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Thematic REPORT



WEST AFRICA NETWORK FOR PEACEBUILDING
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEACE



Violent Extremism and Terrorism

Exploring New Frontiers in West Africa?

BOKO HARAM DEVASTATION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA
COVER PHOTO CREDITS: AFRICA BRIEFING MAGAZINE

Violent Extremism and Terrorism:

Exploring New Frontiers in West Africa?

INTRODUCTION

The threat of terrorism and violent extremism in West Africa and the Sahel is of increasing concern to local, regional, and international actors. Additionally, growing threats and acts of violent extremism and terrorism in the region have created a climate of fear and insecurity that continue to undermine peace and development efforts¹. In comparison to other regional blocs in Africa,

West Africa has increasingly become a hotbed for predatory acts of a host of extremist groups. The trend of terrorist and extremist activities remains significantly high, especially in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Mali and Niger. According to the Department of National Defense and Veterans Affairs in Burkina Faso, from April 4, 2015 to June

16, 2019, the country recorded 283 terrorist attacks. In Nigeria, violent extremist attacks² reached a high point in 2015, with 456 events, and 325 attacks per year through 2016-2017³. Similarly, in 2018, there were 237 terror attacks in Mali, up from 226 in 2017 and 183 the previous year⁴.

Trends emerging in the attacks of extremist groups such as Boko Haram, ISIS West Africa Province (ISWAP), ISIS in the Greater Sahel (ISGS), Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Nusrat al-Islam and Al-Mourabitoun suggest continual effort to expand their operations beyond the Sahel belt to the Southern coastal areas of West Africa, particularly Benin, Ghana and Togo.

