

# **African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT)**



**How Security Vacuum Provides Terrorists and Traffickers Fertile Ground in the Sahel**

Abdelkader Abderrahmane

**One finger dip in palm Oil soils the others:  
The activities and Consequences of boko Haram in central and West africa (cameroon, Niger and chad)**

Walter Gam Nkwi

**Terrorism and Transnational Organised Crimes in West Africa: A Regional Exposé**

Dr. Freedom C. Onuoha

**The resilience of Harakat al shabab Al mujahidin**

C Nna-Emeka Okereke

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## Editorial

*Ambassador Francisco Caetano Madeira, AUC Chairperson's Special Representative for Counter-terrorism Cooperation and Director of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT).*

The African continent, whose abundance in resources cannot be questioned, is, today, experiencing a strong economic and trade dynamism which is making it a power house with significant impact on the future of our planet. However, this evident progress is constantly threatened by a troubled security environment surrounding it. We are still plagued with conflicts of different types, nature and origins, some new, some old and anachronic, and some in the making. The struggle for the dawn of a safe continental environment, free of violent conflicts and instability, is one of the main endeavors of the AU and, at the same time, one of its major challenges, a factor that galvanizes it and motivates it for, as stated in article 3.f of the constitutive act, «we simply know well that peace and security are a precondition for any meaningful and sustainable economic, social and human development ». Africa has no other alternative but to face this challenge and prevail.

The scourges of terrorism and organized crime have emerged as major threats to peace, security and development throughout the world. In Africa, crimes such as drug trafficking, money laundering and human trafficking have combined with piracy, smuggling and other forms of violent crime to fund terrorist activities. It is no exaggeration to say that Africa, in particular the Sahel, is increasingly emerging as a major transit route for various forms of transnational trafficking, a fact that has been recognized by the United Nations Office against Drugs and Crime (UNODC)<sup>1</sup>.

Our continent is an extremely vulnerable place. In many instances it has shown inability to face the ferocity of violent extremism and international organized crime.

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1. United Nations Office against Drugs and Crime (UNODC, Trafficking and Transnational rule of law in West Africa: Assessing the Threat, July 2009)



The criminal threats we are presently facing, combined with the persistence of different forms of violent extremism, long history of intractable conflicts, underdevelopment, political instability, long, porous and poorly controlled borders, institutional weaknesses, extreme poverty, corruption, youth unemployment, social marginalization, alienation and problematic forms of governance constitute a highly explosive cocktail that terrorists and organized criminals are ceaselessly trying to put their hands on, sometimes with extraordinary success.

Indeed, during the UN Security Council Meeting held in June 24, 2011, it was recognized that drug trafficking and organized crime constitute factors for the emergence and persistence of conflicts, with consequences on peace and security. During the 20th session of the Committee on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held April 11, 2011 in Vienna under the auspices of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), it was reported that the annual criminal gains equal 1.5% of the total world GDP, while drug trafficking alone generated \$ 320 billion annually and trafficking and human trafficking generated \$32billion. It is clear that, given these huge gains, transnational organized crime has the potential to undermine national economies, corrupt state officials and erode the very foundations of our societies.

Traditionally, terrorist groups in Africa relied on overseas remittances to fund their activities and logistics. (European Cells engaged in, *inter alia*, credit card fraud). But since 9/11 and the successful operations of the security forces, especially in North Africa, which have dismantled most of the terrorist support network and destroyed their sources of revenue, terrorists sought other ways of funding their operations. They found them in the alliance with other groups of organized criminals and traffickers.

The African Union has all along recognized the intimate relationship that exists between terrorism and related scourges such as drug trafficking, illicit proliferation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, corruption and money laundering.





At first sight, terrorism and other types of organized criminality seem to have nothing in common. But, if we look a bit closer, these differences are often just apparent. The two phenomena have a lot in common. In Africa, the line that divides terrorists from ordinary criminals and drug traffickers is becoming increasingly blurred. The connections between terrorism and organized criminality have developed in a very dynamic way, particularly in their organizational and operational aspects. They are both interested in lawlessness and instability because a lawless and unstable environment is more conducive to the accomplishment of their objectives.

For terrorists, lawlessness and instability are good because they weaken the government and erode its authority and legitimacy before the people. The same people terrorists look for in search of support and sympathy. Lawlessness and Instability are also good for criminal groups because in a lawless and unstable environment the possibility of maximizing profit from their criminal acts bribe officials and generalize corruption is much greater and less risky. Criminal groups use terror as an operational weapon to stop law pursuit, to acquire political leverage over the political apparatus, to manipulate political processes and establish control over the management of state institutions. With this control, criminals can gain monopoly of the most lucrative markets of the national economy and, eventually, of the state itself. On the other hand, terrorist groups normally get involved in criminal activities as a means to find a substitute to lost sources of financial support. But once this is achieved, they gain taste and usually no longer want to quit. They often maintain their political and ideological rhetoric as a way to disguise their criminal activities, they equally continue to resort to terrorist acts, not necessarily for ideological reasons, but as a way to keep the attention of the justice system and the security apparatus focused on the political aspect of the problem and avoid legal prosecution. The maintenance of terrorist methods and rhetoric also serve as a means to ensure continued moral leverage over other criminal groups and enable terrorists to continue to present themselves before the population as political activists, not mere criminals.





Africa is the second largest producer of cannabis in the World, with West Africa, according to UN Reports, being used as transit route for Cocaine to Europe via the Sahel and North Africa. An estimated 50 tons of illicit drugs, worth almost US\$2 billion, pass through the region each year, according to the same report, which approximately represents some 27% of the cocaine consumed annually in Europe<sup>2</sup>.

Drugs and arms trafficking, robbery and vehicle theft, human smuggling, racketeering, contraband, Kidnaping for ransom, Piracy, money laundering, human trafficking, smuggling of cigarettes, narcotics and psychotropic substances, manufacturing and sale of drugs, expired food products and counterfeit currency, illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW, have provided terrorists and organized criminals with extraordinary material and financial power and sophistication.

Terrorists have mastered the networking techniques and have adopted modern technologies to communicate, recruit, radicalize and finance their operations.

In the Sahel, they have used their acquired power to entrench themselves and consolidate their presence in the Maghreb by developing a tight and complex relationship with local Communities, by co-opting, absorbing or entering into alliances with local armed groups and internationally organized criminals, by providing essential services to the population, establishing family ties with influential members of local tribes, attracting new recruits and by using corruption, persuasion and intimidation to have their way.

Organized crime gave terrorists capacity to wage conventional and asymmetric warfare and challenge central government's authority over huge expanses of national territory and establish for themselves

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2. In the four years between 2005 and 2009, some 40 tons of cocaine has been seized on its way to Europe via West Africa. Prior to that time, seizures for the entire continent had already exceeded one ton annually. Something has shifted, recently and dramatically.



a lawless zone from where to comfortably plan, commandeer and monitor the implementation of their criminal operations.

There can be no doubt that terrorism and organized crime constitute a new war front in the struggle for peace and security, economic and social development. To be won, this war requires firm commitment of AU member states to genuinely exchange information among themselves on the activities and movements of terrorist groups within their borders and surroundings provide mutual legal assistance, share expertise and research and mobilize resources with the view to enhancing the scientific technical and operational capacity of our countries.

The articles in this number are a product of dedicated studies and research by prominent African Experts on the matter. It is my hope that our readers will find them useful and that they will help them better understand the complexity of the connections between terrorism and international organized crime.



## **HOW SECURITY VACUUM PROVIDES TERRORISTS AND TRAFFICKERS FERTILE GROUND IN THE SAHEL**

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*The views expressed here are the independent views of the author and do absolutely not represent the views of ISS.*

### **Abstract**

In January 2013, the French and Malian armies jointly launched the Serval military operation to regain the territories and cities of the North of Mali which had been under the control of terrorist groups for most of the previous year. However, beyond the ongoing thorny political Malian conundrum, it is the entire West African region from Guinea Bissau to Niger and the entire Sahel that is under a global threat of destabilization.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the Sahel and West Africa have become a dangerous pivotal platform and crossroad of terrorism, drug and human trafficking, crime and insurgency as well as a transit route to Europe for the international trafficking of narcotics emanating from not only Latin America but also from Asia. Moreover, since the fall of Qaddafi of Libya in 2011, arms of all kind have fallen into the hands of insurgent and terrorist groups present in the region. Already vulnerable due to the porosity of its frontiers, a catastrophic humanitarian situation, tensions between Tuaregs and their respective central government as is the case in Mali, and its strategic route for cocaine trafficking, the Sahel and West Africa have therefore become highly instable in the recent years.



## Introduction

While terrorists in the Sahel and West Africa had until recently a politico-ideological orientation, narco-traffickers and criminals were principally motivated and attracted by financial gain. Indeed, whereas ten years ago terrorist groups and drug traffickers were perceived as being motivated by different and diametrically opposed goals, such is no longer the case. For many years now, terrorists and drugs traffickers have been synergizing their respective illegal activities, transforming the Sahel into a narco-terrorist route in support of dangerous drugs, crime, terrorism and insurgency. According to Kemp, the Sahel has even become a crossroad for human trafficking (As Crime in West Africa Spreads, Response Requires Regional Cooperation). Also, in order to have a greater understanding of the question of security and drug trafficking in the Sahel, it is pertinent to opt for a global, holistic, sociological and geographical approach. Indeed, different intertwined exogenous forces, parameters and role-players ought to be taken into account, from the European mafia, South American drug cartels, opium traffickers from Afghanistan to terrorist groups present in the Sahel.

Through this study, the author will attempt to identify the different parameters and actors that not only endanger the stability of the Sahel region, but also the security of local populations. This paper will have the following breakdown. It starts with an overview of the regional historical vulnerability which leads to its instability. It then covers the growing drug trafficking in the Sahel which in turn leads to transnational crime. The author will then underline the issues of money laundering and the poverty aspect which is one of the components creating vulnerability in the region. The author will eventually synthesize the article and finalize it with a conclusion.



## **Regional vulnerability**

Throughout history, the Sahel has been a fascinating geographical and immensely strategic region for many contiguous and non-contiguous states. The Sahel has been an important confluence for the meeting of civilizations and trade bridging rather than separating societies from north and central Africa. Sahara desert has bridged rather than separated. It is also known to be the birthplace of African agriculture, particularly the cultivation of rice and the domestication of animals (Klaus M. Leisinger & K. Schmitt, 1995: 11). Considering its geostrategic location combined with rich natural resources such as uranium, bauxite, gold, manganese, phosphates, iron metals, cotton and fishing, the region could therefore only attract a new scramble for the control of the Sahel by states and non-state actors. Furthermore, the region occupies a key geostrategic location and is a gateway for trade between the Mediterranean region and the rest of Africa and also provides a passage to mainland Europe, which makes it extremely vulnerable to clandestine immigration and all types of trafficking including drugs and humans. This geostrategic importance prompted the French missionary and nonetheless military geo-strategist, Charles de Foucauld, to articulate a plan in 1911 for the military and administrative reorganization of the Sahel region (André Bourgeot, 2000: 24).

## **Drug**

History of drug trade began during the Neolithic era (7000 BCE to 3000 BCE) with the cultivation of opium and cannabis for both medical and religious purposes (N. Inkster & V. Comolli, Drugs, 2012: 21). However, for a long time, the main drug available and consumed in the Sahel as well as West and North Africa, was cannabis (or hashish) principally cultivated in Morocco. With 21% of the world's production, the latter is the leading producer



of cannabis in the world<sup>1</sup>. In 2011, the revenue emanating from the traffic of cannabis was estimated at USD12.5 billion (Christina Schori Liang, 2011: 3). However, drugs such as cocaine and heroin have increasingly become present in the region, albeit largely as a result of transit to Europe.

Historically, the USA were the first consuming market for cocaine in the world. However, from the mid-1980s, this drug has been losing its appeal in the country. As a result, from the mid-1990s, cocaine traffickers have had to find new consumers elsewhere, namely in Western Europe where the market was growing (A. Philip de Andrés, 2008b: 215). According to the British Crime Survey, the prevalence of cocaine use increased more than four-fold in the 2000s, from 0.6% of the adult population in 1996 to 2.6% in 2007. Spain, Italy, and France have all seen cocaine use levels double or triple in those years (Ibid.). As a result, a growing share of the total cocaine production is shifting from markets in North America to markets in Western Europe, as reflected in the seizures figures.

Having said that, cross-border crimes in West Africa have been in existence since the 1970s (A. Philip de Andrés, Ibid.: 205). Initially, traffic in the region was confined and limited to individuals or groups of traders and businessmen and women involved in the smuggling of goods across the borders. However, these illegal activities eventually took alarming proportions when human trafficking, in the form of domestic slavery and illegal sexual activities, accompanied the other illegal activities (Ibid.). Also, already vulnerable due to the porosity of its frontiers, a catastrophic humanitarian situation, tensions between Tuaregs and their respective central government as is the case in Mali, and its strategic route for cocaine trafficking, the Sahel region has become even more instable in the recent years. Moreover, since the fall of Qaddafi of Libya in 2011, arms of all kind

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1. According to the 2011 UNODC report, Afghanistan could soon become the first producer and exporter of cannabis in the world; UNODC World Drug Report 2012, p. 44 ([http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2012/WDR\\_2012\\_web\\_small.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2012/WDR_2012_web_small.pdf))



have fallen into the hands of insurgent and terrorist groups present in the region such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Dine (Defenders of the Faith or Jummu'a Ansar al-Din al Salafiya.), the Unity Movement for Jihad in West Africa (or MUJAO under its French acronym), Boko Haram (Western education is sinful) -some intelligence reports indicate a growing link between AQIM and the Nigerian terrorist group-, or the National Mouvement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA).

### **The Sahel**

The Sahel Ocean<sup>2</sup>, which stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Shores of Somalia and the Red Sea, is a vast desert (5,000 km long and 300 km wide) which has now undoubtedly and increasingly become a dangerous pivotal platform and crossroad of drug trafficking, crime and insurgency as well as a transit route to Europe for the international trafficking of narcotics emanating from not only Latin America but also from Asian countries such as Afghanistan.

One explanation for this dangerous and toxic phenomenon is that the Sahel region is less dangerous than the direct routes between the zones of production in Latin America and the European continent, which is also the world's primary consumption market (La situation sécuritaire dans les pays de la zone sahélienne). According to Christina Schori Liang, this augmentation of drug trafficking in West Africa is also due to different exogenous and intertwined factors such as the correlation between terrorism and transnational organized crime which is in turn principally due to globalization, the end of the cold war which witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ease of communication (Internet) and the fight against global terrorism (Op. Cit., p. 2). In addition, the availability of affordable air travel opened up new markets which have become within easy reach (N. Inkster & V. Comolli, Op. Cit., p. 26).

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2. The author has borrowed this expression from Mehdi Taje.





Also, since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, drug cartels in Latin America, particularly Colombians, have begun to export their illicit products to the European continent, transiting through Africa. Because they consider the North American market to be saturated and not lucrative enough, they have opted for the European market. However, since the shortest route for delivering the drugs is not necessarily the safest one, traffickers use “Highway 10” (in reference to the tenth parallel) in order to penetrate and transit West Africa. The merchandise is then transported through Chad, Mali, Niger and Morocco whose porous frontiers facilitate the passage (see map 1). This trafficking is further worsened by the presence of heroin and cocaine coming from Afghanistan and transiting through this region as well as through East Africa, particularly Somalia (see map 2).

In 2011, it was estimated that 15% of the world’s cocaine production, equivalent to 90 tons, transited through West Africa to the European market (S. Julien, 2011: 130). Likewise, in 2008, 60 tons of cannabis from Morocco were intercepted in Algeria (F. Belgacem, 2012), while Malian forces seized 750 kg of cocaine, equivalent in value to some 36% of the Malian military budget that year (G. Berghezan, 2012: 27). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in 2010, it was also estimated that 30-40 tons of heroin transit annually through East Africa (The Globalization of Crime. A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment, UNODC, 2010). Some of these drugs finance terrorist groups present in the region such as AQIM, MUJAO and Boko Haram and Al Shabab in Somalia. This concentration of drug traffickers and terrorists in the Sahel and West Africa is principally explained by the weakness of the individual states of this geographical zone, the lack of surveillance, the porosity of frontiers and the corruption which infects different institutions such as the army, the customs and the police<sup>3</sup>.

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3. See also M. M. Ould Mohamedou, *The Many Faces of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*, pp. 1-6



In this regard, the 2009 Boeing scandal in Mali, labeled “Air Cocaine” underlines the enormous shortcomings if not complicity of Malian local government officials. In November 2009, a Boeing 727 coming from South America landed in the northern desert of Mali. Once the cocaine was unloaded, the plane, bogged down in the sand, could not take off. Forensic personnel found large traces of cocaine in the plane (M. M. Ould Mohamedou, 2011: 3). It was then established that the Boeing had been rented in Venezuela, registered in Saudi Arabia and flew under an expired license delivered by Guinea-Bissau (Ibid.). Similarly, in January 2010, another plane arriving from Latin America landed in North-West Mali near the Mauritanian border. All these illegal activities underline the connections and ramifications of this international traffic and also indicate that such traffic cannot occur without the complicity of the locals. Likewise, in 2008 in Niger, police forces were prevented from intervening in a drug trafficking transaction by the local population who chased them away (C. Champin, 2010: 108). It has indeed been established in this “Air Cocaine” affair, that local notables were present during the unloading of the plane<sup>4</sup>. As Philip de Andrés argues, “the participation by local communities (and local authorities) in the smuggling activity is a guarantee of impunity for all participants in the smuggling venture” (2008a: 5). According to a French diplomat, there even exist close ties between AQIM and members of the Malian government (G. Berghézan, Op. cit.). Likewise, it is also widely recognized that the airport of Bamako has become a transit point for traffickers, especially Nigerians, transporting drugs to Europe.

### **Transnational criminals**

This drug trafficking between Latin America and Europe via the Sahel is further aggravated by European groups such as the Camorra crime

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4. For a concise analysis on the drug trafficking situation in Mali, see A. Abderrahmane, *Drug Trafficking and the Crisis in Mali*



syndicate. Indeed, it has clearly been established that as opportunist, the Italian mafia and Al Qaeda have cooperated in recent years in order for the latter to benefit from the expertise of the Camorra, for instance by obtaining forged documents. The terrorists who operate on the European continent benefit also from these criminal techniques and through active cooperation with the Camorra which may eventually even provide them with a shelter or a safe haven (Christina Schori Liang, *Op. Cit.*, p.3). There are also indications that the Camorra is present in the Sahel region to claim its share of the drug trafficking market (C. Champin, *Op. Cit.*, p. 89). Likewise, the presence of members of the Cosa Nostra and Ndrangheta Italian mafia in Latin America facilitates trafficking to Europe.

Through their cooperation, these criminal and terrorist groups benefit from each other's expertise which, in the medium to long term, could be transformed into hybrid groups like the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). This Colombian group is a perfect example of a group founded on a radical and militant political ideology, which transformed itself into a criminal-narco-terrorist group. According to the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), 60% of foreign terrorist groups have some link with the trafficking of drugs (C. Schori Liang, *Op. Cit.*, p. 3). Likewise, it is estimated that 80% of the Taliban's leaders in Afghanistan fight for the financial profit to be made from the sale of opium and other drugs rather than any close attachment to religious ideology (*Ibid.*). However, regarding the latter, they nonetheless must pursue a seemingly parallel religious struggle in order to remain credible vis-à-vis their supporters.

As a result, transnational organized crime in West Africa has become a matter of major international concern. The activities of West African criminals in other parts of the world are increasingly perceived by international organizations such as the UNODC or Interpol, police forces in the European Union, North America and elsewhere as a serious threat. Although West African organized crime is less violent than, for example, Russian organized crime, its scale and scope are astonishing and the growing nexus between West African criminals



and others involved in operations global illicit markets is worrisome (A. Philip de Andrés, *Op. Cit.*, p. 2).

In addition to the trafficking of drugs and arms, the important routing of contraband cigarettes across the Sahel is also very lucrative for traffickers in the region. Counterfeit cigarettes, which come mainly from Nigerian and Asian factories, are then distributed throughout the Sahel, the Maghreb, Europe and the Middle East. Although terrorist groups are not necessarily implicated in this kind of trafficking, they nonetheless enrich themselves by benefitting from it indirectly. It is said that the Salafist Group for Predication and Combat (GSPC), now known as AQIM, struck a deal with drug dealers and tobacco smugglers. In exchange of fuel and money, the traffickers obtain from the terrorists a 'close transporting guard' throughout their journey as well as advices and recommendation to avoid security forces and check points (A. Philip de Andrés, 2008a: 4-5). This traffic is an important source of financing for terrorist groups present in Mali, such as the MUJAO and to a lesser extent AQIM. Indicatively, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, alias Mister Marlboro, the mastermind behind the dramatic hostage-taking at In Amenas in Algeria in January 2013, is widely known for controlling the cigarette trafficking enterprise in the region.

### **Money laundering**

In order to recycle the money generated from drug trafficking, the narco-traffickers proceed to money laundering through different operations. However, it is also believed that criminals in the upper echelons of the trade literally have a problem knowing what to do with their money (N. Inkster & V. Comolli, *Op. Cit.*, p. 27)<sup>5</sup>. Also, criminals frequently invest in real estate projects or insurance contracts, very often in countries where the legislation remains vague and the opportunities numerous. In this regard, the UNODC

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5. It is said that the former drug baron, Pablo Escobar would burn Dollar notes to keep warm at night.



bureau in Dakar calculated that in 2012, out of a \$1.2 billion profit generated from the traffic of cocaine, more than \$500 million were laundered and spent locally (A. Frintz, 2013: 22-23). In countries such as Morocco and Senegal for example, where the real estate market is booming, the easy acquisition of houses and buildings facilitates money laundering. Besides the ease of acquisition, it is the high level of benefits that appeals to the traffickers (C. Champin, *Op. Cit.*, p. 127). Furthermore, this type of acquisition is hardly detectable due to the absence of any central data or registry (N. Lalam, 2011: 3). Unscrupulous brokers may also provide insurance investments in exchange for financial favors (*Ibid.*). In parallel, income emanating from drug sales in Europe may also need to be transferred in Africa in order to pay and acquire more drugs. This could be done through wire transfers such as remittances or through the movement of bulk cash (A. Philip de Andrés, 2008b: 223). Additionally, the large number of West Africans and Moroccans as well as their descendants living in the suburbs of Paris, Amsterdam or London creates opportunities for the many unemployed to become part of such illegal trafficking between the African continent and Europe<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, the current European economic crisis, which is also affecting Morocco whose economy is highly inter-connected with the European economy, can only encourage the postponement of any effort by Rabat to eradicate money laundering, which plays an important part in Morocco's national economy (A. Abderrahmane, 2013). In 2004, it was estimated that more than 800 000 Moroccans relied directly or indirectly on the revenues provided by the sale of hashish (S. Julien, *Op. Cit.*, p. 127). Furthermore, many of those bi-national or with valid resident permits in Europe also known as "free lancers", invest their savings in the purchase of a couple of kilos of cocaine with the aim to smuggle it to Europe to sell it and make financial profit (A. Philip de Andrés, *Ibid.*, p. 211).

