DOMESTICATING THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM IN WEST AFRICA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUB-REGIONAL SECURITY

Felix C. Chidozie¹
Goddy U. Osimen²
Oluwamurewa A. Newo³
Joy Bhadmus⁴

ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this study is to the recent incidences of terror attacks in the West African sub-region that have only overwhelmed national governments concerned. Using the case studies of Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, and Niger, the paper interrogates the recent scourge of terrorism in these countries within the context of sub-regional security.

Theoretical Framework: The structural conflict theory, which argues that conflict is built into the systems and structures of society, is employed in the work. This is based on the radical transformative agenda promoted by globalization and accentuated by the violent intra-state conflicts in Africa, especially following the restructuring of the international security architecture after the end of the Cold War in 1989.

Method: The methodology adopted for this research utilizes the qualitative research design using the case study approach. Secondary data is engaged for this study, alongside thematic analysis for the harmonization of data.

Results and Discussion: The study discovered that the activities of domestic terror groups is hinged on the unresolved rhetoric of globalization. The study concludes that until there are institutional measures to strengthen the fragile politico-economic structures hurriedly erected after prolonged dictatorships in the countries concerned, the solution to the threat of terrorism will remain a tantalizing mirage. It canvasses for the creation of a civil-military alliance in the war on terror, and the strengthening of democratic institutions to bring about good governance which will make states better equipped to curb terrorism.

Research Implications: The practical and theoretical implications of this research are discussed, providing insights into how the results can be applied or influence practices in the fields of national security, strategic studies and even institutional democracy. These implications could encompass the protection of lives and property within the state, protection of the state’s territorial integrity and the consolidation of democracy by state governments.

Originality/Value: This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the fragility of democracy in West African states as a consequence of prolonged terrorist attacks that are yet to be adequately catered to by civilian governments. The relevance and value of this research are evidenced by its practical applicability across the fields of policy and strategic studies, and political science.

Keywords: Domestication, Terrorism, Globalization, Politics, Sub-Regional Security, West Africa.

¹ Department of Political Science and International Relations, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria. E-mail: felix.chidozie@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
² Department of Political Science and International Relations, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria. E-mail: goddy.osimen@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
³ Department of Political Science and International Relations, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria. E-mail: oluwamurewa.newo@covenantuniversity.edu.ng
⁴ Department of Political Science and International Relations, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria. E-mail: joy.bhadmuspgs@stu.cu.edu.ng
DOMESTIZANDO A GUERRA GLOBAL CONTRA O TERRORISMO NA ÁFRICA OCIDENTAL: IMPLICAÇÕES PARA A SEGURANÇA SUB-REGIONAL

RESUMO

Objectivo: O objectivo deste estudo é analisar os recentes incidentes de ataques terroristas na sub-região da África Ocidental que apenas sobrecarregaram os governos nacionais em questão. Utilizando os estudos de caso do Burkina Faso, do Mali, da Nigéria e do Níger, o artigo interroga o recente flagelo do terrorismo nestes países no contexto da segurança sub-regional.

Referencial Teórico: A teoria do conflito estrutural, que argumenta que o conflito está embutido nos sistemas e estruturas da sociedade, é empregada no trabalho. Isto baseia-se na agenda transformadora radical promovida pela globalização e acentuada pelos violentos conflitos intrastatais em África, especialmente após a reestruturação da arquitetura de segurança internacional após o fim da Guerra Fria em 1989.

Método: A metodologia adotada para esta pesquisa utiliza o desenho de pesquisa qualitativa utilizando a abordagem de estudo de caso. Dados secundários são utilizados para este estudo, juntamente com análises temáticas para a harmonização dos dados.

Resultados e Discussão: O estudo descobriu que as actividades dos grupos terroristas nacionais dependem da retórica não resolvida da globalização. O estudo concluiu que, até que existam medidas institucionais para fortalecer as frágeis estruturas político-económicas emergidas após ditaduras prolongadas nos países em causa, a solução para a ameaça do terrorismo continuará a ser uma miragem tentadora. Preconiza a criação de uma aliança civil-militar na guerra contra o terrorismo e o fortalecimento das instituições democráticas para conseguir uma boa governação que tornará os estados mais bem equipados para conter o terrorismo.

Implicações da pesquisa: As implicações práticas e teóricas desta pesquisa são discutidas, fornecendo insights sobre como os resultados podem ser aplicados ou influenciar práticas nas áreas de segurança nacional, estudos estratégicos e até mesmo democracia institucional. Estas implicações poderiam abranger a protecção de vidas e propriedades dentro do Estado, a protecção da integridade territorial do Estado e a consolidação da democracia pelos governos estaduais.

Originalidade/Valor: Este estudo contribui para a literatura ao destacar a fragilidade da democracia nos estados da África Ocidental como consequência de ataques terroristas prolongados que ainda não foram adequadamente atendidos pelos governos civis. A relevância e o valor desta investigação são evidenciados pela sua aplicabilidade prática nos campos dos estudos políticos e estratégicos e da ciência política.

Palavras-chave: Domésticação, Terrorismo, Globalização, Política, Segurança Sub-Regional, África Ocidental.

