causing, attempting or threatening to cause:

(a) death or serious bodily injury to any person; or
(b) serious damage to public or private property, including a place of public use, a state or government facility, a public transportation system, an infrastructure facility or the environment; or
(c) damage to property, places, facilities, or systems..., resulting or likely to result in major economic loss, when the purpose of the conduct, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act.” The draft article further defines as an offence participating as an accomplice, organizing or directing others, or contributing to the commission of such offences by a group of persons acting with a common purpose. (United Nations, 2018:5).

At the level of Regional Platform, the European Union in Article 1 of the Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism (2002) conceptualized terrorism as certain criminal offences set out in a list comprised largely of serious offenses against persons and properties which give their nature may seriously damage a country or an international
organisation committed with the aim of seriously intimidating a population or unduly compelling a Government or International organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act or seriously destabilizing or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic and social structures of Government or International organisation (Report of European Union on Terrorism, 2016:5) cited in (Madubuegwu, et al, 2021:129). Furthermore, the 1999 Organisation of African Unity, OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating Terrorism, held in Algeria, defined terrorism as;

“any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a state party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to any person, any number or group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage and is calculated or intended to;

i. intimidate, put in fear, force or coerce or induce any government body or institution, the general body or institution, the general public or any segment therefore to do or abstain from doing any act or to adopt or abandon a particular standing point or act according to certain principles.

ii. disrupt any public services, the delivery of any essential service to the public or create a public emergency.


Similarly, Report of Global Terrorism Index (2020), defined terrorism as ‘the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.’ The act has to be ‘an intentional act of violence or threat of violence by a non-state actor.’ This means an incident has to meet certain criteria in order for it to be counted as a terrorist act:

i. The incident must be intentional - the result of a conscious calculation on the part of a perpetrator.

ii. The incident must entail some level of violence or threat of violence - including property damage as well as violence against people.

iii. The perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors.

iv. The violent act was aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious or social goal.

v. The violent act included evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate or convey some other message to a larger audience other than to the immediate victims.

vi. The violent act was outside the precepts of international humanitarian law.

Succinctly, the foregoing myriad of definitions attempt to establish terrorism as act of violence by non-state actors which is perhaps narrow and prejudiced perspective as Madubuegwu, et al (2021) argued that act of terror is not exclusively precipitated by non–state actors but also peculiar to state or what is otherwise seen as “state terrorism”. However, the concept of “state terrorism” is also vague in conceptualization. Accordingly, Blakeley (2008) remarked that governments of many countries have used repression against their own population. This has included terrorism. Yet there has been relatively little research on state terrorism within the discipline of international relations and even less on state terrorism by liberal democratic states from the North. Again, it is argued that state terrorism receives so little attention primarily because many scholars focus on terrorism by non-state actors rather than state actors. Some do not even accept that terrorism by state should be equated with terrorism by non-state actors. In this vein, Laqueur (1986) argued that there are basic differences in motives, functions and effects between oppression by state (or society or religion) and political terrorism by non-state actors.

In explicit sense, Blakeley (2009) went further to embellish four key elements of state terrorism:

i. There must be deliberate act of violence against individuals that the state has a duty to protect or threat of such an act if a climate of fear has already been established through preceding acts of the state violence.

ii. The act must be perpetrated by actors on behalf of or in conjunction with the state including paramilitaries and private security agents.

iii. The act or threat of violence is intended to induce extreme fear in some target observers who identify with the victim.

iv. The target audience is forced to consider changing their behaviour in some way.

In a more illustrative sense, states may use terrorists in the pursuit of their own strategic interests. States may sponsor terrorist groups, especially when the objectives of the state and the terrorist group are similar. For example, Libya used terrorists to explode a bomb aboard Pan Am 103 flying from London to New York in 1988, allegedly in response to U.S. and British bombing of Libya (Module of United States Institute of Peace Education, 2004: 23). Democratic dictatorships in Africa have over the decades successfully carried out state–sponsored terrorism against their nationals in guise of resisting rebellion. For instance, Rwandan genocide, state repression of Arab Spring in the Maghreb countries, are few out of many explosive events in reference to state terrorism in Africa (Madubuegwu, et al, 2021:130). State terrorism reflects in domestic and external dimensions. It is domestic or internal when it coerces nationals to submission and external when it is intended to destabilize a regime of another country and create atmosphere of terror among its nationals.
Beyond the polemics of ideas, Omede and Omede (2015) attempted specific characterization of terrorism which involves the following:

a. Use of unlawful violence believing that violence will usher in a better system
b. Use of unlawful and assorted dangerous weapons
c. Motivated by goals that might be political, religious or ideological
d. Secretive in membership recruitment and locations of residence
e. Fewer in number comparable to the larger society they attack
f. Have strong will and could die for the course they uphold
g. Most times, operate as syndicates
h. Derive financial and military supports from national and international loyalists
   i. They are militant, they use coercion, intimidation and instill fears in people
   j. Their tactics involve suicide bombing, car bombing, rocket propelled grenades, assassinations, abductions and kidnapping, disguising and hijacking. Their targets are extermination of human lives and destruction of properties. These are achieved by attacking public squares, government buildings and installations, churches and mosques, schools, bridges, police stations, military barracks and installations as well as market squares and prisons to free inmates particularly their members incarcerated.
Consequently, terrorism is a function of innovative variables of social change and dialectical conditions of a dysfunctional system. In this vein, Adejoh, and Shimawua (2017: 236), outlined the broad triggers of terrorism:
   i. Structural Causes (demographic imbalances, globalization, rapid modernization, transitional societies, increasing individualism with rootlessness, atomization, relative deprivation, class structure etc).
   ii. Facilitator Causes (or accelerator) include modern new media, transportation, weapons, technology, weak state etc.
   iii. Motivational Causes (ideologies) are the actual grievances that people experience as a personal level, motivating them to act. Motivational causes may also be seen as concert symptoms of more fundamental structural causes.
   iv. Triggering Causes (momentous, provocative events) which include outrageous act committed by enemy or events calling for revenge or action.

In further conceptualization, terrorism by the state or non-state actors involves deliberate coercion and violence (or threat thereof) directed at some victim with the intention of inducing extreme fear in some target observers who identify with the victims in a such way that they perceive themselves as potential future victims. In this way, they are forced to consider altering their behaviour in some manner decided by the actor (Mitchell, et al 1986:5) cited in Blakeley (2009: 17). In conclusive sense, terrorism is therefore viewed as acts or actions aimed to challenge the sovereignty of the state with the intent of compelling or ensuring a new order; or to intimidate and suppress liberty driven process such as agitations or protest with the intent to create fear of terror among the population. Hence, terrorism is planned and carried out by none-state actors to challenge the government or by the state to coerce its citizens to allegiance (Madubuegwu, et al, 2021:130).

