



Research Article

## An Assessment of the History and Causes of Radicalisation in West Africa: A Review

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Received : November 26, 2024

Accepted : November 26, 2024

Revised : November 27, 2024

Available online : March 04, 2025

**How to Cite :** Yahuza, N.-H., Kabuye Uthman Sulaiman, & Ahmad El-Muhammady Bin Uthman El-Mhammady. (2025). An Assessment of the History and Causes of Radicalisation in West Africa: A Review. *HISTORICAL: Journal of History and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 35–58. <https://doi.org/10.58355/historical.v4i1.162>

**Abstract.** West Africa faces an extremely high terrorist threat. The dramatic increase in terrorist activity in the sub region is primarily due to two groups: Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). Although the territorial presence and activity of Al-Qaida and its affiliates (particularly Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)) was initially limited to the extreme north of Mali, it has now expanded across large areas of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The growing strength of ISIL in West Africa has compounded the terrorist threat and contributed to the deteriorating security situation in the subregion. The current article therefore presents an assessment

of the history and causes of radicalisation in West Africa based on the previous literatures. The methodology employed in this work was desk-based and library-oriented research. Desk research, also known as secondary research or library research, is a method of gathering information and insights by analyzing and synthesizing existing data and sources rather than conducting primary data collection through fieldwork or surveys. The findings indicate that it is difficult to identify a single reason that can sufficiently explain the existence of radicalisation in any particular country or region, and West Africa is no exception. However, through the findings it was concluded that factors such as political repression, widespread corruption in governance, dysfunctional governments and available large number of unemployed youth were key causes. It is suggested that ECOWAS makes great progress in issues relating to conflict management and prevention with the introduction of some protocols. For instance, Article 3 of ECOWAS Protocol relating to the mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Security outlines fighting terrorism and radicalisation as one of its objectives.

**Keywords:** Radicalisation, History, West Africa, Colonization, Independence

## INTRODUCTION

Radicalisation is the process of a person subscribing to extremist ideology. This can include legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence. The majority of people who commit terrorism offences do so of their own agency and dedication to an ideological cause.<sup>1</sup>

Radicalisation is a phenomenon that advocates and promotes violence related with or justified by specific ideological, political, social, or religious views. Conflicts is the major engine of these violent extremism and radicalisation, with nations participating in a violent conflict or witnessing high levels of political terror. This has accounted for more than 99 percent of all terrorist related deaths. The acts of terrorism and violent extremism are confronting reality in the globe and an ongoing threat in Ghana and beyond.<sup>2</sup>

Radicalisation has been a major source of worry across the world. It has been connected to the loss of life as well as generating fear in inhabitants of both developing and wealthy countries. The majority of radicalized adolescents and youths were employed, highly educated, and involved in their communities. Negative feelings of discrimination, political persecution, and the impact of spiritual leaders were important motivators for radicalisation.<sup>3</sup> The drivers of radicalisation in the British Isles were extremist ideologies that enthralled teenage and young people, and

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<sup>1</sup> United Kingdom. Channel duty guidance: Protecting people susceptible to radicalisation. 2023. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/651e71d9e4e658001459d997/14\\_320\\_HO\\_Channel\\_Duty\\_Guidance\\_v3\\_Final\\_Web.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/651e71d9e4e658001459d997/14_320_HO_Channel_Duty_Guidance_v3_Final_Web.pdf) (accessed on 18th November 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Precht, T. "Home Grown Terrorism Islamist. An Assessment of the Factors Influencing Islamist Extremism and Suggestions or Counter Radicalisation Measures. Danish Ministry of Justice. 2007. Available at: [https://www.justitsministeriet.dk/sites/default/files/media/Arbejdsomraader/Forskning/Forskningspublikationer/2011/2007/Home\\_grown\\_terrorism\\_and\\_Islamist\\_radicalisation\\_in\\_Europe\\_-\\_an\\_assessment\\_of\\_influencing\\_factors\\_2\\_.pdf](https://www.justitsministeriet.dk/sites/default/files/media/Arbejdsomraader/Forskning/Forskningspublikationer/2011/2007/Home_grown_terrorism_and_Islamist_radicalisation_in_Europe_-_an_assessment_of_influencing_factors_2_.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, Precht, T. (2007).

members of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) were seen as celebrities.<sup>4</sup> Added to that, western Jihadists are driven by psychological issues such as identity difficulties, personality trait and relative deprivation within a group. Most adolescents and youths, according to Erikson's psychosocial theory, are at the stages of growth where they are striving for an identity.<sup>5</sup> It has also been discovered that radicalisation terrorism has been linked to Muslim adolescents and youth, notably Muslim adolescents and young who seek to cause disturbance and devastation.<sup>6</sup> It can also be stated that Nigerian people joined Boko Haram to protest secular westernization in Nigeria, notably democratic elections and co-educational learning.<sup>7</sup>

The pervasive unwillingness of governments and international organizations to adjust policies and viewpoints to the realities of youth has resulted in undesirable and preventable outcomes. In Sub-Saharan Africa, an increase in the youthful population aged 15–24 is associated with a substantially lower prevalence of social disturbance. This demonstrates that there must be a reason that motivates youngsters to join violent organizations.<sup>8</sup> Hummer<sup>9</sup> contends, based on Mercy Corps research, that causes of youth violence are more directly linked to concerns of weak governance and marginalization. To ensure that counter-violent extremism discourse and initiatives do not further dehumanise and condemn young people or entire communities, they must be critically studied and critiqued. Furthermore, there is a need to ensure that this critique does not gloss over the uncomfortable and challenging problems at the heart of the terrorist problem.<sup>10</sup>

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The History of Radicalisation in West Africa

Radicalisation has become a household term in West Africa in recent years. This is not because radicalisation, as a phenomenon, is new. In reality, radicalisation is as old as human being's willingness to use violence to attain one aim or the other.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Allen, K. "Breeding ground: Analysing higher education in the United Kingdom and the Allure of Islamic extremism". *Journal of Education and Human Development*, 4, (2015): 238-248.

<sup>5</sup> Michael King & Donald M. Taylor. *The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence Terrorism and Political Violence*. Volume 23, Issue 4. (2011)

<sup>6</sup> Lynch, O. "British Muslim Youth: Radicalisation, Terrorism and the Construction of the "Other". *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 6(2), 2013: 241-261.

<sup>7</sup> Zenn, J. and Pearson, E. "Women, Gender and the evolving tactics of Boko Haram". *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 5(1). 2014: doi:10.15664/jtr.828.

