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## **Ungoverned Spaces and the Challenges of Counterterrorism in West Africa Sub-Region**

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### **Abstract**

In recent times, terrorist groups; Islamic fundamentalists; separatist agitators; armed bandits and other criminal elements have begun harnessing the availability of ungoverned spaces in West African States. From such locations, they launch their horrific acts of terror aimed at destabilizing the corporate existence of these states and the overall peace and security of the sub-region. Porosity of border security, poverty and ungoverned spaces are linked as stimulants to terrorism in the West African sub-region. It is against this backdrop that this paper examined the issues and challenges of terrorism and counterterrorism in West Africa. The paper is anchored on the fragile state theory, which argues that terrorism oozing from ungoverned spaces and porosity of borders have adverse effects on the security of the region. The study relied essentially on secondary sources of documentary evidence through thorough literature review. Findings revealed that the region became volatile and easily susceptible to terrorist activities because the ungoverned spaces provided them unhindered operational bases. Therefore, the paper concluded and recommended that West African States should build a synergic security architecture in the form of independent inter-region police force recruited from member countries, and deployed to transnational borders to carry out routine border patrol in collaboration with national customs and immigration personnel. Sequel to aforementioned recommendation, governments of West African States, in collaboration with their National Security Advisers, are to provide intelligence information and report to the region's inter-region police to enhance their security duties and ensure peace and orderliness in the sub-region.

**Keywords:** Counterterrorism; terrorism; peace and security; porosity borders, ungoverned Spaces.

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## Introduction

The uprising of terrorist groups- Islamic fundamentalists, armed bandits, separatist agitators and other criminal groups in West Africa have aggravated the security dilemma in the sub region and the continent of Africa at large. Porosity of state borders, poverty and the overarching issue of ungoverned spaces are identified as instigating factors of terrorism in the West African sub-region. Ejiofor (2022) in his article titled: *Beyond Ungoverned Spaces: Connecting the Dots between Relative Deprivation, Banditry, and Violence in Nigeria* contends that the phenomenon of "ungoverned spaces" is a by-product of a state's inability to monopolize violence over its territory. Despite the efforts of sub-national entities like the local governments and the state to safeguard its territories, the failure of states to significantly impose sovereign order and authority on these territories creates loosely organized armed groups which unleash terror on these states. Yonmo (2020), linking the causes of global terrorism to modern technologies and the effects of globalization argued that the advance spread of modern technologies in the twenty-first century coupled with the effects of globalization aids and provides terrorist groups with more sophisticated weapons and methods to unleash violence of arts of terrors.

The implication of the spread of more sophisticated weapons resulting from the effects of globalization and modern technologies is that it enables terrorists to carry out transnational organized crimes even in the West Africa which undermines the collective efforts by states to foster peace and security in the sub-region. The holistic questions raised by this paper is; (i) does porosity of security architecture along states borders instigate terrorism? And (ii) does the phenomenon of ungoverned spaces instigate terrorism and undermine counterterrorism efforts in West Africa? In addressing these questions, the paper gives an insight into the geographical location, size and features of the region and therefore explain how the region became volatile and easily susceptible to terrorist activities.



A map of West Africa showing the number of states in the region  
 Source: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2014

Geographically, West Africa is a sub-region in the continent of Africa and is made up of sixteen (16) independent states namely; Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Code d'Ivoire, Ghana, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and the Republic of Togo. These countries are culturally and historically Tripolized according to their former colonial masters- Britain, France and Portugal with English, French and Portuguese as their official languages. The region remains one of the fastest demographically and economic growing part of the African continent. The physical size of the region is said to cover an estimated 4.7 million square kilometers, which is presumably twice the size of Western Europe (Pham, 2007). Large parts of these territories in West Africa remain uninhabited and inadequately ungoverned. In other words, most of the West African territories suffer from government ability to effectively monopolize the use of sovereign authority and power and they are also devoid of social/corporate existence. This coupled with porous border security architecture along states consequently creating many ungoverned spaces in the sub-region and unchecked movements of people from one country to another. The strategic location of these ungoverned spaces provide a safe haven for terrorist groups from where they carry out their operation. Consequently, making the region volatile and easily susceptible to terrorist attack. Also, the lack of adequate and appropriate security mechanism along inter-states borders for monitoring movement of people from one state to another within the region consequently turns these porous borders and ungoverned spaces into a hotbed and veritable routes for smuggling and trafficking of drugs,

illegal firearms and transnational (trans-border) organized crimes as its resultant effect.