DOMESTIFICAR LA GUERRA GLOBAL CONTRA EL TERRORISMO EN ÁFRICA OCCIDENTAL: IMPLICACIONES PARA LA SEGURIDAD SUBREGIONAL

RESUMEN

Objetivo: El objetivo de este estudio es analizar los recientes incidentes de ataques terroristas en la subregión de África Occidental que sólo han abrumado a los gobiernos nacionales interesados. Utilizando estudios de caso de Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria y Niger, el artículo interroga el reciente flagelo del terrorismo en estos países dentro del contexto de la seguridad subregional.

Marco teórico: En el trabajo se emplea la teoría del conflicto estructural, que sostiene que el conflicto está integrado en los sistemas y estructuras de la sociedad. Esto se basa en la agenda transformadora radical promovida por la globalización y acentuada por los violentos conflictos intraestatales en África, especialmente después de la reestructuración de la arquitectura de seguridad internacional después del fin de la Guerra Fría en 1989.

Método: La metodología adoptada para esta investigación utiliza el diseño de investigación cualitativa utilizando el enfoque de estudio de caso. Para este estudio se utilizan datos secundarios, junto con análisis temáticos para la armonización de los datos.

Resultados y discusión: El estudio descubrió que las actividades de los grupos terroristas nacionales dependen de la retórica no resuelta de la globalización. El estudio concluye que hasta que no existan medidas institucionales
Domesticating the Global War on Terrorism in West Africa: Implications for Sub-Regional Security

1 INTRODUCTION

Ever since the systematic formation of the international system of states, there have existed several events ramped up around its formation. Issues ranging from the various war experiences, environmental challenges, and the ultimate reconfiguration of the world into a sophisticated global village have all served as issue points, yoking and splitting states in the international system. One such substantial issue in contemporary times is the growing menace of terrorism, which has changed the direction and focus of governments around the world towards the trends of collective security and the global war on terror (Chidozie et al., 2020).

Although the debate on the origin of terrorism in the international system is multifaceted, the widespread consensus is that terrorism assumed an international dimension with the 9-11 attack on the United States; simultaneously, counterterrorism or the war against terror also assumed a global form (Barash & Webel, 2014; Bubna, 2010; Haruna, 2022). In the fight against terrorism, Africa is not left out as it is believed that terrorist groups find a safe abode within the unstable socio-political and economic terrain of the continent (Haruna, 2022).

America became interested in the security architecture of the continent because the large presence of weak states, poverty, corruption, criminal activities, and organized crime which made the continent a suitable abode for both domestic and international terrorist groups (Lyman, 2008). Financial and strategic assistance was invested in Africa to minimize the rise of terrorism. In this manner, Africa became integrated into the global war on terror to combat
the surge of tactical violent extremism being carried out by rebel groups and malicious non-state actors such as international terrorist networks, as they gained a strong foothold in Africa and sought to destabilize the continent (Lyman, 2008; Mroszczyk & Abrahms, 2021; Omenma et al., 2020).

Unfortunately, despite the evolving war on terror in Africa, the proliferation of terrorist groups continues (Duruji et al., 2019; Joshua & Chidozie, 2021). Generally, the continent has faced cruel attacks from different terrorist factions in the last decade, and attempts at counterterrorism have been met with strong resistance. This resistance is further heightened by the organized and sophisticated communication technology networks employed by these extremist factions (Joshua & Chidoze, 2015; Mroszczyk & Abrahms, 2021). Disappointingly, West Africa the region which happens to have the strongest and most well-organized military and economic integration system has equally suffered a spiral of terror attacks that have undermined the effectiveness of both national and regional institutions to combat the menace of terrorism (Darkwa, 2011; Haruna, 2022).

West African states have joined the train of the global war on terror; however, terrorism seems to be an enduring nightmare for national and regional bodies. This is primarily due to the presence of weak institutions, political instability, the proliferation of corruption and organized crime networks, and porous borders across the sub-region. The incidence of terrorism has become so exacerbated that of the 5 African countries present on the list of countries most impacted by terrorism in the world, 4 of these countries are resident in West Africa – Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, and Niger (Gberevbie, 2014; Haruna, 2022; Issaev et al., 2021; Issaev et al., 2022; Institute for Economics & Peace, 2023; Lopez-Lucia, 2020).

The sporadic terror attacks in West Africa, coupled with the resurgence of military coups on the sub-continent has led to international responses from different non-state actors who have been unable to deal with the scourge of terror in the sub-region adequately (Duruji et al., 2019). Foreign agencies that operate within the region are unfamiliar with the land, putting them at a disadvantage, unlike the terrorists who are familiar with back roads and unconventional routes whilst also enjoying support and protection from the locales of communities where they operate. Indeed, the uncoordinated counter-terrorism approach by different influences in West Africa, particularly the Francophone/Anglophone age-long rivalry, not only undermines the agenda of the global war on terror but also gives impetus to the course of the terrorist networks. In effect, the above makes it imperative to reevaluate the effectiveness of the existing global war on terror mechanism in the sub-region – hence the urgent need to domesticate the war on terror.
1.1 PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

Terrorism has become a mainstay of the West African sub-continent, and the activities of these terrorists affect every area of life of the indigenes of affected communities, causing strain to national governments and further heightening the levels of insecurity in the sub-region. The consequences of terrorism in one country have been observed to have a ripple effect on neighbouring countries, further undermining the security architecture of these neighbouring states and exacerbating the tension on the weak political and institutional structures that are present across West African states. The re-emergence of military coups in the sub-region further poses a threat not only to state security and defence but also to the institutions of democracy existent within the affected states, the sub-region, and the continent at large. The challenge of terrorism seems to be spreading like a virus from one country to the next and leaving in its wake compromised democracies and weak states.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Given this backdrop, this paper interrogates the question of terrorism in West Africa and investigates why terrorism seems impossible to defeat despite tireless efforts at counterterrorism. It examines the scourge of terrorism in these countries within the context of sub-regional security to identify similarities in the structure of West African States that accommodate and galvanize terrorist activities.