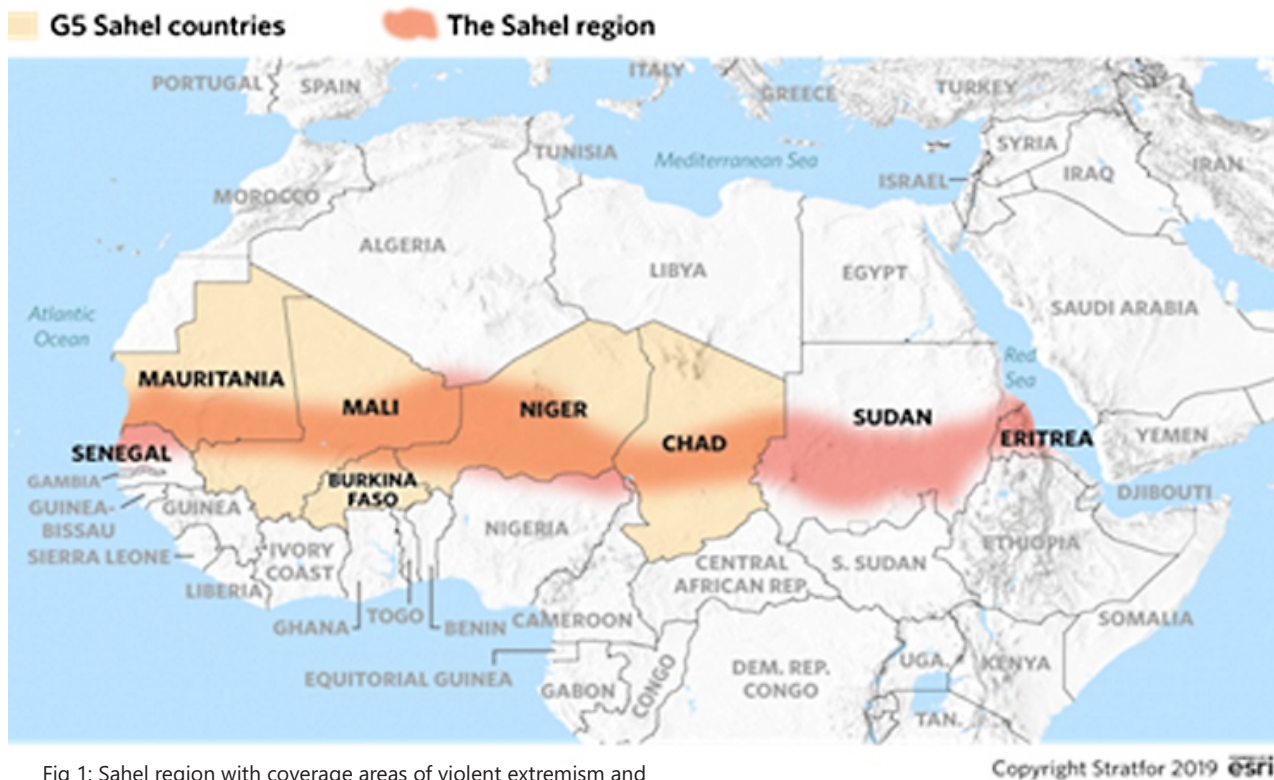


Fig 1: Sahel region with coverage areas of violent extremism and West Africa's coastal countries. Courtesy: Google Maps

¹United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, "Education to Prevent Violent Extremism in West Africa and the Sahel". Senegal: UNESCO Office Dakar. 2017

²See: <https://netafrique.net/burkina-de-2015-a-2019-283-attaques-terroristes-ont-fait-524-morts-bilan-officiel/> (Accessed July 8, 2019).

³See: <https://www.acleddata.com/dashboard/#> (Accessed August 15, 2019).

⁴France 24. Terror Attacks Rise in Mali. Available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/20190305-terror-attacks-rise-mali-un> (Accessed August 15, 2019).

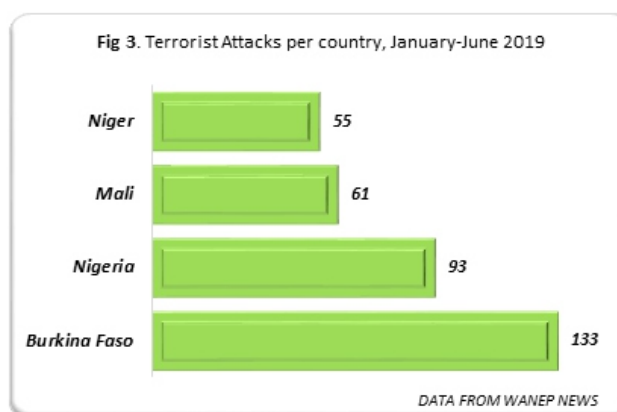
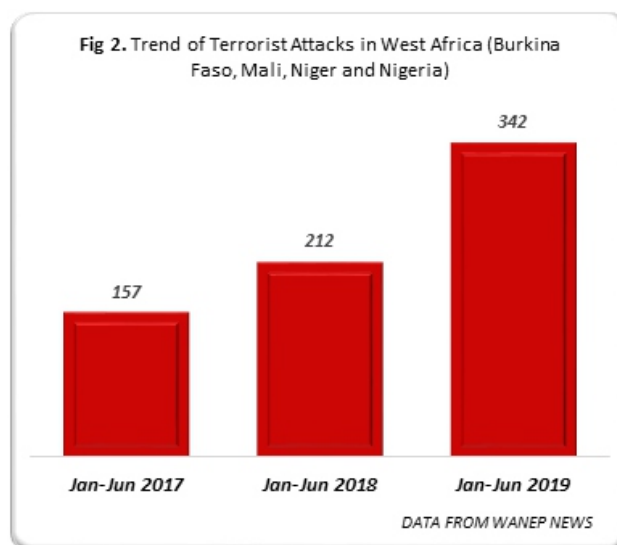
Enduring vulnerabilities including porous borders, youth bulge, pervasive corruption, deteriorating security profile, increased political tension, violent demonstrations, chieftaincy and ethnic violence, farmer-herder conflicts, proliferation of arms, as well as piracy and drug trafficking in Benin, Ghana and Togo, also provide a leverage for terrorist and extremist incursions in these countries. Already, these countries⁵ are challenged by the influx of migrants fleeing extremist insurgences in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger which has heightened security concerns in the three countries⁶.