Basically, terrorism in whatever form and context it occur obviously remain a potential threat to national security of a sovereign state. Hence, national security evinces the essence of territoriality and defense against external aggression and internal insurrection. Thus, security as a term apparently denotes the condition of safety or being safe. However, the term “security” is riddle in ambiguities which stems from its multi-disciplinary orientation. David (2006) remarked that security is the condition or feeling of safety from harm or danger, the defense, protection, and the absence of threat to acquire values. similarly, Wolfers (1962), cited in (Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2013: 286) argued that security in objective sense, measure the absence of threats to acquire values, in subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked. It is therefore obvious that security entrenches peaceful co-existence, orderliness and stability. Furthermore, Okolie (2014:10) aptly illuminated the broad nature and meaning of security which captured remarkably certain indices and conditions as expressed below:

   i. Freedom from hunger, want, starvation and disease.
   ii. Conviction that the “needs of the stomach” are safeguard and guaranteed.
   iii. Mustersing of adequate security machinery in a given polity to protect the lives, property and investment of the citizens.
   iv. Guaranteeing the future of the people through responsible and responsive governance.
   v. Instituting adequate safeguard against oppression, suppression and alienation of the citizens.
   vi. Evolving political actions that will deeper affective, ascriptive and evaluative orientation among citizens.
   vii. Implementing state craft based on effective protection and equitable distribution of socially produced wealth.
   viii. Improving the residues of patriotism, solidarity and cooperative behaviour.

From the above, the meaning of security is multi-dimensional and extends beyond layman’s perception. On this premise, Adedayo (2011) classified security as: (i) Political (ii) Regional (iii) National (iv)State and, (v)Community. Interestingly, national security is imperative for safety and development of every economy. It is therefore argued that nation is secure
to the extent that it is not in a position to lose core values, lives, properties and liberties, property or other important goals and values (Lipman 1993:81 and Aja 1999:31).

In a historic sense, Holmes (2015) embellished that modern concept of national security arose in the 17th century during the Thirty Years War in Europe and the Civil War in England. In 1648, the Peace of Westphalia established the idea that the nation state had sovereign control not only of domestic affairs such as religion, but also of external security. The idea of the nation-state is commonplace today, yet it would be wrong to assume that it is the only way to look at international security. The pre-Westphalia international system was based on the assumption that there existed a universal principle governing the affairs of states led by emperors, popes, kings, and princes. That was indeed the principle of the Holy Roman Empire. The new idea of the nation-state took a different approach. Peace and stability could be better served if people were not slaughtering each other over some universal principle—in that case, religion. It would be far better to have an international system based on the equilibrium of nation-states dedicated to the limited purposes of national sovereignty and self-defense. This idea was challenged by the philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who resurrected the universal principle idea not in the old religious context, but in a secular one inspired by the Enlightenment. In his 1795 essay “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch,” he outlined his idea that the system of nation states should be replaced by a new enlightened world order. Nation-states should subordinate their national interests to the common good and be ruled by international law. Thus was born the secular view of supranational institutions governing international affairs, which today is reflected in the global worldview of liberal internationalism and most clearly manifested in the United Nations. It is important to keep these two schools of thought in mind when considering the various definitions of national security. They are present in current debates over national sovereignty, international law, and the role of international institutions in world affairs. American liberal internationalists for example, with their dedication to the United Nations and international governance, are neo-Kantians, whereas realists tend more to the views of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), and other philosophers who espoused the supremacy of the nation-state.

Furthermore, national security is seen in terms of a nation’s military capabilities or the struggle to overcome internal and external aggression. A nation is secured once it is free from military threats or political coercion (Aliyu, 2012) cited in Onimisi (2014:81). Security threat differs amongst nations. The major security threat to some powerful nations like the USA and its allies may be how to defeat international terrorists and to promote their economic interest and democratic values (Aliyu, 2012). However, nations like Nigeria has its own peculiar security threat determined by socio-economic and political circumstance. And, threat to Nigerian security caused by the activities of the Jama`at Ahlas sunnah lid-da’wa wal-jihad, popularly known as Boko Haram (Onimisi, 2014:81).

Beyond the military centric view of national security, Richard (2012) noted that national security is defined as articulation of security priorities and concerns put forward by the political leaders of a state at a given time in history. Hence, these concerns are constructed around the interests of a particular set of people identified as citizens of the state. In a broader perspective, national security is seen as the expression of a consensus, a compilation of the expectations of citizens of a Nation, wherein the alleviation and mitigation of certain perceived threats to members of that society (Nation) and their values (referent objects), are exclusively delegated to the relevant institutions of the state, which are held primarily responsible for the identification, assessment and mitigation (or in some cases, extermination) of these threats. Emphatically, national security therefore implicitly entails fundamentals of national defense against threat to:

i. freedom and civil liberty of the nationals in legitimate social processes.
ii. national ethics and values
iii. state institutions in safeguarding national ethics and values.

Sadly, the national security of sovereign states in West Africa sub-region is stridently threatened by insurgency of terrorist groups.

In descriptive analysis, West Africa is a sub-region of African continent and broadly defined to include the western portion (Western Sahara, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia). West Africa occupied an area in excess of 6,140,000 km², or approximately one-fifth of Africa. The vast majority of this land is plain lying less than 300 meters above sea level through isolated high points exist in numerous states along the Southern shore of West Africa (Black Encyclopedia, 2015:34) cited in Azu, e tal (2017:67).

Madubuegwu and Okafor (2017) remarked that modern West Africa region comprised sixteen countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo). These countries are products of Western imperialism where Britain and France were the dominant colonial powers whose influence in the sub-region has culminated to ideological-polarity among the West Africa countries-the Anglophone and Francophone. Furthermore, the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) is the sub-regional platform that facilitates cooperation, trade and partnership among the West African countries. Mauritania is the only Western Africa country that is not a member of ECOWAS.
1.2 The Volatility of Terrorism in West Africa: Underlying Causes and Implications

West Africa remains a strategic sub-region of African continent. A sub region of estimated population of 414, 912, 873 as of October 11, 2021 based on the latest United Nations estimates. West Africa population is equivalent to 5.16 percent of the total world population. The population density in West Africa is 66 per Km2 (172 people per m12) in a land surface of 5.1 million square km where 11 countries lies on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean and 5 countries form part of the Sahel. Thus, 47.7 percent of the population is urban. Nigeria is the largest economy in the sub-region whose current GDP worth value is 514 billion U.S dollars and records the highest gross domestic product in Africa followed by Egypt’s GDP worth value of 394 billion dollars U.S dollars which ranks as the second-highest on the continent. A cluster of sovereign countries within the sub-region have stable macroeconomic governance with exponential economic growth, although constrained by enormous poverty and weak state institutions occasioned by authoritarianism in governance.