1.3 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The West African sub-continent has had a history of violent conflicts in the past. Intra-state conflicts caused by ethnic tensions, organised crimes, and military coups have been present since these states received independence from colonialism. However, these conflicts have taken an even more drastic dimension, considering the activities of terror groups and the cessation of democracy through the military apparatus. This work is essential in that it sheds light on the trends of terrorism in the continent by assessing the four countries on the continent that are the most ravaged by terrorism, three of which have witnessed a halt in political democracy in recent years. By analysing these trends and assessing the data, this research contributes to scholarly discourse on regional security and offers valuable insights for policymakers, governments, and international organizations striving to address the root causes.
of terrorism and promote sustainable democratic governance in the West African region.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper examines terrorism within the confines of conflict theory, with a spotlight on structural conflict theory, which is connected more with, the nature and character of the structures existing in a state and how it either breeds or dispels the atmosphere for conflict. The structural conflict theory originates from the works and orientations of scholars such as Karl Marx, Engel, Ross, Scarborough, and Johan Galtung among others. The structural conflict theory consists of two basic strands of orientation which are the radical and the liberal structural orientations (Faleti, 2012). The theory is rooted in the social conception of Marx, which emphasizes the inevitability of dialectics in the whole of nature and, consequently, in human society. Hence, underneath the structural conflict theory is the principle of dialectics that seems ubiquitous in social life. Based on this premise, the structural conflict theory argues that conflict is built into the ways in which societies are structured and organized. This central theme presupposes that, as dialectics becomes more visible in the social organizations of societies conflict is probable. The conflict tendency moves in the rank of those who are not favored by the social order and structure.

The structural conflict theory argues that conflict arises when there exists a struggle for scarce values and resources in society. The nature of the struggle for scarce resources among individuals is further solidified and accentuated by the societal structure, its organization, and its workings, which tends to benefit certain groups at the expense of other groups in society. This eventually creates stratification in the society, leading to a lacuna between the individuals in the society, a ‘class-based lacuna’. This eventually creates fundamental problems like poverty, unemployment, injustice, exploitation, and exclusion, which fertilizes the soil for conflict.

In essence, the entire gamut of the arguments of the structural conflict theory emphasizes how the contradicting and competing interests of people or groups of people knot conflict into the socio-political and economic configuration of the society. It exposes the facts that the socio-political and economic dialectical interest woven into and sustained by the societal structure breeds ominous elements and factors such as security challenges, poverty, unemployment, and diseases, among others, which eventually become a minimum requirement and a fertile soil for the emergence and escalation of conflict. Consequently, where such playgrounds of contradiction exist, terrorism as a violent form of conflict cannot be unexpected. The growing
Domesticating the Global War on Terrorism in West Africa: Implications for Sub-Regional Security

menace of terrorism in the West African sub-region, which is an indictment of the systemic failure of the national security apparatus in the countries involved, can be viewed through the prism of structural conflict theory. The exploitative structure of colonial legacy and the consolidation of these structures by the elite of these states after independence can, therefore, be linked with the escalation of terrorism in the sub-region (Faleti, 2012; Aje & Chidozie, 2016).

2.1 THE ENDURING MILIEU OF TERRORISM IN WEST AFRICA

The problematic subject of national peace and security in Africa, as well as the attendant issues of societal malaise, ethno-political disputes, and religious intolerance, is as old as the states themselves. These are borne and maintained by severe internal (political, socioeconomic, cultural, and religious) conflicts that may be traced back to how and why the states came into being. The generic post-colonial African state is structurally defective due to its awry malformation by the Europeans who, in their rabid quest for territories and natural resources, wilfully threw away rational thinking in the creation of these states (Ovie-D'Leone, 2012).

The deformed colonial structure promoted the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few indigenes who were associates of the colonial powers; it laid the groundwork for economic dependency and neo-colonialism which affected the structures of the states even after several years of flag independence. Consequently, a few years after independence, most West African states were cut up in the web of severe economic adversity, partly because of the global economic recession, poor management of resources, and the growing corruption patterns. The states were compelled to borrow from the Bretton Wood Institutions as a means of escape. Borrowing from the World Bank and IMF meant the introduction of hostility measures on the political-economic domain of the concerned states.

The introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program and cross-conditionality principles sent many citizens into grave financial tragedy. With no way out of the poverty web, the typically unemployed ones claimed their classical roots of religion and soon, grievances against the state began to manifest in different forms. In this manner, many terror factions that were previously linked with the Maghreb and the Arab world created their terrorist sects (Nkwi, 2015). Thus, a new set of terrorist groups was formed by the dissatisfied and unemployed youth population of West Africa. This feat was further accentuated by the ties that had been formed with other violent organizations in Africa. Thus, these groups in West Africa could easily fraternize with their counterparts in North and East Africa (Nkwi, 2015).
Hence, the nature and character of the West African states, their over-developed political superstructure, low level of productive forces, and the cake-sharing syndrome (Omotosho, 2010) which are explicitly expressive of its internal dialectics in the subregion laid the foundation for terrorists and shattered all possibilities of creating a peaceful and secure environment that is sine qua non for the attainment of socio-economic and political development. These contradictions represent potential conflict triggers, fostering domestic insurgency and international terrorism. Forest (2012) reinforces this argument, asserting that the combined consequences of socio-political conditions have resulted in widespread disillusionment and marginalization. With the compounding factors of poor governance, concentration of power and wealth, crumbling or absent infrastructure, regional inequalities, and various other challenges, these elements collectively contribute to a volatile environment conducive to the recruitment and initiation of violent movements by revolutionaries and extremists.

Hence, those who are recruited and engaged as effective tools to perpetuate the terror attacks against the states of West Africa are extremely aggrieved citizens who have gained connection with a larger circle of terrorist groups. According to Lyman (2008), the highest threat of terrorism in Mali came from disaffected minority groups, specifically the Tuareg, who felt discriminated against in terms of development investments in their region and who occasionally resented intervention in their economic activities.

An appeal to the religious sentiments of these citizens further rouses the feeling of dejection. In connection with this, the terrorist leaders argue that the reason behind the palpable level of corruption and socio-economic decay in the state is because of the wrong socialization and education (Western) that the States embraced and cultivated from colonial beginnings. It thus makes the Islam-based ideology of Jihad against ‘evil’ highly acceptable to these aggrieved citizens who seek the opportunity to vent their anger on the state and against all institutions which they believe to be facilitators of this “unjust” status quo.

The sub-region's vulnerability to transnational crimes, including trafficking, stems from high unemployment, weak governance, and porous borders (Darkwa, 2011). West Africa, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, is an ideal environment for organized crime due to its strategic location, porous borders, governance weaknesses, widespread poverty, and corruption, leading to exploitation by criminals and insurgents (UNODC 2010 in Darkwa, 2011). These elements have constituted the enduring milieu upon which terror groups operate in the sub-region.
2.2 VIOLENT ATTACKS IN WEST AFRICA

2.2.1 Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is a landlocked state in the Sahel region of West Africa, and in the past decade, it has become a fertile breeding ground for terrorist uprisings. Both internal and external factors are responsible for this as there exist rural areas in remote regions that are poorly governed, where these terrorists can easily hide and set up bases of operations within the states. The external factor is mainly tied to the effect of violence in neighboring countries, which often spills over into Burkina Faso. It has been observed that the advent of terrorism in Burkina Faso came after the Compaore regime was ushered out of power in 2014. The Burkinabe Revolution which removed the corrupt regime, ushered in a new era of instability, as the revolution was closely followed by a military coup in 2015, while Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) started sporadic guerilla attacks in Ouagadougou (Issaev et al., 2021; Issaev et al., 2022).

Terrorist activities commenced in Burkina Faso on April 4, 2015, with the kidnapping of a Romanian security officer near the Mali-Niger border. Subsequent attacks occurred, including the assault on a gendarmerie brigade on August 23, 2015, and an attack on gendarmes in their barracks on October 9, 2015. The first major terrorist attack in Ouagadougou took place on January 15, 2016, targeting the Cappuccino restaurant and the Splendid Hotel, resulting in 30 fatalities and 56 injuries. AQIM, the North African branch of al-Qaeda based in Mali, and its affiliate al-Murabitoun claimed responsibility (RTnews, 2016; Issaev et al., 2022).

Between then and December 2017, Burkina Faso experienced 102 large-scale attacks by violent extremists. Initially, AQIM and al-Murabitoun were the primary perpetrators. However, other resident terrorist groups emerged, including the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Ansar-ul-Islam, Masina Liberation Front, Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, and Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wa-l-Muslimin (JNIM), formed in 2017 through a merger of AQIM, Ansar al-Din, and al-Murabitoun. Rivalry between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State exists in the region, but both factions exploit local grievances, a weak central state, perceived corruption among local elites, and social divides to carry out their operations. This makes it challenging for state agents to effectively combat their activities (Nsaibia & Weiss, 2020; Demuynck, 2021; Issaev et al., 2022).

Violence in northern Burkina Faso has displaced 54,000 people, destabilized the local economy, and forced the closure of roughly 800 schools from late 2016 to 2019. In 2018, around 200 alleged militant incidents were registered in Burkina Faso (Nsaibia & Weiss, 2020). From
2016 to 2018, there were also several cross-border armed attacks in Burkina Faso by Mali-linked terrorist groups (Akanji, 2019). With 593 recorded deaths in 2019, the country saw the greatest increase in terrorism-related deaths globally, indicating a six-fold increase over 2018.

Terrorist incidents escalated in 2020, with extremists using Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), kidnapping, small-arms attacks, and targeted executions in various sections of the country. Military and gendarme targets appeared to be shifting to citizens and volunteer defense forces. According to the African Center for Strategic Studies, Burkina Faso accounted for the bulk of violent attacks in the Sahel from July 2019 to June 2020 (516 versus 361 in Mali and 118 in Niger). According to the Global Terrorism Index (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2023), the West African country had 1,135 terrorist-related deaths in 2022, a 50% increase from the figure of 2021 – 759. Burkina Faso needs a new strategy for effectively dealing with the menace of violent terror attacks, as it currently ranks second on the list of top ten countries most impacted by terrorism (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2023).