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6. See for example, C. Champin, *Afrique noire, poudre blanche*, pp. 95-101



To complicate the security situation in the Sahel, the fall of Libya's Qaddafi and the territorial and geo-political instability that has followed have enabled these terrorist groups and drug traffickers to reinforce their position in the region. Although the roots of the crisis are decades-old, the acceleration of the crisis in Mali is also due to the consequences of NATO's intervention in Libya. The open-sky Libyan black market has enabled militants, insurgents and rebel movements, as well as terrorist networks to acquire sophisticated light weaponries. As a result, arms have proliferated and now circulate even more easily across the region. The predominantly pro-Qaddafi forces who fled Libya brought with them a large number of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and vehicles which they either used against the central government of Bamako or sold to terrorist groups such as AQIM and MUJAO. The seriousness of this problem was captured in a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution, in which the Council expressed concern at the proliferation of all arms and related materials of all types in the region and its potential impact on regional and international peace and security, as well as underlined the risks of destabilization caused by the dissemination of such weapons in the Sahel<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, during times of rebellion, taking advantage of a judicial vacuum, the Sahel region becomes an area where trafficking in commodities of all kinds, such as drugs, cigarettes and other illegal products, are commercialized<sup>8</sup>.

Additionally, the presence of several terrorist groups such as the MUJAO, Ansar-al Din and AQIM has transformed Northern Mali a new terrorist hub in Africa. These groups which operate in temporary or convenient alliances may also confirm that Al Qaeda is regrouping in Africa through the use and recruiting of local groups

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7. See paragraphs 6 & 7 of the Preamble to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2017, dated 31 October 2011, <http://unsmil.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=3548&language=en-US>

8. We find this phenomenon across the world during war periods whereby a minority takes advantage of the chaos and a lack of governmental authority to enrich themselves.



on the continent. In his report, Mohammed Mahmoud Abu al-Ma'ali has provided great insights of the organization, its leadership and modus operandi (2012: 1-9). As Dario Cristiani and Riccardo Fabiani underline, “the actors, leaders, tactics, goals and geographical focus of what is known today as AQIM have changed several times over the past two decades, as the organization reacted to existential threats and external inputs in often unpredictable ways” (2011: 2).

Consequently, the presence of terrorists in the Sahel has a nihilistic impact on the economy of the region with foreign investments and tourism dramatically declining. The decline or loss of tourism, an important component of the regional economy has deprived the region of hundreds of millions of dollars and forced more and more Tuareg, especially young men, into crimes of banditry and drug trafficking. For instance, the French tour agency *Point-Afrique*, which specializes in Sahara eco-tourism, was forced to withdraw from the region after the killing of French tourists in Mauritania in 2007 and the kidnapping of employees of the French nuclear power company, AREVA, in Niger in 2010 (P. Leymarie, 2012: 8-9). Likewise, due to the growing terrorist threat, the organizers of the famous Paris-Algiers-Dakar motor rally have since 2009 ‘relocated’ it to Latin America<sup>9</sup>.

### **SOCIAL CONTEXT**

West African countries have some of the lowest standards of living in the world. According to the UNDP Human Development Index of 2013 (2013 World Human Development Report, UNDP), thirteen out of the fifteen Economic Community of West African States

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9. Despite its relocation in South America, the Europeo-African name remains unchanged. It was also due to security reasons that the race stopped taking place across Algeria in the 1990s when the country was facing high terrorist threat. Currently, this race generates an additional US\$230 million to Argentina's national economy.





(ECOWAS) members are among the last thirty bottom-listed<sup>10</sup>. It is in this dramatic context that the proliferation of drugs, cigarettes, SALW and other numerous illicit products takes root in the Sahel. Traffickers take advantage of the dire socio-economic vulnerability of the local populations to convince such desperate people that they can improve their daily lives through such illegal activities. The economic hardship faced by these populations is a fertile ground for their criminal development, which becomes transformed in many cases into narco-terrorism. Uncertainties about long-term stability may encourage citizens, including public civil servants, to take whatever they can, even if it is illegal (A. Philip de Andrés, 2008a: 4). As Inkster and Comolli argue, “drug barons are sometimes able to deliver local communities with services the state is incapable of supplying, which provides them with a degree of public support” (Op. Cit., p. 108). Consequently, this growing link between terrorist groups and criminal organizations only contributes to the human suffering of the local populations of the Sahel and West Africa. The ‘Sahel Ocean’ is moreover ideally placed for illegal migration to Europe. Despite different measures and cooperation between the governments of the region to stop this phenomenon, and regardless of the high risks involved, the Sahel continues to be the *passage obligé* for thousands of migrants (see map 3).

Thus, African and other illegal migrants who dream of a European Eldorado, often become connected to drug traffickers and clandestine smugglers of human beings, who lure them with the promise of a better future in Europe<sup>11</sup>. These trafficking networks are able to mobilize dozens of human couriers on the same flight (A. Philip

10. The report lists 177 countries. Regarding individual ECOWAS countries: Benin (166), Burkina Faso (183), Cape Verde (132), Cote d'Ivoire (168), The Gambia (165), Ghana (135), Guinea (178), Guinea Bissau (176), Liberia (174), Mali (182), Niger (186), Nigeria (153), Senegal (154), Sierra Leone (177) and Togo (159).

11. Having said that, migrants are often not aware that they transport drugs to be only caught upon arrival in the European airports. For a thorough account, see for example A. Angel-Ajani, *Strange Trade, Dealeuse de drogue*.



de Andrés, 2008b: 211). In this regard, traffickers are never short of innovative sophisticated ideas to transport drugs to Europe to make their illegal businesses more lucrative. In July 2012, the customs officials of Nador, North-East of Morocco, intercepted 10 kilograms of heroin hidden in 30 copies of the Qur'an (Oumma, 2012; Nadorcitey, 2012). Likewise, in December 2012, the Spanish police arrested a Colombian woman at the Barcelona airport who was trying to smuggle 1,400 kilograms of cocaine concealed in her breast implants (Elle transportait de la drogue dans des implants mammaires, Le Figaro, 2012). In the USA, American police forces recently found that Mexican traffickers on the mutual American-Mexican border constructed a sort of cannon fixed on a pick-up capable of propelling as much as thirteen kilograms of drugs across the American border and on a distance of 400 meters which would then be recuperated by their accomplices on the American soil.

When Africa becomes too dangerous and is no longer financially profitable for their business operations, drug traffickers will undoubtedly relocate their business elsewhere, using new routes and new markets. For instance, Russian officials and cargo handlers are exploring the possibility of opening a new freight route across the Antarctic, which would save them many days in contrast to the more time-consuming route through the Suez Canal. Needless to say, once it is fully operational, drug traffickers will waste no time in exploring the possibility of use this route for their illegal enterprises.

### SYNTHESIS

Similarly to Central America and the Caribbean which have long suffered for being placed between South America's cocaine producing countries and the cocaine users in North America, or southeast Europe affected by heroin produced in Afghanistan and then transported to Western Europe via the so-called "Balkan route",



today many West African and Sahel countries suffer from the adverse effects of lying between the sites of drug production and the most lucrative consumption markets (A. Philip de Andrés, 2008a: 2).

As a result, the Sahel has undoubtedly become the major crossroads and meeting point for traffickers and terrorists of all kinds. From AQIM to MUJAO, the Camorra criminal syndicate, South American drug barons and even the FARC, all these groups have built their own businesses and networks in the region. As an American expert has argued, all those groups who nurture hatred towards the USA are now present in the Sahel (in C. Champin, 2010: 140). Furthermore, the ongoing instability in Libya has had dramatic spill-over effect in the region and in Mali in particular, which has in turn changed the balance of power in the region through the circulation of armed combatants, arms and ammunition (Antonin Tisseron, 2012: 27). Needless to say that the threat of terrorism in the region also feeds on the many unresolved internal conflicts, some of which have been dragging on for decades, such as the Western Sahara unachieved decolonization process, the socio-economic and political unresolved issue in Mali and its northern Azawad region or the conflict in the Casamance region of Senegal.

What this study also indicates is that the growing cooperation which started many years ago between terrorist groups of West Africa and the Sahel and Latin America drug cartels and other African and European drug barons has accelerated and strengthened in the recent years which have in turn dramatic socio-political and economic consequences for West African States. While a decade ago terrorist groups and drug traffickers were perceived as having diametrically opposed motivations, such is not the case anymore. Nowadays, the activities of the drug cartels of South America and other African and European drug barons are closely intertwined with terrorist groups such as AQIM and MUJAO. Indeed, terrorist groups are now more interested in increasing their financial revenues than any promotion of religious ideology. Also, Mohamedou is probably close to the truth when he argues that while AQIM's actions are presented under



religious ideology and ideals, the group is more interested in financial gain through the demands of ransoms and other parallel activities such as organized crime (Op. Cit., p.3).

In this regard, and bearing in mind the current crisis in Mali, and the numerous hostages held there, the international community ought to urgently ponder its strategy in fighting terrorists present in the country and the region in general. AQIM's source of financing largely emanates from the payments of ransoms. Although the UNSC resolution 1904 underlines the urge to deal appropriately with this issue, it does not specify any ban on the payment of ransoms to terrorists. However, before this alarming situation, and in order to dry up these terrorists' sources of finance, the UNSC ought to further strengthen its approach and vote for a new resolution condemning any ransom payment to terrorists<sup>12</sup>. In this regard, while recognizing that Member States faced challenges in their efforts to curb the financing of terrorism while having to fulfill their primary obligation of protecting their citizens, the African Union (AU) reiterated in November 2012 its call for outlawing the payment of ransom to terrorist groups for the release of hostages. For the AU, the payment of ransom should also be seen for what it is – rewarding criminal behavior and not only encouraging, but also actively financing further abductions and terrorist attacks, thereby endangering many more innocent lives in the continent and beyond (Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa, pp.11-12). It is important to underline that AQIM's budget -estimated at €360 million during the period 2007-2012- was largely obtained through the payment of ransoms (Y. Zoubir, 2012: 453). In comparison, the EU budget to assist Mali for the period 2008-2013 is €650 million<sup>13</sup> while Mali's military budget does not exceed €190

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12. Already in 1995, Algeria had during a UN conference in Vienna introduced a resolution project linking terrorism and drug trafficking. At that time, this project was met with a veto from both the USA and the UK.

13. Figures presented during a seminar organized jointly by EPLO and ESSEC in Paris on the 4th of December 2012.



million (Ibid.). As the former Africom General, Carter Ham, nicely once put, “AQIM is the best-funded, wealthiest affiliate, thanks to its lucrative practice of kidnapping foreigners for ransom and its smuggling prowess” (The Washington Post, 2012).

Furthermore, despite genuine concerns from the EU and the USA to eradicate all trafficking in both their respective territory and in Africa, they, as well as international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, appear to have a rather lax approach. Indeed, as Champin underlines, on the one hand, the latter impose conditions for their aid to Africans, the installation of good governance and transparency, but on the other hand they, close their eyes to countries where money laundering is endemic such as Senegal, Morocco or Niger (Op. Cit., pp. 131-133). In this regard, it is paramount to underline that unexplained cash remittances from Europe increased dramatically during the 2000s in a number of West African countries. In countries such as Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal, remittances doubled and even trebled compared to the previous two decades while Nigeria’s remittances increased by 200% between 2005 and 2006 (A. Philip de Andrés, 2008b: 223). Likewise, after years of invisible or zero foreign direct investment (FDI), Guinea Bissau suddenly attracted US\$42 million in 2006, equal to nearly a sixth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that year (Ibid.).

Likewise, relatively strong states such as Morocco which have the means to achieve better results, use drugs trafficking as a diplomatic tool vis à vis their neighbors (S. Julien, Op. Cit., p. 126). Banks and offshore havens bear also a tremendous responsibility in the money laundering transactions. It is believed that in 1999, the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) Chairman, Dick Grasso met the FARC leader in Colombia to convince him to invest their drug money profits in Wall Street arguing that if he would make peace [with the central Colombian government] he could expect great economic benefits from global investors (A. G. Marshall, Afghan heroin and the CIA).



Such attitude has persuaded Champin to argue that diplomatic and economic interests prevail over the fight against organized crime and drug trafficking (Op. Cit., p. 133). It is important to recall here that drug trafficking is the largest global commodity in profits after the oil and arms trade. Another important issue is that often it is only the small fish and mules who are arrested leaving the drug barons free and safe. This leaves the drug trafficking scourge unresolved as the root of the problem remains untouched (Ibid., p. 111). This situation has in turn convinced Koutouzis and Perez that this fight seems to be more of a mutant struggle, which never ends (2012: 173, footnote 1).

Moreover, despite concrete efforts on the part of all states concerned, there nonetheless remains a lack of genuine inter-state cooperation in Africa (C. Champin, Op. Cit., p. 112). This situation only provides drug traffickers and criminals with more latitude for their illegal commerce. But as a French policeman noted, it is already difficult for well-equipped European and American agencies and other enforcement bodies to efficiently fight the scourge of drug trafficking, let alone for those poorly-equipped African states (Ibid., p. 108). Yet, if this dangerous scourge is not urgently dealt with, many countries in East and West Africa, if not the entire continent, could not only be transformed into new drug producing and drug exporting states for the European market, but could also be caught in a war between narco-traffickers and their respective governments, as in the case of Guinea Bissau, with the probable risk of a domino effect involving neighboring countries. Due to the growing demand in the other continents, methamphetamines is increasingly commercialized by the African barons. There are already signs that some African states are reprocessing drug and therefore are acquiring techniques to produce drugs as evidenced by the reprocessing laboratories found in Mauritania (Ibid., p. 77). In Nigeria, two laboratories producing methamphetamines were dismantled in 2013. Likewise, in 2011 and 2012, five other laboratories were discovered in Lagos, Nigeria and elsewhere in the country (Méthamphétamine made in Nigeria).



A Colombian, Gonzelo Osorio –paid \$38000 per week to share his know-how expertise- and seven Nigerian accomplices were also arrested which further confirms the Nigerian-Colombian drug connection.

Another important point in this fight against drug trafficking and organized crime, is that there remain a serious lack of awareness of the inter-connection between the numerous protagonists, as the example of AQIM and the Camorra indicates. This may be explained by the lack of any significant investigation on the topic. According to a German criminologist, organized crime does not attract much interest, especially crime of Italian origin. All efforts are focusing on the fight against Islamic terrorism, ignoring its correlation with the European mafia and other criminals. The reason for this is that unlike other criminal organizations, the Italian mafia pays its annual taxes to the government (In Koutouzis & Perez, *Op. Cit.*, p. 186).

Yet, if we have concentrated this study on drug trafficking and terrorist groups, other illegal trade in, such as toxic waste, petrol, vehicles or medications, occur across the Sahel. In fact, it has been argued that the illegal trade of petrol in the Delta region of Nigeria is even more lucrative than the trafficking of drugs (C. Champin, *Op. Cit.*, p. 8). However, beyond the fact that all such trafficking is linked in one way or another, it is undoubtedly the reasons and root causes behind this scourge of criminal activity that needs to be urgently questioned and resolved. Weak national institutions, misery, poverty<sup>14</sup>, social injustice and the lack of any future perspective are among many reasons behind the proliferation of such trafficking in the Sahel which causes the local populations to fall into the trap of imagining that criminal activity will lead to a hypothetic better life. Latin American cartels and other barons have no difficulties with

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14. Poverty does however not explain it all. There are ample cases of people who were not in need but fell into the drug trap such as the international Senegalese chess player, Abdoulaye Der who was arrested in Italy in 2006 transporting 3 kilograms of cocaine (in C. Champin, 2010: 147)





their endless financial means to buy-out and corrupt Africans across all different social strata, from the poor unemployed to custom officers, army Colonels and ministers (Ibid., p. 109). The fact that key security personnel are poorly paid, and often irregularly paid, further contributes to their exposure to corruption. As a result, when those who are bind to indicate the example to the population fail to do so, it then becomes extremely difficult for the mass population to avoid bribes and remain honest, thus creating a vicious cycle.

Also, as Kemp underlines, it is by improving the living conditions of these people, conducting crime prevention and educational programs and providing human assistance and reinforcing good governance that trafficking networks of all kinds in West Africa and the Sahel may be successfully fought (Op. Cit.). Using force would only be a temporary solution, which would postpone a real and lasting solution to this problem, whose socio-political and economic roots are deep. Drought, famine, the absence of food security and dire economic perspectives are all factors and parameters favoring and inciting local populations to fall into the trap set for them by narco-terrorists. To complicate an already complex situation, the economic crisis and the tough structural economic programs imposed by the IMF and the World Bank have further eroded the legitimacy of most states in the region.

Also, approaches and solutions to these multiple intertwined security problems in West Africa must be holistic. Actions such as strengthening border and territorial controls, law enforcement agencies' operational capabilities, legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms against organized crime, money laundering and corruption are all measures required to restore the authority of the state and the rule of law. Sustaining their effects will however require in-depth reforms of the criminal justice sector, and, in the case of post-conflict countries, of the security sector (A. Philip de Andrés, 2008a: 7). Yet, such an ambitious strategy requires tremendous amount of money which African States do not have. As a result, in



order for them to attract exogenous financial assistance and funding from the international community, the strengthening of the rule of law may become for them the only and *sine qua non condition*.

## Conclusion

The international intertwined drug trafficking affects all regions and countries it travels through, from Latin America to Africa and the European continent. Moreover, the preoccupying terrorists and criminals inter-connected activities in West Africa and the Sahel present problems requiring urgent solutions. Taking advantage of a power-vacuum due to a lack of judicial and institutional power, the region has undeniably become a platform for all kinds of illegal trafficking, or as Philip de Andrés, the UNODC Regional Representative for Central America and the Caribbean named it, 'the new Achilles' heel of West Africa'. In addition to the difficult circumstances in which the local populations live, the cooperation between terrorist groups and drug traffickers further puts the former at greater risk.

Unfortunately, it is clear that this criminal scourge continues to grow and has yet to be eradicated. If nothing effective is done, it is very likely that drug trafficking in West Africa and the Sahel will spread across the entire African continent, which already faces numerous conflicts and socio-economic problems. Traffickers are very adaptable, mobile and very quick to exploit existing weaknesses in the political, economic and security conundrum systems of every region. The link that already exists between drug traffickers and terrorists only serves to weaken the already fragile states of the Sahel, such as Mali and Niger, as narco-terrorism easily takes root within weak institutions. Mali, once presented as a promising example of democracy in western Africa is now caught in a web of regional terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime. Until 2008, and due to its landlocked position, narco-traffickers had previously largely ignored and neglected the Malian route to Europe. However, the country has since then,



undoubtedly and increasingly, become a hub and transit route to Europe for the international trafficking of narcotics. It is therefore also through this regional perspective that the current crisis in Mali, but more generally in the Sahel, may be understood.

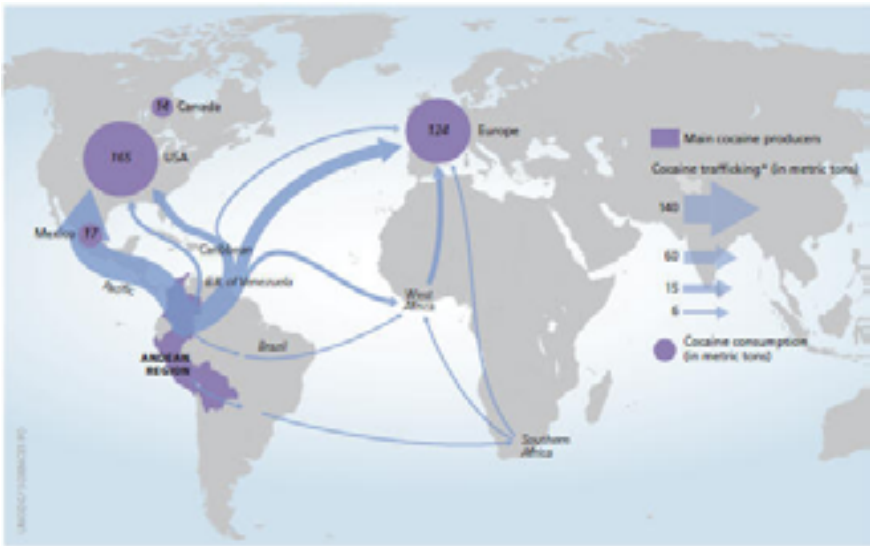
In a globalized world, the response to this threat must be multiple, national, regional and international. Cooperation between states, but also between organizations and institutions, is a *sine qua non* condition for obtaining tangible results. Part of the solution is to be found principally in the poverty and absence of education and economic conditions in which most Africans live. Therefore, by improving the living conditions of these local populations, by enabling them to conduct programs of crisis prevention and education, by reinforcing good governance and fighting corruption, trafficking of all kinds may be effectively fought and curtailed in Africa.



Mapping

Map 1

Global cocaine flows, 2009



Source: UNODC, 2011a.

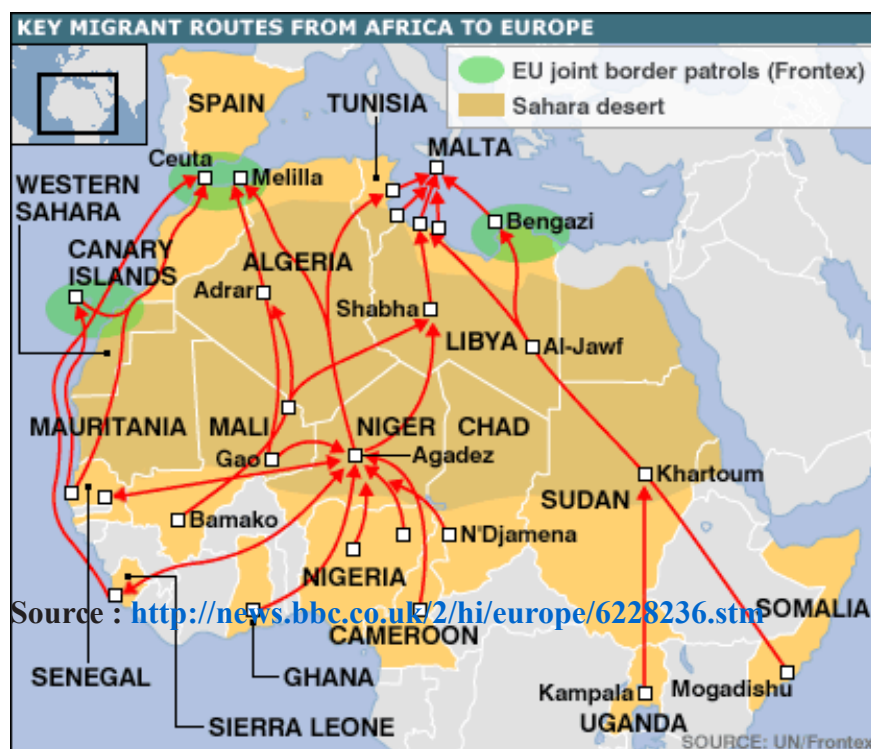
**Map 2**  
**Global heroin flows of Asian origins, 2008**



Source: UNODC, 2010

Map 3

## Key migrant routes from Africa to Europe





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# African Journal



## **ONE FINGER DIP IN PALM OIL SOILS THE OTHERS: THE ACTIVITIES AND CONSEQUENCES OF BOKO HARAM IN CENTRAL AND WEST AFRICA (CAMEROON, NIGER AND CHAD)**

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### **Summary**

This paper examines the activities and consequences of Boko Haram in Central and West Africa. It specifically, focuses on the historical roots and effects of this group on immediate neighbouring countries with Nigeria which include: Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin. It questions the challenges, difficulties and prospects which the governments of these countries have been facing since Boko Haram has become a reality and the global connection which Boko Haram has with other regional organisation. Using internet sources, secondary data and personal observations, the paper contends that this conflict like most conflicts in human history has a spilled over effect engulfing two sub-regions in Africa. Secondly, that the activities have impacted on the masses as well as the government with largely unforeseen consequences. On a final note the paper concludes that a better understanding of Boko Haram could only be achieved when it is scrutinized in relation with other organisations such as al-Shabaab, Janjaweed, AQIM and al-Qaeda.