In this regard, the thematic report seeks to highlight the implications of the spread of violent extremism in the coastal areas of West Africa, especially, Benin, Ghana and Togo. In so doing, the report will also highlight key trend in West Africa-Sahel and present some relevant learning and recommendations for response and mitigation of the threats.

Threats of Terrorism in the Region

A half-year assessment of security risk in West Africa highlights a rising trend and spate of violent extremist and terrorist attacks in the region. In figure 2, data from WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) reveals a combined figure (January – June) of 157 terrorist attacks in 2017, 212 attacks in 2018 and 342 attacks in 2019 in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. Between January and June 2019, terrorist groups have expanded and intensified their activities in the various ways. The occurrence of attacks is more than the double of the attacks in 2017 and shows a difference of 130 attacks with 2018.

This suggests an increasingly prevalent trend of terrorist attacks across the region. Among the four affected countries in the review period (January-June 2019), Burkina Faso recorded the highest cases followed by Nigeria, Mali and Niger as shown in the graph (figure 3).



The report highlights casualties of death and injuries as a result of terrorist attacks in the region. In this regard, Figure 4 (below) presents a six-month graphic representation of cumulative deaths of 1481 and 391 injuries recorded the reporting period alone.

⁵WANEP Ghana: Current Peace and Security Dynamics in Perspective (June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed August 10, 2019).

⁶Ibid

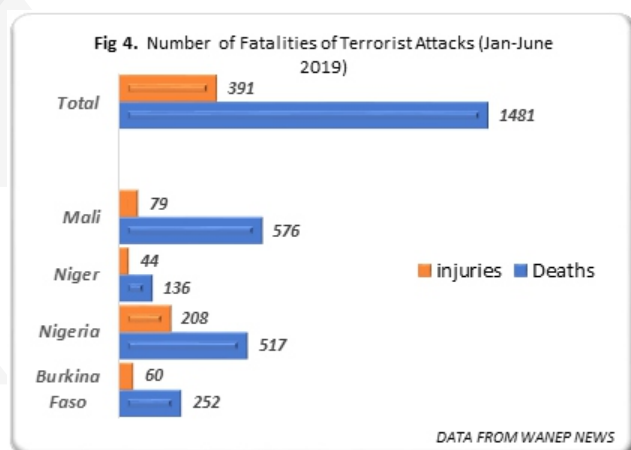


Fig. 4: Map showing Burkina Faso and its southern neighbours – Benin, Togo and Ghana. Credit: www.bbc.com/news

As a consequence of the frequency and impact of these attacks on lives and livelihood, nearly 220,000 people have been forced to flee their homes as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees from Burkina Faso to neighbouring countries⁷.

In addition, more than 1,900 schools including 500 in the Sahel Province have been destroyed or shut down, leaving over 9,000 teachers redundant while nearly 327,000 children are out of school⁸. Since 2009, Boko Haram's campaign has left some 27,000 people dead and displaced around two million in Nigeria alone, and according to UNICEF, the group has kidnapped over 1,000 children⁹. Niger currently hosts 166,093 refugees, 121,391 IDPs and 136,069 returnees¹⁰, while more than 147,000 IDPs¹¹ in camps in Mali with over 800 schools closed, affecting almost a quarter of a million children, many of whom are in the central region of Mopti¹². This situation continues to deny children's access to quality education as well as entrench child labour, child marriage, and household poverty in the conflict affected countries.

Vulnerabilities to Terrorism and Lessons for Benin, Ghana and Togo

The foregoing trend analysis on violent extremism suggests that insecurity from extremist activities remain the most debilitating threat to human security and stability of

the region. Though Benin, Ghana and Togo are yet to experience violent extremist attacks within their borders, they remain vulnerable due to the growing spread and impact in Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria. Given the southward spread of extremist groups in Burkina Faso and the porosity of the borders, there are concerns over cross border incursion into these countries¹³. This is justified by recorded cases of attempted cross-border raids by suspected militant groups linked to Al-Qaeda and ISIS operating in Benin's Pendjari forest bordering Burkina Faso and Niger to the north. A recent abduction of two French tourists and a local tour guide in the Pendjari forest in May 2019 has been linked to these groups¹⁴.