In addition to terrorist attacks, it is pertinent to state that the new wave of military coups in the region has hit Burkina Faso. The first coup that took place in recent times was in 2014; another took place in 2015. In 2022, the country witnessed two military interventions within eight months (Duzor & Williamson, 2023). These events have further compounded the destabilization of the security machinery in the state (Taruvinga, 2023).

2.2.2 Mali

Unlike Burkina Faso, Mali has been plagued by terrorists for decades, and this is primarily tied to the country’s post-independence history. Francois (1982) and Chauzal and Van Damme (2015) both observed a state formation defect in Mali, stating that the imbalance observed in the state formation process was instrumental to the rise of violent conflict within its borders. The Southern elite was at the center of the political process, while the Northerners were largely marginalized in politics and the economy. It has also been noted that Mali’s volatile post-independence history set it up for future challenges observing the uprisings in the latter part of the 20th century. The challenges plaguing Mali could be summed up under four components, namely: chronic property and food shortage because of economic downturn and political mismanagement; the quest for self-determination by the Tuareg tribe of Northern Mali, which was closely linked to the fall of Muammar Gaddafi of Libya; the Arab Spring; and the influx of black-market weapons into northern Mali at the beginning of the 21st century. The presence of these multi-pronged factors impacted the trend of civil unrest in Mali in the new
century, and this ushered in an era that witnessed a spike in terrorist activities funded not only by Al-Qaeda but also by ISIS, and its Sahel chapter dubbed the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (Issaev et al., 2021; Akanji, 2019).

Islamist militants and fundamentalists have engaged the Malian army in severe hostilities, especially in the northern part of the country, for years. The Guardian (2016) reported that the jihadists continuously mounted violent attacks against UN peacekeepers who were trying to help stabilize the country. Dubuis (2015) also noted that in April 2012 northern Mali, (Azawad to be precise), was seized by an Al-Qaeda-linked group, and Akanji (2019) observed that by February 2013, an estimated 377,000 people had been displaced, including 150,000 refugees in Mali. In March 2015, five people were killed when a group of gunmen attacked La Terrasse, a bar in Bamako. And in August 2015, Dubuis (2015) revealed that at least, 13 people were victims of an attack in a hotel situated in the central town of Sevare. In November of the same year, an Islamist extremist group attacked Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali. Hanna et al. (2015) stated that al-Mourabitoun claimed responsibility for the attack, and also claimed that it attacked the Hotel with the joint effort of AQIM. The attack was a retaliatory measure in response to the Malian government's aggression in northern Mali (Akanji, 2019). Blair (2015) observed that the incident targeted Westerners in the country, as the hotel usually hosted aid workers, diplomats, United Nations officials, flight crew members, and other international guests (Searcey & Nossiter, 2015).

On March 21, 2016, gunmen attacked the European Union military training mission’s headquarters in Bamako, after the trio attack that started in November 2015 from Mali and spread rapidly to Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast. Al-Qaeda and al-Mourabitoun immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Also on the 1st of June 2016, two separate attacks were recorded in the Gao area of Mali. AQIM claimed responsibility for the attack which claimed the lives of four people and left a few others injured (Aljazeera, 2016).

The occurrence of violent extremism in Mali has now become a recurring phenomenon and exacerbated political and socio-economic instability. A rise in the terrorist attacks within the country resulted in a surge in the percentage of terrorist-related deaths. In 2022, Mali recorded the highest number of terrorist-related deaths in the past decade, and the Islamic State became the dominant terrorist sect in the country, leading to a recorded 795 casualties with the tri-border area shared with Burkina Faso and Niger becoming the most affected area ravaged terrorist attacks. In 2023, Mali ranked as the fourth country most impacted by terrorism in the world, this indicates that there has been a surge in terrorist activities in the region over the past year, as it was indexed as seventh in the previous year, and the number eleven in 2021 (Institute
In addition, Mali has also been affected by the resurgence of military interventions in West Africa. Duzor & Williamson (2023) observed that after twenty years of democratic peace, the country has been plunged into a decade of military coups, which culminated in the military junta of 2020. The overthrow of President Boubacar Keita in 2020 was in response to the poor economic conditions that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, another coup took place in 2021, spearheaded by the 2020 coup leader, Assimi Goita, who seized power from a transitional government he had set up earlier. These successive coups have proven to be a major threat to the fight against terrorism in Mali (Taruvinga, 2023).

2.2.3 Nigeria

Terrorism in Nigeria started with the outbreak of the Boko Haram uprising in Nigeria in July 2009. Before this, the Giant of Africa had been challenged with a recurring pattern of violent uprisings, riots, and disturbances which have been prevalent in the country since independence (Adesoji, 2010). The sect has carried out several attacks in the country that have claimed the lives of thousands of Nigerians, led to the destruction of property and infrastructure, and displaced and separated families. Boko Haram is an Islamic fundamentalist sect that is both a terrorist organization and an insurgent group that believes that everything contrary to the dictates of Islam is evil and that their effects are bound to bring unspeakable ruin (Walker, 2012; Omenma et al., 2020). It is believed that the sect rose to oppose the present system in Nigeria, which encourages corruption, injustice, and poverty, and that this system is merely a child of capitalism molded by Western education, influenced and supported by Christianity (Salkida, 2009).