### Introduction

Perhaps the better way to start this essay is to have a look at what happened in June 2013 when foreigners were adapted in Northern Nigeria. On Saturday 8 June 2013, Mike Pflanz, West Africa Correspondent of the Paris based newspaper headlined 'French children kidnapped 'by Boko Haram' in Cameroon'. The paper continued to state that Seven French citizens, including four children, were kidnapped in Cameroon on Tuesday, amid a surge of attacks on French interests across West Africa since Paris ordered its country's troops into Mali to battle Tuareg Islamists who were taking over the country from the North. The seven hostages were taken from Cameroon's Far North Region close to the Waza National Park and Lake Chad which has been a cynosure for European tourists for a very long time. The French President, Francois Hollande pointed the accusing finger at the al-Qaeda allied fundamentalist group Boko Haram, based in neighbouring Nigeria. The semi-arid area in which the tourists were adapted lies alongside the border with Nigeria, and Islamist strongholds in towns there, including Maiduguri, which is less than 100 miles to the west of Waza Park. It is nonetheless believed to be the first time that Nigeria's growing problem with Islamic fundamentalism, and kidnapping, has been exported into its generally assumed stable neighbor. "They have been taken by a terrorist group that we know and that is in Nigeria," Mr Hollande told reporters during a visit to Greece. He added: "I see the hand of Boko Haram in that part of Cameroon." On the other hand, Issa Tchiroma Bakary, Cameroon's Information Minister, said his government and security services were investigating the reports but would not immediately confirm details. One of the adults is employed by GDF Suez. The French utility giant said the employee, based in the Cameroon capital Yaounde, and the family was on holiday in the north of the country. A Western diplomat in the region told AFP that six armed kidnappers on three motorbikes abducted



a couple, their four children and an uncle in the northern village of Dabanga near the Nigerian border. The children are aged five, eight, 10 and 12, the diplomat said. Mr Hollande said that his intelligence services said they suspected the group was being taken towards northern Nigeria, or had already been smuggled across the border. A French engineer was kidnapped close to Katsina, a Nigerian town further west, in December. Eight other French nationals, mostly employees with its uranium miner Areva, have been held hostage in the region since 2010. Seven other Westerners, including a British construction specialist, were kidnapped on Sunday from another northern Nigerian town. The French president is facing increasing domestic pressure to justify ordering the operation in Mali, where 4,000 French troops helped install an Islamist surge south towards the capital last month. "France is in Mali, and it will continue until its mission is completed," Mr Hollande said.

This anecdote points to several issues. The first is the existence of Boko Haram across Nigeria-Cameroon boundary and the kidnapping of foreigners. The second is the complicity of Boko Haram with Al-Qaeda. The third is the relationship of Boko Haram with AQIM and the Tuareg rebels of Northern Mali. All these suggests the importance and gravity of Boko Haram conflict in the sub-region

Arguably, Conflict is a feature of all human societies, poor or rich; developed or underdeveloped. Consequently, no human group or community exists without the logical dialectical opposition of friend-enemy either among its members or between it and others. Human groups exist with definite objectives which may be realized with or without the assistance of others. Whoever puts into jeopardy the concrete realization of the common objectives or the achievement of the *bonum commune* creates a situation of conflict and becomes the enemy or a less friendly partner (Nkwi, 1987: 64). The African continent has witnessed conflicts of various kinds. These conflicts are as varied as its causes and the ways these conflicts are managed



are also as diverse as the mechanisms which have been put in place to resolve them. Mwanjiru (2001) maintains that:

One of the distinguishing features of Africa's political landscape is its many dysfunctional and protracted social and political conflicts. This problem is made worse by lack of effective mechanisms to manage these conflicts. Where they exist, they are weak and, thus, social and political relationships on the continent have been disrupted. This has had negative consequences, including the interruption of the development and the diversion of scarce resources for the management of these conflicts and its effects on neighbouring countries.

North, Central and West Africa appears to be rife with conflicts and arm militias seeking for a redress of cultural norms according to their whims and caprices. The al-Shabab of Somalia representing the horn of Africa, the Boko Haram of West Africa and al Quaeda branch of North Africa, AQIM of Mali; Janjaweed of Darfur all have a common objective which is to do away with western civilization. According to these groups the Western civilization is 'evil' and should therefore be cleansed. The event which occurred in the North of Cameroon and which was orchestrated by Boko Haram was just a tip of an iceberg indicating and confirming that a conflict in a country would have its ramifications felt by its neighbours and beyond. This what has been going through most of the continent with groups that resemble Boko Haram in formation and objectives. This paper takes its inspiration from such events and focuses at examining the deeper effects and historicity of Boko Haram in the sub-region and its rapport with sister/brother organisation.

Boko Haram has received multiple meanings and definitions from scholars with varied backgrounds (Adibe, 2012; Adesoji, 2010; Akokegh, 2012; Cook, 2011; Johnson, 2011; Last, 2009; Mantzikos, 2010; Ojo, 2010; Onapajo, 2012; Pham, 2012; Thomson, 2012; Walker, 2012). Despite all these various definitions there is need to contextualize the meaning of Boko Haram. Broadly understood, it is





known as the Congregation and People of Tradition for the Proselytism and Jihad. It is an Islamic movement which strongly opposes non sharia legal systems and what they deem westernization. It seeks to establish sharia law in the country especially in the Northern parts of Nigeria. It was formed in Maiduguri. Etymologically, the term Boko Haram comes from Hausa, an indigenous language that is largely spoken in Northern Nigeria. 'Boko' in Hausa figuratively means "western education" and "Haram" again figuratively mean "sin" (Literally meaning 'forbidden'). Loosely, translated from Hausa therefore the term means "western education is forbidden" (Rodolico, 2012; Austen, 2010). It means that anything about western civilization ranging from dressing codes, eating, and culture is aberrational to Boko Haram.

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (2001) when the activities of Boko Haram became more visible in Nigeria, researchers, scholars and journalist and jack-of-all trades have taken keen interest on it. The intensity and gravity of the group activities necessitates a visit at the literature. The literature which is legion and indicates that much ink has flew. This will do us some good if we take up some snapshots here to appreciate how much of the ground has been covered thus far. All the literature so far cannot be covered in a single paper. Some scholars have focused on the origins of Boko Haram. Loimeier, (2012), provides an historical background paying attention to the Yan Izala movement of reforms within Islam. Last (2007, 2009 and 2011; International Crisis Group, 2010 and Warner, 2012: 38-40) have all attempted to provide an historical account. Others have defined and sustained their stand that Boko Haram is a terrorist groups (see Popoola 2012: 43-66; Omitola, 2012; Onapajo, 2012: 337-357; Musa 2012; Soyinka, 2012; Ojo, 2011: 45-62; Maiangwa et.al. 2012: 40-57; Barrett, 2012; 719-736; Bagaji, 2012: 33-41). Yet, others have posed the question, what is Boko Haram (Walker, 2012; Rogers, 2012, Thomson, 2012; Adibe, 2012; Adesoji, 2010; Akokegh, 2012; Cook, 2011; Mantzikos, 2010). Others still have



concentrated at examining the current happenings surrounding Boko Haram and violence in the south of Nigeria. Watts (2009) offers a nexus between of events in the North and the rich oil Delta of South East Nigeria while Walker (2012) offers an interesting link between real and imagined Boko Haram. Other scholars that belonged to this school include Onuoha, 2010; Ifeka, 2010; Danjibo 2009; Adesoji, 2010). Still others have attempted to trace Boko Haram having relations with al-Shabab of Somalia (Cook, 2011). Some of the works have remained at best skeletal and limited in scope (Akokegh, 2012: 46-55).

This body of literature, although not exhaustive enough suggest that much has been written on Boko Haram. Despite the much literature, there are still yawning gaps to piece the 'conflicting narratives together' (Adib, 2012: 47-64) and therefore add to the budding literature and debates. In what follows in this paper I wish to demonstrate not just the activities of Boko Haram but so crucial to the paper is the consequences of the activities in the sub-region and a deeper historical touch which has not been adequately handled so far. How has the *modus operandi* of the group affect the geo-politics and social configuration of the countries immediately neighbouring Nigeria in the likes of Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin? In order to achieve this objective, the paper starts by situating the significance of such a study. Is it worth undertaking a study of Boko-Haram in Nigeria and its ripple effects in global politics? Absolutely yes! From the significance the paper will logically focus on the historical origins of Boko Haram much so because an historical dimension of such a movement is so important for a proper understanding of today's dynamics. So far the historical accounts given by scholars have remained fractured and not properly adequately handled. The third part of the paper will provide a synopsis of the activities of Boko Haram while in the fourth part I will show the ramifications of Boko Haram in the sub-region. Part five will be the conclusion and the last part a list of reference material used in the paper.



### Significance of the Study

The reemergence of the Nigerian militant Islamist group Boko Haram has been a cause for significant concern both within Nigeria and neighbouring states and above all to the academia. Since late 2010, the organization has been responsible for a brutal crusade of attacks that have been targeting public officials and institutions and, increasingly, ordinary men, women, and children, wreaking havoc across northern Nigeria with its ramification spilling over to Cameroon, Niger, Benin and Chad. In terms of human casualty at least 550 people are said to have been killed in many separate attacks in 2011 alone, a grisly toll that has been accelerating while scores of many were maimed and others rendered as widows and orphans. Meanwhile, Boko Haram's rhetoric and tactics indicate that the organization has expanded its reach well beyond its original base in northeastern Nigeria. As a matter of fact its *modus operandi* Indeed, has evolved and it is evolving into a transnational threat with links to other terrorist groups and violent extremists in North, West, and East Africa. The group thus constitutes a wider threat to the political, economic, and security interests in Africa and more particularly to the sub-region. Given that Nigeria is Africa's biggest oil exporter (it holds the world's 10th largest proven reserves) as well as the continent's most populous country, instability there has significant wider implications in world politics. For the gravity and intensity of Boko Harma's operations in Nigeria the table below gives a bird's eye view and makes the paper more relevant as it charts the path for a better understanding of what is happening in Nigeria and as a result the consequences have directly and indirectly spilled over and beyond Nigeria.



**Table 1: Date and place of Operation in Nigeria**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Place of Operation</b>
7 September 2010	Bauchi prison break
31 December 2010	December 2010 Abuja attack
22 April 2011	Boko Haram frees 14 prisoners during a jailbreak in Yola, Adamawa State
29 May 2011	northern Nigerian bombing
16 June 2011	The group claims responsibility for the Abuja police headquarters bombing
26 June 2011	Bombing attack on a beer garden in Maiduguri leaving 25 dead and 12 injured
10 July 2011	Bombing at the All Christian Fellowship Church in Suleja Niger State
11 July 2011	The University of Maiduguri temporary closes down its campus citing security concerns
12 August 2011	Prominent Muslim Cleric Liman Bana is shot dead by Boko Haram
26 August 2011	2011 Abuja bombing
4 November 2011	2011 Damaturu attacks
25 December 2011	December 2011 Nigeria bombings
5–6 January 2012	January 2012 Nigeria attacks
20 January 2012	January 2012 Kano bombings
28 January 2012	Nigerian army says it killed 11 Boko Haram insurgents
8 February 2012	Boko Haram claims responsibility for a suicide bombing at the army headquarters in Kaduna.
16 February 2012	Another prison break staged in central Nigeria; 119 prisoners are released, one warden killed.
8 March 2012	Christopher McManus, abducted in 2011 by a splinter group Boko Haram, both hostages were killed.



31 May 2012	During a Joint Task Force raid on a Boko Haram den, it was reported that 5 sect members and a German hostage were killed.
3 June 2012	15 church-goers were killed and several injured in a church bombing in Bauchi state. Boku Haram claimed responsibility through spokesperson Abu Qaqa.
17 June 2012	Suicide bombers strike three churches in Kaduna State. At least 50 people were killed. 130 bodies were found in Plateau State. It is presumed they were killed by Boko Haram members.
3 October 2012	Around 25–46 people were massacred in the town of Mubi in Nigeria during a night-time raid.
18 March 2013	2013 Kano Bus bombing: At least 22 killed and 65 injured, when a suicide car bomb exploded in Kano bus station.
7 May 2013	At least 55 killed and 105 inmates freed in coordinated attacks on army barracks, a prison and police post in Bama town.
6 July 2013	Yobe State school shooting: 42 people, mostly students, were killed in a school attack in northeast Nigeria.

*SOURCE: Ayodeji Bayo Ogunrotifa, (2013) "Class Theory of Terrorism: A Study of Boko Haram", Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol 3 No 1; Also see [http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Boko\\_Haram](http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Boko_Haram). Retrieved 3 September 2013.*

A cursory peruse of Table 1 above suggests that between 2010 and 2013 there were twenty-six attacks carried out by Boko Haram. Out of these attacks, the least was in 2010. In 2011, there were eleven attacks and the apotheosis of the attacks came in 2012 with thirteen attacks alone. The table should not be taken as covering all the activities of Boko Haram as this pre-date 2010. Yet it is relevant for the reader to have a brighter view of its activities. These attacks were mostly in the Northern parts of Nigeria and calls into question why and what are the origins of Boko Haram. There is no doubt that countless accounts have been given as concerns the origins of Boko Haram but for a more profound appreciation of this paper a re-capitulation is absolutely



necessary. This paper therefore becomes relevant as it adds in its small way to the budding literature on Boko Haram.

### **The Historical Roots of Boko Haram**

Several views and schools of thought in relation to the origin of Boko Haram have been cropped up with various arguments about the origins of Boko Haram. One of these views stipulates that Boko Haram is based on the acknowledgment of Osama bin Laden's popularity after the attacks of 9/11 and the strong unpopularity the west faces among a population that is very poor and feels betrayed by its Westernized and/or Western-educated elite. In this sense, Boko Haram is an ultra-violent social movement that has deep roots in the social and economic marginalization of a large section of Nigeria's northern population. This highlights the issue of the divergent (and largely unequal) economic and social dynamics of northern versus southern states in Nigeria (Pham, 2011& 2012; Elkaim, 2012; Marchal, 2012; Rogers 2012). Accordingly this school of thinking gives the impression that Boko Haram got its inspiration and rise to prominence because of Al-Queda of Osama Bin Laden who orchestrated the bombings and ultimate destruction of the twin tower on 9 September 2011.

Another school of thought headed by Aghedo & Osumah (2012: 858-863) suggested that Boko Haram could be understood as one group among many. Notes the group has existed under a variety of names, including "*Ahlulsunna wai'jama'ah hijra* and... the 'Nigerian Taliban' and 'Yusufiyah' sect", and that the group probably exists in two main factions. The scholars further opine that the "country's porous borders" is facilitating and helping the group in terms of movement of people and ammunition as well as its growth in the sub region.

The third school holds that the creation of The Sokoto Caliphate which was established by Uthman dan Fodio in 1804 to rule parts of what is now northern Nigeria, Niger and northern Cameroon in the



late 19th century has a direct relationship with the origins of Boko Haram (Ekem, 2012; Thomson, 2012; Hills, 2012). Ever since it fell under British control in 1903, there has been resistance among the area's Muslims to western education. Boko Haram was conceived on the basis of previous Islamic revivalist experiences in Nigeria. Its main affiliation is related to the *jama'at izalat al bid'a fi al-iqamat as sunna* (society of removal of innovation and reestablishment of the sunna), known as *izala* or *ffian izal*. This movement is a *fiahhab*, anti-Sufi movement established in 1978 in Jos by Sheikh Ismaila Idris (1937-2000). It was one of the fast-growing Islamic reform movements in Nigeria. The movement was very much shaped by the teachings of Sheikh Abubakar Gumi (1922-1992), a leading Islamist pioneer of reform in 20th-century Nigeria. Sheikh Gumi campaigned against sorcery and witchcraft and promoted Islamic education for women upon his death in 1992; *izala* suffered an acrimonious split between two factions within the movement (Jos based and Kaduna based) and as a result appears to have lost most of its authority and credibility among Nigerian Muslims. The two factions eventually reconciled in 2011. This school in short shows that Boko Haram is related to another group within Nigeria.

Furthermore another school which is headed by Hansen & Aliyu Musa, (2013) uses the Martinique scholar, Frantz Fanon's work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, to understand the emergence of Boko Haram. The scholars suggest Fanon's concept of 'the wretched' which remains relevant and useful. Apparently they used the notion of racial foreigner in this case the British to position Fanon and how helpful it could make sense to the understanding of Boko Haram. These scholars further draw a link that sees all violence in the north as due to Boko Haram, with AQIM of Mali as influence upon it, rather than affiliates of the second group being responsible. For instance, the kidnappings of the British and Italian nationals in Sokoto had its roots link in the racial xenophobia which implicitly was embedded in Fanon's treatise. This school was supported by Forest (2011).



These various fractured narratives about the origins of Boko Haram are relevant to our study. But we need a complete historical compendium to grasp a fuller understanding of the group. The interconnectivity of world states and the attempted hegemony of the West on peoples of the universe have a serious repercussion on the beginnings of Boko Haram in Nigeria. The main objectives of Boko Haram are to do away with anything pro-western. It goes without saying that Boko Haram is out to purify a civilization that has been adulterated. If these two objectives are tenable then it is proper to see the very existence and survival of the group in the light of other global groups which have similar objectives in Africa and the world at large. Boko's Haram's origins therefore could be linked to Al-Qaeda; AQIM of Mali whose activities stretch as far as Algeria and al-Shabab of Somalia and Janjaweed of Darfur. It will be a historical misnomer if we attempt to understand one of these groupings even if it was Boko Haram without understanding the involvement and interconnecting cobweb structures of the others. All these groupings have been besprinkled in the western media as terrorist organisations because they have one main common objective which was to give western civilization a death blow.

Closely related to the above point is the geo-political and/or common historical benchmarks which this Northern Nigeria area shares. Northern Nigeria's ecology is what geographers have known for a very long time as the Sahel. This zone saw the rise of empires which embraced trade as far back as the 10 Century. The ancient empires of the Western Sudan which started with Ghana, Mali, Kanem, Songhai and Kanem Bornu existed and survived because of Islam whose rulers embraced and trade across the Sahara desert (Abubakar, 1977; Ajayi & Crowder, 1974; Ajayi & Espie, 1969). The empires rose and fell and the last of the empires was Kanem Bornu. A cursory observation of the operation of Boko Haram and other sister organisation indicates that they are standing on the sands of the previous Islamic empires of Western Sudan. To add to this point in 1804, the jihads were launched in Sokoto. The aims and





objectives of these holy wars shows a similarity with the objectives of Boko Haram and other organisations in the region

The jihads were a religious war albeit its execution and consequence which showed some political indications. As a war to purify Islam which the adherents felt, rightly or wrongly that it has been adulterated was fought with renewed ferocity and intensity. The jihads of the nineteenth century were carried out under the guidance of Uthman dan Fodio against the Hausa states of Northern Nigeria. There is enough mentioning of the name in the literature but the missing link was who was he and what did he really want and what is the relation between his movement and today's Boko Haram?

Uthman dan Fodio who descended from the Fulbe Toronkawa migrant clan from Futa Toro in the fifteenth century, was born in 1754 in the Hausa state of Gobir. While growing up, it is assumed that he undertook a deep study of Islamic theology, law and mysticism in the Arabic language. After mastering his studies he gradually and systematically built up a following and consequently strained the relations that had existed between himself and the traditional rulers of the neighbouring Hausa states (Njeuma, 1978; Fanso, 1989). In 1788-1789 he escaped an assassination attempt which was plotted by the sultan of Gobir. Because of the escape negotiations were opened to establish peace between Uthman and the sultan, the former was given the right to spread Islam in the sultanate. Through that preaching Uthman gained further greater considerable influence and more adherents among the Gobirawa, much to the indignation of the Sultan (Fanso, 1989: 81).

It is assumed that at the age of 40 Uthman received in a dream, instructions to 'unsheathe the sword of truth'. He immediately began preaching that war against the unbelievers was not only inevitable but necessary against the unbelievers as sanction by Prophet Mohammed. The indignant sultan attempted to restrict Uthman and his preaching and strengthening of Islam in his state resulted in a serious clash, between the two. This clash was quite particular and



led to the decision by Uthman and his followers to go away from Gobir (to make a hijra) in order to prepare for a holy war. In 1804 open hostilities between Uthman forces and Gobir began. After several battles Uthman's forces defeated Gobir, and he established his head quarters at Gwandu. Thus the Gobir wars saw the beginning of jihads in northern Nigeria, which were to extend to the entire sub region. Fulbe emissaries from all over Hausaland and Fumbina went to secure Uthman's blessing and returned to their various states with the flag to propagate the jihad (Adeleye, 1971; Njeuma, 1978). By the time Uthman had established his headquarters at Sokoto, and was at the head of an emerging Islamic Empire he was then severally known as Shehu, Sultan or Caliph of the Sokoto Caliphate. From this Caliphate his power radiated to different directions with the sole aim of purifying Islam from Futa Toru to Futa Borno and area that swallows almost the whole of Sahelian West African countries today (Last, 1977). What is crucial is that this brand of Islam was imported from the Middle East and it passed through North Africa and the Sahara desert to West Africa. It was never westernized.

The caliphate did not survive forever. European imperialism in Africa had catastrophic effects of the already achievements on indigenous nation building and civilizations. First during the Anglo-German partition of Adamawa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's most parts of this empire either fell into the German hands or the British. The imposition of colonial rule saw the Yola Emirate annihilated with parts going to modern day Nigeria and Cameroon. When the British colonised Nigeria, Northern Nigeria fell under the grandiose policy of Indirect Rule. Through this policy the British empowered traditional rulers especially the emirs and at the same time produced educated elite. This was the beginning of the erosion of the caliphate. The Futa Toro and Futa Bondu which covered the Senegambia and Mali areas witnessed the French onslaught and collapse giving rise to the French Equatorial Africa (Webster & Boahen, 1980: 1-46).



What is important again and even more relevant is the relationship between the above literature and Boko Haram? This has a direct relation with Boko Haram in several ways. Boko Haram operates in Northern Nigeria just as the jihadist had done in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Just as Uthman dismissed the adulterated Islam, Boko Haram's teachings today have rejected Western civilization and the secular Nigerian state which they have described as *dagut* ("evil") and unworthy of allegiance in an effort to replace it with purified Islamic regime. One will not be completely wrong to maintain that Boko Haram is standing on the footprints of the Sokoto Caliphate that was devastated by the colonial forces. The group's aims are more to do with self-preservation than political or religious, and make a compelling case for their mafia-like organization (Davis, 2012).