The overarching problems of terrorism emanating mainly from ungoverned spaces and porosity of border security have made governments of West African states to jointly declare war on terrorism. Such significant move was demonstrated in their joint fight against any threat to peace and security under the umbrella body of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Based on this, on 27 and 28 February 2013, the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, at its 42nd ordinary session held in Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire, adopted the Political Declaration on a Common Position Against Terrorism, which included a Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan, to fight every threat to peace, security and overall stability of the West African sub region such as terrorism and transnational organized crimes by intervening in the internal crisis of its member states. As stated earlier, it is against this backdrop that this paper examines the issues and challenges of ungoverned spaces and counterterrorism in the West African sub-region.

### Conceptual Analysis

This section explicitly gives scholarly definitions on some essential concepts. It gives clarity of the following concepts; ungoverned spaces, terrorism and counterterrorism as they apply to the paper.

**Ungoverned Spaces:** The concept of ungoverned spaces though not new in academic discourse, however, the appropriateness of its meaning and application has remained contested among scholars. This is because no territory or space is completely left ungoverned by the state either directly or indirectly. Rather such territories are either partially controlled by the state, or they are being controlled by non-state actors. The origin of the idea and its importation to academic discourse can be traced to the RAND Corporation, as well as in speeches offered by former American leaders and Ministers' of the European Union Cabinet (Oakley & Proctor, 2012). The term is usually linked to or associated with phenomenon like weak, failing and failed states in most academic discourses which describes government's inability to exert control over its sovereign territories. Teresa (2006), identified two types of ungoverned spaces vis-à-vis are; physical ungoverned spaces and non-physical ungoverned spaces. She then defined the concept as an area devoid of government control. These territories are generally rugged, remote and littoral areas that are not effectively governed or control by a state. Other scholars consolidated Teresa physical and non-physical types of ungoverned spaces arguing that, the concept of a 'space' that is not governed is not only limited to large quantities of territorial borders and lands, but can be broadened and interpreted to also include:

airspace, cyberspace and littoral spaces which suffer from government supervisory control (Menkhaus, 2010; Clunan, & Trinkunas, 2010; Keister, 2014; Lenshie, 2018; Anichie et al, 2021). Either way ungoverned space is, whether on water, land or cyberspace, it provides large swaths of territory for criminal organizations like armed bandits, militants, Islamic fundamentalists and separatist agitators as safe haven and bases for their operation which threatens the corporate existence of national states, the peace, security and overall wellbeing of the West African sub region.

**Terrorism:** the center of analysis of this paper on terrorism and counterterrorism challenges in West Africa remains the underlying issues of border security porosity and ungoverned spaces in the region. The argument is that porous border security provides the pipeline through which illegal trafficking of arms, drugs and terrorists move unchecked and undetected freely from one country to another in the region. Ungoverned spaces on the other hand provides a safe haven for terrorists to strategically launch attacks.

Different meanings are associated violent extremism. This has made it difficult to operationalise concepts such as terrorism and insurgency. In fact, most times, both terms are used interchangeably. Igwe (2003) writing on the concept of terrorism disclosed that it is a forethought violent action against a non-belligerent target. The attacker according to him is aimed at intimidating the opponent through guerrilla warfare involving the use *Insurgency, terrorism and militancy* with the use of illegal weapons aimed at achieving objectives that are political, socioeconomic or military in nature. In his words, he contends:

Many acts of terrorism by individuals and groups are supposedly targeted at governments, but almost in all cases, those who fall victims to them are innocent people who have little or nothing to do with the grievances complained against. Plane hijacking and bombings, street explosions, hostage taking, public water and environmental poisoning, train derailment, road vehicle attacks and extra-judicial murders, the killing and poisoning of public figures, hired assassinations and other forms of criminal bloodshed and blackmail are acts which human beings may hardly associate with civilized political objectives (Igwe, 2003, p. 440).