According to Akanji (2019), Boko Haram's core purpose is to destabilize the Nigerian state. Boko Haram's actions have increased in regularity and ferocity since 2009, and it was designated a terrorist organization in 2013. The group possesses a wide range of arms that have been used to carry out violent attacks on civilians across the different states of the country. Their operations are primarily in the Northern region, but recently, they have begun to travel southward, committing numerous atrocities such as decapitation and incineration of people, rape, and kidnapping, with their activities resulting in the displacement of millions of people (Agbiboa, 2015; Akanji, 2019). Boko Haram has been strategic in the capturing of soft targets, namely, women and girls, many of whom have been kidnapped, raped, forced into marriage
with warlords, sold into sex slavery and prostitution, used as human shields against attacks by
government forces and used as bomb carriers. In addition, violence by the group has forced five
traditional rulers in Borno State and two in Yobe State into exile due to severe attacks in their
domains. The activities of these terrorists have also spilled into neighboring countries,
particularly Niger, Chad and Cameroon (Akanji, 2019). Since 2009, Boko Haram activities have
resulted in about 20,000 to 30,000 casualties and over 2.3 million people displaced from their
homes (Haruna, 2022).

Another dominant terrorist sect in the country is the Islamic State in West Africa
(ISWA). The group rose as a formidable terrorist group at the demise of Abubakar Shekau, the
formidable Boko Haram leader, in 2021, and many Boko Haram members defected to join the
sect. ISWA recorded 57 attacks and 211 deaths in Nigeria in 2022; however, this was regarded
as a decline in the trend of terrorism in Nigeria for the past decade. Terrorism index reports
show that Nigeria was the third most impacted country in the world by terrorism in 2014 and
went higher in the rankings by 2019 at number two. In 2023, Nigeria ranked number eight, this
decline is credited to Shekau’s death, which has stemmed the tide of terrorism in the country
(Institute for Economics & Peace, 2019; Omenma et al., 2020; Institute for Economics & Peace,

2.2.4 Niger

Closely linked to Mali, Niger has been plagued by terrorist activities for decades which
was caused chiefly because of the presence of Tuareg refugees and Islamic terrorist activities.
The country also has a post-independence history riddled with civil unrest, political instability,
and consistent economic decline. Terrorism emerged in the 1990s because of Tuareg nationalist
movements, the first of which occurred in 1995. After the Arab Spring in 2011, terrorist attacks
began to increase because of the Tuareg movements. Boko Haram has also been instrumental
to the growth of terrorist activities in Niger; after its emergence in Nigeria, it spread its activities
to neighbouring countries such as Niger and Chad (Issaev et al., 2021).

Initially, violent attacks in Niger were carried out by Islamist Tuaregs under the aegis
of the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa, an ally group of Ansar al-Din and
AQIM. The violence concentrated in the northern region of Agadez, and areas close to the
border shared with Mali and Algeria, the traditional region of the Tuaregs. It can therefore be
observed that terrorism in Niger is a continuation of what is obtainable in Mali, but it is further
complicated by the presence of Boko Haram (Issaev et al., 2021). Another noteworthy factor to
be considered in the instance of Niger is its porous borders. Boko Haram has posed a significant challenge for the security of states bordering Nigeria, such as Niger; before the advent of violent attacks within its borders, the state was grossly affected by a refugee crisis which was a consequence of Boko Haram activities. The poor economy also contributed to heightened insecurity, intermittent attacks that impacted local economies, and the recruitment of capable manpower from the country into terrorist networks (Blanchard, 2014). In 2019, Niger recorded an estimated 74 deaths from Boko Haram attacks, many of which occurred in the Lake Chad Basin Region, while others were recorded in the western region (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020).

Another dominant terrorist sect present in Niger due to its porous borders is the IS. They mostly operate in the tri-border region that spans Mali and Burkina Faso. The Islamic State emerged as a Sunni radical organization and has spread its influence from the Middle East to the Sahel, it ranked as the deadliest terrorist organization in 2021. From January 2021, attacks by groups affiliated with the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda were noted across Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, with a recorded number of 15 deaths per attack in Niger. In the first half of 2022, violent attacks skyrocketed in the tri-border region, and these countries witnessed the highest death toll in the last decade (Kohnert, 2022). D’Amato and Baldaro (2022) acceded to this claim by stating that the first half of 2022 witnessed a dramatic surge in an already volatile area known for severe armed conflict and jihadist insurrections. The tri-border region, which has been observed to be the most volatile area, continues to be a conducive breeding ground for the activities of other groups, such as JNIM and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), as they struggle for dominance and compete for the control of the region (D'Amato & Baldaro, 2022).

Niger witnessed 595 casualties because of terrorism in 2021, although a decline was witnessed in the following year, with the casualty rate pegged at 198. The deadliest attack that took place in recent times, according to the Institute for Economics & Peace (2023) was in five villages of the Diffa region when gunmen killed 21 civilians during an armed confrontation. No terrorist sect has claimed responsibility for the attack, but it is suspected to have been conducted by either Boko Haram or ISWA. As a consequence of the different terrorist groups at work in the country, terrorist activities have surged, and this has led to Niger’s ranking as the tenth most terrorized country in the world.

Niger also continues to be plagued by the incessant military juntas in the sub-region and witnessed a hostile takeover in July 2023 when the presidential guard, General Abdourahamane Tchiani, seized power from President Mohammed Bazoum. This was the second coup to take
place over two years as an attempted military takeover occurred in March 2021 (Duzor & Williamson, 2023).