### **Some of Boko Haram's Activities**

From the discussion so far, Boko Haram uprising was not the first forceful attempt to impose a religious agenda in Nigeria. Violence based on religion in Nigeria is indeed neither new nor confined to Muslims. Over the last 30 years what has changed is that religious dissent is based in cities and not, as before, in the countryside (Olaniyi, 2011). Moreover, dissent is increasingly violent, in part because it is urban and therefore in closer proximity to the urban centered authorities. Boko Haram appears an original phenomenon in Nigerian history might neither be targeted assassinations nor car bombings against official buildings, but a sustained campaign of attacks over several months. In the last 30 years, one may quote several precedents: the Maitatsine uprisings of 1980 in Kano (Adesoji, 2011), and 1982 in Kaduna and Bulumkutu, 1984 in Yola and 1985 in Bauchi are often compared to the present situation. Following the Maitatsine crises or interspersing them were several other major clashes. These include the Kano metropolitan riot of October 1982; the Ilorin riot of March 1986; the University of Ibadan crisis of May 1986; the Kafanchan/ Kaduna/ Zaria/ Funtua religious



riots of march 1987; the Kaduna polytechnic riot of march 1988; the Bayero university crisis of 1989; the Bauchi/Katsina riots of March /April 1991; the Kano riots of October 1991; the Zangon-Kataf riot of may 1992; the Kano civil disturbance of December 1991; and the jos crisis of April 1994. Similarly, between 1999 and 2008, 28 other conflicts were reported, the most prominent being the recurrent crises in jos of 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2008 (For more see Schwartz, 2010). This litany of attacks shows that besides the Boko Haram, much attacks have been going on in Nigeria. What makes Boko Haram's so unique is their objectives and the sustain ambition to carve out a theocratic Northern Nigeria

Their activities have often occurred in the Northern Nigerian states which include amongst others: Bauchi, Kano, Yobe, Borno. Their weapons includes: AK 47 rifles, locally made rifles, double barrels guns, bows and quivers, walkie-talkies (Ibeh, 2013; Adesoji, 2011). With these weapons it is possible for Boko Haram to attack civilians and even the security forces who stand on their way to achieve their objectives. In August 2011, the group carried out suicide attacks on the UN headquarters in Abuja in which more than 20 people were killed. All these attacks have had serious repercussions not only on Nigeria but their neighbours.

### **Consequences**

The consequences of Boko Haram are many and varied. The risks presented by the militant group are amplified primarily through the prevalence of porous borders in the West African sub-region. Countries like Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger are all potential targets due to their proximity to Nigeria as well as their porous borders, notwithstanding their demographics and their socio-economic realities. At greatest risk are Cameroon and Niger, which share considerably vast borders with Nigeria.



Nigeria's borders with Benin and Chad are fairly short, about 773km and 87km long respectively. In comparison, Nigeria's borders with Niger and Cameroon span 1 497km and 1 690km respectively. The porous nature of these borders heightens the potential spread of terrorist activities into the neighbouring countries. Their vulnerability to the spread of Boko Haram is compounded by the fact that Niger and Cameroon have borders with the northern Nigerian states, where Boko Haram already exerts a strong influence. The border with Niger, for example, stretches along Sokoto, Katsina, Jigawa and Yobe states. This proximity to northern Nigeria is therefore a particular threat to Niger's security, given the relative ease with which Boko Haram's elements can cross into the country. Cameroon faces a smaller risk than Niger as only two of the four Nigerian states bordering Cameroon (Taraba and Adamawa states) are part of northern Nigeria, while Cross Rivers and Benue states are in the south-eastern and Middle Eastern regions of Nigeria. However, the Boko Haram risk to Cameroon should not be underestimated.

It should be noted that citizens of Cameroon and Niger have been suspected of participating in Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria as well. This alleged involvement implies that Boko Haram activities could already be spreading or have already spread across Nigeria's borders and that it could possibly already be conducting some of its activities in neighbouring countries such as training recruits, and planning and executing terrorist acts. Although with little evidence the probability cannot be under looked. Boko Haram also uses neighbouring countries as safe havens. Allegations that some Boko Haram militants have migrated to Niger and Cameroon after committing attacks in northern Nigeria buttress the need for swift action in addressing the problem. In addition, there have been incidences of Boko Haram attacks on the border between Nigeria and Cameroon. The May 21 suicide attack on a police station in Taraba state, on Nigeria's border with Cameroon, illustrates the growing level of insecurity at this border post. Although Boko Haram has not claimed responsibility



for this incident, the attack is in line with the *modus operandi* of the militant group and, needless to say, exposes the vulnerability of this border area. If Boko Haram has relations with sister organisations like AQIM and Al-Qaeda and Janjaweed sympathized with Boko Haram therefore have been helping out as havens of the militias. Niger has been identified as fertile ground for the activity of Boko Haram due to its ethnic and indigenous relations with the region socio-economic challenges and the marginalization of certain components of society notwithstanding. Furthermore, the existence of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) suggests the presence of Salafist ideology, which Boko Haram is also rooted in, and adds to Niger's security situation. When the Nigerian military dislodged one of the camps of Boko Haram at Yobe State by arresting 49 of its members, the rest is said to have fled to the Niger Republic (Ibeh, 2013). The spread of Boko Haram into Niger therefore has been creating further national and regional insecurity.

While Cameroon's vulnerability to terrorism is not as substantial as Niger's, socio-economic malaise and dissatisfaction with the government do exist in the country and citizens could easily galvanise with such groups like Boko Haram to destabilize the existing peace. But there is no doubt that if left unchecked, the combination of these two elements might allow for fundamentalist ideology to thrive and result in the sprouting of terrorist activities in this country. It is therefore crucial to prevent the movement and infiltration of any elements such as Boko Haram into both countries. But the June 2013 events showed that Cameroon could not be exempted from the activities of Boko Haram. The trapping of French tourist and subsequent adopting by Boko Haram caused panic both to the government and civilian as well.

The governments of Nigeria, Niger, Benin and Cameroon have made enormous efforts to strengthen border security and prevent the spread of Boko Haram's activities into their regions. This shows the magnitude of Boko Haram's activities in these countries. For example, the Nigerian government closed down sections of its border with Cameroon and Niger as part of stricter border control



measures several times. However, this was insufficient and tighter, more efficient border control measures need to be put in place to prevent the movement of Boko Haram and other criminal elements across borders. This attempt failed because the borders are mostly very porous and one and the same cultural stock of people straddle the borders. In addition, the closure of borders provokes further consequences. It is notable, for instance, that citizens in Cameroon, Niger, Benin and Nigeria rely on cross-border trade for economic sustenance. For instance, the closure of Cameroon Nigerian borders greatly hampered trade in that part of Cameroon and Nigeria. Nigeriens in particular have borne the brunt of the closure of their border with Nigeria as drought in Niger means that many citizens rely on trade with Nigeria for food. The closure of this border has compounded the food shortage problem in Niger.

Other efforts towards border security include the agreement to create a Nigeria-Cameroon trans-border security committee. The committee's establishment should, however, be matched with immediate and precise action to prevent wide-scale Boko Haram movements across borders. Action is required to redouble efforts to secure the countries' vast borders. In this regard, action constitutes deeper collaboration between the various border agencies. Information and resource sharing, as well as the standardization of policy, are crucial in this respect. Relevant legal instruments and frameworks should also be harmonized. More so, regional and international organisations should support efforts geared at tightening borders and restricting the flow of terrorists within the sub-region. Funding infrastructural development for enhancing border security is one way in which border control efforts can be supported.

The ramifications of Boko Haram's activities on the neighboring states show that they are telling and have socio-political rubrics. Politically when the insurgence bombed a police headquarter on 16 June 2011 at Kano its impact was readily having an impact on Cameroon. The stakeholders in Cameroon government spoke in



panic about a possible infiltration into the country by elements of the radical Boko Haram sect in Nigeria. Coming on the heels of Presidential elections the government sources did not take it lightly. Historically, the concern was made more serious by the fact that military people who attempted to overthrow President Paul Biya in 1984 *coup d'état* were drawn from the same northern regions bordering Northern Nigeria which are seen as subject to the perceived infiltration by Boko Haram Islamists. "Should it be true that the Boko Haram elements who have crossed the border into Cameroon contain some of the military people who attempted to overthrow Biya in 1984, then there is a lot of trouble in the works for us both before, during and after the presidential election", said a senior government official who elected to remain anonymous for fear of repercussions from government. The ruling Cameroon Peoples' Democratic Movement (CPDM) party has reason to worry as the ranks of the military are heavily populated by northern personnel, some of who were accused of being behind the 1984 coup attempt. To add more many of those implicated in that coup fled and took refuge in neighbouring countries, especially in Northern Nigeria.

No doubt the border zones of both countries have many families who live on either side of the territorial divide and who share much in common except nationality. And with the porous boundaries, international border lines tend to fade in the blur. After the 1984 coup attempt, it was rumored that thousands of northern Cameroonians were alleged to have been extra-judicially killed and buried in mass graves in Biya's home region in the south. Others such as the current Minister for Communication, Issa Tchiroma Bakary, were tried and sentenced to long prison terms. Another victim was Daokole Daissala, who ironically helped to salvage CPDM out of defeat in the 1992 legislative elections when his MDR faction struck a coalition deal with the ruling party to enable it retain control of Parliament. Mr Daissala was eventually appointed Minister of State for Posts and Telecommunication. The man the northern putsches were fighting to restore to power in 1984 was Biya's predecessor





as Head of State, President Ahmadou Ahidjo. President Ahidjo was popular among his northern compatriots, and much as the authorities seek to portray matters otherwise, resentment of the Yaounde regime remains high among northerners. Common logic therefore holds that most northern Muslims are still sympathetic to their man Ahidjo. With the arrival of the Boko Haram in Cameroon it appeared obvious that the Biya's regime will not take it lightly as it affected directly and indirectly too.

On purely social platform the activities of Boko Haram have had serious consequences on the neighbouring states. This has been quite visible in the area of refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) reported that no fewer than 3,000 Nigerians have fled into Cameroon as a result of the activities of Boko Haram while some flee into Niger. The arrival in Niger actually compounded and complicated an already parlous situation which the UNCHR confirmed that there already 6,000 refugees and most of them were children who came from rural villages across border and from the towns of Maiduguri and Baga in Northern Nigeria. Chad which a third possible destination for the Nigerian refugees fleeing Boko Haram's activities, merely closed its borders although it already had 155 refugees from Nigeria.

Farmers abandoned their farms and escaped into Niger and Cameroon. Again the UNCHR noted that about 19,000 rice farmers had escaped from their farms making food shortage imminent. The activities of the Boko Haram had prevented many more farmers from working their fields. Food shortages were to add to the misery and predicaments in the Northeastern Nigeria because the area which they had abandoned was a fertile crescent created thus by receding waters of Lake Chad. The danger was capped all by the Agriculture Commissioner for Borno State, Usman Zannah when he said: We anticipate general hunger this year because all roads linking the cities to the farming hinterlands have been closed down because of imminent attacks of Boko Haram. Farmers have been locked out of their farm lands while those in the hinterland cannot come to the city for tractors or laborers to get their farms till for the next cropping...."



## Concluding Remarks

I started my story with a short snapshot from an event which took place in Northern Cameroon which was the kidnapping of a French family in that part of the country. Evidently it was orchestrated by an arm milia group in Nigeria widely known as Boko Haram that event had wider implications in the region than meet the eye. That event was coming on the heels of activities which Boko Haram had carried out in Nigeria, one of Africa's largest and most populated country. While anxious to espouse their ideology which was purely anti-Western and putting in place a theocratic system especially in Northern Nigeria, it has wreaked havoc in Nigeria causing panic in the neighboring states of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon and to a little extend Benin. While using a wide range of literature, this essay has accomplished the following:

Firstly, in a global world connection, the essay has shown that Boko Haram has a network with other regional organisations. These organisations include among others; AQIM; al-Shabab; al- Queda and Janjaweed. All these organisations are anti-west. Secondly, the essay has traced the hhistorica roots of Boko Haram and concluded that it is another holy war which Uthman Dan Fodio had carried out in the same political ecological region. Thirdly, the essay has shown that the ramifications of the activities of Boko-Haram have been felt in the neighboring countries. The governments as well as civilians have not been at ease with the activities of Boko Haram

The activities of Boko Haram both inside Nigeria and beyond are so complicated, difficult and challenges the notion of nation building in central and West Africa. A careful study i.e. well scrutinized should be able to help various governments to curb the excesses of the organisation. A closer look at the hypothesis in this paper if tasted in Benin or Niger should be able to yield results far accorded in the writings of Boko Haram thus far.



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## **TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIMES IN WEST AFRICA: A REGIONAL EXPOSÉ**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the threat of terrorism and transnational organised crimes (TOC) in West Africa, focusing on how TOC directly or potentially feed into the evolving threat of terrorism in the region. While drawing insights from Nigeria, it argues that the situation in West Africa has changed dramatically from when terrorism was viewed as an ‘imagined’ threat to when it has emerged as a ‘real’ security challenge for the region. Underpinning this shift is the escalation of violence perpetrated by groups such as AQIM, Ansar Dine, Ansaru, Boko Haram and MUJAO, among others. TOC such as drug trafficking, kidnapping, oil smuggling, arms trafficking, and maritime piracy, among others, are critical enablers for the sustenance and operations of these terrorist groups. The article further highlights some of the regional instruments at addressing insecurity in the region. It concludes that the challenge has not been the lack of frameworks and instruments at either the regional or national levels but rather the failure to deal with both the underlying factors contributing to the outbreak of these crimes as well as the complex linkages between them. It recommends the adoption of a broad approach that integrates efforts at the national and regional level into a robust strategy, focusing on governance, development and security.



## Introduction

Across the world, the existence of terrorist groups and organised criminal gangs as well as the nexus between them is not a new phenomenon. In recent times, however, their manifestation and intricate linkages in Africa have become growing source of concern at the national, regional and international levels. In Africa, as in the rest of the world, transnational organized crimes (TOC) take the form of drug trafficking, natural resource smuggling, forgery, cigarette smuggling, arms trafficking, money laundering, and maritime piracy, among others. There is now a growing realisation that most, if not all, directly or indirectly aid the activities of jihadist and terrorist groups in the continent.

This perhaps informed the May 2013 debate at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), on the growing manifestation and connections between terrorism and organised crime in Africa. In his opening remarks, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, informed the Council that “opportunistic links between terrorist and transnational organized criminal groups ensure the constant flow of people, money, weapons and illicit goods across borders, allowing such groups to survive and proliferate” (UN News Centre, 2013). In this regard, the UNSC expressed “its concern regarding the connection, in many cases, between terrorism and transnational organized crime and illicit activities such as drugs, arms and human trafficking and emphasizes the need to enhance coordination of efforts on national, sub-regional, regional and international levels in order to strengthen a global response to this serious challenge and threat to international peace and security” in Africa (UNSC, 2013:2).

From Tunisia, through Libya and to Egypt, the push for democracy made possible by the “Arab Spring”, or ‘*Arabellion*’, has created domestic security vacuum that terrorist and jihadists groups are exploiting to establish footprints in places where they hitherto operated or re-establish their foothold where some states had significantly





driven them underground in the past (Onuoha, 2013a:2). Of late, Africa has witnessed significant increase in planned and actual attacks by terrorist groups who are taking advantage of weakened domestic security, governance failure, porous borders, and the proliferation of weapons from destabilised countries in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

For instance, *Ansar al Sharia Tunisia*, the al Qaeda-linked extremist group, assaulted the US Embassy in Tunis on 14 September 2012. The January 2013 incident at the In Amenas gas plant in Algeria equally point to a worrisome trend. On 16 January 2013, suspected members of *Al-Mulathamoun* Brigade (“The Masked Brigade” or “Those Who Sign with Blood”) founded by a veteran jihadist, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, took hundreds of workers hostage at the gas plant. The four-day siege ended when Algerian forces stormed the plant to release the remaining hostages. In total, 685 Algerian workers and 107 of the 132 foreigners working at the plant were freed, while 37 hostages and 32 terrorists were killed. In May 2013, Egyptian security forces arrested three al-Qaeda militants who were in the final stages of planning suicide attacks on French and US embassies in both Cairo and Alexandria. All three men had been in touch with an al-Qaeda militant in Pakistan as well as another in the Sinai Peninsula (Stapley, 2013).

In East Africa, Kenya, Somali and Uganda have been hit by terrorist violence, mostly planned and executed by the Al Shabaab. In West Africa in particular, terrorist footprints are increasing due to the activities of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) operating largely in the Sahara-Sahel region; the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO1) and Ansar Dine based in northern Mali; and Boko Haram and *Ansaru* in northern Nigeria. Further complicating the security landscape is the increase in the outbreak and persistence of TOC that feed into the terrorist loop in West Africa.

This article therefore examines the threat of terrorism and TOC in West Africa, focusing on how some TOC directly or potentially feed into the evolving threat of terrorism in the region. It highlights some



of the regional instruments at addressing insecurity and recommends ways the region can halt and reverse the growth of terrorism and TOC. The article draws ample insights from Nigeria, given that the author is from Nigeria. On a positive side, Nigeria's demographic and economic size makes it a key player in West Africa. In fact, it is argued that West Africa goes the direction Nigeria heads. Second, and as a corollary to the above, Nigeria has leveraged on its economic strength and military might to serve as a regional security and political stabiliser, evident in its contributions to conflict resolution and peace support operations. On the negative side, however, Nigeria in many ways is a microcosm of the rest of West Africa in terms of its territory serving as origin, transit route and destination of all forms of TOC in the region. Finally and more importantly, the escalation of violent activities of terrorist groups such as the Boko Haram and *Ansaru* has made Nigeria a subject of international security concern, in relation to growing terrorism in West Africa.

### **Definitional Challenges and Epistemic Orientation**

At the outset, there are issues of definition and terminology that merit clarification before we delve into the substantive section of this chapter. Thus, the concept of *terrorism* and TOC would be clarified with a view to enhancing understanding of their meaning and linkages as used in this article.

Definitions continue to proliferate about the meaning of terrorism. In fact, there are as many definitions of terrorism as there are people, scholars, and institutions grappling with it. Simon (1994:29), for instance, identified no fewer than 212 different definitions of terrorism in use, with 90 of them used by governments and other institutions. The avalanche of definition derives from the fact that terrorism is "intended to be a matter of perception and is thus seen differently by different observers" (Cronin, 2004: 40). Toros (2008:408) has noted therefore that, "any article on terrorism must enter the labyrinthine debate on what 'terrorism' means and how it is to be defined".



A few examples of these definitions would suffice at this point. Radu (2002:275) defines terrorism as “any attack, or threat of attack, against unarmed targets, intended to influence, change or divert major political decisions”. According to Wardlaw (1982:3), terrorism refers to “the use, or threat of use of violence by an individual or a group, whether acting for or in opposition to established authority, when such action is designed to create extreme anxiety and, or fear including effects in a target group larger than immediate victims with the purpose of coercing that group into acceding to the political demands of the perpetrators”.

These definitions tend to generalize all forms of prohibited violence with political and ideological motives as terrorism. What this means is that any form of organised resistance against the state -which would most certainly be politically motivated- is terrorism. In reality, this may not necessarily be the case. Post-colonial African states have consistently laboured under the yoke of poor or bad governance, characterised by ethnic marginalisation, privatisation and criminalisation of the state, political exclusion, gross violation of human rights and unbridled corruption by the privileged elites, among many other ills. These governance deficits have led to the proliferation of non-state armed groups, rebelling against the perceived unjust order. Under these circumstances, classifying these non-state armed groups as terrorists becomes highly contestable. This indeed explains why reference to organised violence framed under political and ideological narratives are highly emotive and politicised. As aptly captured by (Hoffman 1998:32):

...terrorism is a pejorative term. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotations that is generally applied to one's enemies and opponents, or to those with whom one disagrees and would otherwise prefer to ignore. (...) Hence the decision to call someone or label some organization 'terrorist' becomes almost unavoidably subjective, depending largely on whether one sympathizes with or opposes the person/group/cause concerned. If one identifies with



the victim of the violence, for example, then the act is terrorism. If, however, one identifies with the perpetrator, the violent act is regarded in a more sympathetic, if not positive (or, at the worst, an ambivalent) light; and it is not terrorism.

Furthermore, the introduction of 'conflict parties' as the object of intimidation and fear by terrorists is even more controversial. This element has the tendency to classify armed campaign by belligerents under situations of armed conflicts recognised under international humanitarian law as terrorism; particularly if such campaigns have the tendency to generate fear among the population. It is the existence of such contentious elements, among others, that have so far inhibited a universally acceptable definition.

From a legal point of view, international efforts at evolving a universally acceptable legal definition of terrorism have failed till date. Even the definition proposed by the UNSC in Resolution 1566, is considered as non-binding, and therefore lacks legal authority in international law. This failure is predicated on the value-laden nature of the concept of terrorism. Furthermore, the lack of consensus is compounded by the persistent debate within scholarly and diplomatic circles on whether States could be regarded as terrorist or what is termed *state terrorism* (Rama Rao, 2007). This question rages against the backdrop of sordid experiences where states have forcefully invaded a fellow state, with consequent human casualty and damage over and above the magnitude caused by sub-state groups. The recurrent conflict between Israel and Palestine and the more recent controversial US invasion of Iraq are common examples. It is against this backdrop that Lawson (2011:140) argued that "the peculiar semantic power of the term, beyond its literal signification, is its capacity to stigmatize, delegitimize, denigrate, and dehumanize those at whom it is directed, including political opponents". There is the need, in his view, for a globally agreed upon definition of terrorism.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, many regional organisations and national authorities have managed to define terrorism in their



conventions or legislation. Article 3 of the Organization of African Unity's (now African Union – AU) *Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism* (1999), for instance, contains the definition of terrorism, which has in turn, influenced municipal definitions of terrorism on the continent. It defines a terrorist act as:

(a) any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a State Party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any person, any number or group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage and is calculated or intended to: (i) intimidate, put in fear, force, coerce or induce any government, body, institution, the general public or any segment thereof, to do or abstain from doing any act, or to adopt or abandon a particular standpoint, or to act according to certain principles; or (ii) disrupt any public service, the delivery of any essential service to the public or to create a public emergency; or (iii) create general insurrection in a State. (b) any promotion, sponsoring, contribution to, command, aid, incitement, encouragement, attempt, threat, conspiracy, organizing, or procurement of any person, with the intent to commit any act referred to in paragraph (a) (i) to (iii).

States' definitions of terrorism generally reflect their specific historical, socio-political and legal contexts. It is the respective contexts that largely account for differences, not only in the way terrorism is interpreted but also in ways that it is countered, including the textual narrative of their anti-terrorism legislation (ATL). Consequently, acts that may not constitute terrorism in one period may be regarded as terrorist acts in another. This, for example, would occur if a state adopts a new ATL in response to changing security dynamics occurring either within or outside its territory, or both. Thus, at the minimum, an act becomes labelled as terrorism when it has been defined as such in the ATL of a specific state or in international or regional instruments it subscribes to (Sampson and Onuoha 2011:35).



As with terrorism, it is easier to explain what the concept of TOC entails than it is to provide a definition that is generally accepted. In order to understand the meaning of TOC, it is helpful to begin with what is an 'organised crime'. As far as research on organised crimes is concerned, its definition has remained problematic. Over 150 definitions of organised crime exist in extant literature (Lampe, *undated*). Plywaczewski (2000: 99), for instance, defines organised crime as "the activities of criminal groups set up out of desire for gain for the purpose of carrying out various offences – criminal or economic – which would entail the use of force, blackmail or corruption, and whose end result – as intended by the organisers – would be to bring unlawful gains into the legal economy".

Furthermore, Lebeya (2007: 17) contends that organised crime was any serious crime that is systematically and persistently committed, on a continuous basis or in a determinate period, by a consciously organised criminal group of two or more persons or a criminal enterprise, in pursuit of an undue financial or other material benefit. A United Nations Working Paper (1975: 8) defined organised crime as "the large-scale and complex criminal activity carried on by groups of persons, however loosely or tightly organised, for the enrichment of those participating and at the expense of the community and its members". In this sense, organised crime is frequently accomplished by ruthless disregard for the law, including offences against a person, and frequently facilitated by political corruption. Despite varying definitional tenor, extant literature reveals the existence of three main perspectives on organised crimes, namely, the structuralist perspective, network perspective and market perspective.