Onuoha (2008, p. 59) on the other hand, avers that terrorism is itself emotive-laden, the function of which is to evoke attitudes, feelings or emotions. Implicated in this is the use of fear which breeds emotive part of it. Consequently, this emotive dimension comes with misrepresentation of the concept of terrorism, as the meaning it bears is dependent on the interest involved and deliberate use of the mass media to convince and project to the world that an action is an act of terrorism or that of

freedom fighters. Additionally, he argues that, though from a liberal point of view, that once one side succeeds in attaching the terrorist label to its opponent, it has gained a vital psychological advantage and attracts the sympathy of the world. Insurgents on the other hand are seen as social groups or actors who use violent means to wrestle a state's sovereignty with the aim of regime change. It is a movement that tries to change or destroy a constituted authority by subverting its activities and sovereignty. Insurgents may use espionage, terrorism, or armed conflict. Terrorism most times is encapsulated in the broader canvass of insurgency or can simply be said to be a subset of insurgency. As noted by the United States Department of Defence (2016), insurgency is an organised resistance movement that uses sabotage, subversion and armed conflict and to achieve its objectives. Insurgencies are interested in overthrowing existing social order and reallocate power within the state. They may also seek to (1) Overthrow a government (2) Establish independent territory within the borders of a state. (3) Cause the withdrawal of an occupying power and (4) Gain political concessions with less violent means. The difference between terrorism and insurgency is strictly an academic exercise, as both are mutually inclusive (Chilaka, 2021). Several extant literatures on insurgency revealed that insurgency is beset with a lot of conceptual confusion largely due to a lack of consensus on what the term actually stands for because of its affinity with terrorism. But central to insurgency is that it is a rebellion against a constituted authority either in the pursuit of political goal or for selfish interest.

From the above definitions, we can infer that an insurgency is a violent, often protracted, rebellion or uprising against a constituted authority, typically by a group of people within a country who oppose the established government or ruling power. Insurgencies often involve guerrilla warfare tactics and aim to challenge or overthrow the existing political order. However, for the purpose of this paper, terrorism can be defined as any art of terror – killing, kidnapping, hijacking and hostage taking for ransom, which puts fear, threats and intimidation to both its target who could be the government or to the civilian populace and its victims. The International Security Management Institute (ISM), defines it as “specific form of extreme violence or threat of violence carried out for ideological objectives with the main aim of instilling fear and demoralization into a targeted population. The definition though gives an explicit insight into terrorism, but is however too broad for branding all art of violence which may not be ideologically motivated as terrorism. A more detailed definition of terrorism was given by Shuhghurt (2005) who defined it to capture four basic distinctive features viz-a-viz are (i) violence for political effect (ii) it is planned (iii) calculated and (iv) systematic act. Despite the fact that the phenomenon ‘terrorism’ is an age long issue in the international community of states, it has however been difficult for nations –Nigeria, Mali,

Burkina Faso and the rest of West Africa to collectively deal with it. The complexity of effective counterterrorism in the region could be linked to the advancement of twenty-first century technology which aids terrorists with more sophisticated tactics and weaponry in unleashing their acts of terror.

**Counterterrorism:** in the wake of challenges spanning from terrorism, West African states have in their own at one time and collectively at another time declared war against all forms of threats emanating from terrorism in the region mainly through the auspices of ECOWAS. From this narrative, the paper defines every conscious and/ sub conscious efforts of a state or groups states (collectively) aimed at fighting terrorism should be considered as counterterrorism. Hence, counterterrorism can simply be defined as the measures designed to combat or prevent terrorism (Merriam Webstein Dictionary). Stigall and Donnaucci (2019), interchangeably use the term counterterrorism with antiterrorism to denote the practices, military tactics, techniques and strategies that governments, law enforcement agencies and intelligence agencies use to combat or eliminate terrorism. The concept also implies governments actions intended to prevent violence for political, economic and/or socio-culture purposes.