<sup>8</sup> Urdal, H. and Hoelscher, K.,. *Urban Youth Bulges and Social Disorder An Empirical Study of Asian and Sub-Saharan African Cities*. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 5110*, (2009). [online] Available at: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1503804](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1503804) [Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023].

<sup>9</sup> Hummer, L. *Youth & consequences: Unemployment, Injustice and Violence*. (2015). Available at: <https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/youth-consequencesunemployment-injustice-and-violence> [Accessed 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023].

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, Hummer, L. 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Zalman, Amy., *The History of Terrorism, 1st Century BCE-13th Century: Terrorism in the Pre-Modern World*, accessed <http://terrorism.about.com/od/whatisterroris1/p/terrorism.htm> on 10 September 2023.

One of the earliest groups that displayed features of contemporary radicalisation leading to terrorist activities was the Zealots, also known as the Sicarii of Judea around the First Century. They carried out a campaign of assassinations of the Roman occupation forces.<sup>12</sup>

Another group to exhibit familiar attributes of terrorism through radicalisation, as manifested in recent times, was the Assassins.<sup>13</sup> The Assassins were a faction of Shia Islam called the Nizari Islamis, who avoided open combat with their adversaries, instead espoused assassination of enemy leaders as a strategy. Contemporary terrorists also exhibits these traits. However, to appreciate how radicalisation has evolved in West Africa, it is vital to differentiate between the various acts of violence that has culminated into, in order to determine which of them constitute terrorisms and which do not.<sup>14</sup>

There is no global consensus on what constitute radicalisation just as the case of terrorism. This has engendered different definitions of radicalisation, often from the perspective of the one using the term. Therefore, what constitute acts of terror to Israel could mean resistance against Zionist occupation to Palestinians. In spite of the ambiguities and difficulties in arriving at a global definition of terrorism, contemporary usage of the term is generally associated with certain kinds of violent acts carried out by individuals and groups instead of states. Terrorism is also generally associated with incidents that take place during peacetime instead of events that occur as part of conventional warfare.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU), now African Union's (AU) Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism Article 1(3) (a), defined terrorism as any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of states 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 cause or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environment or cultural heritage and is calculated or intended to:

- Intimidate, put fear, force, coerce or induce any government, body, institution, the general public or any segment thereof, to do or abstain from doing any act or adopt or abandon a particular standpoint, or to act according to certain principles; or
- Disrupt any public service, the delivery of any essential service to the public or create a public emergency; or
- Create a general insurrection in the state.

Article 3 of the same Convention provides that notwithstanding the provision of article 1, the struggle waged by peoples in accordance with the principles of international law for their liberation or self-determination, including armed struggle against colonialism, occupation, aggression and domination by foreign forces shall not be considered as terrorist act.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Terrorism Research, Early History of Terrorism, accessed from [www.terrorismresearch.com/history/early.php](http://www.terrorismresearch.com/history/early.php) on 11 July 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, Terrorism Research, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Daftary, F. *A Short History of The Islamis*. (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1998), p. 107.

<sup>15</sup> OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism

It is however important to understand how radicalisation and terrorism has evolved in West Africa in order to fashion out appropriate responses.

### Radicalisation and Terrorism in Pre-Colonial West Africa

During the pre-colonial era, West Africa witnessed a number of conflicts among the clans, chiefdoms, kingdoms and states that controlled various parts of the sub-region. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that terrorism was a major occurrence in pre-colonial period of West Africa. Though some writers have suggested that some communities were terrorized as a result of slave raids during the trans-Saharan slave trade, evidence suggests that most slaves were captured during battle or enslaved for crimes committed.<sup>16</sup>

Terrorism emanating from radicalisation during the Transatlantic Slave Trade and Colonial Era

Literature that links slave trade and colonialism to terrorism are very rare. However, there are some African scholars on terrorism who have outlined clearly-defined linkages between terrorism in Africa and the transatlantic slave trade as well as colonialism<sup>17,18</sup> Writers like W.E.B. Du Bois writes of the slave trade during the colonial days as state sponsored terrorism. In agreeing with this assertion, other scholars have suggested that “slavery could not have been possible without the accompanying spell of terror”.<sup>19</sup> As posited by Oshita, the transatlantic slave trade and anti-colonial struggles during which African nationalists resisted the presence of European administrators were periods that witnessed the entrenched use of terrorism by both the colonial powers and the colonised.

Considering the definition by the OAU, terrorism, in this period, could mostly have been carried out by the colonial authorities. Terrorism during the Transatlantic Slave Trade could therefore be described as state sponsored. The slave trade, therefore, traumatised the people of West Africa through the massacre, humiliation and the brutal exploitation the people experienced. This sowed seeds of disunity, conflict and war among the people of the sub-region.<sup>20</sup> Some of the violent conflicts and terrorism emerging in recent times could therefore be seen in the light of the past experience that West Africans have had with terrorism.

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<sup>16</sup> Perbi, Akosua “Africa Before Transatlantic Trade,” the Abolition Project (Slavery and the Slave Trade in Pre-Colonial Africa – Manchester College, Indiana USS – Paper Delivered on April 5, 2001 at University of Illinois.

<sup>17</sup> Du Bois, W.E.B. The status of colonialism. <https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b204-i042> (1954), (accessed on 18th March 19, 2024).

<sup>18</sup> Pares, Richard. The London Sugar Market, 1740–1769. *The Economic History Review*. Volume 9, Issue 2. (1956) <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-0289.1956.tb00660.x> (accessed on 18th March 19, 2024).

<sup>19</sup> Oshita, Oshita. “Domestic Terrorism in Africa – Ontology of an Old War in New Trenches, in Domestic Terrorism in Africa: Defining, Addressing and Understanding its Impact on Human Security”, ed Wafulu Okumu and Anneli Botha, *Institute of Security Studies*. (2009), p. 30.

<sup>20</sup> Boon, Emmanuel K., and Ayong. Charles T., “History and Civilisation: Impact on Sustainable Development in Africa,” (n.d.).

## Radicalisation and Terrorism in the Era of the Independence Struggle

The wind of freedom and self-determination that blew across Africa after the Second World War saw the emergence of various anti-colonialism groups at different regions in Africa, including West Africa. The leaders of these groups included Dr Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Oliver Tambo of South Africa and Joshua Nkomo of Zimbabwe. Some of these leaders and their groups engaged in violent means to either forcefully capture power from colonialists or compel them to the negotiation table.<sup>21</sup> These activities could not be described as terrorism if one is to go by the OAU definition of terrorism.