A structuralist perspective presents organised crime as involving a structured or hierarchical group of individuals with clearly defined roles and authorities collectively engaged in illegal activities for the purpose of securing profit and power. An often cited definition in this regard states it as "a non-ideological enterprise involving a number of persons in close social interaction, organised on a hierarchical



basis for the purpose of securing profit and power by engaging in illegal and legal activities” (Abadinsky 1994: 6). It is noteworthy that although this traditional perspective of organised crime focusing on clear structure or hierarchies – that is, lines of command beginning with a ‘godfather’ figure at the apex of criminal organisations – dominated the literature on organised crime in the late 1970s and 1980s, its usage is fast diminishing in academic and policy debates.

The network perspective of organised crime focuses less on the hierarchical nature or structure of the criminal group. Instead, it is concerned with the network character of such criminal enterprise. This school of thought views organised crime as a criminal enterprise involving a network of individuals or small organizations, rather than a clearly structured and easily understood pyramid (Oche 2009: 248). One example of such definition presents it as “a set of activities spread in networks that have components of economic endeavour, that is, it needs repetitive activities (though without the discipline, regularity and rights of regular work), a goal of which is profit (easier, higher and better at the wholesale networks), using variable methods and currencies for exchanges typical of underground relationships” (Zaluar, 2001: 377). The conception of organised crime as involving networks bound together by interests, trust, family, and ethnic links, among others, captures a clearer picture of the dynamic nature and durability of criminal enterprises. The network-centric nature of contemporary organised crimes is, no doubt, useful in explaining the fluidity and dynamic nature of different forms of organised crimes operating in different places at different times but fails to account for why such crimes persist even when part of the network is disrupted or destroyed.

The market perspective to organised crime focuses neither on the hierarchical structure of a criminal group, nor on its network character. Rather, the emphasis is on the unique nature of the ‘market’ that facilitates the continuance of these crimes, even when individuals



and structures involved in the activity are intermittently disrupted. As a result of the dynamic nature of different forms of organised crimes and the intricacies of globalisation, organised crime is now viewed less as a matter of a group of individuals involved in a range of illicit activities, and more as of a group of illicit activities involving some individuals for the exchange of services or goods. The idea is thus to view organised crime as a market with dynamism of its own, rather than as the activities of a collection of particular individuals.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a leading proponent of the market perspective. It bases its proposition on the argument that “if these individuals are arrested and incarcerated, the activities continue, because the market and the incentives it generates remain” (UNODC 2009:10). The obvious policy implication of this emerging paradigm shift in the conceptualisation of organised crime is to refocus law enforcement and intervention efforts at curbing organised crimes. The policy direction must be shifted away from the ‘group’ behind the illicit activity to a discrete containment and control strategy designed to disable markets by making it structurally more difficult for organised crimes to flourish (UNODC 2009).

Organised crime is thus a form of crude wealth accumulation, based on the use or threat of physical violence, emerging in different socio-economic formations across time and place, and generated by the specific conditions of that time and place. There are many ways in which organised crime can and has been approached or defined. However, the sense it is used in this article suggests that a “defining feature of organised crime is the participation of different actors involved in illegal provision, stealing, or concealment of goods and/or services in part or in whole, with the goal of securing profit as well as acquiring influence and power vital for sustaining their activities in the face of prohibition by a state or the international community”





(Onuoha, 2012a:10). In some cases, the activities of such individuals or groups can be conducted within the territory of one state – that is, local forms of criminal enterprise, without the connivance of other individuals or groups operating in another state(s). In the era of globalisation, however, there is increasing cooperation between individuals and groups operating in different states, bound together in a network that facilitates the perpetration of criminal activities aimed at directly or indirectly obtaining financial or other material benefits. When such organised criminal networks or activities are facilitated across borders of sovereign states, they are regarded as TOC.

In this regard, Awanbor (2009: 58) succinctly described TOC as “crimes that are not only international (that is, crimes that cross borders between countries), but crimes that by their nature involve border crossings as an essential part of the criminal activity. They also include crimes that take place in one country, but their consequences significantly affect another country”. The implication therefore is that TOC “by definition involves people in more than one country maintaining a system of operation and communication that is effective enough to perform criminal transactions, sometimes repeatedly” (UNODC Report 2005: 14). How then is terrorism and TOC related or differ? This is addressed in the next section.

### **Organised Crime and Terrorism: Complex Similarities and Desperate Differences**

Beyond the debate on what constitutes terrorism and organised crime, there exists academic controversy over the similarities and differences between terrorism and TOC. Academic literature is replete with insights on how terrorisms should be viewed as different from organised crimes or TOC (Hutchinson and O’malley, 2007; Williams, 2007; Picarelli, 2006; Sanderson, 2004; Makarenko, 2003; Schmid, 1996).

To be sure, there are differences and similarities between criminals and terrorists. As rightly noted by Schmid, “criminal and terrorist organizations have much in common: both are rational actors, they



produce victims, they use similar tactics such as kidnapping and assassination, they operate secretly, and both are criminalized by the ruling regime and stand in opposition to the state” (cited in Forest, 2012:171). More so, terrorism and crime are distinguished not only by different purposes (e.g., political motivation versus a greater share of illicit markets), but also by their violence (e.g., terrorists tend to be less discriminate than criminals), and by their communication strategies (e.g., terrorists claim responsibility for violent acts and use the media to propagate their cause, whereas criminals usually avoid the media) (Forest, 2012, Schmid, 1996).

It is also important to note that terrorists generally loathe being labeled as ordinary criminals (Forest, 2012:171), although there has been few exceptions. More importantly, terrorists frame the justification of their actions in political, ideological or religious narratives or rhetoric. While organized criminal groups are not so much interested in government of the day in so far as state authorities do not interfere or disrupt their profit-driven activities, terrorist are very much opposed to the government and political order and are committed to using violent and indiscriminate attacks on governmental and non-governmental targets to disrupt or undermine constituted authority. They also tend to hold their own vision of religio-political or ideological order that should guide society. Criminal cartels nurse no such vision.

Yet, it remains difficult sometimes to separate terrorist and criminal activity. As Forest (2012:171) rightly noted “terrorists maim, kill, and destroy, and it would be difficult to find a court of law anywhere in the civilized world that does not view these as crimes, regardless of motives or ultimate goals”. Terrorists have also routinely engaged in money laundering, theft, fraud, extortion, smuggling (including drugs, weapons, and humans), bank robbery, and many other kinds of criminal activity to fund their sustenance and operations (Forest, 2012; Hutchinson and O’malley, 2007). More so, the act of robbing a bank or engaging in drug trafficking can be to enrich oneself as a person, or to get money for an organization that sees itself as creating a better society (Forest, 2012). As elaborated later in this article, bank robbery for instance has served both the purposes of personal



enrichment and a source of terrorism financing for the activities of the Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. In situation such as this, the distinction between a terrorist and a criminal is not too apparent.

Established that there are differences between organised crimes and terrorism, the main challenge in both academic and practical response however is how best to neatly slice through the complex overlapping and converging layers in the crime-terrorism intersection. At one point, it is possible to observe the existence of criminal and terrorist groups operating in a particular location devoid of collaboration and cooperation. At another time, it is also possible to see strong collaboration between criminal and terrorist groups. In such situation, “fluid interactions between terrorist groups and criminal networks and the sharing of knowledge about smuggling operations, money laundering systems, communications technologies, document forgery, and so forth can advance the interests and skills of both types of organizations. In some cases, terrorists and criminals are seen to cooperate within the same territory, share intelligence information, rely on the same corrupt government officials, and even conduct joint operations” (Forest, 2012:174).

Therefore, the relationships between members of terrorist and criminal networks are often fluid and constantly changing, depending on the environment the interaction is taking place. Irrespective of whether the linkage between the two is durable in one context and fluid or ephemeral in the other, the fact remains that the manifestation of organised crime and terrorism often separately or collectively undermine stability, security and genuine development at national, regional and international levels. Given the complex similarities and desperate differences between terrorism and TOC or organised crime, it could be argued that ultimately, an individual or group irrespective of the act committed could be considered as a criminal or terrorist, depending on how the state or the international community designates such actor. In the case of Nigeria, for instance, an individual can be arrested and tried for an act of ‘kidnapping’ under different legislation: Criminal/Penal codes or Terrorism Prevention Act (2011). The outcome of such trial will stamp the best description



of who that actor is; a criminal or terrorist irrespective of the fact that the act perpetrated was ‘kidnapping’. With this conceptual outlay, the next section examines the socio-economic and political landscape of West Africa, as background to understanding the pervasion of terrorism and TOC in the region.

### **West Africa: A Region Afflicted by Terrorism and Organised Crimes**

West Africa is a highly complex region caught between affluence and affliction. The region used to be made up of 16 states, namely; Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Apart from Mauritania, the remaining states are members of the regional community known as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which was formed in 1975. The region is composed of a variety of states in terms of their territorial size, colonial history, economic strength, internal cohesion, and external linkages. It comprises eight franco-phone states, five Anglophone, and two lusophone (Ann-Sofi Rönnbäck, 2008:12).

The member states also differ in terms of population size, levels of development, stages of state building, and nature of resource endowments. They are confronted with different levels of security, governance and development challenges (see table 1).

### **Table 1: Demographic, Socio-Economic, Governance and Peace Index of West African (ECOWAS) States**



Country	Population in millions (July 2013 est.)	Gross Domestic Product (GDP), (Billions of U.S. \$)	Human Development Index (2012)	Poverty Incidence	Unemployment Rate	2012 Corruption Ranking (out of 174)	2012 Governance Score out of 100 (Position)	2013 Global Peace Index of 162 countries (Scores & Ranks)
Benin	9,887,292	15.51 billion	166	37.4% (2007 est.)	N/A	94	58 (13 <sup>th</sup> )	2.16 (104 <sup>th</sup> )
Burkina Faso	17,812,961	24.03 billion	183	46.7% (2009 est.)	77% (2004)	83	55 (18 <sup>th</sup> )	2.06 (87 <sup>th</sup> )
Cape Verde	531,046	2.188 billion	132	30% (2000)	21% (2000 est.)	39	78 (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	N/A
Cote d'Ivoire	22,400,835	39.64 billion	168	42% (2006 est.)	N/A	130	39 (46 <sup>th</sup> )	2.73 (152 <sup>th</sup> )
Gambia	1,888,051	3.495 billion	165	48.4% (2010 est.)	N/A	105	52 (27 <sup>th</sup> )	2.09 (93 <sup>th</sup> )
Ghana	25,199,609	83.18 billion	135	28.5% (2007 est.)	11% (2000 est.)	64	66 (7 <sup>th</sup> )	1.90 (46 <sup>th</sup> )
Guinea	11,176,029	12.25 billion	178	47% (2006 est.)	N/A	154	43 (42 <sup>nd</sup> )	2.43 (132 <sup>th</sup> )
Guinea-Bissau	1,660,870	1.902 billion	176	N/A	N/A	150	40 (45 <sup>th</sup> )	2.27 (116 <sup>th</sup> )
Liberia	3,989,703	2.693 billion	174	80% (2000 est.)	85% (2003 est.)	75	47 (34 <sup>th</sup> )	2.05 (80 <sup>th</sup> )
Mali	15,968,882	17.35 billion	182	36% (2005 est.)	30% (2004 est.)	105	55 (20 <sup>th</sup> )	2.35 (125 <sup>th</sup> )
Niger	16,899,327	N/A	186	63% (1993 est.)	N/A	113	50 (28 <sup>th</sup> )	2.36 (127 <sup>th</sup> )
Nigeria	174,507,539	450.5 billion	153	70% (2010 est.)	23% (2011 est.)	139	42 (43 <sup>rd</sup> )	2.69 (148 <sup>th</sup> )
Senegal	13,309,410	26.5 billion	154	54% (2001 est.)	48% (2007 est.)	94	56 (16 <sup>th</sup> )	2.06 (85 <sup>th</sup> )
Sierra Leone	5,612,685	8.376 billion	177	70% (2004 est.)	N/A	123	48 (30 <sup>th</sup> )	1.90 (59 <sup>th</sup> )
Togo	7,154,237	6.899 billion	159	32% (1989 est.)	N/A	128	44 (39 <sup>th</sup> )	N/A

Source: Data on population, GDP, Poverty and Unemployment were from *CLA Fact Sheet*; Data on Corruption are from *Transparency International Index 2012*; Data on governance ranking are from the *2012 Ibrahim Index of African Governance Country Rankings and Scores*; Data on Human Development Index are from UNDP Human Development Report 2012; and data on Global Peace Index are from the Institute for Economics and Peace's *2013 Global Peace Index*.



A majority of West African states are generally regarded as poor although they are potentially rich in terms of endowment with natural resources. For instance, West Africa contains approximately 32 per cent of Africa's total natural gas reserves. Nigeria holds the region's largest proven reserves with 185 trillion cubic feet (Tcf). In addition, proven reserves are also located in Côte d'Ivoire (1.0 Tcf), Ghana (840 billion cubic feet; Bcf), and Benin (40 Bcf). West Africa has produced 35 billion barrels of oil worth more than \$1 trillion over last 40 years, but the sector has never provided enough jobs or skills and technology centres due to poor revenue management (Wachira, 2013).

With a population estimated at about 300 million people in 2011, West Africa constitutes about 32 per cent of the African population. The combined gross domestic product (GDP) of the ECOWAS states in 2011 was estimated at \$565 billion in 2011 (Agboola, 2011). However, this overall performance hides some disparities. For instance, Nigeria's real GDP constitutes over 60 per cent of ECOWAS countries GDP, while Niger survives largely on aids.

For a long time, West African states were dominated by their colonial powers. The colonial ties still survive up till date. They not only influence the dynamics of the internal political economy of these states, but also their relations to each other. Although West African states gained political independence before any other region in colonial Africa, they have failed to achieve high degree of political stability due to corruption, weak or failed governance institutions, conflicts and porous borders, among other contributing factors.

Since independence in the 1960s, for instance, almost all West African states have experienced coups d'état. A 2009 compilation reveals that between 1958 and 2008, West Africa had the highest number of coups in Africa, not only in each decade but also overall, and accounts for 44.4 per cent of Africa's coups (Zounmenou, 2009:73). Of the 15 states in West Africa, only Cape Verde and Senegal have avoided military coup d'état. More so, coups d'état and other gover-



nance deficits often precipitate political instability that some terrorist groups exploit to their advantage in the region. The recent case of Mali readily comes to mind.

Furthermore, the variety of states in the region includes countries at different stages of democratization; from consolidating democracies such as Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal to post-conflict societies such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, governance fragility such as Niger and Guinea, and narco-state epitomised by Guinea Bissau. Overall, they all share a common feature of multiple layers of insecurity, associated with conflicts and crime at community and national levels, often across borders and with regional ramifications (Bryden, N'Diaye and Olonisakin, 2008).

The region is characterized by various multidimensional and multifaceted security challenges, including non-military threats differing in their nature, manifestation and scale. Threats like terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal oil bunkering, piracy, and arms trafficking have acquired worrisome transnational dimension in recent times. Besides, human smuggling and poaching remain rampant in the region and are further complicating the security landscape. Consequently, terrorism and TOC have emerged as formidable threats to human security and is now taking on a singular importance in terms of national, regional and international engagements.

### **Overview of Terrorism in West Africa**

The threat posed to security, stability and development by terrorism is not new in Africa in general. However, it was not until few years after the 11 September 2001 attacks in the US that the issue of the vulnerability of West Africa to domestic and transnational terrorism assumed a centre stage in policy and academic circles. Notwithstanding the fact that Algeria-based *Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat* (GSPC) had first set foot in Northern Mali in 2003 and began forging ties with local population (through marriage and protection



of smuggling routes), there existed a collective security nescience concerning the growing vulnerability of West Africa to domestic and transnational terrorism. As of 2006, for instance, the debate centred on whether terrorism is a real, emerging or an imagined threat in West Africa (Obi 2006). Shortly afterwards, an analyst contended, if not concluded, that:

There is, therefore, no doubt that international terrorist organisations have a presence in West Africa and have used the subregion as an operational base without carrying out any major terrorist attacks of international significance.... The absence of a major attack on any international terrorist target situated in West Africa may, therefore, be a deliberate tactic to insulate their hiding place from the prying eyes of the international community in order to sustain their activities (Yoroms, 2007:92).

Few years after, the situation in West Africa has changed dramatically. In fact, the rising number of terrorist attacks, the multiplicity of terrorist groups in West Africa and the growing links between and among these groups has transformed the threat of terrorism from *imagined* or *emerging* to a *real* security challenge in West Africa. (See Table 2).

At the core of this is the attacks AQIM has mounted on West African soil as well as the tactical, weapon and ideological supports it extends to groups such as the Ansar Dine, Ansaru, Boko Hara, and MUJAO, among other sleeper terrorist cells dotting the region. Countries in West Africa such as Niger, Nigeria, Mali, and Mauritania have witnessed new outbreaks or escalation of terrorist attacks. Groups hitherto considered as domestic groups, such as Boko Haram and MUJAO, have successfully launched transnational attacks or struck at international targets, which has fundamentally changed their prior description and designation. A brief discussion on the activities of these groups in some West Africa states will help sketch the terrorist silhouette that is emerging in the sub-region.





A discourse on terrorism in West Africa would as a matter of fact begin with the activities of AQIM. AQIM's origins are usually traced back to the crisis in Algeria in 1992, emanating from the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS in its French acronym), the armed wing of the radical Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The future leaders of AQIM first founded the Islamic Armed Group (GIA), but left it to found the GSPC. In September 2006, the GSPC announced its formal affiliation to Al-Qaeda and in January 2007 changed its name to AQIM (*IRIN*, 2012). Since it transmuted to AQIM, the group has provided logistical supports to other sleeper terrorist groups and Islamic Jihadists that operate in West Africa. It has equally maintained ties with organised criminal groups involved in smuggling activities in the region.

AQIM and sleeper cells affiliated with it have been operating in Mauritania since 2005. Actions included kidnapping and murder of Western tourists, aid workers, and Mauritanian soldiers, as well as attacks on foreign diplomatic missions in Mauritania. This culminated in the June 2009 attempted kidnapping and murder of a private U.S. citizen in the capital city of Nouakchott. Since 2009, AQIM continues to threaten Westerners. A French citizen was kidnapped in southwest Mali, near the border with Mauritania in November 2012. AQIM has also focused its actions on Mauritanian military installations and personnel. In August 2010, a suicide bomber attacked a Mauritanian military barracks in Nema. Also in July 2011, AQIM attacked a military base in Bassiknou, near Nema, in southeastern Mauritania. It has mounted several of such attacks.

## **Table 2: Overview of Some Terrorist Groups in West Africa**



S/ No	Name	Current Leader(s)	Country of Origin	Remote Background	Area of Operation	Operational Tactics	Driving Ideology
	Al-Qaeda in the Land of Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)	Abdelmalek Droukdel (Abu Musab Abdel-Wudoud)	Algeria	Emerged from remnants of <i>Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat</i> (GSPC) and became AQIM in 2007, after pledging allegiance to Osama Bin Laden's al Qaeda network	Conducts operations across the Sahara-Sahel Region; Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger	Targeted assassination, ambush, gun attacks, use of IEDS, suicide bombing, and kidnapping	<i>Salafi Jihadism</i>
	<i>Ansar Dine</i> (Defenders of the Faith)	Iyad Ag Ghaly	Mali	Formed toward the end of 2011 by a veteran 1990s Tuareg rebel leader (Iyad Ag Ghaly)	Operates largely in northern Mali; has not demonstrated capacity for transnational attacks	Ambush, gun attacks, use of IEDS,	Islamic <i>Van-guardism</i>
	<i>Jama'at al Tawhid wa al Jihad fi Gharb Afriqiya</i> (The Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa - MUJAO)	Hamada Ould Mohamed Kheirou and Ahmed al-Talmasi	Mali	A splinter group of the AQIM which formally announced its existence in October 2011	Its current area of operation is northern Mali, Niger and Southern Algeria, and has strong links with AQIM	Ambush, gun attacks, use of IEDS, kidnapping, and suicide bombing	<i>Salafi Jihadism</i>
	<i>Jama'atu Ahlissunnah lidda'awati wal Jihad</i> , (aka Boko Haram)	Abubakar Shekau, alias "Darul Ta'wheed"	Nigeria	Originally founded in 1995 as the Ahlulsumma wal'jama'ah hijra or Shabaab group, but has incriminated over time as the Yusufiyah sect, Nigerian Taliban, and Boko Haram	Its current area of operation is northern Nigeria and has conducted cross-border kidnapping in Cameroon. Has weak links with AQIM	Targeted assassination, ambush, drive-by-shooting, gun attacks, use of IEDS, suicide bombing, and kidnapping	<i>Salafi Jihadism</i> and <i>Takfirism</i>
	<i>Jam'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan</i> (aka Ansaru)	'Abu Usamatul Ansari' (Pseudonym for Khalid al-Barnawi)	Nigeria	A Breakaway faction of the Boko Haram founded in January 2012	Operates in northern and Middle Belt zones of Nigeria, and has strong links with AQIM	Gun attacks, ambush, and kidnapping	Islamic <i>Van-guardism</i>



AQIM's ties with Mali Islamists have equally emboldened such groups to mount audacious attacks. Mali slipped into instability after a coup led by Captain Amadou Sanogo overthrew President Amadou Toumani Touré on 22 March 2012. The coup created a power vacuum that enabled predominantly Tuareg National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), backed by a patchwork of Islamist forces – Ansar Dine, AQIM, and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) – to take control of nearly two-thirds of the country. The MUJAO has since then mounted audacious attacks.

The MUJAO has grown in reach and sophistication since October 2011 when it became active. It went on to carry out some deadly attacks and gained control of Konna, in northern Mali. MUJAO hit the media headlines when it claimed responsibility of the abduction of three humanitarian workers from a Saharan refugee camp in the region of Tindouf, Algeria, on 23 October 2011. The group announced its first armed action via a video on 12 December 2011, with the intended goal of spreading Jihad across West Africa. In the video, it “referenced its ideological affinity for such figures as al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar but placed greater emphasis on historical figures of West African origin, claiming to be the “ideological descendants” of Usman Dan Fodio, Cheikhou Amadou, and el Hadj Umar Tall” (Okpi, 2013:2). The MUJAO has claimed responsibility for some operations including the 5 April 2012 abduction of seven Algerian diplomats in Gao, Mali; the 23 March 2012 attack on the Gendarmerie Nationale base in Tamanrasset, Algeria; and the 29 June 2012 attack on the Gendarmerie Nationale base in Ouargla, Algeria.

Beginning from 11 January 2013, France deployed her forces in “Operation Serval” (wildcat) to stop the advance of Islamists group – Ansar Dine, AQIM, and MUJAO – intent on invading Bamako. French Mirage and Rafale fighter jets mounted air strikes across a wide belt of Islamists strongholds, from Gao and Kidal in the northeast, near the border with Algeria, to the western town of Lere,



close to Mauritania. France air and ground assaults on rebel strongholds enabled French and Malian forces to retake Konna, Douentza, Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal, with hopes of capturing more territories from the Islamists.

In response, these terrorist groups re-strategise in two principal ways. The first was their retreat into the mountainous region of northern Mali as well as melting into the local population. The second strategy was the adoption of hitherto terrorist tactics such as ambush, suicide bombings and guerrilla attacks in reclaimed territory. Particularly worrisome is the inclusion of suicide bombing as part of its new campaign against French intervention. On 8 February 2013, Mali witnessed its first suicide bombing when an attacker blew himself up in the main city of Gao. In the attack, a young Tuareg, dressed as a paramilitary officer, rode a motorcycle to an army checkpoint and detonated an explosive belt, wounding a soldier. A larger bomb that he was also carrying failed to go off. MUJAO later claimed responsibility for the attack (RFI, 2013). Two days later, a second suicide attack rocked a military checkpoint at the city's entrance. Again, on 21 March, a suicide bomber attacked a military checkpoint near Timbuktu's airport.