### Theoretical Framework

The method adopted by the authors in facilitating this paper was largely influenced by the holistic questions which the paper aimed to address and they are; (i) does porosity of security architecture along states borders instigate terrorism West Africa? And (ii) does the phenomenon of ungoverned spaces instigate terrorism and undermine counterterrorism efforts in West Africa? In addressing these questions, the researchers essentially relied on secondary data sources through thorough literature views which were carried out on journals, conference papers, seminars, newspapers and internet sources.

Theoretically, the researchers used the ‘fragile state theory’ to underpin the bases of the study. Sara (2008) in Yonmo (2022) connotes the term fragile state to mean countries that face severe developmental challenges such as weak institutional capacity, political instability, poor governance and low level of employment. The fragility theory tends to describe states categorized as weak or failing which loses legitimate control over its citizens and territories. It is characterized by a state’s inability to maintain a monopoly of force or control over its citizens and territories. State fragility provides a theoretical framework that analyzes the characteristics of states in West African region that are precariously at risk of failure or collapse due to a variety of factors like political instability and weak governance (Wimmer and Schetter, 2003). The theory is primarily concerned with explaining the complex challenges faced by developing countries today like the problem of counterterrorism

in West Africa sub region spanning from many ungoverned spaces and porous border security. It also identifies strategies that can promote greater stability, security and prosperity (Herbit, 2015; Gberte, 2010 as cited in Abas and Maneh). The strength of the theory lies in its ability to address complexity of challenges faced by developing countries. Consequently, it recognized the importance of strengthening weak institutions, building of relevant governance structure and promoting economic development with sustained commitment from both domestic and international actors (Stewart, 2010; Collier, 2009). Drawing from the foregoing, ECOWAS war on terrorism can be seen as a collective response by West African States to wane off all security threats resulting from ungoverned spaces, porous border security, poverty and small arms and light weapons proliferation. By collectively responding to terrorism and its pervasive effects, West African States aimed to enhance security, peace, development and the overall stability of the sub-region.

### **The West Africa Terrorism Complications**

This unit examines and investigates different acts of terrorism and its effects in different parts of the sub-region.

#### **Transnational Organized Crimes**

Ungoverned spaces and porous border security in West Africa over many decades have remained strategic pipelines for illegal trafficking of harmful objects such as drugs and arms and organized trans-border crimes within the region. Transnational organized crimes in West Africa take the form of human trafficking, child labour, money laundering, drugs and arms trafficking and oil bunkering. These illegal commercial activities significantly impede political stability and development of the region as it helps in financing and strengthening trans-border terrorist's groups like the Boko Haram sect and West African affiliate Islam State terrorist groups. These transnational organized crimes in West African also provide the routes for illegal trafficking of drugs like cocaine to South America and to Europe (Magdalena & Kim, 2014). Yonmo (2022) collaborated Magdalena and Kim and argues that illegal drugs such as cocaine are trafficked in West Africa mainly through the ports of Guinea Bissau and enter into the Republic of Mali through Mauritania where they are exported to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea.

It is pertinent to note that State sponsored form of transnational organized crimes exist within the West African region undermining the counter terrorism efforts of the regional government. Instances of state sponsored form of transnational organize crimes was manifested in the role of former President Amadou Touman's of Mali (2002-2012) in freely allowing crimes to flourish in his country where both the



government and the local operatives massively benefit from the business (Yonmo, 2022). There are also instances of human trafficking from Nigeria to North Africa from where they are exported to Europe for sexual exploitations, oil bunkering and money laundering to Europe and some parts of America had also been on the increase until recent times. There are also cases of Islamic terrorist groups like the Boko Haram in Nigeria, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISIG) and Jama'at Nasi al-Islam wal Muslim (JNIM) which are affiliate of Islamic State in Iraq (ISIL) and the Al-Qaida terrorist groups in Mali and Burkina Faso. These groups commit organized crimes across the Sahel and other parts of West Africa which cause ripple economic, social and political effects in the region. The orgy of terrorism and counterterrorism can be seen in the following states in West Africa

### **Burkina Faso**

In recent years, terrorism has become a major security threat in Burkina Faso's north borders with Mali and east borders with Niger, allowing militant groups like Ansarul Islam and JNIM to hide in remote border zones (Sulemana, 2019). The country has seen a significant increase in attacks by Islamic militant groups linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (CISAC, 2021). To combat this, Burkinabe security forces have conducted major operations, like Operation Otapuanu aimed at terrorist bases in eastern regions (Gueye, 2019).