To explicate the vulnerability of West Africa to criminalities and hostilities before the advent of Islamic extremism and insurgency, it is argued that the limited state presence has over the years enabled criminal networks to operate in the border regions, prior to the emergence of Boko Haram. Indeed, the Lake Chad region was previously known for organized crime, with a weak state presence leading to de facto havens for violent criminal organisations. Smuggling is rife, including every day consumer products (profiting from price differences), vehicles, cigarettes, genuine or fake medicines, weapons (especially light), drugs and so on. Banditry has also been common, to the point where Cameroon developed a specific force, the Rapid Brigade Intervention (BIR), to address the issue. In addition, the inspiration of the original regional force along the lines of the current-day Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), also has its origins in combating criminal activity in the region in the 1990s(Omar, and Ani, 2018:6).

Today, the situation has changed rapidly. The peculiarity of West Africa hostilities stem from suicide bombings, rocket launched offensives and abductions by Jihadist groups that emerged from the euphoria of Islamic extremism and domestic systemic failures. Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda Awati Wal-Jihad, (Boko Haram), Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISIL affiliate), Jama’a Nusrat UL-Islam Wa al-Muslim (affiliate of AL-Qaida) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara have in the recent time persistently unleashed terror against sovereign states in Sahel and Lake Chad regions of West Africa which had claimed thousands of lives and displacement of millions amid ground and aerial offensives from coalition forces (MNJTF and G5 joint force) and French troops. In the Lake Chad Basin, the unabated offensives of third most dreaded terrorist organizations, Boko Haram and Islamic State of West African Province are intensely visible in North-East in Nigeria, Diffa region of Niger, Far North Province in Cameroon and Lac region of Chad. In Sahel region, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara and Jama’a Nusrat UL-Islam Wa al-Muslimm (affiliate of AL-Qaida) remained undaunted in central region of Mali to East region of Burkina Faso with a firm control of Mali-Niger borders. The motive of these Sunni Jihadist armed groups is to usurp political power, exterminate western values and Islamize as professed in their respective ideologies.

Succinctly, Alexis (2021) recalled that in 2017, AQIM’s Sahel branch merged with an offshoot and two local affiliates to form the Union for Supporting Islam and Muslims (aka JNIM), under the leadership of Iyad Ag Ghaly, a Malian Tuareg. JNIM has claimed attacks on U.N, French, and state targets in Mali and Burkina Faso. In 2018, JNIM attacked the G5 Sahel joint force headquarters in central Mali, forcing it to relocate to Bamako. A separate AQIM offshoot

Fig. 1. West Africa
Source: Adapted from Musah (2009: 14).
has affiliated with the Islamic State and claimed the 2017 deadly ambush of U.S. soldiers in Niger; it remains active in border areas. These groups have proven resilient, withstanding frequent French military strikes on top leaders and ably exploiting local grievances and communal tensions. In recent years, they have enlarged their areas of operation, expanded recruitment, carried out complex attacks on local and U.N. military outposts, and forced the retreat of state and rival actors by targeting civilian officials, traditional leaders, and individuals accused of colluding with Bamako and/or France. Human rights abuses by state and militia forces may have helped fuel recruitment. In explicit sense, Omar, and Ani (2018) indicated that the Lake Chad region consists of parts of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Linkages throughout the region surpass the national boundaries imposed upon it. It is in this region that Boko Haram was able to thrive, taking advantage of a number of common issues that affect all four states, albeit with some variations.

In retrospect to terrorism in Lake Chad Basin, Teipar and Adriana (2015:5) documents, Boko Haram is a deadly jihadist terrorist group that saw its emergence in early 2002. This group had as founding leader, the unorthodox preacher, Mohamed Yusuf. He amongst other things at inception bemoaned the bad governance, poverty and other “Western ills” in Nigeria and called for a religious revival as a logical response to these “vices”. When the leader was neutralized by the Nigerian government in 2009, the scale and brutality of Boko Haram violence escalated under Yusuf’s deputy, Abubakar Shekau. The sect used crude and rudimentary tools to perpetrate violence in Nigeria. The use of child suicide bombers and mass abduction became rampant. Notably, the kidnapping of 276 ‘Chibok girls’ from a school in Borno State in 2014 completely elevated both domestic and international attention to the threat posed by this group. Attacks on soft targets notably, mosques, churches and market places became rampant. Today this group is based in the Sambisa forest in Borno State and can boast of both crude and sophisticated weapons which they use for their operation. From 2015, Boko Haram intensified and expanded its activities beyond the Nigerian borders and increased its campaigns to capture and control territory in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states. It also regularly orchestrated sporadic attacks in the far north region of Cameroon, southeast region in Niger and Ngouboua village in Chad. This sect exploited and penetrated the cultural, linguistic and religious ties shared by Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon to implant their heinous vision. In 2015, Boko Haram pledged its allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) and changed its name to the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP). Reports have it that between 2009 and 2016 about thirty thousand (30000) people died from Boko Haram related attacks. Enormous property has been destroyed to the Islamic State (IS) and changed its name to the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP). Reports have it that between 2009 and 2016 about thirty thousand (30000) people died from Boko Haram related attacks. Enormous property has been destroyed.

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In summary, the Table 1 below illuminates the alarming position of West African countries in global terrorism ranking to further accentuate the relevance of earlier submissions of scholars on torrents of terrorism in LCB and Sahel region.

Table 1
Sub-Saharan Africa GTI Ranks in 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Republic of the Congo</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Cote d’Ivoire</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Report of Global Terrorism Index (2017:46).
In credence, Report of Global Terrorism Index (2020) documents that the expansion of ISIL affiliates into sub-Saharan Africa led to a surge in terrorism in many countries in the region. Seven of the ten countries with the largest increase in terrorism were in sub-Saharan Africa: Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mali, Niger, Cameroon and Ethiopia. These countries are also facing various ecological threats, are amongst the countries with the highest population growth and suffer from low societal resilience. The largest increase in deaths from terrorism occurred in Burkina Faso, where deaths rose from 86 to 593, a 590 per cent increase. The rise was mainly driven by three groups: the Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and the Burkina Faso branch of Ansar al-Islam. ISIL’s shift to sub-Saharan Africa meant that the region recorded the second highest number of terrorism deaths, even after accounting for the substantial fall in Nigeria. Deaths attributed to ISIL affiliates in the region were recorded as far south as Mozambique and 41 per cent of all ISIL-related attacks in 2019 occurred in sub-Saharan Africa.

Beyond the onslaught of these formal terrorist groups, it was also reported that Fulani extremists were responsible for 26 percent of terror-related deaths in Nigeria at 325 fatalities. The Fulani do not constitute a single terrorist group. However, certain deaths within the ongoing conflict between the Pastoralists and the nomadic Fulani have been categorized as terrorism and attributed to extremist elements within the Fulani. This categorization is reflective of terrorism used as tactic within ongoing conflict. There are an estimated 14 million Fulani in Nigeria with substantial population also seen in Guinea, Senegal, Mali and Cameroon. The majority of terrorist activity related to Fulani extremist occurred in states of Kaduna, Plateau and Benue in Nigeria. Kaduna recorded a 77 percent increase in terrorist–related deaths of 111 attacks attributed to Fulani extremists (Report of Global Terrorist Index, 2020: 21) cited in Madubuegwu et al (2021:136).