3 METHODOLOGY

This research investigates the domestication of the war on terror in West African countries, with a specific focus to assessing its implications and highlighting potential solutions on regional security. To achieve this goal, the study adopts the qualitative research approach using secondary data which involves the review of existing literature. The research design follows a descriptive and exploratory approach to identify and analyze relevant data. The data was analysed through a thematic and comparative review method, to derive meaningful insights from the available information.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Terror attacks in West Africa have attracted various responses both from national, regional, and international bodies: ECOWAS initiatives, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Multi-National Joint Task Force to France Operation Serval, and Operation Barkhane among others. However, prominent among these counter-terrorism measures are the Multi-National Joint Task Force and the French Operation Barkhane because they constitute the actual military rejoinder to counterterrorism.

To battle transnational crimes in the Lake Chad area, the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was set up in 1998 as a coalition force between Nigeria, Chad, and Niger. However, between 1998 and 2011, the MNJTF was greatly quiet until 2012 when it was rejuvenated to deal with the emerging Boko Haram threat in Northern Nigeria (Zamfir, 2015; GlobalSecurity, 2016). The Paris Summit in 2014 which brought the Presidents of France, Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon alongside the representatives from the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union gave impetus to the revitalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force (Zamfir, 2015). Consequently, by October 2014, Benin, Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon agreed to pull effort together to combat terrorism in the subregion (especially the growing activities of Boko-Haram) by pledging troops to the Multinational Force.

The Presence of MNJTF in the region has aided the neutralization of about 675 Boko Haram members, the arrest of over 500 members of the group, and the destruction of over 32
training facilities of the terrorist groups (Assanvo et al., 2016; GlobalSecurity, 2016). France's pole of Counterterrorism in the Sub-region (Powell, 2016; Griffin, 2015). Thus, its member states are drawn from former French colonies in the sub-region to include Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger. The France counter-terror initiative in the region with its headquarters in N’Djamena comprises about 3,000 French military personnel spread across the G5 Sahel states (Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger), two hundred armored vehicles, six fighter aircraft three drones since inception in 2015 (Griffin, 2015). However, there has been a lack of military and strategic coordination and the absence of confidence among the member states of the force. Moreso, global security report reveals that some member states of the force have displayed displeasure with the actions of others, and there have been accusations that some of the member states have substantial links with the foe (GlobalSecurity, 2016).

Countries have been observed to have a more domestic focus than a regional focus during quorums like the MNJTF, and various approaches have been adopted to domesticate the war on terror. In Burkina Faso for instance, the government has made several attempts to restructure the security apparatus of the state, and this informed the creation of a National Intelligence Agency, although it is yet to yield the desired results. Another means employed was by recruiting citizens as volunteers to defend threatened areas. On 21 January 2020, the law establishing the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie, VDP) was passed. This program allows for the recruitment of citizens above 18 years who are willing to serve the security interests of their respective locations. Recruited individuals are to serve for one year and can renew their volunteers for a maximum of five years. After recruitment, volunteers are trained on weapons handling and are also taught to abide by a code of conduct for two weeks, then they are provided with arms. The Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP) are tasked with safeguarding the populace and property of their respective villages or residential areas and are permitted to resort to armed force if necessary. Their duties encompass intelligence gathering, reporting, patrolling, escorting, and surveillance. Additionally, they are authorized to engage in active combat against invading forces until the arrival of state security apparatus, making them the first line of defence. However, the VDP has been accused of extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and human rights violations against civilians. These allegations have been raised by various human rights-focused civil society organizations (Demuyneck, 2021).

In Mali, counter-terrorism efforts have been championed by various regional organizations such as the European Union Training Mission, Operations spearheaded by the French government such as Operation Barkhane, The United Nations Multidimensional
Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the G5 Sahel Initiative and so on. The government also established an Integrated Security Plan for the Central Regions (Plan de Sécurisation Intégrée des Régions du Centre, PSIRC) (Kühne, 2014; Tobie, 2017; Fafore, 2019). These groups have struggled to achieve their aim in Mali over the years, as the country has proven to be quite unstable and the challenge of terrorism persistent (Bokeriya, 2023). In November 2022, President Macron announced the termination of Operation Barkhane, this was after a series of withdrawal of French troops from the Malian borders throughout the year (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2023). MINUSMA Operations in the country also came to an end officially in June 2023, at the bequest of the Malian government with the Malian ambassador to the United Nations, Issa Konfourou stating that MINUSMA failed to achieve its fundamental objective to support efforts made by the state to secure the country. The decade-long operation was one of the largest peacekeeping operations in the state, and they managed to implement ceasefire agreements while restoring order and stability to the country and delivering humanitarian aid on different occasions (Mohamed, 2023).

The Nigerian government has employed several approaches in the domestication of the war on terror such as administrative strategies ranging from the multi-track approach, persuasion, dialogue, and consultation with political, religious, and community leaders in affected states and communities. The government also launched the National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Extremism in 2017 to bolster agency capabilities in addressing violent extremism, while upholding the rule of law and human rights, fostering effective community engagement, and building resilience against extremism. Other initiatives, such as the 'Buhari Plan of 2016,' aimed at facilitating transformative engagement between the government, religious organizations, and affected communities in the northeast were also affected. The 'Presidential Committee on the North-East Initiative,' established to develop a comprehensive strategy, focuses on rehabilitating, reintegrating communities, and reconstructing the northeast. The introduction of 'Operation Safe Corridor' addresses challenges related to terrorist recruitment, violent extremism, and the rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant Boko Haram members. This involves thorough psycho-spiritual therapy and evaluations conducted by religious clerics and psychology experts before individuals are reintegrated into society (Maza et al., 2020).