It is estimated that between 9 February and 22 May 2013, Mali experienced twelve suicide attacks in the cities of Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, Ménaka, and Gossi (Atallah, 2013). Analysts believe that this trend, which speaks to the inculcation of the insidious ideology, ethos and means of al-Qaeda's global jihad, is not going to disappear anytime soon. It is speculated that, in time, AQIM's influence and tactics will grow more sophisticated and violent in Mali, following a similar evolution seen in the Nigerian jihadist group, Boko Haram, from 2011 until present (Atallah, 2013).

The MUJAO has also expanded their attacks into neighbouring countries and threatened to attack African countries that have contributed troops to the French-led onslaught. On 23 May 2013, for



instance, MUJAO-primed suicide bombers detonated two car bombs simultaneously in Niger, one inside a military camp in the city of Agadez and another at a French-operated uranium mine in the remote town of Arlit. No fewer than 26, mostly Nigerien soldiers, were killed and about 30 injured (Alechenu, Soriwei, and Baiyewu, 2013:2). The attack was a fulfillment of MUJAO's threat to attack countries that were contributing forces to the French-led military intervention which ousted them from towns in northern Mali.

The growing audacity of the Nigerian Boko Haram is one among many developments that have made West Africa a region of growing terror concern. Following an anti-government revolt it waged in July 2009 that attracted worldwide attention, Boko Haram members have escalated attacks targeting mainly security and law enforcement agents. Civilians, critical public infrastructure, community and religious leaders, politicians, centres of worship, markets, public schools, hospitals, tertiary institutions, media houses and other civilian targets that have nothing to do with the government have also been targeted. Its tactics have equally evolved from poorly planned open confrontations with state security forces to increasing use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), targeted assassinations, ambush, drive-by shootings and suicide bombings. The Boko Haram attacks is estimated to have cost more than 6000 lives since 2009, including deaths caused by the security forces.

It is estimated that between June 2011 and April 2013, the sect staged at least 30 suicide attacks in northern Nigeria, with Borno State witnessing the highest number of attacks. No fewer than 500 persons have been killed in suicide bombings mounted by the sect. The first suicide attack in Nigeria occurred on 16 June 2011, when a Boko Haram member attacked the Police Headquarters in Abuja. The 26 August 2011, bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Abuja that killed 23 people was devastating evidence that the group aims to internationalize its acts of terror (Onuoha, 2012b:33).



The Nigeria government was of the conviction that that Boko Haram received training in Mali, making it imperative for Nigerian troops to join the French campaign to free northern Mali from Islamist militants. It was reported, for instance, that:

Hundreds of Boko Haram members stayed at training camps with Malian militants for months in Timbuktu, learning to fix Kalashnikovs and launch shoulder-fired weapons....The Boko Haram members trained for about 10 months at what is now a bombed-out customs-police building on Timbuktu's desert fringe, intermingling with a local al Qaeda offshoot called Ansar Dine....About 50 Boko Haram militants lived and trained at the customs building, and 50 more lived in an annex across a giant sandy lot, while others took up in other abandoned government buildings (Pindiga, 2013:1).

This report should be read against the backdrop of revelations that many Boko Haram members fled to North Africa after the July 2009 revolt to receive training in AQIM's camp (*Africa Confidential*, 2013:5). Hundreds of Boko Haram fighters are believed to have trained in northern Mali alongside the Islamists. According to Bilal Hassan, a leader of MUJAO in Gao. "Here there are Malians, Somalis, Ivorian, Senegalese, Ghanaians, Gambians, Mauritaniens, Algerians, Guineans, and Nigerians; there are all Muslims here.

The rise of a new violent group by the name *Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan* or *Ansaru*, for short, has added another dimension to the landscape of terrorism unfolding largely in northern Nigeria. The *Ansaru*, which roughly translates as "Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa", is believed to have been founded in January 2012. Its existence however became popular from June 2012, when its self-identified leader, Abu Usmatul al-Ansari, released a video proclaiming the creation of the sect and outlining its doctrines. Security agents and experts suspect that the name 'Abu Usamatul Ansari' is a pseudonym for Khalid al-Bar-nawi, an erstwhile leader of the *Boko Haram* who is believed to have



trained with AQIM in Algeria in the mid-2000s. He is suspected to have participated in strings of AQIM-led kidnapping operations in Niger.

Although the *Ansaru* is less well known than the *Boko Haram*, the nature and profile of its targets as well as its professed intentions makes it a sect of serious interest to Western security and intelligence operatives. Since its emergence, the *Ansaru* has claimed responsibility for various acts of terrorism such as the November 2012 armed attack on a detention facility in Abuja; the December 2012 kidnapping of a French citizen (Francis Colump,) working for Vergnet in Katsina state; the January 2013 ambushing of Mali-bound Nigerian soldiers at Kogi State, and the February 2013 kidnapping of seven foreign expatriates in Bauchi State, all in Nigeria.

The alleged murder on 9 March 2013 of the seven expatriates the group had kidnapped in February remains the biggest of its kind since the outbreak of terrorist violence in northern Nigeria. Before the February 2013 kidnapping, *Ansaru* had been linked to the May 2011 kidnapping of Christopher McManus (Briton) and Franco Lamolinara (Italian), from their home in Kebbi State. They were held for months, before their captors killed them in March 2012, during a failed rescue mission by Nigerian security forces and the British Special Forces in Sokoto. They had operated under the name *al-Qa'ida in the Lands Beyond the Sahel*. Given its ideological and operational outlooks as well as the known history of its suspected leader, Khalid al-Barnawi, analysts believe that *Ansaru* is strongly connected to AQIM (Zenn, 2013; Bay & Tack, 2013). It is pertinent to note that on 4 June 2013, the Nigerian government proscribed the Islamic terrorist groups, Boko Haram and Ansaru, and authorised the gazetting of an order declaring the groups' activities illegal and acts of terrorism. The order, which has been gazetted as the Terrorism (Prevention) (Proscription Order) Notice 2013, was approved by President Jonathan pursuant to Section 2 of the Terrorism Prevention Act, 2011 (As Amended).



Beyond the threats posed by AQIM, Ansaru, Ansar Dine, Boko Haram, MUJAO and other sleeper terrorist cells in West Africa, the gradual infiltration and expansion of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) into West Africa is another terror concern. The arrest and charging to court of two Nigerians (Olaniyi Lawal, 31, and Luqman Babatunde, 30) for accepting thousands of dollars from the AQAP to recruit potential terrorists from Nigeria, suggests that Al-Qaeda's most aggressive affiliate is seeking to boost its presence in West Africa (*Punch*, 2012).

### **Transnational Organised Crimes and links to Terrorism in West Africa**

Several TOC pervade the West African region. These include drug trafficking, natural resource smuggling, forgery, cigarette smuggling, arms trafficking, money laundering, and maritime piracy, among others. A brief overview of some of these crimes and how they facilitate terrorism are discussed subsequently.

#### *Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation*

Small arms and light weapons (SALWS) trafficking is increasingly undermining peace and security in Africa in general and West Africa in particular. Although they do not in themselves cause the conflicts and criminal activities, the proliferation, easy access and misuse of SALWs endanger the security of people, communities and states in West Africa. They are the commonest instrument of violence used in armed robberies, kidnapping, communal conflicts, civil wars, armed insurrections, terrorism, and other such crimes. Hence, there excessive availability fuels the escalation, intensity, spread and duration of violent conflict and criminality in the region.

Out of approximately 500 million illicit weapons in circulation worldwide in 2004, it was estimated that about 100 million are in sub-Saharan Africa, with eight to ten million concentrated in the





West African sub-region (Bah, 2004). Over 70 percent of about 8 million illegal weapons in West Africa are believed to be in Nigeria (Bello, 201:29). SALWs in circulation in West Africa has complex links: local fabrication; smuggling by traffickers; residue of guns used during armed conflicts; thefts from government armouries by corrupt security agents and dishonest government-accredited importers; returnees from international peace-keeping operations; indiscrete release of arms to mercenaries by government such as Libya under Muammar Gaddafi; and raiding of armouries by terrorists, insurgents and criminal groups, among others. Traffickers compose of West African nationals and their foreign collaborators.

The high rate of trafficking and proliferation of SALWs in the region is indexed by the intermittent seizure of various types, sizes and calibre of arms by security and border control officers, the frequency of deployment of these arms in conflict and crime scenes, and the level of human casualty and material damage recorded in the aftermath of its use in the region. In May 2013, for instance, Nigerian security forces made the largest weapons discovery during a raid on a bunker in a house occupied by a foreigner in Kano. Arms and weapons recovered from the house included 103 packs Slap TNT dynamites (with each pack containing 16 pieces) used in preparing explosives; 76 military hand grenades; one 60mm anti-tank weapon; two rounds of 122mm artillery gun ammunition; and four anti-tank mines. Others included 21 Rocket Propelled Gun bombs; 16 RPG charges; one RGP tube; nine pistols; one sub-machine gun; two sub-machine gun magazines; 17 AK-47 rifles; 44 AK-47 magazines and 11, 433 rounds of 7.62mm Special and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation ammunition. They were all traced to three Lebanese suspects – Fauzi Fawaz, Abdullahi Tanini and Talal Roda, who were all naturalised Nigerians – alongside Tahir Fadallah, who partly owns the Wonder Amusement Park and Amigo Supermarket in Abuja, and in whose house the weapons were found were arrested for interrogation (*Punch*, 2013).



Given ineffectual national security systems, porous borders, and growing demand for arms by criminals and terrorists, cartels specializing in arms trafficking have devised methods for concealing and conveniently trafficking arms across borders in West Africa. These methods include the use of specially crafted skin or thatched bags attached to camels, donkeys and cows; concealment in polythene bags stocked into empty fuel or sewage tankers; stuffing in bags of grains or carton of goods; and hiding in parts of ships, speed boats and barges. More so, the small, light and collapsible nature of these arms make it easy for them to be concealed and moved (on the backs of camels, cows and donkeys) by herders and merchants or transported in large number via trucks, trailers, lorries and old model pickup vans and jeeps with little scrutiny conducted on them by security agents (Musa, 2013). These traffickers exploit loopholes in state capacity in monitoring cross-border trade in the region and relaxation of national boundaries intended to enhance regional integration, to perpetrate their nefarious activities.

The audacity of criminal groups such as pirates, kidnappers as well as terrorists operating in West Africa grew with the proliferation of weapons in the Sahara-Sahel region following the destabilisation of Libya. In the wake of the Libyan uprising, terrorist groups like AQIM acquired heavy weapons such as SAM-7 anti-aircraft, RPG and anti-tank missiles and transported it back to the Sahel region. They were either surreptitiously obtained by posing as Muammar Gaddafi's supporters or indirectly purchased from mercenaries who had acquired these arms from depositories which Gaddafi had ordered open on 26 February 2011. The flooding of the region with sophisticated weapons has added a complex layer to the intensity and lethality of armed violence perpetrated by criminal, insurgent and terrorist groups in West Africa. Libyan arms first obtained by AQIM and other mercenaries have been transferred to groups such as Ansar Dine, Boko Haram and MUJAO, emboldening and enabling them to mount more deadly and audacious attacks.



### *Hostage-taking and kidnapping*

Abduction or kidnapping is a longstanding problem, yet it remains an under-reported crime in a number of regions around the world. Acts of kidnapping are increasingly being adopted by different non-state actors for a variety of purposes, such as vengeance (as a political or terrorist strategy), ritual (power and influence), and exploitation (sexual) or ransom. Kidnapping for ransom (K4R) however is one of the fastest-growing criminal industries, estimated to be worth \$500 million each year. The act of K4R is defined as an unlawful act of seizing and transporting a person or persons to an undisclosed place against the victim's wish and threatened with harm in order that money or object of monetary value can be extorted from either the victim or those associated with the victim – for example, friends, relatives or employers – in exchange for the safe release of the victim.

The act of K4R has become a key source of terrorist financing across North and West Africa. The AQIM in particular has kidnapped westerners for ransom across the vast Sahara-Sahel region. According to Warren (2012), AQIM had fetched ransoms as high as \$6 million in one instance and acquired tens of millions of dollars in kidnapping fees since 2006. It collected an estimated \$70 million in ransom payments between 2006 and 2011 (Foster-Bowser and Sanders, 2012). AQIM and its splinter groups have kidnapped Westerners in Algeria, Mauritania, Niger, Mali, Libya, Tunisia, and recently assisted Nigerian affiliates to carry out kidnappings in northern Nigeria.

Growing acts of K4R has since the last decade become a disturbing feature of Nigeria. Popularised by ethnic militants in the Niger Delta beginning from 2006, the menace has spread to virtually all parts of the country. At the 18th African Reinsurance Forum of the African Insurance Organisation, it was disclosed that Nigeria accounted for a quarter of kidnap for ransom cases reported worldwide in 2012 (Popoola, 2013). Targets cut across people of all walks of life, irrespective of age, sex, nationality, religion or ethnicity. The main



consideration is the conviction by the gang of the ability of the victim (his or her relative, firm or government) to pay ransom in exchange for the victim's freedom. In the case of Nigeria, some victims have been killed even after ransom has been collected by the kidnappers.

Kidnappings by Ansaru and Boko Haram in northern Nigeria have added a complex dimension to this form of organized crime that funds terrorist operations. Both the Ansaru and Boko Haram have kidnapped Westerners as part of their terrorist activities. However, it is important to note the parallels to Ansaru in the use of kidnappings. For instance, Ansaru kidnapped seven foreigners on 16 February 2013, and executed them on 9 March 2013. Boko Haram then kidnapped a French family of seven (including four children) in Cameroon on 19 February 2013, and then transported them to Nigeria, where they were freed on 18 April 2013 after allegedly collecting \$3.15 million as ransom (Cocks, 2013).

Boko Haram's campaign has mainly focused on local grievances, although kidnappings of expatriates are a rising tactic. In May 2013, Nigerian security forces raised alarm to the effect that the Boko Haram is adopting kidnapping for ransom as a survival strategy for terrorism financing. In the past, groups such as the Boko Haram had relied on bank robbery to generate funds for its operation.

### *Armed bank robbery*

Armed robbery is one of the ways terrorist groups generate funds for their sustenance and operations. Criminal activities, such as holdups of motorists at roadblocks on remote roads (often disguised to look like security forces roadblocks) and armed robbery, were used by AQIM units located in northern Algeria to fund their operations. In West Africa, the robbery operations by the Boko Haram in Nigeria offer an insight into how these attacks are carried out and how the loot is shared. For instance, Kabiru Abubakar Dikko Umar, alias *Kabiru Sokoto*, one of Boko Haram commanders and the suspected



mastermind of the Christmas Day bombing of St. Theresa's Catholic Church, in Madalla, Niger State, in December 2011, who was later arrested by security operatives have confirmed that the Boko Haram raises money for its operations through bank robbery. To be sure, not all bank robberies in Nigeria are carried out by Boko Haram. A feature of Boko Haram robberies is the deployment of several of its militants (around 15-60) who target the bank vaults or the bullion van using explosives and rocket propelled grenades. Examples of such attacks include the raid on a branch of First bank at Gwanye area of Adamawa state on 22 March 2013; attack on branches of Ecobank and First Bank in the Birnin Gwari area of Kaduna state on 1 January 2013; raid on branches of Intercontinental Bank Plc and Guaranty Trust Bank Plc in the town of Azare of Bauchi State on 4 December 2011; and attack on Unity Bank of Nigeria Plc, Alkalari branch in Bauchi State, on 18 July 2011. Millions of naira were stolen and several policemen killed during these raids (Adepegba, 2013).

Money generated from robbery is usually shared among five groups: the less privileged, widows of those that died in the Jihad, Zakat, those that brought in the money and to the leadership for use in prosecuting the Jihad. In the past, an arrested member of a robbery gang, Sheriff Shettima, had confessed that his gang was responsible for some robbery operations in Borno State to raise funds for the Boko Haram. He claimed that his gang robbed First Bank Nigeria Plc, Damboa branch, where they killed a policeman and stole 21 million naira, on 12 October 2011 (Bwala, 2011). This is a perfect case of collaboration between organised criminal group and terrorists.

The attacks by the Boko Haram explains the sharp rise in bank robbery in Nigeria in recent years. For example, about 100 bank installations were attacked in 2011 alone, and over 30 of these were attributed to Boko Haram (*Thisday*, 2011:6). As security agencies tighten the noose on the known Boko Haram's funding sources, it is feared that the sect may turn to other rewarding financial criminal activities such as oil theft, illicit trafficking in drugs and narcotics, smuggling and criminal rackets to raise funds for its operations.



### *Oil Theft and Oil Illegal Oil Bunkering*

The pervasion of oil theft is another organised crime that is increasingly being viewed as a potential source of terrorism financing. Although several countries produce and export oil in the West Africa and Gulf of Guinea region, with Nigeria and Angola being the leading exporters, illegal oil bunkering as a TOC appears to be largely, if not exclusively, limited to Nigeria (Obasi 2011). The large scale theft and smuggling of oil in Nigeria often referred to as *illegal oil bunkering*, poses serious threat not only to rule of law in Nigeria, but also to regional security in West Africa.

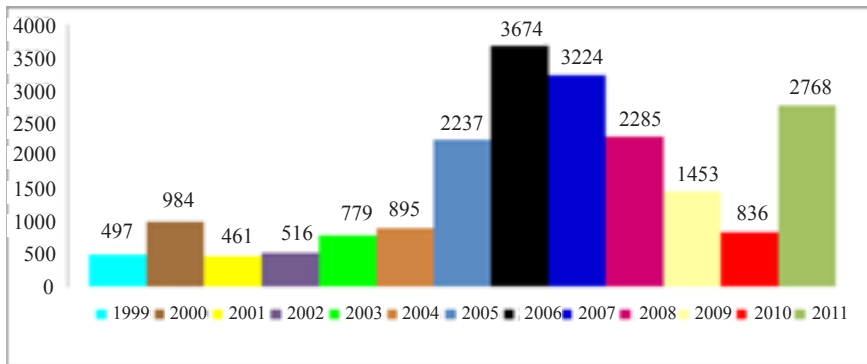
Analysts trace the origin of illegal oil bunkering in Nigeria back to the 1980s, but the crime has assumed an alarming scale in recent years with a network of actors involved in the criminal enterprise. The main actors involved in oil smuggling include, but are not limited to, cult leaders, oil company staff, politicians, serving and retired security agents, shipping lines, international oil dealers, and youths, conscripted by bunkering cartels to puncture the pipelines as well as provide security during the transportation of the oil to the point of exchange (black market).

In Nigeria's coastal region, three dimensions of oil theft feed into the broader criminal enterprise called illegal oil bunkering. First is the small-scale operations perpetrated by some loosely organised youth groups, which initially began with bursting or vandalising pipelines to siphon petrol, diesel and condensate for domestic use. Industry sources estimate that low-scale oil theft amount to no more than 30,000 barrels per day.

Although the Niger Delta region remains the hotbed of this form of organised crime, pipeline vandalism cuts across the entire length and breadth of Nigeria where crude oil and petroleum product pipelines transverse. Statistics in figure 1 shows that a total of 21, 102 pipeline breaks across the country were reported between 1999 and

2011. Further breakdown of the data revealed that Port Harcourt zone with 9, 070 breaks accounted for 44%, while Warri zone with 4, 164 breaks constituted 20%. The rest is Mosimi (16%) with 3, 273 cases; Gombe (12%) with 2, 401 cases; and Kaduna (8%) with 1, 701 cases (Onuoha, 2013:203b).

**Figure 1: Pipeline Breaks (Ruptures & Vandalisation) in Nigeria, 1999 – 2011**



Source: (Onuoha, 2013b)

Although neglected by security and intelligence operatives, theft of crude oil or petroleum products through pipeline vandalism could serve as a source of funds for individuals and criminal gangs with connections with terrorist groups such as the Boko Haram. For instance, it was reported that the escape of Kabiru Sokoto (a Boko Haram commanders) from police custody in January 2013 was facilitated by an army of youths coordinated by the son of a local chief in Abaji, a suburb town in Abuja. The chief's son is said to be a close friend of Sokoto, and the youths used by him "are also believed to be responsible for the breaking of oil pipelines in the area" (Suleiman, 2012:50). It is possible that youth groups such as these may be generating funds for the Boko Haram from siphoning fuel from oil pipelines. More so, Sokoto is alleged to have a terrorist training camp at the same Abaji (Nnochiri and Nwabughio, 2013).



There is also the large-scale oil theft perpetrated by well organised and entrenched groups. Their operations involves a little complex process and are quite organised; individuals transfer illegally extracted oil from pipeline and wellheads into containers, and onto barges, and then to the oil tankers, from where it is transported to the ports for sale, usually at a lower price than the international rate. The well organised groups employ all the necessary logistics and transport facilities to facilitate their trade – barges, *Cotonou* boats, training manuals, surface tanks, speedboats, pumping machines and generators, to mention but a few. There is no exact industry estimate of the quantity of oil lost in this form of oil theft, but it “is much more significant—not just in terms of the money involved but because of what the crude oil is often exchanged for: illegal weapons and drugs. There are large international syndicates involved in this operation, which also handle the money laundering for the international players” (Asuni, 2009:5).

The third level of oil theft, *grand* oil theft, is the highly organised resource pillaging perpetrated by syndicates or cartels, involving corrupt government officials, security agents, and foreign collaborators. Groups operating at this level do not require oil gangs to puncture oil pipelines or wellheads to procure crude oil. The cartels are assisted by disreputable ship owners, oil company staff, corrupt government officials and security forces that benefit from the illegal trading. The syndicates use ships or vessels to transport large quantities of oil stolen from the loading jetties in the region. They are highly international, including not only other West Africans, but also Moroccans, Filipinos, Venezuelans, Lebanese, French and Russians, to name but a few. For instance, in June 2012, a ship, *M.T. ST Vanessa*, was seized in the vicinity of the Brass loading terminal, for involvement in massive illegal bunkering that cost Nigeria about 22.5 billion naira per week. The ship was used to transfer crude oil to a waiting super tanker ship (with a capacity to bunker about 1.5 million barrels) on the high sea (Oluwalana 2012). Estimates on how much oil is lost to grand oil theft vary, but it is obvious that the connivance, coopera-





tion and collusion of corrupt government and oil company officials underpin its persistence in the oil sector in Nigeria.

There is also a new dimension of offshore oil criminality off the coast of West Africa, with the emergence of sophisticated bandits specialising in hijacking oil vessels. Piracy in the region has escalated from low-level armed robberies to a more sophisticated violent hijackings and cargo thefts known as ‘oil piracy’ – the well-organised act of criminal hijacking and stealing of oil from oil-laden vessels and product tankers for resale through other illicit outlets.

The illegal trading on stolen oil is carried out in what experts call the “spot market”, where transactions do not require the necessary documentation, or documents are not subjected to stringent scrutiny, since the pricing does not follow market forces (Yusuf 2008: 28). Onuoha (2012a:18), had observed that the illicit nature of oil theft or smuggling “makes it difficult for the Nigerian state to determine the exact amount of oil revenue being lost, and also to track where and how the proceeds are invested”. Some of the millions paid to the oil gangs are thought to have made their way to Islamic rebels linked to al-Qa’ida in the north of Nigeria (Kochan, 2013). Yet, the Nigerian security forces have sought unsuccessfully to combat the oil thieves.