Today, the civilian casualties in Northern Nigeria have increased rapidly with accelerated fatalities from Fulani Herdsmen. For instance, from December to April, 2021, there has been incessant killings and abductions in most states in Northern Nigeria (Madubuegwu, et al 2021:137). Again, menace of banditry in north-west and north-central Nigeria has reached alarming height in incessant abductions of school children.

Recently, United Nations Report (2021) documents that security situation in West Africa and the Sahel remained volatile, with high levels of violence, notably in parts of the central Sahel and Nigeria. Despite the scaling up of military and counter-insurgency operations by national armies, the Multinational Joint Task Force, the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and international partners, attacks by extremist and criminal groups in the subregion, targeting civilians, humanitarian personnel and assets, defence and security forces and civil defence volunteers, continued to increase during the reporting period. In the Liptako-Gourma tri-border area shared by Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, rival terrorist groups competed over territory and resources, in particular stolen goods, trafficking routes, artisanal gold mines and illegal taxation. The absence of State authority in the area also created a conducive environment for militant and criminal groups to operate and recruit new members. Accordingly, the report embellished terrorist incidents in West Africa states as potential threat to national security:

i. In Burkina Faso, in the first half of 2021, hundreds of civilians were killed in attacks by presumed terrorist groups in the eastern region, while at least 15 civilians were reportedly kidnapped and subsequently executed in Sitenga, Sahel region. In April 2021, 70 people were reportedly killed, including 30 civilians, of whom four were children. Security forces and civil defence volunteers were also frequently targeted in various provinces. In June 2021, more than 100 civilians, including 7 children, were killed and several others injured by unidentified assailants in a village in the Province of Yagha, in the Sahel region.

ii. In Mali, attacks against national and international security forces continued unabated, with at least 40 reported incidents between 1 January and 1 April, 2021. On 15 March 2021, at least 33 Malian soldiers were killed, and 14 others injured, in an attack on a security post in Tessit, Gao region. In attacks on a United Nations convoy on the Douentza Timbuktu axis on 13 January, and on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) camp in Aguelhok, Kidal region, on 2 April 2021, 4 peacekeepers were killed and 34 were injured. Furthermore, a total of 307 attacks against civilians were reported in April and May, 2021.

iii. In the Niger, civilians bore the brunt of extremist assaults. In the first quarter of 2021, large-scale attacks against civilians in Tillabéri and Tahoua regions resulted in a record high combined death toll of more than 400 people. In Diffa, on 21 February 2021, alleged Boko Haram elements attacked a convoy carrying election materials, killing an electoral official, while in Bankilare, Tillabéri region, a polling station was attacked during the run-off presidential election.

iv. In Nigeria, the situation continued to pose multidimensional security challenges. Boko Haram factions, bandits and unidentified armed groups increased their attacks against security forces and humanitarian agencies, but mostly against civilians. In the previously calm south-eastern region, there were numerous attacks by unidentified shooters targeting security personnel and installations. During the reporting period, the frequency of kidnappings for ransom increased exponentially, affecting more than 1,570 people, including 800 secondary school students, predominantly in Kaduna, Kastina, Zamfara and Niger States. In late April 2021, the Governor of Niger State announced that Boko Haram factions had taken control of some territories in the state, marking an extension of their operations beyond north-eastern Nigeria.
Security challenges in the country have triggered knock-on effects on public safety, food security and social cohesion, with separatist voices growing louder.

v. In Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal, the period under review, terrorist groups continued to probe the border defence of coastal countries. In Côte d’Ivoire, four attacks on security personnel were carried out during the reporting period, in Kafolo, Tehini and Toungo, close to the border with Burkina Faso. In Senegal, the authorities dismantled a cell affiliated with Jama’a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin in the eastern town of Kidira, causing the President to attend, for the first time, the ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State of the Group of Five for the Sahel, held in N’Djamena on 15 February, 2021.

vi. In Guinea, the Gulf of Guinea remained a piracy hotspot, despite indications of a slight decrease in the number of incidents taking place, compared with the previous reporting period. From January to March, the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea recorded 20 incidents, compared with 45 incidents in the last quarter of 2020, including 9 in the maritime space of ECOWAS, and 40 kidnappings. Kidnappings for ransom, which constituted the primary modus operandi, became increasingly sophisticated, with the use of mother ships to operate farther from shore, as evidenced in the pirate attacks perpetrated between 7th and 10th February, 2021 on four ships between Cameroon and Sao Tome and Principe. According to the International Maritime Bureau, the sole crew fatality in 2021 occurred in the Gulf of Guinea.

   Basically, the plague pneumonia of terrorism in the sub-region has adversely reversed governance expectations and socio-economic projections. Hence, the overwhelming Jihadist terrorism in West Africa reflects enormously in human fatalities, destruction of critical infrastructures and loses of billions of dollars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>The Ten Most Affected Countries by Economic Cost of Terrorism in 2019.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Economic Cost of Terrorism as Percentage of GDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Africa Republic</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


   Subsequently, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in 2020, documents that a new record high of 24 million Sahelians required humanitarian assistance and protection. In 2020, West Africa and the Sahel host 870,000 refugees and 4.9 million internally displaced persons (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2020:4). In West Africa and the Sahel, 19.1 million persons are projected to be food insecure during the lean season, June to August 2020, a 77 per cent increase compared with 2019 and the highest in a decade. Food insecurity, whose hotspots include southern Mauritania and northern Senegal, the Lake Chad basin and the central Sahel, is mainly a result of the persistence of conflict and insecurity, leading to displacement, dysfunctional social infrastructure, the destabilization of market and economic flows and the disruption of livelihoods (United Nations, 2020:7). Accordingly, United Nations Report illuminates the humanitarian crisis of Jihadist hostilities in Lake Sahel and Lake Chad as enunciated below:

i. The humanitarian situation across the subregion remained highly precarious, as insecurity, violence, internal displacement, poverty and malnutrition exacerbated extreme levels of vulnerability. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, almost 29 million people in the Sahel required assistance and protection in 2021, which represented an increase of 5 million over beginning of 2020. In Burkina Faso, a record number of 3.5 million people will require emergency assistance in six priority regions. In Mali, 5.9 million people will need humanitarian assistance, up from 4.3 million at the beginning of 2020. In the Niger, compared with early 2020, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance increased by 900,000, to 3.8 million. In addition, in north-eastern Nigeria, 8.7 million people require some form of assistance, with critical support required for 6.5 million people who are most vulnerable.

ii. Across the Sahel, the population of displaced people increased to 5.3 million. In Burkina Faso, a further 200,000 people fled their homes, bringing the total number of displaced persons to 1.2 million, the majority of whom are women and children. In Mali, the number of internally displaced persons increased by 60,000, to 347,000 in total. In the Niger, the number of persons who have fled their homes rose by 34,000 during the reporting period, to reach 300,000 internally displaced persons by end of May 2021.
iii. The level of food insecurity remained alarmingly high. Across the Sahel, 14 million people were expected to face severe food insecurity during the upcoming lean season, from June to August. A total of 6.3 million children were facing acute malnutrition, including 1.6 million who were suffering from life-threatening severe acute malnutrition. In the Niger, 2.3 million people faced acute food insecurity and 457,000 children under 5 years of age were exposed to severe acute malnutrition. In the Lake Chad Basin, the number of people facing hunger in 2021 was expected to increase by half a million compared with the previous year. In Nigeria alone, 4.3 million people were expected to face acute hunger during the upcoming lean season.