In this case, while the local guide was killed, the tourists were rescued by the Benin security operatives with support from French military based in Mali¹⁵. In Ghana, the arrest of a Burkinabe with a loaded foreign pistol at a crowded Catholic Church in Hamile, Upper West Region in June 2019¹⁶ was widely reported in the media. In the same month and location, another Burkinabe was arrested with a locally manufactured pistol and several rounds of ammunitions while illegally crossing into Ghana from Burkina Faso¹⁷. In Togo, four Burkinabe Custom Officers and a Spanish priest were killed in an attack at Nohao, Province of Koulpelogo – a border community with Togo and three vehicles were destroyed in February 2019¹⁸. These cases have raised growing concerns over possible exploitation of existing security vulnerabilities within the countries and across borders in the region by extremist groups to establish presence and launch attacks.

⁷See: <https://netafrique.net/burkina-faso-pres-de-220-000-personnes-deplacees-interne-a-la-date-du-10-juillet-2019/> (Accessed July 11, 2019).

⁸Op. cit. <https://netafrique.net> (Accessed July 8, 2019).

⁹See: <https://www.bbc.com/uk/bbcthree/article/2a93b8de-7b51-40f0-a7b8-9ec53fe97db3> (Accessed July 8, 2019).

¹⁰Source: World Bank Press Release (November 29, 2017), "The Refugee Situation in the Sahel: Urgently Responding to this new Development Challenge". (Accessed, 3 December 2017)

¹¹See: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Mali%20Situation%20Regional%20Update%20-%20April%20-%20June%202019-.pdf> (Accessed July 18, 2019).

¹²UNICEF Mali. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/mali/en/children-mali> (Accessed July 18, 2019).

¹³WANEP West Africa Early Warning Outlook 2019: Potential Flashpoints and Simmering Conflicts in the Region. (2019). Accessed 31/05/2019. Available at: www.wanep.org

¹⁴See available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/20190505-two-french-tourists-kidnapped-local-guide-killed-pendjari-benin-safari> (Accessed July 12, 2019)

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶See Available at: <https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2019/June-3rd/upper-west-region-burkinabe-caught-with-loaded-gun-at-crowded-catholic-church.php> (Accessed June 7, 2019).

¹⁷See Joy News Report. "Another Burkinabe Arrested Over Terror Fears". Available at: <https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2019/June-6th/another-burkinabe-arrested-over-terror-fears.php> (Accessed June 7, 2019)

¹⁸Ibid.

Related to the above, another vulnerability within the coastal belt is the threats to maritime security manifested through piracy and illegal fishing. Already, increased pirate attacks of vessels have been recorded in the Gulf of Guinea. The rate of piracy increased from 16 incidents¹⁹ in 2017 to 46 in 2018 with Ghana recording five incidents. Also, in the first quarter of 2019, the Gulf of Guinea recorded 22 cases of piracy²⁰. Again, 21 crew members of various vessels were kidnapped across five separate incidents in coastal countries, particularly, Benin, Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia²¹. Illegal fishing is also a major problem with far reaching environmental and socio-economic impacts on livelihoods of millions of people who rely on and revenue losses to Governments in West Africa. According to a recent study by Frontiers in Marine Science, countries in the coastal areas lose \$2.3 billion annual to illegal fishing²². This deprived Governments in the coastal belt the needed revenue to contribute to their development agendas. It is feared that these criminal networks operating in the Gulf of Guinea could easily form alliances with extremists groups to broaden and bolster their illegal dealings.

In addition, drug and arms trafficking are contributing factors to the security threats in West Africa. Available data on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) reveals that out of the 640 million SALW circulating globally, an estimated 100 million are found in Africa, and about 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa and eight million in West Africa, alone²³. Similarly, drug trafficking – tramadol, opioid, codeine, amphetamines and cocaine - among others through the Gulf of Guinea is linked with armed groups and terrorism in the West African-Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria)²⁴. Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde continue to serve as the transit points for drug trafficking mainly from Latin America to Europe²⁵. For instance, in the first half of the year 2019, Cape Verde Police seized 9.5 tons of cocaine bound for Tangiers and Morocco on a Panama flagged vessel²⁶. These activities of pirates and drug traffickers on land and territorial waters of countries in the Gulf of Guinea are not only potential sources of increased violence and conflicts, but also offer safe corridors for terrorist attacks on economic activities in the region.