Independence struggles in West Africa in general were not as violent as experienced in other parts of Africa. In West Africa, there were often demonstrations for better conditions of resettlement by veterans of the First and SWWs which sometimes resulted in unrests. These demonstrations were sometimes met with brutal repression and imprisonment of leaders of anti-colonial rule. One of the few exceptions of the relatively peaceful anti-colonial movements was in Portuguese Guinea, now Guinea Bissau.<sup>22</sup>

In Guinea Bissau, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), headed by Amilcar Cabral, waged a guerilla war against the colonial rulers. This is one of the few instances that provide a cogent account of the nature and extent of terrorism associated with independence struggle in West Africa. In Guinea Bissau, in particular, the Portuguese Colonialist were condemned by the UNSC for the brutal massacre of villagers who were fighting for their rightful desire of freedom and independence.<sup>23</sup> As colonialism ended in West African, a new wave of violence came along with the political independence, which also involved using others as means.

## The case of Post-independence West Africa

After independence, many West African countries were confronted with some challenges that contributed to political and social instability. Bad governance, mismanagement and corruption, coupled weak state connived to drive most West African countries into poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and disease, among many others. The result of all these challenges was that West African countries became susceptible to social unrests and internal conflicts.

Coup d'états became a common phenomenon in many countries in West Africa. For instance, Ghana, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo and Sierra Leone all experienced numerous coup d'états, some violent, after independence.<sup>24</sup> During these

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<sup>21</sup> Bolaji, Kihinde A. "Preventing Terrorism in West Africa: Good Governance or Collective Security?" *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 12, no.1. (2010), pp. 207.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, Bolaji, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Cravo, Teresa de Almeida., "Western Representations of Africa: A Genealogy of Donor Discourses on GuineaBissau," in 13th General Assembly of CODESRIA, Rabat, Morocco, December 5-9, (2011): 7, url: [http://www.ces.ac.pt/.../902\\_Teresa\\_Cravo.paper.CODESRIA](http://www.ces.ac.pt/.../902_Teresa_Cravo.paper.CODESRIA), accessed October 4, 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Sesay, John Baimba, "Why Military Rule Must be Discouraged in African Politics." *NTA Newtime Africa*, September 4, (2009), accessed October 9, 2023, <http://www.newstimeafrica.com/archives/2027>.

periods of military rule, extra-judicial killings, disappearances, detention without trials and many other such human rights violations were a common occurrence.<sup>25</sup> Most of the violence and terror experience in many West African countries after independence emanated from the state often against a section of the society viewed as being against the government in power.

In certain cases, the violence was perpetrated by the ruling government against tribes, ethnic groups or communities that predominantly belonged to a particular religious group. This sowed seeds of hatred and other grievances among various groups, a sort of radicalisation, which would later become the fault lines along which terrorism and other violent conflicts are now being waged. For example, the Liberian civil war which terrorized not only Liberians but also Sierra Leonean, resulted from the Doe government discriminating and terrorizing other ethnic groups that it viewed as threats to the government. This was a common feature in many West Africa countries with mostly authoritarian governments. For instance, Sani Abacha's military regime confrontation with the Niger Delta people contributed to the emergence of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

As the Cold War ended in the late 1980s, coup d'états appeared less fashionable and the wind of democracy was beginning to blow across much of West Africa. The hope of democracy was however dealt a setback when civil wars gripped the sub-region

The early 1990s saw the emergence of violent civil conflicts in several West African countries, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. Most of these countries are yet to recover from the effect of these civil wars. Some of these civil wars were particularly gruesome. For instance, the amputation of limbs by the erstwhile Sierra Leonean Revolutionary United Front (RUF) cannot be described any other way than acts of terror.<sup>26</sup> The RUF also gouge out eyes with knives, smashed people's hands with hammers, and some people were burned with boiling water.<sup>27</sup>

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that notwithstanding the sporadic violent acts that have occurred at various times in West Africa, the sub-region has not been particularly known for terrorism until the contemporary manifestation of the phenomenon.

### **Contemporary Manifestation of radicalisation in West Africa**

The use of violence to achieve political, social, economic and ideological goals is not new in West Africa, as discussed earlier. However, in recent times the employment of violence for these objectives and other similar goals has assumed certain dimensions that have raised concern among West Africans and the international community as well.

Contemporary terrorism in West Africa is predominantly Islamist in nature, culminating from acts of radicalisation. Kidnapping has become a preferred strategy

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, Sesay, (2009).

<sup>26</sup> Rotary International. "Face to Face: Lives Change Forever when victims of Sierra Leone's civil war meet their Rotarian Benefactors," *The Aug 2002 Rotarian*, 181 no. 2. (2002).

<sup>27</sup> Human Right Watch. "Sierra Leone: Getting away with Murder, Mutilation, Rape," *New Testimony from Sierra Leone* 11, no 3 (A): 4, (1999), accessed September 25, 2023.

and the indiscriminate targeting of civilians and non-combatant a common feature. Other contemporary manifestation of terrorism in West Africa is its increasing connection with TOC and growing internationalisation of the activities of terrorists by luring youths through the process of radicalisation. These are discussed below.

### **The Rise in Islamic Extremism in West Africa**

West Africa is becoming synonymous with Islamist extremism. The presence of AQIM, Jama'atu Ansarul Musilimina Fi Biladis Sudan (Ansaru), Ansar Al-Dine and Boko Haram in various countries in West Africa indicate that the once distant phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalists have now made West Africa one of its strongholds. Contemporary terrorists use religion as its public face to radicalise youths.

Almost all the main terror groups in the sub-region invoke one Islamic dictum or the other as their course. For example, as their name suggests, Boko Haram claims Western education is forbidden. The group has also professed their intention to turn Nigeria into an Islamic state. Though some writers have argued that religion is just being used as a convenient front for their criminal intent, one cannot deny the fact that virtually all the terrorist groups in West Africa are Islamist related.

They have assumed some of the traits exhibited by more established and notorious terrorists in other parts of the world. They claim responsibility for violent attacks, circulate video messages of their intention and course, openly profess their support and endorsement of other extremist groups like AQIM, Al Shabaab, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda.

With the Islamisation of their course, it becomes easier for such terrorist groups to win sympathy of other Muslims in solidarity with perceived oppressed Muslims elsewhere. In essence, the terrorists are exploiting identity as a rallying call to other Muslims to join their call for "Jihad" (Holy War) though most the course they fight has more to do with economic and political grievances than religious.