It is argued that “illegal oil bunkerers and pirates operating in the coastal regions of Nigeria use part of the proceeds from this illegal business for the procurement of sophisticated weapons” (Onuoha, 2008:110). The result is that the dynamics of oil bunkering is contributing to SALWs proliferation and circulation in West Africa. The proliferation of SALWs in turn contributes to insecurity offshore (sea banditry) and onshore (terrorism, kidnapping and robbery) in West Africa.

### *Sea Robbery and Maritime Piracy*

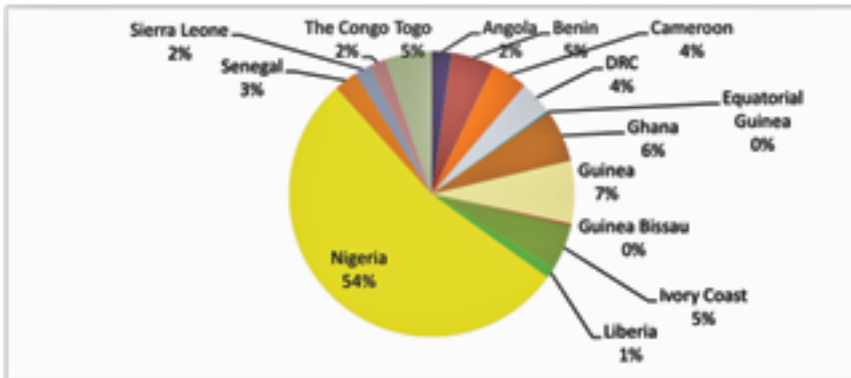
The threat of maritime piracy continues to plague shipping vessels off the coast of East Africa and more recently, off the coast of West



Africa (Gulf of Guinea). The latest global annual piracy report by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) has revealed that although piracy on the world's seas has reached a five-year low reducing from 439 in 2011 to 297 ships attacked in 2012, the situation off the waters off East and West Africa remains highly dangerous with the figures reaching 150 attacks in 2012 (IMB, 2012a). The number of attacks off the waters of East Africa has markedly fallen since 2011 due to, among others, improved security aboard ships, use of vessel protection detachments and increased Western naval patrols.

Off the coast of West Africa, piracy is increasing and represents a significant and complex threat to regional security. The region remains the second most dangerous waters for merchant shipping in Africa, after the coast of East Africa. A study has shown that incidents of piracy in the region decreased from 64 attacks in 2003 to 56 in 2004 and 25 in 2005. It increased from 31 in 2006 to 53 in 2007 and 59 in 2008. Although it declined from 48 in 2009 to 39 in 2010, it increased to 53 cases in 2011 and further to 62 in 2012 (Onuoha, 2012c). According to the IMB, there were 10 hijackings in 2012, of which 207 crew members were taken hostage, 26 kidnapped and four killed IMB (2012b:11). The majority of the attacks in the region occurred in Nigerian waters (54%), but an estimated 60% of attacks in Nigerian waters go unreported (see Figure 2). Besides Nigeria, other countries with high number of incidents include Guinea (7%), Ghana (6%), Ivory Coast (5%), and Benin (5%) for these years.

**Figure 2: Distribution of Pirate Attacks in the Gulf of Guinea, 2003-2012.**



Source: Onuoha, (2012c:8)

As a result, piracy in West Africa is receiving serious attention from Western capital due to economic, strategic and ‘hard’ security reasons. The strategic importance of West Africa (Gulf of Guinea) to the United States and the West is not in doubt. Each day, the Gulf of Guinea ships 1.5 million barrels of its oil to the United States, as well as 1 million barrels to Europe, 850000 barrels to China, and 330 000 barrels to India – altogether, 40% of Europe’s oil imports and 29% of the United States (Vircoulon, 2012). From eco-strategic point of view, increase in maritime piracy constitutes a significant threat to livelihood security, revenue profile of coastal states and energy security of foreign countries that depend on oil supplies from the region; not to mention the loss of lives.

From a ‘hard’ security perspective, the possible connection between piracy and terrorism financing in West Africa is one that is of profound and growing concern. Of recent, defence and security analysts speculate on “a possible link between piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the financing of regional Islamist terrorist groups such as al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Al Dine, Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Boko Haram and



the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, all of which operate in the wider Sahel desert region covering Nigeria, Mali, Niger, Algeria and Mauritania” (*Israeli Homeland Security*, 2013; *Pilot Africa*, 2013). There exists no credible evidence proving an alliance or cooperation between a profitable criminal enterprise (piracy) and an ideological movement (terrorism) in West Africa. The link for now is at best tenuous, but worth monitoring given that terrorist groups are known to facilitate or indulge in organised crimes to raise funds for their operation.

### *Drug Trafficking*

In recent times, West Africa has proven to be a transit route and destination of drugs. Lax border (land, maritime and air) security as well as corruption, cooperation and collusion between state actors and drug cartels ensure the persistence of drug flows in West Africa. Cocaine from Latin America to Europe continues to be the most lucrative of trafficking activities in the region. Most cocaine seized is transited through Brazil from Colombia or Peru, and then arrives in West Africa through Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau and Nigeria by land, air or sea. According to the UNODC, Cocaine seizures in West Africa peaked in 2007 with 47 tons netted. The seizures have since declined to about 18 tons. At least fifty tons of cocaine (worth \$2 billion) transit through West Africa per year (Edwards, 2013), with over one ton heading through Guinea-Bissau which has since become a transshipment hub for narcotics bound for Europe. West Africa’s drug smuggling routes provide opportunities for terrorist organizations to generate revenues. Two major incidents in April 2013 point to a worrisome trend in this regard.

On 2 April 2013, for instance, Rear-Admiral Jose Americo Bubo Na Tchuto, a former Chief of the Guinea-Bissau navy was caught in a US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) sting on board a boat in international waters off West Africa. According to prosecutors, Na Tchuto and two other defendants – Papis Djeme and Tchamy Yala – planned to bring 3.5 tonnes of Colombian cocaine transported by vessel from South America to Guinea-Bissau, and then to store the cocaine



in Guinea-Bissau before its shipment to other locations, including the United States (AFP, 2013). In return, they were to smuggle weapons, including surface-to-air missiles, back to Colombia's FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) rebels.

Again in April 2013, UK Border Force officials seized cocaine valued at over £17 million at the Port of Tilbury in Essex. This seizure is of particular security interest in that the drugs are believed to have been smuggled via Senegal to Europe by an Al-Qa'ida affiliated group. If confirmed, this will be the first time an Islamist terrorist group has attempted to ship a considerable amount of Class A drugs directly to Europe from West Africa and is a significant step for AQIM in terms of both funding and operations (Edwards, 2013). UK officials believe the cocaine was part of a major deal between AQIM and FARC who provided cocaine in return for weapons the Islamist terrorist group had procured – possibly from Libya (Edwards, 2013). This particular case is a perfect example of the intricate connections between drug trafficking, arms smuggling and terrorism financing.

Furthermore, the recent time has seen West Africa graduate from a transit region to a consumption region. The seizure of drugs from Boko Haram camps in northern Nigeria by security operatives confirms this trend. A kilogramme of cocaine bought in Latin America for \$3,000 (£1,990) can be sold in the capitals of West Africa for about \$16,000; in North Africa it sells for \$25,000 and can fetch about \$45,000 in Europe (*BBC News*, 2013). Other organised narco activities in the region include the increasing number of methamphetamine labs. The persistence of drug trafficking in the region owe to several factors, among which include political timidity on the part of West African leaders to deal decisively with the scourge.

#### *Other Transnational Trafficking Flows*

Apart from the TOCs highlighted above, other forms of transnational criminal activity that originate from, transit through or destined for West Africa include cigarette smuggling, human trafficking/smug-



gling (including illegal migration), and counterfeit medicine, among others. Money laundering is also a major challenge in the region. Together with other factors like poverty and widespread unemployment, these trafficking flows contribute to instability and insecurity in the region.

From the above, it is evident that different forms and scale of TOC pervade West Africa and feed into the cycle of armed violence and terrorism. Although perpetrated within or across national borders of West African states, these forms of criminality undermine security, stability and development at the national, regional and international levels. As expected, they have attracted or are attracting concerted responses from national, regional and international authorities. In the next section, attempt is made to briefly highlight regional instruments adopted by the ECOWAS to contain or curtail these security challenges.

### **Efforts at Suppressing Terrorism and TOC in West Africa**

The security environment in West Africa has been changing in recent years. The region as earlier highlighted is confronted with several security challenges, including terrorism and TOC that undermine security, stability and development. These challenges are being tackled at different levels: individually by states; bilaterally in the form of collaboration between two states; collectively by the ECOWAS; and extra-regionally – involving partnerships between ECOWAS or some West African states and foreign powers.

West African states have made effort at regional integration for collective approach to the region's quest for peace, security and development. This is evident in the achievements of the ECOWAS. The imperative of addressing the security challenges have inspired the adoption of several regional mechanisms and instruments for enhancing security, development, good governance and conflict management in the region. Some of these instruments aimed at collective suppression of these challenges include the *Protocol on*



*Non-Aggression (1978) and Mutual Assistance in Defence (1981)*. In December 1999, the ECOWAS also adopted the *Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for on Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security* (December 1999) for greater effectiveness in its approach to conflict resolution and management, to mitigate untoward conditions that are propitious to the evolution of terrorist groups. In this regard, the *Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance* (December 2001) was adopted to ensure the development of rule of law, consolidation of democracy and adoption of common principles of good governance, including prohibiting all forms of unconstitutional changes of government in the region.

Furthermore, the adoption of the *ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials* (June 2006) was a key intervention mechanism designed to address the problem of SALWs proliferation which contributes to conflict and insecurity in the West African region. This instrument provides for, among other things, the establishment of a National Committee for the Control of SALWs (NatCom), in each of the member states to lead and coordinate national efforts at controlling the proliferation and circulation of SALWS. It is expected that collaboration across member states leveraging on the NatComs would contribute to the mopping up of illegal arms that contribute to the escalation of terrorism and violent crimes in the region. In 2008, the regional body also adopted the *ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework*, which provides an institutional mechanism for strengthening the human security architecture in West Africa. The idea is to create space with the ECOWAS system and in Member states for cooperative interaction within the region and with external partners to place conflict prevention and peace-building at the top of the political agenda of Member States in a manner that will trigger timely and targeted multi-actor and multi-dimensional action to diffuse or eliminate potential and real threats to human security in a predictable institutional manner.



Apart from these mechanisms, the ECOWAS has established several promising conflict prevention and security-enhancing organs to help underpin the Commission's effort at achieving peace, security and development in the region. Such outfits include the Early Warning System, the Council of the Wise, and Special Mediators. It has also encouraged and supported periodic meetings of *ECOWAS* Committee of Chief of Defence Staff (CCDS) and the West Africa Police Chief Committee (WAPCCO) of member states, as veritable platforms for sharing ideas on, and adopting common measures to combat, security challenges in the region. Another avenue through which ECOWAS fight terrorists' networks is through the Dakar-based Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering (GIABA), an agency of the ECOWAS Commission. GIABA undertakes actions to stop the financing of terrorism in West Africa by helping in building the capacity of states and networking with other international organisations (Bolaji, 2010:217).

Of central importance and relevance to dealing with terrorism was the recent adoption of a *Political Declaration and Common Position against Terrorism*, which provides for a regional Counter Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan to help member states combat terrorism. The strategy is meant to facilitate the implementation of regional, continental and international instruments in combating terrorism and provide a common operational framework for community-wide action to prevent and eradicate terrorism and related acts. It is expected that the strategy would enhance coordination among Member States; strengthen national and regional capacities to detect, deter, intercept and prevent terrorism; promote criminal justice approach; prevent and combat violent religious extremism; harmonise responses and promote regional and international cooperation on terrorism (ECOWAS, 2013).





At the national level, measures have been put in place and many are underway to deal with issues of TOC and terrorism. Nigeria, for instance, has enacted a comprehensive Anti-Terrorism Legislation (2011) and Money Laundering Act (2011); deepened training within its military and security institutions on Counter-Terrorism (CoT) and Counter Insurgency (COIN) operations; drafted a National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST); and the resuscitated the near moribund Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF) established in September 1998 as a joint operation made up of soldiers from Chad, Niger, and Nigeria to ensure security within their common borders and engender international cooperation. These and other regional and national instruments were designed to prevent, deter and contain TOC and terrorist activities in the regions. In spite of these, terrorism and TOC are growing and mutually reinforcing the other in the region.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The foregoing analysis has shown that terrorism is no longer an imagined or perceived threats to West Africa. It is now a reality pervading the region, with potentials to increase in intensity and scale if urgent steps are not taken to arrest the trend. It is being nourished by various TOC and trafficking flows in the sub-region. Interestingly, West Africa has demonstrated that it lacks no capacity to design instruments and mechanism to tackle insecurity in the region. Yet it is seriously afflicted with security *plagues* in the form of rising terrorism and TOC, and Nigeria reflects a perfect microcosm of these realities. On its part, Nigeria has put in place mechanisms to tackle insecurity but has been battling a raft of security challenges, including terrorism and TOC.

The challenge therefore has not been the lack of frameworks and instruments at either the regional or national levels but rather the failure to deal with both the underlying factors contributing to the out-



break of these crimes as well as the complex linkages between them. Factors such as weak and failing governance institutions, high incidence of poverty, pervasive corruption, marginalisation, porous borders, large ungoverned spaces, ineffectual national security systems, and increasing number of under-or unemployed youth have made West Africa increasingly vulnerable to violent extremism and terrorism. Addressing these governance, development and security deficits is critical to rolling back the tide of terrorism and TOC in the region.

In order to deal effectively with the threats of terrorism and TOC, there is the need for the adoption of a broad approach that integrates efforts at the national (member states) and regional (ECOWAS) levels into a robust strategy, focusing on improving governance, development and security (GDS) in the region. The recommendations below are therefore proffered in line with these three dimensions. There is therefore the need for:

### *Governance*

- The strengthening of all institutions and processes that promote efficiency, accountability and transparency in the management of national resources across West African states. This will enthrone sustainable fiscal policy management practices in ways that ensure that available national resources are judiciously utilised to promote and provide job opportunities for West Africa's teeming youth.
- The creation and strengthening of governance and law enforcement institutions capable promoting rule of law, enforcement of sanctions for human rights violation and prosecution of criminal cartels and terrorists. Capacity building for judicial institutions is urgently needed.
- The broadening and democratisation of the political space to accommodate people and groups who have been marginalised along ethnic, religious or racial lines. This will require broad political and governance reforms that could enthrone governmental institutions capable of providing human security, equal representation and addressing inequalities or socio-political exclusion in the society.



### *Development*

- Robust partnership between governments and the private sector to initiate and sustain functional microcredit schemes for the poor, especially the unemployed youths. The microcredit movement has shown clearly that lack of access to capital through restrictive institutional practices is a major obstacle to giving the poor greater capacity to improve their own standard of living. Hence, the proposed microcredit schemes should be robustly organized to enhance transparency and accountability in its management, and flexibly structured to avoid unnecessary institutional bottlenecks and patronage dynamics that prevent youths from accessing such credit facility.
- Identification and implementation of targeted developments interventions in border communities to earn their goodwill so as to support governments' efforts at combating transnational trafficking flows facilitated across borders. Border communities in West Africa have long been neglected by successive administrations, and needed to be integrated into the fight against terrorism and TOC through the provision of basic amenities that they have been denied.
- The formulation and implementation of a region-wide security consciousness and awareness programme for people. This will require the evolution and implementation of broad-based strategic communication or information operations strategy to counter growing extremism and jihadist narrative that are fast-spreading in West Africa and infecting the minds of growing impressionable and unemployed youths.

### *Security*

- Creation of an ECOWAS Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre (RIFC) for warehousing intelligence and information on terrorist



and TOC activities. The RIFC will build up proper records of information with a system of easy retrieval by the various security agencies across the region to facilitate effective anti and counter terrorism and TOC operations. It should have online presence and a direct link on its webpage where citizens can log on to give crime tips to it or national security agencies. There is huge potential in using this platform at both the national and regional level to combat terrorism and TOC given the penetration of ICT tools – internet and mobile phones, among others.

- Establishment of National Focal Units for Regional Counter Terrorism and TOC to leverage on the proposed RIFC to enhance synergy of national and sub-national efforts at combating terrorism and TOCs.

- Partner with Central and North African states to develop a robust tri-regional mechanism to combat security challenges in the Sahara-Sahel region, with emphasis on intelligence sharing, border security and control of illicit flows – drug, arms, weapons, explosives and fighters.

- Reform and professionalization of state security forces to ensure that they win the ‘hearts and minds’ of the local population by avoiding committing atrocities in the performance of their duties. This requires targeted and specialised training and education of security forces to inculcate in them the right mental disposition to effectively respect and protect human rights, including during execution of CoT and COIN operations.



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## (Endnotes)

1. Also know as Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJAO)



# African Journal



## THE RESILIENCE OF HAKAKAT AL SHABAB AL MUJAHIDIN

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### **Introduction**

Since the end of the Cold War the scourge of armed insurgency has emerged a major security challenge to the global community. Such insurgencies have been associated with civil wars in Africa, resource based conflicts in Nigeria Delta and the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism. The persistence of acts of insurgencies are often linked to the propensity of certain non state actors to pursue clearly defined socio-political, economic and ideological objectives through armed struggle. It is however significant to note that since the September 11 attacks on World Trade Centre in New York, the attention of the international community has become increasingly focused on the spread of extremist Islamic narratives by the Al Qaeda and affiliated cells. This narrative is rooted in the orthodox Wahhabism as espoused by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. The Al Shabab which emerged a major issue in security discourses in Africa since 2006 also subscribes to the teachings of orthodox Wahhabism

The Wahhabists contend that every idea added to Islam after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century of the emergence of Islam is false. It therefore rejects the modern reformations introduced to the religion since the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. This was considered important to prevent Islam from perceived corrupting influences that could lead to the decline of the religion.<sup>2</sup> It is their position that genuine Muslims must adhere strictly to the original beliefs set forth by Prophet Mohammed. The Wahhabi doctrine prohibits among others, praying to saints, making pilgrimages to tombs and special mosques, venerating caves and



stones as well as using votives and sacrificial offerings. It equates these to polytheism in contradistinction to absolute monotheism which characterized traditional Islam. Wahhabi Muslims further condemn secularism and modernism. It is their belief that only persons that adhere to the Wahhabi doctrine are true Muslims.<sup>3</sup> Bearing in mind that killing a fellow Muslim is considered as *Haram* in Islam, the Wahhabi doctrine justifies the killing of persons not considered true Muslims. Al Qaeda leaders like Osama ibn Ladin and Ayman Al-Zawihiri subscribe to the Wahhabi doctrine and utilize it for indoctrinating members and affiliated cells of the Al Qaeda network such as the Al Shabab.

The Al Shabab Al Mujahidin constitutes one of the Salafist movements in Africa that projects the Wahhabi doctrine. Like other Salafi driven movements in Africa such as the Al Qaeda in the Maghreb, Iyad al Ghali's Ansar ul din in Malia and Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Al Shabab pursues jihadist agenda with objective to spread the practice of Wahabbi Islam beyond the continent. This has brought the movement into conflicts with member states of the African Union especially Ethiopia and Kenya which are contiguous territories with Somalia.

This paper therefore examines the Harakat Al Shabab Al Mujahidin and its engagement in the security dialectics in Somalia and East Africa. It begins with a conscious effort to establish an understanding of the Al Shabab. Consequently, it explores the history, nature and activities of the Al Shabab. Furthermore, the paper identifies factors that contribute to the resilience of the movement in East Africa.

### **Understanding the Harakat Al Shabab**

The Somalia based Al Shabab or The Youths is a Salafi group that emerged in 2003 as the militant wing of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC). It portrays itself as existing to actualise the enthronement of an Islamist Emirate in Somalia. During its formative years, the main



leaders of the Al Shabab were Aden Hashi Ayro and Ahmed Abdi Aw-Mohammed Godane. Ayro who trained with AQN fighters in Afghanistan in the 1990s was killed in 2008 through US drone strike. Ahmed Godane who is presently the leader, fought alongside AQN in Afghanistan. These men draw inspiration from the ideological leaning of the Wahhabi doctrine.<sup>4</sup> The Wahhabi/Salafi orientation of the Al Shabab is a radical departure from the relaxed and forgiving Sufism orientation that is considered traditional for the average Somali.

The nucleus of the Al Shabab could be traced to the Al Ittihad Al Islami (AIAI) or Unity of Islam which evolved from former religious organisation in Somalia referred to as Al-Salafiya Al jadiid that was defeated by former Somalia President, General Siad Barre in the late 1970s.<sup>5</sup> The AIAI sought to promote unity of Islamic groups in Somalia, overthrow the regime of Siad Barre and establish an Islamic state in the Horn of Africa.<sup>6</sup> This organisation comprised mostly of educated young men that studied and worked in the Middle East. The organisation received funding from, and was influenced by the Salafi/Wahabbi movements in Saudi Arabia.<sup>7</sup> It was however defeated by Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf in the early 1990s in Somalia's North East region and later by Ethiopian military in Somalia's Gedo region.<sup>8</sup>

By 1994, the nucleus of what later became known as the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) emerged in Mogadishu. The first fully functioning Islamic Court was established by Islamic clerics from the powerful Abgal sub-clan of the Hawiye clan with the support of their secular political leaders.<sup>9</sup> The UIC had a record of restoring security as well as provision of basic social services. It was also supported by the business community in Mogadishu. The influence of the courts was extended to Lower Shabelle region and the port city of Marka. Following the establishment of the Transition National Government at the Arta Conference at Djibouti in 2000, the UIC influence of the UIC waned until 2003 when Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed who later



became the Chairman of all Islamic courts operating across north and south Mogadishu revived the Islamic court system in Somalia.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the political vacuums and security turmoil that confronted Somalia as a result of the collapse of the General Said Barre regime in 1991, the country experienced more political violence including assassinations and disappearances in 2005. The Transition Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia based in Baidoa was accused of covert operations with the US intelligence against UIC leaders. The UIC as a response added the pursuit of security as a priority. The Al Shabab served as the armed youth militia for the UIC and was accused of killing security officials of the TFG.

The UIC mobilised its resources to counter perceived US and TFG alliance. Between April and June 2006, it has captured the whole of Mogadishu, bringing within its control, the El Ma'an seaport and the Isaley airfield.<sup>11</sup> It also seized heavy weapons from the TFG. With Mogadishu under firm control of the UIC, the capital city experienced peace and security for the first time since the collapse of the Barre regime. The UIC went further to carry out functions of a government through the Sharia law. The victorious UIC engaged in provocative statements against the TFG and condemned the status of Somaliland which declared its territory independent of Somalia.

By October 2006, the UIC controlled most of Somalia key strategic points including the strategic port city of Kismayo which was held by the TFG. Following successes recorded by the UIC, hardliners within the Union, such as Sheikh Awey, sought for the actualisation of Greater Somalia, a form of Somali irredentism to extend Shariah beyond Somalia to neighbouring Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya with large Somali presence. The quest for Greater Somalia (an objective also shared by its predecessor, the AIAI) drew the Somali Islamists to conflict with Ethiopia following threats of acts of terror against the later by the Islamists. Clashes between the UIC on the one hand and the TFG backed by Ethiopia on the other began at Baidoa





and culminated in the overthrow of the UIC and its affiliates from Mogadishu. Some leaders and members fled to Kenya and Yemen. It is however noteworthy to observe that although the UIC lost control of Mogadishu and other territories, it did not lose its militant wing, the Al Shabab. Rather, the AL SHABAB transformed from a small, unimportant component of a moderate Islamic movement to a radical armed faction in the Somali conflict.<sup>12</sup> Members of the cell fled southwards within Somalia to havens where it regrouped to launch daring attacks on Somalia and Ethiopian targets through bombings and assassinations and other forms of asymmetric warfare.