A youth militant in Burkina Faso. Credit: www.bbc.com/news

Youth bulge and unemployment are critical challenges in West Africa. Given that, countries along the coastline such as Benin, Ghana and Togo are also not insulated from this vulnerability. According to the Ghana Statistical Service, about 57 percent of the population is below age 25 with an unemployment rate of 13.7 percent²⁷. In Togo and Benin, the figure rises to about 60 percent²⁸ and 65 percent²⁹, respectively. Large proportions of these populations are unemployed and struggle to make ends meet.

A research conducted by WANEP on the Current Dynamics and Challenges of Violent Extremism in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria revealed a growing nexus between violent extremism and unemployment or underemployment in West Africa³⁰. In the Diffa Region of Niger, for instance, extremist groups offer soft loans to women and youth as a strategy to join the group³¹. The use of such strategies reveal persistent attempts by extremist groups to leverage on weak State capacity in the provision of jobs, basic social services, and other demands of the youth to establish their presence in communities in West Africa.

Therefore, the cases of Niger, Nigeria and Burkina Faso should serve as lessons for Benin, Ghana and Togo to take advantage of the young population and prevent them from joining extremist groups for tangible services that are the responsibility of the State to provide.

¹⁹See www.graphic.com.gh (Accessed July 15, 2018).

²⁰See www.worldmaritimeneeds.com (Accessed April, 2019).

²¹Ibid.

²²See: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2017.00050/full> (Accessed April, 2019).

²³See <https://allafrica.com/stories/201802220192.html> (Accessed on 2/08/2019).

²⁴See: United Nations Office for Drug and Crimes (UNODC) West and Central Africa, <https://www.unodc.org/westandcentralafrica/en/index.html> (Accessed on 6/8/2019).

²⁵Institute of Security Studies (ISS), 'Can Cape Verde Keep Drug Traffickers Out?'. June 2019. Available at: www.issafrica.org (Accessed 6/8/2019)

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ghana Statistical Service. Available at: <http://www.statsghana.gov.gh> (Accessed July 15, 2019).

²⁸See: https://www.indexmundi.com/benin/demographics_profile.html (Accessed July 15, 2019).

²⁹See: https://www.indexmundi.com/togo/demographics_profile.html (Accessed July 15, 2019).

³⁰WANEP Research Report (2017): "Current Dynamics and Challenges of Violent Extremism in West Africa," (Accessed November 9, 2018).

³¹Ibid

Implications of Violent Extremism to Coastal Areas

The forays of current extremist attacks within the West African region show a southward spread which portends significant security implications for coastal areas, especially, Benin, Ghana and Togo. This is evident by the recent security deterioration in Burkina Faso which has led to a surge in the flow of migrants fleeing to neighbouring countries for safety reasons. For instance, between January and June 2019, more than 2000 migrants from Burkina Faso have settled in communities such as Tumu-Navrongo, Wuru, Kwapun, Banu, Pido, Kunchorkor and Basian communities in the Upper West Region of Ghana.³² The influx of migrants into these communities is escalating tension between residents and migrants over competition for limited resources including farm lands, water and food³³. Despite the ongoing efforts by the Immigration and security agencies of Ghana to record the movement of migrants, a number of them are not having proper documents to ensure regulation and effective monitoring of their activities. More importantly, undocumented migrants or refugee camps could also be exploited as an avenue for extremist groups recruitment as well as establish presence and launch attacks in neighbouring coastal Countries.

Furthermore, considering the geographical strategic importance of the coastal countries to international trade activities, it constitutes a potential target of extremist groups within the sub-region. For example, the sea ports of Benin, Ghana and Togo are key regional strategic hubs for economic activities and are also essential supply lines for goods transportation into or out of landlocked countries like Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Given the contributions of sea ports to the economies of these countries, especially in the area of revenue generation, extremist incursions in the sector would have adverse repercussions on the already staggering economies of these three countries.