To deal with the growing Islamist terrorism in West Africa, it would be important to investigate and unravel the basis of the emboldened strategy and activities of the terrorists in West Africa. This would help in fashioning out appropriate response that has a better chance of dealing with the increasing threats of terror in the sub-region.

### **Kidnapping as a Major Strategy for Terrorists in West Africa**

Kidnapping has become a major strategy for most of the terrorist groups in West Africa. Previously, most of the kidnappings by terrorist groups targeted Westerners, ostensibly for ransom. Terrorist groups have made millions of dollars through kidnapping for ransom. Today, jobless youths are lured or radicalised into such behaviours.<sup>28</sup>

According to The New York Times, between 2008 and 2013, Europeans paid a total of \$91.5 million in ransom to AQIM. Between 2003 and 2012, MUJAO and AQIM

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<sup>28</sup> Carlos E. J. "Kidnapping as a Terrorist Instrument of AQIM and the MUJAO," *Peace and Security International*, no. 1. (2013), pp. 162-166.



kidnapped westerners including Europeans, Canadians and American for ransoms amounting to over 500 million dollars (Carlos, 2013).<sup>29</sup> According to David S Cohen, the former U.S Treasury Department's Under-Secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, "Kidnapping for ransom has become today's most significant source of terrorist financing."<sup>30</sup>

In more recent times, the kidnappings, especially, by Boko Haram has not been limited to citizens of Western countries. Nigerians, Cameroonians and expatriate workers from other parts of the world have been kidnapped by the group. Christians, Muslims, rich and poor alike have also been targeted by the Boko Haram. For instance, the group kidnapped over 200 school girls from Chibok in Borno State of Nigeria and also the wife of the Deputy Prime Minister of Cameroon in the early part of 2014.

Any measure adopted to prevent or counter radicalisation in West Africa must seek to understand their objectives and also undermine the terrorist source of funds in order to degrade their ability to operate. As the strategies of the terrorists change, so must the response by West African countries change in line with the new strategies especially in protecting the citizens from acts of radicalisation. In the same vein, efforts to deal with terrorism need to be proactive rather than reactive in order to prevent recruitment and protection of vulnerable groups like women being used as suicide bombers.

### **Targeting of Civilian and the Use of Suicide Bombing and Female Recruits**

In the past, most terrorists in West Africa targeted the security agencies with whom they had their greatest grievances. For example, following the Nigerian security agency's crackdown on Boko Haram in 2009, the group retaliation initially focused on government and security targets, as well as churches and Muslim leaders that rejected its brand of Islam.<sup>31</sup> This has since changed.

Today, terror groups like Boko Haram and AQIM are prepared to kill, irrespective of race, tribe, religion or gender. The target adversaries of contemporary terrorists in West Africa are extensive, and the strategy is to achieve maximum death and destruction. This is manifested by the attacks carried out by Boko Haram which are mostly targeted at highly crowded places including market places, schools, bus terminal and drinking bars. As security agencies increase their efforts to tackle the threats, the terrorists adopt new tactics. In this case, much need to be done to develop the psyche of citizens of individual nations in West Africa, to understand these negative spotlights; which starts with radicalisation.

Over the last few years, the tactics of terrorist group in West Africa has changed to include suicide bombings.<sup>32</sup> For example, on August 26, 2011 Boko Haram

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, Carlos, 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Walters, G., "Underwriting Jihad: Paying Ransoms, Europe Bankrolls Qaeda Terror." July 29, *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/30/world/africa/ransoming>

<sup>31</sup> Irish Times, "Nigeria Security Forces Investigate Mass Kidnapping." *Irish Times*, June 24, 2014. Accessed October 26, (2023). <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/africa/nigeria-security-forces-investigates-mass-kidnapping1.1843794>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, Irish Times, 2014

terrorist attacked on UN compound in Nigeria, killing twenty-three people and injuring seventy-six more. That attack marked the first high profile suicide attack by the Boko Haram terrorist group.<sup>33</sup> The recruitment of women to carry out some of the attacks has become another recent development in terrorism in West Africa.

There are reports that teenage girls have been used by Boko Haram to carry out suicide attacks against targets in Kano, a major city in Northern Nigeria. This could only have happened through radicalising the girl first.<sup>34</sup> This caused panic among many as one cannot tell if some of the kidnapped girls from Chibok Girls' school might have been radicalized to become suicide bombers.

These new trends by Boko Haram and other terrorists in West Africa are worrisome not only because of their attacks but also the complex dimension it has assumed. This therefore requires not only a sub-regional effort to combat but a global cooperation. Paradoxically, the indiscriminate attacks by Boko Haram provide an opportunity for Nigeria and West African leaders to erode the sympathy of the people from Boko Haram.

### **Radicalisation, Terrorism and Transnational Organised Crime in West Africa**

A lot of TOC permeate the West African sub-region. These include drug trafficking, smuggling, arms trafficking, money laundering, armed robbery and piracy, among other crimes. The trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) is also a major security challenge for West Africa and increasingly undermining the stability of the sub-region. Out of approximately 500 million illicit weapons in circulation worldwide in 2004, an estimated eight to ten million were concentrated in the West African sub-region.<sup>35</sup>

Though SALPs do not in themselves seem to cause conflicts and terrorism, their wide availability makes it easier for terrorist groups and criminal gangs to have access to instruments of violence. Given the weak national security systems across West Africa, the generally porous borders and growing demand for arms by emerging militants and criminals, arms trafficking has become a lucrative trade in West Africa. In a report authored by Freedom Onuoha and Gerald Ezirim, the boldness with which present-day militants operate in West Africa grew with the proliferation of weapons in the Sahara-Sahel region following the overthrow of Muammar Ghaddafi and destabilisation of Libya.<sup>36</sup>

Piracy, together with armed robbery at sea, is another TOC that has characterized recent terrorist activities in West Africa resulting from radicalisation. A number of experts on terrorism believe that there is possible link between piracy in

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<sup>33</sup> Mshelizza, I., "Islamist Sect Boko Haram Claims Nigerian U.N. Bombing." *Reuters*, August 29, 2011. Accessed October 26, 2023. <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE77S3ZO20110829?irpc=932>.

<sup>34</sup> Pearson, Elizabeth., "Nigeria's Female Suicide Bombers: A Show of Strength," *War On The Rocks*, October 16, 2014. Accessed October 26, 2023. <http://warontherocks.com/2014/10/nigerias-femalesuicide-bombers-a-show-of-strength/>.

<sup>35</sup> Bah, A. "Micro-disarmament in West Africa: The ECOWAS Moratorium on Small Arms and Light Weapons," *African Security Review*.13 no.3. 2004. p.33.