Niger continues to apply different counterterrorism strategies through different regional bodies such as the now-defunct French Operation Barkhane, the G5 Sahel Joint Force, and the MNJTF among others (Bokeriya, 2023). Within the state, the government has tried to enforce internal peacekeeping, observed through the use of dialogue and military action (Institute for...
Economics & Peace, 2022). However, the recent incidence of military coups in the country has proven that there exists a weak civil and political structure which makes the existence of security threats more pronounced.

It is instructive to recognize that terrorism although homogenous in goal is motivated and informed according to the nature of events and the environment in which they operate. This implies that attempt to defeat terror must also take into account, the nature of events, and the background environment where terrorism lingers. Recognizing this enduring dilemma of the West Africa sub-region, Powell argues that, should the region become cleansed of terror groups in the coming decades, external military and strategic assistance will likely not be responsible, rather the best hope for the region and states affected will be a locally organized peace and reconciliation processes (Powell, 2016). This suggests that the current mechanism to counter terrorism in the sub-region is not holistic but contains gaps which if left unfilled could protract instability and terrorist activities in the region.

In essence, despite the commendable remark to the current mix of external and internal military approaches, terrorism still lingers (as exemplified in the case of the four West African states above). Given this, the effectiveness of such one-sided (military-centered) approaches has been questioned by academics, policymakers, and security connoisseurs. The first fault hinges on the fact that even with the military and technical defeats of some terror groups, nothing is done to eradicate the underlying cause that begot such acrimony in the first place (Solomon, 2013). Furthermore, the current strategy records dismal success because it sucked in the web of confusion as to whether to use the predatory government that created the problems as a solution or to intensify external support. It is also cut between granting passive support or active support to them. Solomon (2013) argued that the alliance of the West with an illegitimate state by providing it with counter-terror assistance and the like serves to anger local citizens and attract the attention of local terrorists who now view the West as a legitimate target.

Countering terrorism not only requires military planning nor intelligence assistance from the externals. On the contrary, it requires the “kind of government – financially secure, with a common vision and coercive means” as well as commitment to correct the socio-economic and political woes of the people. Additional military surges will do little to reduce the socio-political defects that have given impetus to the formation and survival of terrorism; in certain zones, it may even serve to deepen its hold (Joshua & Chidoze, 2015). Thus, there is an urgent call for National and regional bodies concerned to domesticate the war on terror in such a way that it resonates with the complex dynamics of the region. However, this is not to mean that external support should be annihilated, but rather, that the support coming from
outside should be coordinated and passively limited. Only within the ambient of such a holistic approach to counterterrorism can the terrorist groups be completely defeated in the sub-region.

5 CONCLUSION

The terrorist question has lingered on in Africa, and the West Africa sub-region has not been spared in the splurge of attacks in recent years. Thus, the paper reiterates the urgent need for national and regional bodies concerned to domesticate the global war on terror. External support should be passively limited and coordinated especially the presence of France in the region. Rather than leading the front line in the fight against terror, external support should be given to the promotion of constructive reforms capable of generating an egalitarian society upon which peace and security can be ascertained. As far as the enduring milieu of terrorism is sustained, the military approach alone will not serve as a panacea for peace and stability in the sub-region.

In tackling the increased activities of terrorist networks, there must be a commitment on the part of the member states of the Multinational Joint Task Force to generate a well-coordinated and organized offensive and defensive against terror groups in the region. The force should also be readily mobilized to swing into action as terror groups still litter the landscape of the region. Finally, civil-military relationships should be engaged to make communication efficient in the fight against terror. It will be a hyperbolic assertion to argue that there is a one-sided approach to overcome such dynamic socio-political and economic defect, thus, approaches to counter-terror are best laid in dynamic and multifaceted rejoinder to terrorism.

Unfortunately, the increased politicization of the military has left many nations in a dire state as democracy and democratic institutions are being eroded on the sub-continent. A major prerequisite for success is good governance which is still lacking across the continent. Good governance could correct the structural defects engraved in the foundation of the modern African political society; and lay the groundwork for socio-economic, political, and human development which will thus limit the recruitment process of frustrated and aggrieved citizens into terrorist networks. However, good governance cannot be present in countries which practise democracy in theory but not in practice. The redistribution of wealth, protection of human rights and continuity enabled by free and fair elections, are all characteristics of democracy, that are largely absent in West African states. To this end, it is recommended that democratic institutions be strengthened across the sub-continent in order to establish a true democracy that will bring about good governance and put an end to terrorism once and for all.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge Covenant University Center for Research, Innovation and Discovery (CUCRID) in providing the framework for this study alongside publication assistance in the form of paper processing fees.

REFERENCES


Domesticating the Global War on Terrorism in West Africa: Implications for Sub-Regional Security


Domesticating the Global War on Terrorism in West Africa: Implications for Sub-Regional Security


Domesticating the Global War on Terrorism in West Africa: Implications for Sub-Regional Security