The tourism and hospitality sector is another area of the coastal countries that extremist incursions could adversely affect. Benin, Ghana and Togo have thriving tourism and hospitality industries that continue to attract foreign and local tourists and contributes to the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of these countries. Available data reveals that the sector is the third foreign exchange earner for Ghana and contributes 3.7 percent of the country's GDP.³⁴

In term of direct revenue, the tourism sector generates about GH 4.457 billion cedis which is expected to increase to GH 7.449 billion cedis by 2026³⁵. Similarly, tourism is Benin's largest source of foreign exchange earnings behind cotton. It generates 2.6 percent of GDP and accounts for 5.6 percent of all jobs in the country³⁶. The Togolese Government has also introduced a tourism sector master plan aimed at increasing the contribution of tourism to its national economy from 2 percent to 7 percent by 2020³⁷. Considering this, infiltrations and instability caused by violent extremist and terrorist groups would not only scare foreign investors and tourists, but could also stagnate economic growth and development in the region.

Closely related to the aforementioned implications, is the potential for violent extremist groups to exploit cross-border organised crimes and the proliferation of arms in Benin, Ghana and Togo to have access to weapons for their operations. Already, available data suggests that prevalence of illicit craft or 'home-made firearms is estimated to be 33,000 (both licit and illicit) in Benin³⁸, about 3 million small arms in circulation in Ghana³⁹, and 58,000 arms in the hand of civilians in Togo⁴⁰. In view of this, terrorist and organized crime groups could mobilize and link up with internal networks to escalate armed violence in communities that are already experiencing challenges with crime and violence.

Youth bulge and unemployment are critical challenges in West Africa. This has significant socio-economic implications on young people who mostly become marginalized, frustrated, and resentful of Governments' inability to create decent jobs and provide other opportunities that would improve their wellbeing. These inadequacies in local communities make youth susceptible to recruitment by terrorist and other armed groups to commit to violence. At the moment, there is an increasing involvement of youth in organized crimes and armed violence in the Benin, Ghana and Togo. In addition, some of the youth have also become a mobilizing tool by politicians and conflict entrepreneurs in the three countries for political vigilantism, agitations and violent attacks to protect their interests. This indicates that such groups are also exploitable by extremists operating in the region.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Emmanuel Dodzi Havi and Patrick Enu. "The Impact of Tourism on Economic Performance in Ghana". European Scientific Journal. December 2013. Edition Vol. 9, No. 34, ISSN: 1857-7881. Accessed on 13/06/2019. Available at:

<https://ejournal.org/index.php/esj/article/viewFile/2173/2058> (Accessed May 2019).

³⁵See <https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2017/April-24th/travel-tourism-contributed-gh45b-to-2015-gdp.php> (Accessed July 18, 2019).

³⁶See: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/04/27/benins-new-venture-to-expand-tourism-from-26-percent-to-10-percent-of-gdp-in-ten-years> (Accessed July 18, 2019).

³⁷See: <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/articles/2013/04/29/supporting-tourism-in-togo-as-a-tool-for-development.html> (Accessed July 18, 2019).

³⁸See: <https://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/benin%20%0d33> (Accessed July 18, 2019).

³⁹See: <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Over-3-million-small-arms-in-circulation-Security-Expert-577341> (Accessed July 18, 2019).

⁴⁰See: <https://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/togo> (Accessed July 18, 2019).

Existing Mechanisms for Response: Opportunities and Pitfalls

There is an existing political goodwill to address violent extremism at both national and international levels by States, non-state actors and inter-governmental bodies, especially ECOWAS, AU and the UN system. In this respect, the UN, AU and ECOWAS Counter-terrorism strategies are actionable policies designed to guide the prevention or mitigation of violent extremism in the region and continent. In addition, the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel [S/2013/354] “emphasizes continued mobilization of political will and resources to address the security challenges by building resilience of people and communities in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger”⁴¹.