<sup>36</sup> Ezirim, G.E. & Onuoha, F.C. Terrorism and transnational organized crime in West Africa. *Al Jazeera Center for Studies*. 2013. Retrieved from <http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2013/06/2013624102946689517.html>

the Gulf of Guinea and the financing of Islamist militants including AQIM, Ansar Al-Dine, MOJAO, Boko Haram and others. Some of the millions paid to the oil gangs are thus suspected to have made their way to terrorists in Northern Nigeria (Nick & Madueke, 2014).<sup>37</sup> Related to piracy and terrorism financing is the disturbing development of drug trafficking and its influence on terrorism financing in West Africa.

West Africa is now a major transit hub and destination of drugs coming from Latin America and sometimes destined for Europe and America.<sup>38</sup> The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) claims that cocaine seizures in West Africa rose to 47 tons in 2007. At least fifty tons of cocaine, valued at about 2 billion U.S Dollars transit through West Africa each year. About one ton passes through the West African “narco-state” of Guinea-Bissau. The arrest of a former Chief of the Guinea-Bissau Navy, Rear-Admiral Jose Americo Bubo Na Tchuto by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency for drug trafficking is ample evidence of the drug menace to West Africa. The UNODC estimates that terrorism financing, trafficking in arms and drugs and other forms of TOC generate about 1.3 billion U.S Dollars annually.<sup>39</sup> The growing relationship between illicit drug trafficking and terrorism in West Africa is a dangerous trend as it does not only threaten the political stability of the West Africa sub-region, but its economic, social and demographic development.

To address the threats posed by today’s terrorists, West Africa leaders and the society at large require a multidimensional approach in first curbing radicalisation. This can however only be effective if the causes of terrorism in West Africa are well-understood.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is a desk-based and library-oriented research. Desk research, also known as secondary research or library research, is a method of gathering information and insights by analyzing and synthesizing existing data and sources rather than conducting primary data collection through fieldwork or surveys. It involves scouring through published reports, articles, studies, and other publicly available materials to extract valuable knowledge and make informed decisions.<sup>40</sup> In this regard, the researchers studied the Islamic sources, available published literatures, research monographs, journals and magazines in this field in order to develop the traits as well as a model of radicalisation in West Africa in particular. The study has been structured in the light of the research objectives.

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2. <sup>37</sup> Center for Preventive Action. *Violent Extremism in the Sahel*. *Cfr Global Conflict Tracker*. (February 14, 2024). <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel>

<sup>38</sup> Luna, D. M. “Trans-African Security: Combating Illicit Trafficking Along the Crime –Terror Continuum,” U.S Department of State, Last modified February 26, 2014, <http://m.state.gov/m222591.htm>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, Luna, 2014

<sup>40</sup> Gell, Tim. (8<sup>th</sup> April 2023). Desk Research: What It Is and How You Can Use It. <https://www.driveresearch.com/market-research-company-blog/desk-research-what-it-is-and-how-you-can-use-it/> (accessed April 24, 2024).

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Causes of Radicalisation in West Africa

It is difficult to identify a single reason that can sufficiently explain the existence of radicalisation in any particular country or region, and West Africa is no exception. In the case of West Africa, most of the security challenges that the sub-region had faced in the past, including military coups, civil wars and general political violence have their basis in democratic shortfalls and poor governance.

Such democratic deficits include inadequate economic opportunities, social deprivation, loss of cultural and social identity as well as endemic poverty. Others include political repression, widespread corruption in governance, dysfunctional governments and available large number of unemployed youth.<sup>41</sup> As such, there are underlying political, economic and social factors that appear to influence, and sustain the terrorism in West Africa.

### Socio-Economic Factors

According to Oshita Oshita, poverty and unemployment are conditions that reinforce terrorism.<sup>42</sup> Existence of these conditions, enflamed by extreme ideologies from radical groups, availability of SALWs and financial support, as well as the existence of extremist groups that are capable of mobilizing the idle youth, usually manifest in violence. This violence often arises from political conflicts that are largely associated with the demands of deprived groups that are usually meted with suppressive state policies.

For example, Boko Haram's activities started in the form of a revolt against economic, social and political injustice for government corruption, abusive security forces and widening regional economic disparity.<sup>43</sup> This situation is not peculiar to the North-eastern part of Nigeria alone, it is common in many parts of West Africa and particularly endemic in countries experiencing the activities of terrorist groups.

In Northern Mali for example, poverty, unemployment among the young, economic underdevelopment and the feeling of exclusion from decision-making have provided a breeding ground for fundamentalist ideas.<sup>44</sup> A country with such distortions inherent in its society, achieving peace will not revolve solely around security operations to destroy or contain the terrorists threats. It must necessarily include but not limited to social development, economic prospect, political inclusion, good governance, sound economic policies and respect for human rights. Without

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<sup>41</sup> Mair, S. "Terrorism and Africa: On the Danger of Further Attacks in Sub-Saharan Africa," *African Security Review* 12, no.1. Accessed November 10, 2023, <http://www.iss.co.za/pubs/asr/12no1/CMair.html>

<sup>42</sup> Opcit, Oshita, 2009.

3. <sup>43</sup> Center for Preventive Action. *Violent Extremism in the Sahel*. Cfr *Global Conflict Tracker*. (February 14, 2024). <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel>

<sup>44</sup> Lohmann, A. "Who Owns the Sahara? Old Conflicts, New Menaces: Mali and the Central Sahara between the Tuareg, Al-Qaeda and Organized Crime," *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung – Peace and Security Series*. (2011). Accessed December 8, 2023, <http://www.library.fes.de/pdf-files/buenos/nigeria/08181.pdf>

such policies that provide some source of livelihood for the youth, extremists groups can easily radicalize them, making them susceptible to recruitment by terrorists.

### ***Traditional Qur'anic Teaching System and Secular Education***

Education or the lack of it plays a significant role in determining whether one is susceptible to a terrorism or not, especially in West Africa. Similarly, the kind of education one pursues can influence the ease with which a person gets radicalised.

Well educated population, with qualifications in specialised areas like engineering and information technology (IT) but without gainful employment can be vulnerable and be lured or radicalised into terrorism to earn a decent income. In many West Africa countries, including Ghana, evidence seems to suggest that there is a large percentage of graduate unemployment which is still growing. This makes the sub-region a fertile ground for radical groups to recruit foot soldiers. Lack of education on the other hand reduces an individual's chances of gainful employment particularly in today's globalised world. With such low prospect for the future, people in this situation can be enticed into joining terrorist groups.