### **Chad**

Chad has also seen Boko Haram attacks in the Lake Chad region and jihadist infiltration on the borders with Libya and Sudan. Counterterror efforts by Chadian forces include operations in the Tibesti Mountains, though terrorists still exploit the desert north (Jamestown Foundation, 2020).

### **Mali**

Mali, particularly with its vast ungoverned spaces in the north and central regions, has unfortunately become an oozing ground for extremist and terrorist activities. Northern Mali for instance has faced issues with ungoverned space being exploited by jihadist groups. Jama'at Nusrt al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) a terrorist group formed in 2017 through the merger of four existing groups has constantly carried out attacks on both civilian and military targets in the country (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023). Porous nature of ungoverned spaces allows for strategic collaboration between terrorist groups and criminal networks in smuggling, killing, trafficking and kidnapping. However, the formation of the G5 Sahel bloc brought promising counterterrorism measure. French and Malian forces have undertaken counterterrorism efforts in the northern regions.

## Nigeria

Nigeria has suffered from the menace of terrorism over many decades spanning from armed bandits, separatist movements and other criminal groups who employ the threat of violence in projecting their interests. Major terrorist groups that cause havoc in Nigeria mainly operate in the Northern part of the country. These groups include Fulani armed groups, armed bandits, the Boko Haram sect and its breakaway group, Islamic West Africa group. The Boko Haram and its affiliate groups have been recognized by the United Nations as international terrorist groups because of the affiliation with the Al-Qaida groups, ISIS, source of finance and their similar mode of operations globally. Forms of terrorism in the country varies from one region or geo-political zone to another. As a result, militancy and oil pipe vandalism thriving in the South, Separatist movement in the East and armed bandits, Boko Haram and farmers-herders' conflicts in the North. There are many reported cases of farmers-herders conflicts prevalent in North Central States of Benue, Kwara, Abuja and Plateau which inherently affect the nation's economy because agricultural activities cannot thrive in war situated environment such that there will be a rapid decline in production output of foods. The consequence is that it will lead to food scarcity and high cost of living in the society.

The Boko Haram terrorist group which began an ideological war against all forms of Western Civilization have expanded its scope into kidnapping and killing of innocent citizens, bombing of educational institutions and public institutions like military barracks and police stations in Nigeria. These acts the Boko Haram does by taken advantage of the porous borders and ungoverned forests and mountain areas between Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger to establish bases and move freely (Omeni, 2017). Nigerian security forces have conducted raids and operations in the Sambisa Forest aimed at dislodging Boko Haram factions, though these efforts have had limited long-term success (Aghedo & Osumah, 2014).

## Niger

Jihadist groups move freely across the shared borders between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, exploiting ungoverned areas like the Liptako-Gourma zone (Holmer, 2019). Niger has cooperated on counterterrorism with international forces and through the G5 Sahel Joint Force (Reid, 2020).

## Stimulants of Terrorism in West Africa

**Ungoverned Spaces:** This is the center of analysis of the paper. Ungoverned spaces which can be defined as the absence of government influence and legitimate control and exercise of authority over spaces under its territories is linked here as the major cause of insecurity and terrorism in West Africa. The argument is that large swaths

of lands within the West African sub-region that remains uncontrolled by the state have recently been identified and hijacked by criminal elements as strategic bases that provides them safe haven for the launching of their incessant attacks on the region.

**Porosity of borders:** Another major possible cause of terrorism in West Africa is its porous border security nature. Porous border does not designate the absence of state security guards around borders, but weak security surveillance and policing around borders. The porosity of security architectures in the West Africa sub-region aggravates the potential spread of terrorist and criminal elements like –illegal arm and drugs smuggling, unchecked migration of people within the region. Borders in the region are highly vulnerable and susceptible to terrorist groups given to the region’s geographical features – rich mineral and manmade resources, vast, rugged terrain, sea, and many ungoverned spaces which provide strategic importance for terrorists and make it difficult for security operatives to detect and put an end on their movements. For example, the porosity of Nigeria’s ungoverned borders in the words of Adeola and Oluyemi (2012) makes it possible for influxes of undocumented migrants from neighbouring countries such as Benin, Chad and Niger Republics into Nigeria. It is argued that most of these unchecked and undocumented migrants within the region are said to be perpetrators of many criminal and terrorist activities in the region. The free movement of people within the ECOWAS bloc also to some extent encourages unchecked and uncontrolled movements of people within the region. Put differently, ECOWAS free movement protocol provides an express way for criminal gangs to illegally move from one state to another within the region.