There are also multi-lateral cooperations among countries in the Sahel corridor and the Lake Chad Basin as evidenced through the Multi-National Joint Taskforce (MNJTF) and G5 Sahel cooperation that fight extremist groups in the region. Similarly, UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), African Union Mission in Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), the US Special Operations Forces (USSOF) and other Western forces have established military bases in the region to counter violent extremism and armed insurgency. In February 2019, the Governments of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Togo initiated a joint operational cooperation known as “Accra Initiative” to combat terrorism, and other transnational organised crime in the region⁴².

In addition to joint-security responses to the threat, States and non-state actors in the region are also taking steps towards enhancing prevention mechanisms through community orientation and awareness education as well as multi-stakeholder security discussions. Niger and Burkina Faso have declared a state of emergency in the border areas between the two countries to curtail the movement and spread of violent extremism. In addition, Mali and Burkina Faso have held national reconciliation conferences to facilitate peace and social cohesion as well as developed comprehensive counter-terrorism

strategies. At the track 2 level, CSOs including WANEP Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Togo have ongoing projects on preventing and countering violent extremism. Local communities have also established security initiatives such as neighborhood guards, vigilante and militia groups to support the security operatives to counter threats from terrorism and armed attacks⁴³. These efforts contribute to strengthening resilience and existing peace infrastructure mechanisms at community and national levels in these countries.

In spite of these opportunities, the effectiveness of the aforementioned mechanisms has been hampered by some challenges. One major challenge is weak state capacity to prevent as well as counter the scourge of violent extremism. It has been further revealed that the security sector in countries in the region are ill-equipped with inadequate armaments and lack the proper training coupled with low morale to confront the challenge⁴⁴. As a result, States military approaches have not been encouraging as the attacks on defense positions, civilians and other soft targets continue to rise in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria⁴⁵. This has given rise to a number of self-defense and community-based armed groups like Civil Joint Taskforce (CJTF) in Nigeria, Koglweogo and Dozo in Burkina Faso and Mali, respectively, to protect lives and properties in underserved areas and other ungoverned spaces in the Sahel⁴⁶. The implications of this is shown in the increased cases of human rights violations including arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial killings, disappearances, assassinations and robberies among others in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria.

Also, undermining the success of the counter-terrorism efforts in the region, is the discontent among troops, as exemplified by instances of military personnel refusing to take part in operations or abandoning their posts⁴⁷. This is further compounded by the mistrust among Troop Contributing Countries with some troops always in a hurry to announce victory without crediting the entire force. The challenge of coordination, cooperation and synergy among security agencies within States as well as among military contingents deployed in terrorists affected areas is also another issue. In fact, a research conducted by the

⁴¹Op. cit. UN strategy on the Sahel, [S/2013/354].

⁴²See: ECOWAS Final Communiqué at the Fifty-Fifth Ordinary Session of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, held on 29th June 2019, Abuja, Nigeria.

⁴³Okoli Al Chukwuma (July 2017): “Nigeria: Volunteer Vigilantism and Counter-Insurgency in the North-East”, Conflict Studies Quarterly Issues, pg.34.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Apan, Richard and Ziblim. Inusah. Policy Brief. Beyond the Rhetoric: Addressing the Terrorism Phenomena in the Sahel. Published by Africa Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT 2019).

⁴⁶WANEP West Africa Peace and Security Report (January – March 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed July 22, 2019).

⁴⁷Op. cit. Policy Brief (ACSRT 2019).

Africa Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) revealed that some military contingents refusal to share intelligence with others in the same deployment area undermine efforts to curtail the scourge of terrorism⁴⁸. This also translates into delay in full deployment of the G5 Sahel forces as well as response to intelligence and other sensitive information on terrorist operations. In addition, existing limitations in information and knowledge on the phenomenon at regional, State and community levels is critical to prevention and counter-terrorism efforts in the region. State actors and local communities need to understand the trans-regional nature of the threat in order to appropriately prevent potential attacks and also contain terrorist movement.