According to Gary Becker, a scholar in Social Economics and a winner of Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, the more a person's human capital, the greater the awareness of the person as to what future benefits is forfeits if killed or arrested.<sup>45</sup> It therefore stands to reason that people with no prospects for the future are more likely to take up suicide bombing.

On the issue of education and radicalization, the Qur'anic schools, known in Hausa language as Makaranta, have become some of the recruiting centres for terrorists. In West Africa, especially in Northern Nigeria, one major assembly point of young impressionable Muslims is at such Qur'anic schools. These Makarantas hold large number of children and youth, with ages ranging from three years old to teenagers, whom their parents have handed over to Malami (teacher) for the purpose of imparting Islamic knowledge.<sup>46</sup>

In many of these Makarantas, the children are often malnourished, unkempt and tend to beg in and around mosques for alms to fend for themselves. In certain cases, they beg on the streets and also make returns to their supervising Malami. This is referred to as the Almajiri system, which initially referred to the boys who travel away from home to study the Qur'an with a Malami whom parents considered trustworthy and devout enough to entrust with children. Alimajiri is now erroneously used to refer to anybody who begs for alms.<sup>47</sup>

The Almajiri system in West Africa is often unregulated by state authorities. Practically anyone can present himself as a Malami, and go on to impart whatever

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<sup>45</sup> Becker, G. S. "Crime and punishment: An Economic Approach," *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 76 (1968): p. 169.

<sup>46</sup> Abdulai, Iddrisu. "The Growth of Islamic Learning in Northern Ghana and its Interaction with Western Secular Education," *African Development*, XXX, no. 1 & 2, (2005). 58 – 59, accessed October 27, 2023, [http://www.academia.edu/164910/The\\_Growth\\_of\\_Islamic\\_Learning\\_in\\_Northern\\_Ghana\\_and\\_its\\_Int\\_eration\\_with\\_Western\\_Secular\\_Education](http://www.academia.edu/164910/The_Growth_of_Islamic_Learning_in_Northern_Ghana_and_its_Int_eration_with_Western_Secular_Education).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, Iddrisu, 2005.

distorted doctrines he desires as 'Islamic teachings'. Many Makaranta educational system practices corporal punishment and other abuses of the students are quite common. Under such environment of abuse, denial and extreme poverty, these youths mature into adults with a deep-seated mistrust, disillusionment and anger towards the society which mostly fail to protect them. With such deep-seated resentment against the states and the society, these youths form a limitless recruit-base for terrorists groups who could easily lure them into a false sense of belonging and identity.

These schools therefore need to be regulated and modernise to ensure that the schools are not turned into places of radicalization by extremist jihadists. The reform of these Islamic schools needs to also ensure that the curricula of the Qur'anic schools include subjects that afford the students opportunity for good moral upbringing and future employment in today's globalised world. This would help reduce the level of unemployment and poverty in such communities as well as minimize the feeling of economic exclusion which spawn terrorism. It would also stop madrasas (centre of Islamic learning) being turned into what Judy Dunker described as places of indoctrination of anti-American and anti-Western feelings where students are primed for global jihad and global Islamic community.<sup>48</sup>

### ***Ideology as a Cause of Radicalisation***

In many parts of the world, ideology has been known to have instigated radicalisation leading to terrorism, and West Africa is no exception. Virtually all the terrorist organisations in West Africa have espoused one form of ideology or the other, either in the form of Islamism or nationalism. For instance, Boko Haram, Ansaru, Ansar Al Dine AQIM have all been associated with the establishment of Islamic states, the spread of Islam and the rule by Islamic law (Sharia). The Mali based group, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), on the other hand, has often been associated with nationalist ideology. They have been fighting for the establishment of an independent state of Azawad in Northern Mali. Though ideology has been cited as a contributing factor to some of the recent emergence of terrorism in places like West Africa, some writers have argued that ideology is just a ploy to legitimize terrorism and help in mobilisation. They suggest that ideology alone does not radicalise people to turn to violence, and that economic, social and political factors are often intertwined.<sup>49</sup> For instance, it is generally agreed that Islam is not a source of terrorism, though many terrorist acts have been committed in the name of the religion. Some scholars argue that political and economic grievances are the main causes but religion is used as the cover to gain legitimacy and to help in mobilization. Notwithstanding this view, to combat terrorism in West Africa, religion

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<sup>48</sup> Duncker, J. Globalization and its Impact on the War on Terror, cited by John Davis, Africa's Road to the War on Terror, in John Davis (ed.), Africa and the War on Terrorism. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2007), p.67.

<sup>49</sup> Juergensmeyer, M. "Religion" cited in The International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security; Addressing the Causes of Terrorism, *The Club de Madrid Series on Democracy and Terrorism*, Vol I, no. 27. 2005.

cannot be ignored, as it has remained an immutable dynamic in contemporary terrorism discourse.

### ***Identity as a Contributing Factor to Radicalisation in West Africa***

Identity denotes a complex construct made up of elements originating at three levels; cultural identity, social identity and personal identity. Cultural identity signifies the specific cultural values an individual becomes part of throughout life as a guiding principle for behaviour such as collectivism, absolutism in belief and familism.<sup>50</sup> Cultural identity values are often internalised perspectives derived from various sources including involvement with national, ethnic, religious, cultural, and educational communities. Closely related to cultural identity is social identity. According to Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, social identity represents the self-assigned importance attached to the social groups to which one belongs and with which one interacts directly.<sup>51</sup> This goes along with the feelings associated with participation in these groups' activities.<sup>52</sup> Social identity also reflects the beliefs and feelings about those groups that one perceives as opposition to the groups with which one is affiliated. These are those groups that are considered as "not us." It is important to emphasise that loyalties to those groups associated with an individual's social identity are often passionate and specific, and social identity tend to define one's personal identity. Personal identity represents one's chosen or ascribed goals, values, and beliefs, as well as the personal perspectives a person uses to make sense of the world. To appreciate the effects of identity on radicalisation in West Africa, it is vital to look how the elements of identity interact with other grievances to spawn terrorism.

The feeling of economic marginalisation, political exclusion, unemployment and endemic poverty, are common features in most West African societies including Northern Nigeria. However, rarely do these prompt a person to become a terrorist. However, when such feelings exist in an environment where passionate observance of traditional differences of "us" versus "them" religious principles which justify violence against those viewed to threaten one's religious or cultural group, violence become more likely.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, a strong prioritization of the group over the individual and a belief that one's group is morally superior to the group being

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<sup>50</sup> Schwartz, S. J., Marilyn J. M. and Ervin B. "The Role of Identity and Acculturation among Immigrant People: Theoretical Proposition, Empirical Question and Applied Recommendation," *Human Development*, 49, (2006), pp. 1-30.