**Poverty:** It is well noted in the words of Muzan (1999) that poverty among several other social ills breeds anger, hatred and conflicts, which inexplicably can lead to some violent form of behaviour out of frustration. It is often the root cause of many problems in West Africa. Although the phenomenon is not easily amenable to a precise definition, but there remain many several parameters of its measurements and effects on human society. Poverty as one of the social ills ravaging the continent of Africa can be defined as the extreme act of being poor. That is, one is assumed to be poor if he/she is unable to meet his/her consumable basic needs. Terluman, Terseer & Torkwase (2020), identified two essential components of man’s basic needs. Vis-a-vis are; (i) the minimum requirements of an individual for the obtainment of sufficient food, clothing, shelter and other important household equipment to make life comfortable in the minimum standard (ii) provision of essential services by the government such as proper sanitation, good health care system, pipe borne water, electricity supply, high employment rate and quality standard of living.

From the foregoing, one can argue that social status of one determines the quality of life and mental quotient of the person. This is because there exists a considerable relationship between poverty and the psychological basis of any individual. As the popular saying goes “the hungry man is an angry man”. It is therefore argued that any individual suffering from the ills of poverty can be frustrated psychologically to go into criminal activities in order to secure a livelihood. A 2016 UNDP Human Development report claims that half of West Africa live in poverty (UNDP, 2016). Consequently, poverty and its catastrophic effects resulting from terrible socio-economic conditions like –high cost of living, unemployment, unfavourable agricultural policies and practices among others account for the terrorism and criminal challenges perpetuated by Boko Haram sect, and other armed groups who smuggle illegal arms and drugs, kill, hijack and other criminal activities in Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea and the rest of West Africa.

**Ideological bigotry and Islamic fundamentalism:** Ideology is a synergy of ideas about life, government and which emanates from conscious dogmatically associated social, political, or slogan which becomes characteristics beliefs of a particular group of people (Chigozie, 2015). Islamic fundamentalism on the other hand is the expression of Islamic tenets and the practice by its followers. Islamic fundamentalism is a religious ideology that advocates a return to the fundamentals of Islam-the Quran and the Sunnah. It is based on upon two pillars: the conviction that Islamic law (the *sharia*) is the only valid system for regulating human life and the conviction that a true and faithful Muslim society can only be achieved through an Islamic teaching (Ezeani & Chilaka, 2013).

Fundamentalism is basically inherent characteristics of Islam. The paper argued that Islamic fundamentalism and ideological bigotry are two equal sides of a coin that aid terrorism in West Africa. The paper however highlighted that it is not all Muslims that are fundamentalists and that not all fundamentalist are terrorists. But that all fundamentalists according to Oksanna (2003) are Muslims and that terrorists linked to Islam are integral parts of radical fundamentalism. The holistic question that comes to the mind is “how does Islamic fundamentalism and ideological bigotry causes terrorism in West Africa”. In answering this question, the narrative of the paper argued that fundamentalists teachings make its students to be radical and aggressive to anyone regarded as a pagan (non-Muslim) based on strict and wrong interpretations of the Quran which includes the use of violence and the declaration of war (jihad – holy war) against non-Islamic believer. Hence, the Boko Haram, Al Qaeda, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist groups are linked to the radical teachings of Islamic fundamentalists. That these Islamic terrorist groups started as an ideological war against all forms of western civilization.