iv. Insecurity and attacks severely disrupted the delivery of basic social services and constrained humanitarian access in many areas, depriving distressed communities of essential assistance and exposing humanitarian personnel to increased risks. Across the Sahel, more than 5,000 schools were closed or non-operational, jeopardizing the realization of children’s right to education, especially for girls, who are the least likely to return to school after prolonged interruptions. In the central Sahel, 136 health centres were closed due to insecurity, and most of those that are still open are not fully functional. Maternal mortality in the crisis-affected areas was much higher than national averages. Women and girls also faced increasing risks of abduction, forced marriage and sexual assault. In the Niger, more than 50 per cent of children between 7 and 16 years of age were out of school, and outbreaks of measles, cholera and meningitis have affected the most vulnerable. In Nigeria, insecurity created challenges in terms of access and logistics, which compounded the already dire humanitarian situation.

v. Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria have developed humanitarian response plans requiring about $2.7 billion to reach 16.2 million people. As of mid-June 2021, 16 per cent of the funding for those plans had been secured.

vi. As of 16 June 2021, West Africa and the Sahel had registered nearly 500,000 cases of COVID-19 and 6,833 deaths. Across the region, the COVID-19 pandemic further increased vulnerability and contributed to an increase in gender-based violence. Vaccination campaigns have started in all the countries of the subregion through COVAX, the vaccine pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator (United Nations, 2021:21).

Assertively, Islamic extremism, adverse socio-economic realities, failed governance and weak state institutions have been attributed as the conditions exacerbating armed insurgency and hostilities in Africa region (Anneli, 2008; Botha 2008; Agbioba and Maiangwa; 2016; Kukah 2012; Mustapha, 2012). In a broad overview, it is argued that West African region was more or less free of terrorist threats, though bouts of ethno-religious skirmishes occurred, particularly in Nigeria. But following the 9/11 attacks on the United States homeland, West Africa came under the spotlight as a possible hub of terrorism. This unfortunate development has been attributed to various reasons including, the growth of radical Islam in several parts of the region; West Africa’s proximity to the Middle East and the Arab world, where many terrorist groups thrive; the general inability of African states to sufficiently police their porous borders; the abject poverty, unemployment and political instability; history of repressive and tyrannical regimes; the mobilisation of religion by sinister actors; the vast ungoverned Sahelian region and other deteriorating socio-economic factors that leave many young people desperate, frustrated and pliable tools for recruitment by terrorist elements. The combination of these factors has created a ‘perfect storm’ for radical alternatives, which have manifested themselves variously in the forms of religious radicalism, insurgency, revolutionary gangs and now terrorism. Ultimately, the emerging threat of terrorism in the subregion has been particularly catastrophic, as demonstrated graphically in Nigeria, Mali and other spaces across the Sahel (Le Sage 2007: 48) cited in Maiangwa (2014). In more specific sense, Ewi (2012) added that chronic corruption, failed states (Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mali, Cote d’Ivoire, Liberal, Sierra Leone and Nigeria), Muslim-Christian conflicts (religious fundamentalism), farmer-grazer land conflicts, porous borders ethnic, poverty and mass youth unemployment and proliferation of arms and light weapons are factors that makes West Africa fatally vulnerable to terrorism.

Most importantly, proliferation and trafficking of arms and light weapons across porous borders in Sahel and Lake Chad Basin perhaps represents one of the vehement facilitator of Sunni Jihadi restiveness in recent time. In this regard, Mangan and Nowak (2019), stressed that illicit arms trafficking forms part of a complex web of interconnected criminal markets extending through West Africa and the Sahel. Illicit flows of weapons, drugs, migrants, and smuggled commodities take on a strategic ordering based on the levels of profit, risk, and tactical importance associated with a particular commodity. Weapons are positioned at the top of this strategic order, serving as both an important trafficked commodity and a means of buying protection and maintaining control over populations and key trafficking routes, flows, and hubs. Small arms and light weapons trafficking in West Africa is fed by easy access to stockpiles of arms and facilitated by weak responses from regional state security. Again, Holton and Pavesi (2018) remarked that weapons sources in West Africa and the Sahel are both internal (sourced from within the region) and external (sourced from other regions) and through international and intercontinental transfers. The industrial scale production of arms in the region is comparatively limited, although small arms and their revised parts, accessories and ammunition are produced in Mali and Nigeria. In Mali, the cartoucherie du Mali produces ammunition particularly 12-gauge shortgun cartridges. In Nigeria, the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria produces a broad spectrum of weapons including AK-pattern and other rifles, sub-machine guns, general purpose machine guns, pistols, rocket-propelled grenade (RPG), Launchers, 81mm Mortars, hand grenades and variety of ammunition. Production in Sub-Saharan African states is largely not for export, but is primarily designed to meet the demand of national security forces. However, Boko Haram reportedly has stolen or captured...
Nigerian-Made assault rifles and ammunition from security forces during clashes and attacks (Tessieres, 2017:6). Significantly, several trafficking routes both within the region and extending to neighboring areas, feed regional demand for illicit weapons. Outflow from quaddafi-era sources of illicit weapons for Sub-Saharan Africa since 2011. Although, these flows have showed following the resumption of civil conflict in Libya in 2014, they nonetheless remain a significant source of weapons regionally including new weapons that have since entered Libya in violation of United Nations Embargo (Florquin, et al 2019:50). Cross-border trafficking hubs and routes include:

(a). Benin and Nigeria; (b). Burkina Faso and Cote d’ Ivoire; (c). Liberia; (d). Guinea-Bissau and Senegal (e). Gambia and Senegal; (f). Liberia and Sierra Leone/Guinea; (g). Algeria and Mali; (h). Chad and Niger (i). Nigeria and Niger; (j). Lake Chad region to Niger and Mali (de-Tessiire, 2017:4-8, UN, 2009:52).

Amid varicosity and frightening scale of terrorism in West Africa, there have conventions on counterterrorism frameworks (domesticated by states) occasioned by myriad kinetic and non-kinetic interventions from sovereign states and coalition force, Economic Community of West African States, United Nations and the West to stem the tides of extremism and insurgency.