<sup>51</sup> Tajfel, Henri and Turner, John C., "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior," in Stephen Worchel and William G. Austin, eds., *The Psychology of Intergroup Behavior* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1986), pp. 7-24.

<sup>52</sup> Sulemana, W.M. 'Radicalization of Muslim Youth in Ghana: A Case Study of Northern Region.' M.A. Dissertation in Gender, Peace and Security, Submitted to the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, (KAIPTC)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, Silberman, 2005.

attacked, breeds aggression.<sup>54</sup> The emergence of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria could partly be explained by this phenomenon of identity-disenfranchisement mix.

As stated earlier, the North-eastern parts of Nigeria where Boko Haram is based are generally very poor, with feelings of political and economic exclusion, and high level of unemployment and illiteracy. This has alienated most of the youth. Members of Boko Haram believe that people who do not believe in their brand of Islam are infidels and inferior. The feeling of 'us'; the unemployed predominantly Muslim youth, against 'them'; the Christian dominated South, and the politically influential elite, which Boko Haram consider corrupt, is prevalent. This created a volatile environment which only needed a trigger like the Nigerian Police crackdown on Boko Haram in 2009 for terrorism to emerge.

### ***Political Instability as a Source of radicalisation in West Africa***

West Africa has witnessed prolonged political instability including coup d'états, ethnic conflicts, electoral violence and civil wars among others. These conflicts distract security agencies from dealing with matters that could lead to terrorism, hence creating the environment for individuals to be radicalised. Additionally, the scarce resources that could be used to enhance human security thereby reducing terrorist's chances of radicalising foot soldier are spent on containing these conflicts. Thus, political instability provides both the space and human resource to radicalisation.

Though the link between political instability and radicalisation is not firmly established, it can be argued that lingering political instability could provide opportunity for terrorists to gain a foothold of individuals in even a relatively stable state. A case in point is Captain Amadou Sonogo's coup in March 2012 in Mali.

The coup d'état which came about as a result of a protracted Tuareg rebellion which the government was accused of not doing enough to quash, provided the opportunity for the rebels to quickly capture the three major cities of Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao.<sup>55</sup> It also provided the enabling atmosphere for terrorist groups like AQIM, Ansa Al Dine and MUJAO to gain foothold in Northern Mali and other countries within the Sahel Region. Today, Boko Haram is believed to be receiving training and other logistics support from these terror groups to perpetrate and perpetuate their violent campaign in Nigeria. Similar, Guinea-Bissau's April 2012 coup worsened the security situation and diverted attention away from efforts to stem a growing drug trade. In a report to the UN Security Council in 2012, the Secretary General's Special Representative to West Africa, Said Djinit indicated that the drug trafficking worsened in Guinea Bissau" in the wake of the April 2012 coup d'état.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Smith, Allison G. "From Words to Action: Exploring The Relationship Between a Group's Value References and its Likelihood of Engaging in Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27: pp. 428 – 429. (2004).

<sup>55</sup> BBC, "Mali Tuareg and Islamist Rebels Agree on Islamist State, Last updated May 27, 2012. Accessed October 31, 2023, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18224004>.

<sup>56</sup> Asemana, Drug Trafficking on the Rise since Coup d'etat in the Guinea Bissau. Last modified July 15, 2012. Accessed October 4 2023, <http://www.asemana.publ.cv/spip.php//spip.php?article78512&ak=1>



It can therefore be concluded that political instability is both direct and indirect contributing factor to radicalisation in West Africa. Efforts by West African countries like Ghana to prevent or combat terrorism need to include measure to deal with political insecurity instigating and aggravating factors.

Some precipitant causes of radicalisation include the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa, the displacement of terrorists from their traditional bases in the Middle East and other parts of the world through America and her allies' war on terror, and the overthrow of dictators whose strongman rule served as "shied" along the northern frontiers of West Africa against infiltration by terrorists from elsewhere.

## CONCLUSION

### **West Africa's Response to the Emerging Threats of Radicalisation in the Sub-Region**

The increased activities of terrorist groups like AQIM, MOJAU, Ansaru and Boko Haram have significantly changed the outlook of security in the West African sub-region. Though there seems to be a consensus that national and bilateral arrangements are vital to counter radicalisation, the complex nature of contemporary radicalisation in West Africa makes it imperative that coherent and coordinated response need to be developed and maintained in order to successfully combat terrorism in the sub-region. This is particularly true for West Africa because virtually all the countries in the sub-region do not possess the individual capacity in resources, skill and technology to combat terrorism. Consequently, ECOWAS and its member states seemed apparent slow in responding to the threats of terrorism following the September 11 attacks on the US. ECOWAS's existing ability to conduct effective counterterrorism appears limited. There are no institutional structures or resources devoted specifically to fighting terrorism".<sup>57</sup>

The emergence of groups like AQIM, Ansaru, MUJAO and the activities of Boko Haram in particular, has drew the sub-regional grouping's attention to the need to vigorously address the terror threats. Over the years, ECOWAS has made great progress in issues relating to conflict management and prevention with the introduction of some protocols. For instance, Article 3 of ECOWAS Protocol relating to the mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Security outlines fighting terrorism as one of its objectives.<sup>58</sup> The creation of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF), and the Moratorium against the Importation and Exportation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in 1998 could all be seen in the light of counterterrorism efforts initiated through radicalisation.

ECOWAS also adopted Conflict Prevention Framework in January 2008 to support sub-regional responses to the interrelated challenges of cross-border crime, small arms and light weapons proliferation, and political, security, and resource

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<sup>57</sup> Andre Le Sage, ed. *African Counterterrorism Cooperation: Assessing Regional and Subregional Initiative* (Dulles: Potomac, 2007), 114.

<sup>58</sup> ECOWAS, "Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security," Article 3, <http://www.comm.ecowas.int/sec/?id=ap101299>.

governance. Additionally, ECOWAS has identified focal points in each of its member states with the aim of building an operational network.<sup>59</sup>

In its attempt to minimise insecurity which contributes to terrorism, ECOWAS member states have been conducting peacekeeping operations in conflict areas in the sub-region since the early 1990s; this could help in minimizing radicalisation. Currently, ECOWAS member states have peacekeepers in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Mali.