## Effects of Terrorism in West Africa

The destabilizing aspects of terrorism have been identified by the United Nations Organization as critical issue in West Africa. Terrorism has so much ripple effects which can be short term, medium and long term. Matseksa & Mapolisa (2013) cited in Beauty (2023) classified the ripple effects of terrorism into two broad categories: tangible and intangible effects. To them, effects on human security such as death, physical injuries or damages and destruction of prosperity should be described as tangible effects. While effects of perpetual fear or the threat of fear should be considered as intangible effects. The narrative of this paper however classified the consequences of terrorism into insecurity dilemma, political, socio-cultural, economic and human development. Though depending largely on the motivation behind the acts. Accordingly, terrorism has created worrisome insecurity challenges within the West African region which are manifested in the loss of lives and properties especially in the North-eastern parts of Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali and the Republic of Chad. Benjamin (2019) identified some terrorists' activities that cause the upsurge of insecurity to include booming, suicide bomb attacks, sporadic shooting of unarmed civilians, burning of worship centers and public institutions such as police stations and army barracks and kidnapping of people. Kidnapped victims are often subject to physical tortures and molestation which consequently lead to psychological problems. The argument is that lack of contact between kidnapped loved ones and their families during periods of their captivity can lead to traumatic problems (Bello & Jamila, 2017). Maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea also poses threats to security of lives and the movement of goods and capital in the region

On the other hand, economic and agricultural activities –farming, buying and selling and production of goods and services have been dwindling in the region which affect the combined total gross domestic product and gross national product of the region. The argument is that, farmers and business people cannot go to farm in a war zone or insecure environment because of the fear of their lives and properties been destroyed. For instance, the Monday sit-at-home order by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the Eastern part of Nigeria put every commercial activities in the area at stall. This grossly affects economic growth and development of Nigeria. The implication of this is that it will lead to scarcity of staple foods which will result in the uncontrollable increase in prices of available foods. Thus, resulting into inflation and eventual decrease in the standard of living of the people.

Another economic impact of terrorism in West Africa is the eroding of states savings and diversion of their resources into fighting terrorism instead of

implementing and executing projects that will lead to the development of states and the region.

Politically, the menace of terrorism causes instability in the region. So many uprising in many states, like armed bandits, farmers-herders' conflicts, inter-communal and tribal wars, religious war and self-determination movements, threaten the cooperate existence and national survival of states in the region. For instance, the Biafra separatist movement in south-east Nigeria, inter-communal and tribal wars and religious wars all threaten the cooperate existence of the country thereby resulting into regional instability. Mali, Burkina Faso and Mauritania have all suffered the pervasive effects of terrorism in the region. Mali for instance, have continued to suffer repeated JNIM and ISGS attacks (Yonmo, 2022). There are reports of deadly attacks on Malian Forces in the year 2021 which resulted into the death of 10 Malian soldiers. There was also reports of a deadly ambush in the first half of 2021 by the ISGS terrorist group on a convoy which resulted into the death of 33 soldiers (ADF,Staff, 2022, cited in Yonmo, 2022).

### **The Challenges of Counterterrorism in West African Ungoverned Spaces**

According to Bashir & Usman (2021), terrorism and insurgency in West Africa sub region have been major security concerns for individual countries and the Economic Community of West African States. Consequently, Article 3 of the ECOWAS Protocol for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security as enacted in 1999 have been triggered at many occasions in order to win the collective support of member states in the war against terrorism. The article states that “combating terrorism and all forms of insurgency is an indispensable objective of the body. ECOWAS therefore as a regional inter-governmental organization collaborate with states and non-state actors internationally and at the regional level in fighting terrorism. Instances of the bloc’s collective efforts in combating terrorism is evidenced when in 2006, heads of states and governments of its member states deliberated on the rising cases of terrorism and money laundering in the region and directed all member states to enact laws to accommodate the revised Anti-Money Laundering and Combating of the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) standards and relevant international instructions on AML/CT (Giaba, 2006).