1.3 Responses to Terrorism in West Africa

In a historic sense, it is instructive to note that over the past three decades, the laws governing counterterrorism efforts have evolved dramatically. Counterterrorism laws were initially enshrined in a series of international treaties, and tackled specific questions such as the financing of terrorism or the hijacking of airplanes. After the events of 9/11, the development of a flurry of laws and policies drastically changed the normative framework for counterterrorism. In particular, the United Nations Security Council almost immediately passed resolution 1373 (2001), requiring states to implement a series of measures to combat ‘threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts’. This resolution is often considered the cornerstone resolution of the UN’s counterterrorism efforts and paved the way for the new quasi-legislative role of the UN Security Council in the counterterrorism arena. The UN Security Council has therefore had a strong direct influence on domestic counterterrorism legislation and policy (Debarre 2018: 200). Beyond these global conventions on counterterrorism, the fatality of terror-related incidents become more intense and overwhelmed the efforts of sovereign states in Sahel and Lake Chad regions necessitating the expedience of coalition force.

Accordingly, Teipar and Adriana (2015:5) remarked that the Multi-National Joint Task Force, MNJTF created by the Lake Chad Basin Commission in 1998 to address cross border security issues in the Lake Chad Basin was reactivated in 2012, with an expanded mandate to tackle counterterrorism operations. A clearer strategy against the Boko Haram sector was decided in an extraordinary summit of LCBC leaders in Benin on October 2014. It among other things saw the arrival of Cameroon as one of the troops contributing countries. This then necessitated a regional response in dealing with the menace of Boko Haara. Consequently, in 2012 the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) under the political auspices of the Lake Chad Basin Commission saw its mandate expanded to manage the Boko Haram menace and broadly promote regional peace and security in the Lake Chad Basin. The MNJTF comprising thousand (10000) troops from four countries; Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger has relatively succeeded in containing the combat capacity of this terrorist group (UNSG report 2017). This however, has led to diverse political consequences for leaders of member states of the MNJTF operation.

Furthermore, the MNJTF had its first major operation in 2016. Despite major challenges, the Task Force recorded major strides against the Boko Haram. Starting in the month of June of 2016, and ending in November of the same year, Gama Aiki (Complete the Job). The operation was held in Borno State and other parts of the LCBR, it entailed integrated military actions from the member States. The success of the Gama Aiki to liberate areas that were under the control of Boko Haram has been able to boost the morale of the Task Force. In the 11th month of 2015, a strike by the MNJTF sector 2 was launched against Boko Haram. The success of the strike included the surrender of an estimate of 250 Boko Haram fighters. In 2015 the Cameroon faction of MNJTF was able to counteract a large number of Boko Haram fighters. The MNJTF were also able to free hostages, recover weapons clamp-down on some Boko Haram training camps. The task force has been able to set free communities that were under the control of the infamous group, such communities include Gore Blangafe, Gore Mahamat, Kirta-Woulgo, Segui, Damboure and Chaugry, these liberated communities remain under the protection of the task force. Also the MNJTF has been able to weaken the capabilities of Boko Haram’s ability to inflict sufferings on civilians, in a 2019 post by Premium times, reporting a statement by the field Commander Chikezie Ude, he reports that attacks on citizens previously at 2000 in 2015 dropped to 573 in 2018. In addendum, members of the Task Force have been able to kill or lockup members of the insurgent group. In Cross Kauwa Lake Chad area, 52 Boko Haram fighters were killed in April 2019, 5 in Borno state on the 31st of March 2019 etc. MNJTF has also been able to arrest Boko Haram fighters in Nigeria and Cameroon, and over 240 Boko Haram fighters surrendered to the MNJTF in 2016 (Musa, 2020; Azutoro, 2019 and Dze-Ngwa, 2018) cited in (Alufogoye and Duruij 2020: 798).

In the Sahel region, G5 Sahel countries—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger – face a plethora of complex challenges, including the growing threat of violent extremism, governance deficiencies, climate change and demographic growth. The interconnectedness of these challenges have made it imperative that countries coordinate their efforts to
promote regional development and tackle cross-border insecurity. The G5 Sahel, which is an intergovernmental organization established in 2014 in Nouakchott was intended to do exactly that. So far, however, the response of the involved countries has been largely dominated by a security focus. In 2017, the G5 Sahel launched a Joint Force (Force conjointe du G5 Sahel, FC-G5S). This concept of joint military operations was not new in the Sahel. Rather, this collaboration sought to resurrect a short-lived joint Malian-Mauritanian experiment that had taken place in 2011. In Operation Benkan (Unity), the forces of both countries collaborated to dislodge militants of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) from their base in the Wagadou forest on the Malian side of their border. In 2013, the Nigerian, Malian and French armies conducted Operation Roussette on the border between Mali and Niger. After Operation Roussette, a handful of cross-border military operations were carried out in early 2014 by hundreds of troops from the five armies concerned. Each army operated on its side of the border, but had a right of hot pursuit, and was assisted by French troops who provided support in terms of planning, logistics, intelligence, air cover, and medical evacuations. After a year of coordinated military action in which the practice of coalition warfare proved promising, the necessity for the affected states to institutionalize their military consultation, planning, and operations became more pressing. On November 4, 2015, the G5 Sahel heads of state signed the Military Cross-border Cooperation Partnership, which regulated the actions of G5 Sahel cross-border military operations. On November 20, at a meeting in Chad, they announced their intent to create their own joint force. After months of debates about the structure of the joint military force and its possible operations, the heads of state opted in a February 2017 summit in Bamako for a modest approach with a limited aim. The G5 Sahel Joint Force was not to police the whole G5 Sahel region—at least not initially. Its main task was limited to securing the borders of the eastern sector of the Sahel involving Niger and Chad, the central sector involving Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, and the western sector involving Mauritania and Mali. The G5 Sahel Joint Force’s first military operation, Operation Hawbi, occurred in November 2017 in the border area of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The second, Operation Pagnali, took place in January 2018 in the border area between Mali and Burkina Faso (https://www.g5sahel.org/ ACSS, International Crisis Group, 2017; Anouar, 2019) cited in (Ibrahim, 2021:124).