Additionally, ECOWAS has peacekeepers in countries bordering the sub-region like Central African Republic and Western Sahara. The destabilisation of these countries has the potential of exposing West Africa to infiltration of terrorist groups, as suggested by some writers in the case of the insecurity in Libya and its impact on West Africa's security.

Other activities by ECOWAS that contribute to deradicalisation are in the area of terrorism financing. For example, it has developed a sub-regional mechanism to combat money laundering and terrorist financing by establishing the Intergovernmental Action Group against Money Laundering (GIABA) was established in 1999. GIABA seeks to provide a common framework for combating money laundering and the financing of terrorist activities (FATF, 2010). With GIABA becoming a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in 2010, the high standards of FATF could be applied to West Africa. GIABA is also assisting ECOWAS member countries to implement the FATF standards and best practices. With tight financial regulations and monitoring system in West Africa, access to funding by terror groups, which could be utilized in luring individuals to radicalisation, would be greatly reduced. Less funding to terrorists ultimately could mean less attacks by terrorists. Additionally, the ECOWAS Protocol for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Peacekeeping and Security has as part of its objective the fight against terrorism (ECOWAS, n.d.).<sup>60</sup> There has been greater cooperation among some ECOWAS member states in the fight against maritime piracy and other TOCs. For instance, the GP and the Togolese Gendarmerie have collaborated on many occasions to apprehend armed robbers and drug traffickers in each other's respective countries.<sup>61</sup> There is also growing information sharing among a number of the security agencies in West Africa, including the police and the military.

Currently, the Ghanaian and the Togolese Navies are linked to a common Vessel Traffic Monitoring and Information System (VTMIS). VTMIS is an integrated system that enables continuous electronic surveillance of the maritime domain to ensure safety of navigation, assist distress vessels and more importantly to guard against armed robbery, illicit traffic of humans and goods and fight piracy. Others countries in West Africa including Côte d'Ivoire, Benin and Nigeria are expected to

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<sup>59</sup> Ipe J., Cockayne J. and Millar A.. "Implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in West Africa," *Centre on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation*,: 12 (2010), <http://www.globalct.org>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, ECOWAS, n.d.

<sup>61</sup> Ghana Armed Forces, "First Ever Counter Terrorism Seminar held for 70 Personnel of GAF," Accessed November 18, 2023, [http://www.gaf.mil.gh/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=270:first-ever-counter-terrorismseminar-held-for-70-personnel-of-gaf&catid=35:news&Itemid=55](http://www.gaf.mil.gh/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=270:first-ever-counter-terrorismseminar-held-for-70-personnel-of-gaf&catid=35:news&Itemid=55).

join the common network soon. This collaboration and information-sharing are measure geared towards fighting piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. With the increasing believe among experts that ransom monies obtained by pirates from ships seized make their way to terrorists, these efforts are vital toward combating terrorism in West Africa.

In addition to other ECOWAS deradicalisation mechanisms, the West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO) also facilitates the exchange of information among its members on potential terrorist and other international criminal activity which can distract the attention of unemployed citizens. WAPCCO collaborates with the West African Interpol bureau, based in Abidjan, to develop and implement counterterrorism-related programmes.

Interpol's West African bureau and WAPCCO have assisted countries in carrying out joint police operations to combat and prevent terrorism and terrorism financing in the West Africa.<sup>62</sup>

To deal with the related issue of drug trafficking in West Africa, WAPCCO, Interpol and other agencies work together to implement the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on illicit drug trafficking and organised crime. They also cooperate in the establishment of transnational crime units in various West African countries. WAPCCO and Interpol have also worked with UNODC to train various legal personnel.<sup>63</sup>

Like the WAPCCO, there is also the ECOWAS Committee of Chiefs of Security Service. Since the rise of Boko Haram attacks and kidnappings, the Committee has met on a number of occasions. On September 9, 2014, the group met in Accra to discuss among other things, how to deal with the Boko Haram issue. These efforts by West Africa that target the different support mechanisms for terrorists would help stem terrorism in West Africa from engulfing the entire sub-region; a step that could minimise radicalisation.

Aside the sub-regional efforts, individual ECOWAS member states have also taken various initiatives in response to the emerging terror threats. Some joint initiatives between West African states and the U.S. have been created to counter terrorism. For instance, there is the U.S. sponsored Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI), with partner nations including Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania Morocco, Nigeria, Tunisia, Senegal, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal as well as Ghana.<sup>64</sup> The TSCTI is aimed at training additional forces in these countries to combat terrorism in their respective countries and foster better information sharing and operational planning between regional states. This is considered as important as establishing new units.<sup>65</sup> The Sahelian and Saharan belts of West Africa currently have a counter terrorism partnership with the US and its G-8 allies, especially as the African region is one of the global sites for the US's war on terror.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, Ipe J. et'al, 2010.

<sup>63</sup> Op.cit, Ipe J. et'al, 2010.

<sup>64</sup> Op.cit, Ipe J. et'al, 2010.

<sup>65</sup> Obi, Cyril I., "Terrorism in West Africa: Real, emerging or imagined threats?" *African Security Review*, 15 no. 3. pp. 87-101.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, Obi, 2006.

Other organisations and agencies that West Africa countries are partnering with include the UN Security Council's Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), UNODC, the AU, the European Union (EU), and the U.S. These organisations and countries have provided technical and other counter terrorism capacity-building assistance to a number of countries in the sub-region.<sup>67</sup>

In spite of the progress made, much remains to be done with regards to ECOWAS' involvement in deradicalisation efforts on the continent. Beyond that, even a dedicated unit to deal with counterterrorism remains to be created as the portfolio currently sits with the Office of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security. For ECOWAS to provide solid and strong counter support to its member states, it is critical that it has structures that focus solely on either terrorism or deradicalisation. This will require a commitment by the leadership of member states to harmonise policies and work together in spite of their varied interests and resources. Individual member states have to give up some aspects of their national independence to contribute to the wider goals and the group collective interest. Furthermore, most countries in the ECOWAS region have not put into place legislations to combat terrorism except for Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal.<sup>68</sup> ECOWAS' role is thus critical in creating awareness and engaging with member states to put stronger legislations into place and to ensure that compliance is achieved.

A sub-regional understanding of the issue of radicalisation and a plan of action for the sub-region need to be developed by ECOWAS. These measures by ECOWAS will serve as a framework around which individual member states like Ghana can build their own response to the emerging threats of radicalisation in West Africa. To this end, the next chapter analyses Ghana's response to the emerging threats of terrorism in West Africa.

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<sup>67</sup> Op.cit, et'al, 2010.Ipe J.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, Bolaji, Kehinde A., 2010, p. 218.

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