Al Shabab's ideological orientation was popularised by Omar Hammami, the American Mujahid known as Abu Mansoor al Amriki. In his work, *A Message to the Mujahideen in Particular and Muslims in General*, published in January 2008, al Amriki explained Al Shabab's absence from the September 2007 Conference of opposition factions in the Somali conflict held at Asmara in Eritrea. He maintained that Al Shabab will not work with the non-Muslim State of Eritrea as cooperation with the infidel state will corrupt the jihad. Furthermore, Amriki maintained that the Al Shabab was committed to pan-Islamism which transcends UIC clan based politics. He further condemned the UIC for having 'a goal limited to the boundaries placed by the Taghoot (a ruler who fails to implement the divine law) while the Al Shabab had a global goal including the establishment of the Islamic Khilaafah (Caliphate) in all parts of the world.<sup>13</sup> Godane further reiterated Al Shabab's orientation in 2009 when he declared that the Al Shabab "will fight and the war will not end until Islamic Sharia is implemented in all the continents in the world"<sup>14</sup>

In August 2008, the Al Shabab described by Ayman Alzawihiri as the "lion of Islam in Somalia" reached out to Al Qaeda pledging loyalty to the leadership of Osama ibn Ladin. Osama ibn Ladin in response, described the Al Shabab as "Champions of Somalia."<sup>15</sup> The formal alliance of the Al Shabab with the Al Qaeda Network



was announced through a video released by ibn Laden's successor, Ayman Alzawihiri and Al Shabab's Amir Godane in February 2012.<sup>16</sup> The Al Shabab now constitutes a cell of the global jihadist network in the Horn of Africa. It recruits its membership from not only Somalis but also Kenyans, Ugadans, Eritreans and radicalised westerners from Canada, United States and Europe. It further strengthens its grip on East African and the Horn by alliance with extremist cells like the Kenyan Muslim Youth Group and Tanzania based Ansar Muslim Youth Centre (AMYC).<sup>17</sup>

The Al Shabab is grouped into two branches, or sub-units which are the military branch Jaysh Al-Usra (the army of hardship) and the Jaysh Al-Hesbah (the army of morality) which maintains law and order. It also has different cells which operate along specific geographic areas. These cells are under distinct political and military commanders are as follows:

- a. The Bay and Bakool command led by Mukhtar Robow (former spokesperson for Al Shabab);
- b. The Juba command led by Hassan Al-Turki (although not directly affiliated to Al Shabab);
- c. The Mogadishu Command led by Sheikh Ali Fidow and three other commanders.<sup>18</sup>

By August 2010, the Al Shabab controlled most part of Central and Southern Somalia where it implemented its interpretation of the Shariah through acts widely considered as human rights violations including resort to terror. Specifically, it prohibited watching of movies, music and various other forms of entertainment. It also prohibits the shaving of beards, adultery and theft and administers harsh punishment such as stoning of adulterers and amputation of thieves.

There exists links between the Al Shabab, the Al Qaeda Network and other global jihadist movements within and beyond Africa.



Like these jihadist organisations, the Al Shabab resorts to acts of terrorism in the pursuit of its objectives. It is on the basis of these that the United States of America designated it as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO). Consequently, the Al Shabab and its members are placed under international surveillance by the United States and her allies and assets belonging to them are subject to being frozen and destroyed by the Western counterterrorism alliance. In pursuance of the Global War on Terrorism, the United States has extended drone strikes against Al Shabab assets in Somalia. Between 2007 and September 2013, about 3 to 9 drone strikes were directed at Al Shabab targets in Somalia. These strikes led to the death of between 7 and 27 Al Shabab militants while less than 15 casualties were civilians. Further, other US covert operations within this period were put at between 7 and 14. Such covert operations included the launching of Tomahawk missiles from warships in the Indian Ocean. It is estimated that between 47 and 143 militant and less than 42 civilians were killed in these operations.<sup>19</sup> This is in furtherance of US Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) declared in 2001 by the George Bush administration in the aftermath of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York.

### **Funding the Harakat AL SHABAB**

The Al Shabab has since its emergence benefited from several sources of revenue which include Somali diaspora, charities, organised crimes like kidnapping, piracy, extortion from local businesses and some terrorists organisations. The sect also gathers grassroot support from local communities through local religious leaders, local mosques which provide the financial means to achieving their logistics and operational requirements. Quite often, these local community networks provide their support in kind through the supply of food, clothing, water and shelter. The Al Shabab also elicits their sympathy as the sect provides a form of order and hope for justice to the locals.



The major external sources of funding for the Al Shabab comes from charitable organisations affiliated to radical Islamists in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. The World Assembly for Muslim Youth (WAMY) and the International Islamic Relief Organisation (IIRO) as well as Somali businesses and nationals in Middle East and Europe form sources of external funding for the Al Shabab operations. The Al Shabab is also funded from Zakat paid by Southern Somalis for the benefit of the jihad against perceived infidels and their allies. The main principles that underlie the financial jihad of the Al Shabab include:

- a. Classification and attachment of values to donations for Al Shabab jihad. The highest value attached life sacrifice.
- b. Supplying the physical needs of Al Shabab fighters by Somalis who are unable to take part in physical jihad.
- c. Taking care of families of the Al Shabab warrior. Somalis who take care of warriors families are considered Mujahidin.
- d. Assisting the families of fallen warriors especially the needs of their orphans and widows.
- e. Assisting the families of imprisoned and injured Al Shabab members.
- f. Financing the medical treatment of wounded Al Shabab mujahidin.
- g. Collecting donations and granting charity donations for the Al Shabab.<sup>20</sup>

Another major source of funding for the Al Shabab was its control of the strategic seaport at Kismayo. This port provided lucrative source of revenues to the Al Shabab from 2008 when the city came under Al Shabab's control till September 2012 when African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces backed by Kenyan military drove it out of the city.<sup>21</sup> The Al Shabab earned revenues in excess of USD25 million annually from the total trade volume of charcoal



exports from southern Somalia to the Gulf Cooperation Commission in 2011. The revenues came from the production tax, transport tax, checkpoints fees, Zakat.<sup>22</sup>

### **Operations of the Al Shabab**

At inception the Al Shabab focused its aggression within Somalia. Military structures and other security agencies including government infrastructure were primary targets. The Bakara market and airport in Mogadishu have also been targeted. Statistics from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) indicates that attacks on private citizens and property amounted to 25.9% while military and police targets were 22.4% and 9.9% respectively. Others targets of Al Shabab aggression are general government (13.9%), businesses (5.1%) and diplomatic entities (4.0%) while journalists and the Media is (4.0%).<sup>23</sup>

Militarily, the Al Shabab avoids sustained battle with security agencies. Rather, it resorts to asymmetrical warfare through the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), targeted killings and suicide bombings. About thirty of Al Shabab's 548 attacks between 2007 and 2012 were executed by suicide bombers while armed assaults represented about 72.6 percent of Al Shabab's assaults. Within the same period, the Al Shabab carried out 90 kidnaps.<sup>24</sup> The Al Shabab however embarked on conventional military confrontation with TFG and AMISOM forces in August 2010 during the Ramadan fast. Its initial successes led to partitioning of Mogadishu between TFG controlled and AMISOM controlled areas until Al Shabab's strategic withdrawal from Mogadishu in August 2011.

Generally, the Al Shabab is reputed for the persecution of non-Muslims including Christian, attacks on Israeli interests as the Westgate attack reveals. The organisation also constitutes a major threat to humanitarian and other international workers in Somalia. In November 2011, the Al Shabab attacked offices of humanitarian



aids agency in Mogadishu seizing their offices and property. It also placed ban on the operation of humanitarian agencies operating in Somalia and accused the agencies of political bias, misconduct and illicit activities.<sup>25</sup> The assaults on humanitarian agencies escalated the casualties amidst famine in the country. It is estimated that since 2007, that Al Shabab has executed 550 terrorist assaults which led to the death of about 1,600 persons while more than 2,100 people were wounded in these attacks.<sup>26</sup> This has cost it some legitimacy among the affected Somali populace.

The Al Shabab which began and restricted its assaults within Somalia since 2006 internationalized its assaults in 2010 with the two suicide assaults on Kampala, Uganda on 11 July 2010 otherwise referred as (7/11) attacks. This is not unconnected to the evident linkages between domestic and international politics. For instance, following the deployment of peacekeepers to Somalia by Uganda and Burundi, the AL SHABAB declared in October 2009, that it will target both countries for contributing troops to Somalia.<sup>27</sup> A local Al-Shabab Commander; Sheikh Ali Mohammed Hussein alleged that the peacekeepers under the umbrella of AMISOM shelled the insurgent stronghold in Mogadishu, capital of Somalia, resulting in the death of at least 20 civilians and injuries to more than 50 persons.<sup>28</sup> The 7/11 attacks on Kampala marked the fulfilment of Al Shabab's threat to Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) to AMISOM and its first act of terrorism outside Somalia.

The first attack was executed during the World Cup finals between Spain and Netherland and occurred in a restaurant called the *Ethiopian Village* located in the Kabalagala neighbourhood. The second attack occurred an hour later at Kyadondo Rugby Club in Nakawa where a state owned newspaper, *New Vision*, was hosting a screening of the World Cup finals.<sup>29</sup> Both incidents resulted to the immediate death of about 74 while about 70 persons whose nationalities cut across Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Kenya, Ireland, America and Uganda were wounded.<sup>30</sup>



The attack on the Ethiopian Village is linked to Ethiopia's assault on the Union of Islamic Court in Mogadishu in December 2007 and her continued support for the African Union backed government in Somalia.<sup>31</sup> Al Shabab's spokesman, Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage, pronounced that the organisation masterminded the two attacks in Kampala while threatening more attacks on countries in the region that deployed troops to Somalia.<sup>32</sup> The AL SHABAB further declared war on Western interests including Non Governmental Organisations that distribute food and aid in Somalia.

Consequent on the Kampala 7/11 attacks, Kenya which was training Somali government forces and Burundi which also has peacekeepers in Somalia have stepped up security measures to forestall any similar attacks. Similarly, the African Union during its 15 Ordinary Summit in Kampala in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, changed the mandate of AMISOM from peacekeeping to peace enforcement as a strategy to confront the threats posed by Al-Shabab.<sup>33</sup>

The Al Shabab also extended its operation to Kenya. Between 2008 and 2012, about 100 attacks representing 65 percent of all terrorist attacks in Kenya within this period, were attributed to the Al Shabab.<sup>34</sup> In September 2012, Al Shabab militants attacked a British couple in the Kiwayu, North-east of Lamu Island killing the David Tebutt and kidnapping his wife, Judith.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, in Daadab refugee camp where Somali nationals fleeing drought and insecurity were camped, two Spanish aid workers, Montserrat Serra and Blanca Thiebaut, working with *Medecins Sans Frontieres* (MSF) were kidnapped by Al Shabab gunmen in October 2011 and released in July 2013.<sup>36</sup> The Island of Manda in Lamu Archipelago (Northern Kenya) also witnessed the kidnapping of another European, Marie Dedieu in October 2011. The Kenyan government blamed the Al Shabab for these assaults and declared "the kidnapping and detention of Marie Dedieu as a terror act not only against her, but also against Kenya, her home country, France and the entire world."<sup>37</sup>



The implication of these acts of kidnapping on the Kenyan economy which earns enormous foreign exchange from tourism cannot be sidelined. The US, Britain and France issued unfavourable travel advice to their nationals travelling to Lamu while the entire Lamu saw the peace of the Island fade to apprehension and insecurity.<sup>38</sup> It was the determination of the Kenyan government to halt Al Shabab criminality within its territory that propelled deployment of Kenyan police aircrafts and boats to and Kenya's cross border military operations into Somalia against the Al Shabab.<sup>39</sup> While troops from the Kenyan Defence Force pushed against the Al Shabab through Southern Somalia, the Ethiopian troops and anti Al Shabab militias such as the Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama (ASWJ) attacked her through Ethiopian borders in the Southeast. Al Shabab militants were forced to withdraw with some fleeing to the Galgala Mountains.<sup>40</sup>

The Al Shabab has since heightened assaults on the Kenyan state with more fatal attacks. By the end of 2012, about 22.7 percent of Al Shabab attacks were executed in Kenya. The key cities targeted include Garissa (13 attacks), Nairobi (8 attacks), Wajir (4 attacks), Mandera (4 attacks), Ifo (4 attacks) and Mombasa.<sup>41</sup> Some of these attacks include the kidnap of 4 aid workers and bomb attacks on two churches in Muslim dominated Garissa town in June 2012 which led to the death of 17 people - 10 women, 2 children, 4 men and 2 policemen who were guarding the church. Some of these acts have been linked to Kenyan recruits to Al-Shabaab who because of the failing fortunes of Al Shabaab have come home.<sup>42</sup> These assaults have stimulated public concerns across Kenya that while Kenyan troops advance across the border in Somalia in pursuit of Al Shabab, Kenyans at home increasingly fall victim to Al Shabab.

It is however the Al Shabab attack on Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi that constitutes the single most daring and fatal attack of the group on Kenyan soil since the internationalisation of Al Shabab insurgency. The total death toll of the Westgate attack is put at 67





while several of persons were wounded.<sup>43</sup> The choice of Westgate is considered strategic because it is a very popular shopping mall patronized by several diplomats and tourists from Western countries of Europe and America. The Westgate also has Israeli interest in the ownership and control. This gave the attack adequate international attention which the Al Shabab desired. The organisation linked the attack to Kenya's military engagement in Somalia and threatened to continue its terror act against Kenya until Kenyan troops are withdrawn from Somalia.<sup>44</sup>

### **Internal Dispute within the Al Shabab**

Besides the anti Al Shabab measures adopted by Somali's TFG and the international community, the sources of weakness for the Al Shabab have also been located to internal contradictions within the organisation itself. Signs of internal wrangling within the Al Shabab emerged in April 2012 when a factional leader, Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys challenged the authority of Al Shabab's Sheikh Godane and Al Qaeda leader Ayman Al-Zawihiri by declaring that jihad could be waged in different ways by different groups. Aweys declared that "we are in Al Shabab but its operation is very wrong, we should correct it... Al Shabab and Al Qaeda do not represent the Muslim world, they are only part of it."<sup>45</sup>

The major areas of disputation revolve on the thrust of Al Shabab jihad, treatment of foreign fighters, despotic rule of Godane and indiscriminate killing of innocent Somalis. Some Al-Shabab's leaders have also been accused of living extravagant lifestyles with the taxes fighters collect from Somali residents.<sup>46</sup> For instance, whereas leaders like Omar Hammani, also known as Abu Mansour al-Amriki and Ahmed Godane projects a global jihadist agenda similar to the objectives of the Al Qaeda Network while leaders like Muktar Ali Robow (Abu Mansoor) and Hassan Aweys prefers a nationalist approach that focuses on Somalia.



It was as a result of these anomalies that senior leaders like Ibrahim al-Afghani and al-Zubeyr al-Muhajir openly petitioned AQN leader, Ayman al-Zawihiri requesting his intervention and attributing Al Shabab failures in Somalia to Godane's tyrannical tendencies. Al-Zubeyr and al-Muhajir accused Godane of neglecting the teaching of Islam, maltreatment of foreign fighters as well as execution and deprivation of basic necessities to his critics.<sup>47</sup> Perceived poor treatment of foreign fighters such as Commander Omar Hammani (Abu Mansour al Amriki) who was killed in September 2013 has also set cracks within the ranks of the Al Shabab.

Factional fighting eventually erupted within the Al Shabab in June 2013 at Barawe in Lower Shabelle region over attempted breakaway by Aweys, Robow and al-Afghani. While Aweys escaped from Godane loyalists and later captured by Somali's government troops, Godane captured and executed al-Afghani and also attempted to kill Robow in his Bakool base.<sup>48</sup> With Aweys, al-Amriki and al-Afghani out, Godane consolidated power to himself. It is however important to note that despite the internal crisis within the Al Shabab, it continued to execute coordinated attacks within and beyond Somalia.

### **Explaining the Resilience of Al Shabab**

Rose Wise identified four areas that sustain radicalisation of the Al Shabab as the inadequate governance in Somalia, foreign military intervention in the Somali crisis, AL SHABAB's resort to modern information and communication technology (ICT) and the organisation's affiliation with the larger Al Qaeda Network (AQN) in early 2008.<sup>49</sup> First, the incidence of state collapse in Somalia created a political and security vacuum which various clans and the Al Shabab seeks to fill. Despite measures by the international community to restore the structure of governance in Somalia, it has proved remarkably difficult for the Somali authority to effectively discharge the functions of a government throughout Somalia. This is not uncon-



nected with the inability of the internationally backed TFG and present Somali government to effectively maintain control in the territory.

Secondly, the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in December 2006 led to the flight into exile, of moderate UIC leadership which had a softening effect on the AL SHABAB. This incidence also led to an upsurge of Somali nationalism targeted ending perceived Ethiopian intervention by Ethiopian troops. I consider it important to observe that these incidents attracted many militant youths to the Al Shabab which claimed to be fighting for protection of Muslim interest.

Third, modern ICT facilities including radio, internet, websites, YouTube and Twitter are increasingly utilised by the Al Shabab for online recruitment and training of its militants. The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) observes that since December 2011, the Al Shabab had been actively using the Twitter to engage with English speaking supporters through (@AL SHABABPress). This micro-logging platform recorded about 20,000 followers as January 2013.<sup>50</sup> The Al Shabab twitted about 1,250 times on its English language account before it was shut down on 25 January 2013. This facility has proved useful for advertising its activities and claiming responsibilities for assaults. The Al Shabab utilizes several languages such as English, Arabic, Somali and Swahili for its media broadcast. It should also be realized that the Al Shabab's mastery and continued use of ICT facilities for recruitment and spread of its narratives and activities constitutes another source of resilience for the sect.

Finally, the affiliation to the larger AQN has enhanced its legitimacy among other global jihadist networks as well as her access to resources. Its leadership has increasingly received trainings and indoctrinations that has facilitated the integration within the core of the AQN. This alliance with the AQN has therefore further sharpened its operational strategies and training.<sup>51</sup> Now the Al Shabab is increasingly adopting suicide attacks in its assaults within and outside Somalia.



The Al Shabab manipulates religious and nationalist sentiments to attract support from a wide section of Somalis and foreign extremist. By this, the sect portrays itself as waging war to defend the course of Islam in Somalia and beyond. This has contributed to the transnational composition of its membership base.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, it portrays itself as fighting Ethiopian and AU forces in Somalia for their violation of Somali sovereignty as well as the killing and displacement of several innocent Somali nationals since 2006. Such propaganda has ensured the regular support it gets from several Somalis in diaspora.

It is also important to note that Al Shabab's visibility and continued control of several territories within Somalia makes it difficult to dislodge them successfully. The movement for a long time acquired military hardware from renegade soldiers escaping poor welfare and ill-treatment by Somali's TFG with which they fought the AMISOM. It is also important to note that even if the AMISOM troops re-conquer territories from the Al Shabab, the troops cannot remain to safeguard it. This is even so as the Al Shabab has opted for asymmetrical warfare instead of direct confrontation with the AMISOM.

Indication that the Al Shabab is still capable of constituting itself into a security threat within and outside Somalia was demonstrated with the suicide attack at a restaurant in the city of Beledweyne. This city is under the control of the Somali government and AMISOM troops. The Beledweyne attack targeted Ethiopian and Djibouti troops who usually patronised the restaurant. Over 13 people were killed in this attack while several were wounded.<sup>53</sup>

It is however not yet *Uhuru* (victory) for the as the movement is weakened by a number of strategic challenges. Central to this include the leadership tussles within the organisation, the loss of its key leaders to United States drone attacks, loss of territory to African Union Mission in Somalia including the strategic port city of Kismayo. The loss of Kismayo which provided al-Shabaab with lucrative revenues via control of its Indian Ocean port was remains a



strategic setback to the movement. These losses have necessitated to withdrawal of Al Shabab from Mogadishu and Kismayo.

However, some observable facts about the operations of the Al Shabab in East Africa and the Horn is that as the movement confronts assaults from the United States drones, AMISOM, Somali government army and Kenyan troops, it seeks newer territories where the society is under-conscious about vulnerabilities to terrorist acts to assault. Furthermore, despite the infighting within the leadership of the Al Shabab, Godane has succeeded in eliminating his opponents and seem to have emerged stronger in his control over the movement. It is however important to observe that the swiftness and damage capabilities of the hostage assault on Westgate Mall and the suicide attack at Beledweyne in September and October 2013 respectively remains clear indicators of the resilience of the Al Shabab. It is this reality that could have informed President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia's comment at the 2013 Summit of United Nations General Assembly that the Al Shabab is "down but not dead."

### **Prognosis of the Al Shabab Aggression**

Certain trends could be deciphered from Al Shabab activities in East Africa and the Horn. Despite the observable strategic loses within the Al Shabab, he movement is still capable of perpetrating fatal attacks on sovereign states in Africa. Firstly, the death of over 60 persons of different nationalities including 78 year old Kofi Awonor in the Westgate Mall attack where several victims with different nationalities demonstrates that Al Shabab attacks could have fatal multinational casualties and consequences.

Secondly, the Al Shabab has established that it will target countries engaged in AMISOM operations within Somalia. The movement has demonstrated this beginning with the 7/11 twin attacks in Kampala in



June 2010 and later attacks on Kenya. These assaults suggest that other Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) such as Burundi, Ethiopia and Djibouti will remain vulnerable to terrorist acts from the Al Shabab.

Thirdly, it is also important to note that Al Shabab's aggression in East Africa is driven by a sense of nationalism that their territory is occupied by foreign troops determined to impose an alien system of government on the Somalis. This narrative constitutes a significant appeal in its propaganda and has succeeded in attracting Somali loyalists that see the movement as nationalistic force capable of protecting the interest of the Somalis. Such demonstration of loyalty has emboldened Al Shabab leaders in the prosecution of its war of terror on perceived enemies. The implication is that as current fighters are killed in the conflict, new ones are recruited from among extremist Somali national that subscribe to AL Shabab's narratives.

Finally, Al Shabab's continued quest for Greater Somali, a sort of Somali irredentism, and the pursuit of global jihadist agenda of forceful implementation of the Sharia within and beyond the frontiers of Somalia will continue to sustain the insecurities in East Africa. This is because neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia which have indigenous Somali population are secular states that reject forceful implementation of Islamic laws.

### **Conclusion**

The Al Shabab has emerged today as a new global melting pot for jihadists from Europe, America, Africa and Middle East. The movement which became prominent during the UIC control of Mogadishu in 2006 initially focused its operations within Somalia. However, as Ethiopian and AMISOM troops entered Somalia on peacekeeping operation, the Al Shabab internationalised its aggressions in East Africa as demonstrated by the assaults in Kenya and Uganda since 2010.



So far, there exists links between the Al Shabab with the global jihadist network. This has strengthened its asset base in terms of training, indoctrination as well as financial and logistic supports. The successes recorded by the Al Shabab despite concerted measures adopted by the international community to address the Al Shabab suggest that the movement is still capable of inflicting casualties on security and stability in East Africa. It could therefore be said that the Al Shabab still remain a strategic factor in security calculus in Africa.

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