The sub-regional socio-economic platform, ECOWAS also made significant efforts to mitigate spread and effects of terrorism in West Africa. Musah (2009) opined that ECOWAS emerged in 1975 with regional economic integration and collective bargaining as its terms of reference. However, the institution is gradually transforming the region into a people oriented security community. The evolving conflict dynamics in West Africa in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War convinced its leaders to rethink the interrelationship between security and development and to raise security issues to the same status as the development agenda. ECOWAS accordingly enacted new statutes to reflect the new realities, adopting the Declaration of Political Principles on freedom, people’s rights, and democratization in July 1991. Two years later, the ECOWAS treaty was revised to confer supra nationality on the regional body. In 1999, it adopted the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security, followed closely by the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in 2001. Together, these legal instruments were designed to provide a comprehensive normative framework for confronting the new threats to human and regional security on a more permanent and predictable basis. ECOWAS is better known for its record in regional security matters, especially its peace enforcement and peacekeeping exploits. Three factors facilitated the relatively successful ECOMOG interventions: the presence of a regional hegemon (Nigeria) ready to commit resources and troops to the cause; the high level of political will; and the fact that several ECOWAS member states, including Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal, had long been associated with international peacekeeping operations. In the process, ECOWAS has developed a comparative advantage in the area of conflict management and has become a model for the continent. Subsequently, Teipar and Adriana (2015) added that beside these protocols, internal mechanisms such as the Mediation and Security Council, under which the Council of the Wise, the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) and the Defence and Security Commission were institutionalized to complement non-kinetic initiatives against terror in West Africa. Also, within the ECOWAS Commission, the Office of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and its three directorates (Political Affairs, Early Warning, and Peacekeeping and Regional Security) are responsible for issues related to peace and security. ECOWAS has had little or no involvement in the military response to Boko Haram, the armed group that has been launching attacks against targets in Nigeria since 2009. The main reason for this is that Nigeria has not requested any military support from ECOWAS. This is partly due to Nigeria being by far the most powerful ECOWAS member state militarily, something that makes ECOWAS military assistance less vital. Partly, the reason is linked to Nigeria’s national pride and preponderant role in the region and reluctance to accept help from smaller member states. Another reason why ECOWAS is not involved in the fight against Boko Haram is that the violence has spread to neighbouring countries (Cameroon, Chad and Niger). This development made clear that the response needed to be trans-regional. Hence, Nigeria was ultimately convinced that it, together with Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin, needed to reactivate the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) of the Lake Chad Basin Commission in October 2014 to defeat Boko Haram. On January 2015, the AU authorised the initial 12-month deployment of the MNJTF, consisting of up to 7,500 military and civilian staff.

Significantly, the laudable assistance from the regional platform, African Union further underline the commitment and drive of state actors and non-state actors in ensuring safety of the sub-region from Jihadist terrorism and insurgency.
In Lake Chad Region, there was an increase in pledges of financial, material and technical support from international actors including the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN) the European Union (EU), the United States of America, Great Britain and France. The EU was particularly supportive as it provided funding for the force amounting to fifty million euros. This force was set up and has since then conducted military operations to prevent the expansion of Boko Haram. With a force comprising of about ten thousand (10000) troops from member states, the MNJTF regularly conducts patrols, preventing the transfer of weapons or logistics to the sect or its cells. It continues to regularly search and successfully free abductees, for instance, negotiating the release of some of the kidnapped chibok girls. MNJTF also partakes in psychological operations to encourage defections within the Boko Haram ranks. It is evident that this regional intervention framework to a common threat as the theory of Regional Integration will predict, has greatly seen the dwindling of the sect’s activities. Reports by the US department of state, the AU, the UN and some international actors all confirm the relative efficacy of the MNJTF in counterterrorism. In a statement in 2016, UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon commended the Lake Chad Basin countries and Benin for the significant progress achieved in combating the terrorist threat posed by Boko Haram (Report of Congressional Research Service, 2016: 12). In the Sahel region, there is presence of 13, 289 military and 1,920 police personnel under the framework of MINUSMA. Thus, MINUSMA is United Nations Multidimensional and Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali established by Security Council Resolution, 2100 of April 25, 2013 to stabilize the Country. MINUSMA is mandated to prioritize support for implementation of the 2015 peace accord, followed by support for stabilizing and restoring state authority in central Mali, protecting civilians, and other tasks. MINUSMA is not authorized to pursue counterterrorism operations but can provide reimbursed logistical support to G5 forces. The mission has struggled with logistical and force protection challenges, despite aircraft and troop contributions from European militaries. African forces have borne the brunt of mission fatalities. As of mid-2021, nine U.S. staff officers were serving in MINUSMA. In addition, The United States State Department characterizes U.S.-Mali relations as “based on shared goals of improving stability and reducing poverty.” Since 2015, successive U.S. Administrations have emphasized implementation of the 2015 peace accord as the cornerstone of U.S. diplomatic engagement. The Trump Administration appointed the first ever U.S. Special Envoy for the Sahel in 2020; the Biden Administration has not named a successor to date. Following the 2020 coup, the United States suspended certain aid to Mali’s government—including all military aid and some development programs—under Section 7008 (“coup’s d’état”) of annual State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs appropriations legislation. Aid for humanitarian, democracy, and certain internal security purposes, among others, is exempted or otherwise not subject to the provision. Once imposed, restrictions under Section 7008 can be lifted only if the State Department certifies that “a democratically elected government has taken office.” Certain U.S. security assistance and arms transfers are subject to additional restrictions due to Mali’s designation under the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008 (CSPA, Title IV of P.L. 110-457), as amended. Mali has not been a top recipient of U.S. security aid in the region since 2012; recent programs have focused on counterterrorism, professionalization, and security sector reforms. U.S. bilateral aid for Mali totaled $44 million in FY2020 appropriations, emphasizing health, basic education, and agriculture. The United States provided an additional $140 million in emergency humanitarian aid in FY2020. In recent years, additional funds have been allocated for Mali under regional and global initiatives, including global COVID-19 relief and the State Department-led Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP); some TSCTP assistance is subject to coup-related and/or CSPA restrictions. The Biden Administration has requested $124 million in bilateral aid in FY2022, proposing to reduce some rule-of-law, HIV/AIDS, water, and education funds. The United States has helped shape MINUSMA’s mandate, and the State Department allocated $356 million for the mission in FY2020; separate U.S. aid programs also support troop and police contributors. In line with U.N. Security Council actions, the United States has designated five individuals for sanctions under Executive Order 13882 (2019), pertaining to Mali. Other Malian individuals and entities are subject to U.S. and U.N. terrorism sanctions (Report of Congressional Research Service, 2021). More recently, the Report of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (2021) documents that:

a. On 23rd January, 2021, the Special Representative participated in the fifty-eighth ordinary session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, at which he called for prioritizing dialogue to resolve political differences, build consensus and ensure inclusive governance. The Authority appointed the Presidents of Ghana and the Niger to lead resource mobilization for the ECOWAS action plan for the eradication of terrorism, 2020–2024, and extended the mandate of the ECOWAS mission in the Gambia until December 2021, to be succeeded by an ECOWAS police mission. The Special Representative renewed the commitment of the United Nations to working with ECOWAS in pursuit of common objectives.