Recommendations:

AU, ECOWAS and member states

- ECOWAS and member States should review their counterterrorism strategies to reflect preventive mechanisms that addresses structural drivers of violent extremism and ensure alignment to national peace, security and development plans;
- ECOWAS member states should intensify regional intelligence cooperation beyond the Sahel countries to address rising threats of terrorism, violent extremism, drug and human trafficking, piracy and proliferation of small arms and light weapons across the region;
- ECOWAS National Response Centres, especially in Mali and Burkina Faso should improve coordination and information sharing as well as prioritize the implementation of the ECOWAS counter terrorism strategy, and the Early Warning mechanism to prevent or mitigate violent conflicts in the Sahel and its southward spread to neighbouring countries;
- ECOWAS in line with its Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) should work with relevant regional and local CSOs to implement the peace education program to mitigate the radicalization of women and youths for violent extremism in the region;
- ECOWAS/AU, international partners and the Troop

Contributing Countries should strengthen synergy among the various forces within the G5 Sahel and MNJTF in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism;

Governments of Benin, Ghana and Togo

- The Governments of Benin, Ghana and Togo should revise their security sector governance strategies and frameworks to ensure inclusivity and community participation through the institutionalization of community security dialogue platforms;
- The Governments of Benin, Ghana and Togo should increase support to strengthen the capacity of the security agencies through trainings, provision of equipment, increased presence of security, enhanced community-security relationship, especially in border areas in response to threats to violent extremism and terrorism;
- The Governments should foster partnership with local communities through restructuring and strengthening community policing structures to enhance resilience against growing threats to security;
- The Governments through their Ministries of Education should ensure institutionalisation of preventing and countering violent extremism strategies in school curriculum;
- Ensure sustained support for Governments and civil society led early warning and response systems;

Community Institutions, CSOs, and FBOs (Faith Based Organisations)

- There is the need for national dialogue and sustained conversations on violent extremism and other emerging security threats in Benin, Ghana and Togo with stakeholders including the Government, political parties, security agencies, religious institutions, traditional leaders, women and youth groups, labour unions, the media, civil society, tourism and hospitality industry and other interest groups;

⁴⁸Op. cit. Policy Brief (ACSRT 2019).

- The National Peace Council (NPC) and the National Commission on Civil Education (NCCE) in Ghana and similar local peace structures in Benin and Togo should intensify collaboration with CSOs, NGOs, traditional and religious leaders, women and youth groups to engage in civic and peace education in communities;
- Religious leaders, faith based and interfaith organisations including places of worship should strengthen interfaith platforms, constructive dialogue and collective response to violent extremism at national and regional levels;
- Local women groups should utilize women social network platforms to intensify training and mentorship on radicalization as well as women's participation in security and early warning initiatives at all levels.

Private Sector

- The private sector in Benin, Ghana and Togo should work with the Governments and CSOs to advance programming that nurtures social cohesion and sources of community resilience against violent extremism through public education, prevention and preparedness.

Conclusion

Violent extremism and terrorism remain an acute problem in West Africa. The region is struggling to deal with these threats to its people, economy and development. Despite actions taken by regional, state and non-state actors to mitigate this challenge, the extremist groups and organised criminal syndicates continue to exploit the security, political and economic weaknesses of States. To halt the persistent attacks and southward spread of terrorism movements from the Sahel to the West coast requires structured approach that links cooperation and partnership between state and non-state actors at all levels. A pyramidal program support structure will ensure effective impact of policies and responses that mitigate violent extremism and terrorism in West Africa.

This report is a special thematic report of the WANEP Warning and Response (WARN) program with specific analysis and interpretation focusing on violent extremism and organized crime. The figures in this report are collated based on data from the WANEP National Early Warning System which is an integral component of WARN. It also makes use of data from the ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) system. It provides analytical report for the period January to June 2019.

The report interprets data in countries of the region where violent extremism and armed attacks are considered to be serious threats to human security. Therefore, for the sake of analysis, it considers only the absolute value of incidence instead of the values compare to population size of the affected countries.

Thematic REPORT

West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)

Trinity Avenue, Off Mile 7 Road, Achimota, Accra

P. O. Box CT4434, Cantonments, Accra-Ghana

Tel: +233 302 411638 | 302 406340 | 302 426004 | 302 408224

Email: wanep@wanep.org | Website: www.wanep.org