Other relevant counterterrorism institutions include, The Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering and Terrorists Financing in West Africa (GIABA) in December 1999 (Olajide, 2019). For more effective war on terrorism, other strategic mechanisms like ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Coordination Bureau (ECOCTB), ECOWAS Arrest Warrant (ECOWARRENT), and ECOWAS Black List of Terrorist and Criminal Network (ECOLIST) were established in February, 2003 to provide a common operational framework for actions to prevent terrorism

in West Africa (ECOWAS, 2013a, 6; 2013b, 14, cited in (Olajide, 2019). At the state level, so many counterterrorism bills have been passed into law within the region. Nigeria for instance began her efforts towards fostering legal, strategic operational counterterrorism war with the enactment of the Terrorism Prevention Act (Abimbola & Rauf, 2019). Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau and a host of other West African States have one time and the other, taken strategic measures aimed at combating terrorism in their countries.

The paper however noted that the individual countries and collective efforts of West African States in their war against terrorism have not yielded much strategic and/significant results. Broadly speaking, three factors account for the individual countries and ECOWAS counterterrorism challenges. First of all is porosity of boarder security. Porous border security within the region provides a strategic pipeline which allows for easy and undetected flow of precarious weapons to terrorist and criminal groups in the region. Another consequence of this is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the possession of criminal elements who took advantages of such porous borders to link with other terrorist groups outside their countries to carry out transnational organized crimes within the region (Una, 2015). Thus, undermining the counterterrorism efforts in the region.

Secondly, corruption of most West African States governments also contribute to the counterterrorism challenges in the region. That is, some governments in the region covet the profitability of transnational organized crimes and therefore allow terrorists and criminal activities to thrive in their country and also use ungoverned spaces within the state as hideout to launch attack on neighbouring states within the region. An example of this is the role of former President Amadou Touman's of Mali (2002-2012) in freely allowing crimes to flourish in his country where both the government and the local operatives massively benefit from the business.

Thirdly is the existence of many swaths of ungoverned spaces in the region. So many spaces –lands, maritime bodies, and cyberspaces that are without the control of a state government made it difficult for such a state to effectively counter the gross menace of terrorism in the state. This is because many terrorists and criminal groups now identified and hijacked the strategic importance of such spaces in a state that are either not being controlled or partially controlled by the government. Criminal elements now use these spaces as a safe haven from where they launch attacks and take cover.

Fourthly, also implicated in the challenges against terrorism is inadequate funding and equipment for the Nigerian military. This has become is a major challenge to the fight against terrorism.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper demonstrated the gross challenges of terrorism and counterterrorism in West African sub region resulting mainly from armed bandits, separatist agitators, transnational organized crimes and other terrorist groups who have discovered and hijacked the strategic importance of many ungoverned spaces and porous border security in the region. The insight that this paper casts on terrorism is its linkage of ungoverned spaces and porous border security which provides safe haven for terrorists to launch their operations and strategic pipelines through which illegal trafficking of arms, drugs and movement of people from one country to another in the region undetected are made.

The theoretical framework adopted in the paper in its operational base was analytical enough to underpin the major causes of terrorism and its effects in West Africa. Consequently, West African States have adopted different approaches under the auspices of ECOWAS to address the underlying causes and growing exacerbated menace of terrorism in the region. The paper however notes ECOWAS shortcomings in providing a complete strategic approaches in their war against terror. That is, despite the bloc's collective ability in establishing proactive strategic response for dealing with threats that emanate from terrorism, there requires many more actions. Drawing from the foregoing, the paper therefore recommends the following strategies to enable the region's war against terrorism become a success. They include;

- ECOWAS member states should create a functional independent inter-region police force recruited from member countries and deployed to transnational borders to carry out routine border patrol in collaboration with national customs and immigration offices. This is basically aimed at strengthening the border security in the region.
- Sequel from the above, governments of West African States should in collaboration with their National Security Advisers, provide intelligence information and report to the region's inter-region police to enable them carry out their security duties and ensure peace and orderliness in the region
- West African States should partner with relevant international bodies, especially non-state actors like the civil society organization, religious bodies and leaders of the local communities in the fight against terrorism. They are to teach them crime prevention techniques and how to deal with every form of extreme violence.
- West African States should improve their municipal anti-terrorism laws, train their judicial officials and remunerate them with essential quality packages to enable them pass credible judgments without taking bribes.



- The militaries--navy, army and air forces--of West African States should regularly invade every identified ungoverned spaces in their countries and such spaces, if very strategic, can be converted for military use or de-radicalization centers and industrial parks.

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