b. On 15 February, 2021, the Special Representative attended the seventh ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State of the Group of Five for the Sahel, held in N’Djamena. At the summit, the Chair of the ECOWAS Authority recalled the ECOWAS commitment to contribute $1 billion to the fight against terrorism in the region. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission reaffirmed the expected deployment of African Union troops to support the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. Furthermore, it is recalled that on 8th and 9th February, the Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel and the UNDP Regional Director for Africa jointly chaired the eleventh meeting of the steering
committee for the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, organized jointly by UNOWAS, (United Nations Office for West Africa and Sahel) and the United Nations Development Programme. The United Nations Office for West Africa and Sahel is a United Nations Political Mission in Dakar, Senegal. It is established in 2002 for preventive diplomacy, political mediation and facilitation in West Africa and Sahel. It is managed by United Nations Department of Political and Peace-building Affairs. Participants reviewed progress made in key regions, including the Liptako-Gourma tri-border area and the Lake Chad basin. They identified steps for resource mobilization and committed to accelerating the provision of United Nations integrated support to regional initiatives and partnerships with ECOWAS, the Group of Five for the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Liptako-Gourma Authority. At the summit of the Group of Five for the Sahel held on 16th February, 2021, the Secretary-General reiterated his call to ensure that the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel had stable and predictable funding, through a mandate by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and sustained financing, including through assessed contributions. On 28th April, 2021, the Deputy Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel and the Special Coordinator provided a briefing to the Peace-building Commission on ongoing efforts to increase cross-border investments and provide greater support for women and young people. The Commission called for more structural investments, as well as stronger multi-partner support to individual countries in the Sahel. The Office of the Special Coordinator and UNOWAS organized a consultative meeting, held on 20 and 21 May, 2021, between the Group of Five for the Sahel and the United Nations entities in Dakar, which provided an opportunity to reaffirm common priorities and identify new areas of targeted support, including in the area of intercommunal dialogue. At the meeting, the Special Coordinator advocated for the harmonization of planned Group of Five for the Sahel activities with the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel road map, 2021–2022, which provides strategic and programmatic reference points for United Nations country teams, notably in terms of cooperation with communities and local authorities. The Special Representative also underlined the need for flexibility, encouraged the reactivation of the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel and reiterated United Nations support for accompanying governance reforms and stabilization efforts. The chair of the Group’s Council of Ministers drew attention to weak resource mobilization as one obstacle that was hampering the implementation of the Group’s priority investment plan. The Peace-building Fund has provided catalytic funding to support the Group of Five for the Sahel and related priorities for the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, notably in the areas of cross-border cooperation, conflict resolution, access to justice, building resilience to climate change, improving the management of natural resources and empowering women and young people. Meanwhile, efforts are ongoing to strengthen coordination for better communication on the Sahel. On 9 March, a steering committee was launched to spearhead an initiative to change the narrative on the Sahel, under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General Members of the steering committee include the singer, Baaba Maal, civil society representatives, including young people and women, and representatives of the private sector, the media and academia.

Amid these multitudinous interventions and ongoing efforts, intermittent resurgence of(hostilities remained unabated across countries in Sahel and Lake Chad regions. Hence, the resilience of these Jihadist groups overwhelms as related to the spread and intensity of its offensives. The stridence of the unpleasant situation obviously accentuated limitations bedeviling military and non-military responses to the war against terrorism in West Africa. In this vein, Osei (2020) argued that one critical challenge to fighting terrorism in West Africa is the lack of complementarity between international and regional responses. For instance, while Nigeria is a major strategic player in countering Boko Haram and ISWAP attacks throughout the Lake Chad Basin, its national strategy for curbing extremist activities is viewed within the narrow prism of national security and territorial sovereignty, a view that has resulted in limited articulation with MNJTF efforts. Likewise, the G5 Sahel Joint Force is not integrated or coordinated with the AU’s African Peace and Security Architecture, which is structured to facilitate collective security cooperation through the Regional Economic Communities (REC), including ECOWAS. Given this mash-up of national, regional, continental, and international counterterrorism mechanisms in West Africa, clarifying their respective roles and reconciling their mandates is essential to the overall effectiveness of counterterrorism and stabilization efforts. A second major shortcoming is regional governments and their international partners have largely focused on traditional military approaches to countering violent extremism while paying relatively minimal attention to underlying human security vulnerabilities such as unemployment, climate change, and diminishing resources to support livelihoods. This heavily military approach also diminishes local participation in countering violent extremism as traditional authorities, religious and ethnic leaders, women, youth groups, and civil society organizations are often on the periphery of counterterrorism efforts. A third key challenge is that neither the MNJTF nor G5 Sahel has long-term and predictable sources of funding. Instead, both are heavily dependent on international funding, especially from the U.S., EU, and France. Between 2016 and 2017, the U.S. alone contributed USD$363 million to the MNJTF, making it the force’s largest financial contributor. Similarly, in 2018, the U.S. provided USD$111 million to the G5 Sahel Joint Force, while in the same year the EU provided it with USD$116 million. Operation Barkhane costs an additional USD$685 million per year, which constitutes about 50 percent of France’s worldwide security cooperation budget. This over-reliance on external funding is unsustainable but also prevents the region from taking real ownership for its own security. A fourth challenge is the overly generalized narrative about peace and security.
in West Africa that often disregards context-based vulnerabilities, resilience factors, and critical actors in the affected countries. As such, strategies are often incongruent with prevailing dynamics of terrorism in the region.

2. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Emphatically, Jihadist terrorism is the most daunting challenges of West Africa in the 21st century. The discourse begin with exhaustive analysis of vortex of Islamic extremism and terrorism in West Africa which emanate enormously in Sahel region and Lake Chad Basin where thousands of lives were lost and millions internally displaced by the intense offensives of Jama’atu Ahlia Sunna Lidda Awati WaI-Jihad, Islamic State of West Africa Province and Islamic State in Greater Sahara. The discourse further dissects extensively concepts and dimensionalities of terrorism as observed across sovereign states and regions of the world. Also, the section, conceptual discourse illuminated etymology and conceptualizations of national security as underlined by scholarly submissions. The section, volatility of terrorism in West Africa revealed enormous fatalities and adverse humanitarian realities of terrorism in countries of Lake Chad Basin and Sahel regions as potential threat to national security and regional development. The section, responses to terrorism in West Africa showed myriad interventions from coalition forces, region and sub-region including United Nations and the West.

These findings inextricably accentuate the imperatives of these recommendations as complement in the ongoing efforts to stem the tides of Islamic extremism and terrorism as outlined below:

i. The need to strengthen operational performance of coalition forces in Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. Hence, the coalition force of G5 Sahel and Multinational Joint Task Force should be effectively repositioned in training, troops, funding, and other logistics in credence to the current realities of resurgence of terrorist offensives. This task requires enormous responsibilities from the participating sovereign states.

ii. The need for sub-regional summit on Jihadist terrorism in West Africa for a holistic Marshall Plan for effective coordination, response and defence of West Africa region from Jihadist terrorist groups and armed insurgent militias. This measure is timely for holistic, strategic and coordinated response amid peculiarities of challenges and expectations across Sahel and LCB countries.

iii. The need for terrorist-torn sovereign in Sahel and LCB to review their respective national security strategy in credence to current realities for improved and efficient response. More efforts are required by governments of these regions.

iv. The United Nations and the West should not relent in military assistance and humanitarian aid to Sahel and Lake Chad Basin countries. The humanitarian crisis across these regions is alarming and exigently requires consistent and sustained interventions to save millions from hunger and disease.

v. Governments across these regions should embark on national empowerment schemes for the productive population in their respective states. Also, effective social rehabilitation network for the surrendered insurgents for reintegration and reliance.

vii. Governments across these regions in collaboration with the Mosque and Islamic clerics and, other appropriate agencies of the state should design National Deradicalization Programme for extremists. This is timely to re-channel energy and drive of these productive segment for national development and regional security.

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