

TERRORISM IN WEST AFRICAN HISTORY: A 21ST CENTURY APPRAISAL

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Introduction: conceptual and historical background

The word terrorism has received increased and exaggerated attention recently more particularly since the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States of America. Since then there have been several attacks on various governments, countries, foreign embassies, hijacking of airplanes, kidnappings of foreign and Western workers, drug trafficking and abduction of sex workers in almost all parts of the world. Yet what constitutes terrorism in terms of the definition is as varied as the different perspectives advanced by several scholars with divergent backgrounds. (Bolaji 2010; Hoffman 1998; Hutchinson and O'Mallery 2007; Wardlaw 1982; Warren 2012; Toros 2008). This problem arises because it is not exact what terrorism is and according to whose perspectives. What one person will see as terrorism will be seen in another perspective as not terror. The debate on what constitutes terrorism reached the corridors of the United Nations Security Council in 2013. In his opening speech, the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, said *inter alia*: "(...) 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 (...)" (Omuoha 2013).

The UN Secretary was defining terrorism in relation to transnational organize crime which in itself has occupied much research in West Africa. Drug trafficking and prostitution have all occupied scholarship as transnational organized crimes in West Africa. With regards to drugs, scholars have contend that drugs such as cocaine, cannabis, marijuana have found their way

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from areas as far as Latin America through West Africa and are then rooted back to Europe (Akyeampong 2005; Brown 2013; Champin 2011; De Andres 2008; Einstein 2012; Grassley 2012; Harrigan 2012; Hebab-Brown 2010; Limoncelli 2006; Wyler and Cook 2009). Other scholars have carried out penetrating research on prostitution as transnational organized crime in colonial and post colonial Africa (see Abderrahmane 2012; Aderinto 2007; Aderinto 2012; Barrera 1996; Brown-Taylor 2002; Gilfoyle 1999; White 1990). With all these events occurring in West Africa it will not be an overstatement to say the region has been at the center of illegal activities in Africa.

Although terrorism has received multifarious meanings (Williamson 2009; Schmid 2011; Hoffman 1998; Hoffman 2006; Novotny 2007), it will be relevant to supply a working definition which will be adapted in this article. According to Article 3, of the defunct *Organization of African Unity* which now is known as African Union (AU), Convention on the Prevention and Combatting of Terrorism (1999), terrorism is defined as:

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). (OUA 1999)

It seems to me that we can profitably adapt such definition and context to understand terrorism in West Africa as a *longue duree* rather than just situating it in the contemporary period. Thus in this article I will consider the above definition of terrorism authentic and relevant. Contemporary and/or recent scholars and researchers have treated terrorism by focusing on what has been happening recently and the literature on such an approach is replete. For instance, Omuoha (2013) opines that terrorism in West Africa is not new which I find it quite inspiring to this article. It was not until September 2001 when the United States was attacked that West Africa became quite topical when it comes to terrorism. Terrorism took on national and transnational

dimensions while at the same time the academia took interest on the subject. Although terrorism has been going on in the sub region it was not until 2006 that it was still doubted whether terrorism was real or imagined in the sub region (Obi 2006).

Whether it was real or imagined, terrorism was further lend credibility when its apologetics said:

(...) There is therefore, no doubt that international terrorist organizations have a presence in West Africa and have used the sub region 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, deliberate tactic to insulate their hiding place from prying eyes of the international community in order to sustain their activities. (Yoroms 2007, 27)

Yoroms got the point, and it needs some rationalization. The first and relevant point is that terrorism is real in West Africa although the terrorist have not used the region to carry out any significant activities out of the continent. Thus, West Africa appears to have been only a place where terrorist hide and launched attacks within the continent. The fact that Yoroms contend that there has not been any significant terrorist activities from West Africa which reached international proportions evokes debates and according to this article, such insinuation could be simplistic and reductionist if we do not take into consideration deeper historical roots of terrorism and also the definition of terrorism as provided by the AU which this article is using its frame. A closer scrutiny of terrorist activities suggests that if it is limited to the recent periods and happenings then we are missing the point. In this article I draw from the Cultural historian, David C. Rapoport's well organized and researched article which addresses four waves of terrorism. He defines a wave as "a cycle of activity in a given time period with expansion and contraction phases" (Rapoport 2004, 47). He further identifies the "Anarchist Wave" as the first terrorist movement with global activity, then discusses the "Anti-Colonial Wave", the "New Left Wave," and finally the "Religious Wave." His discussions of each period can help in understanding the motivations of the groups that give rise to, and perpetuate, terrorist activity. Although exclusively not writing on West Africa, his model can be very helpful in the understanding of the history of terrorism in this region.

This article therefore examines the place of West Africa as a citadel of organized terrorism in the 21st Century. West Africa has been very topical in scholarship and for a very long time too. Recently, terrorist activities like the al-Queda in the Islamic Mahgreb (AQIM), Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria,

Seleka-anti-Balaka in Central African Republic and Janjaweed of Southern Sudan has attracted much international concerns. The region has also come under attack from international community and criminal networks that are using the sub region as a global hub for distribution, wholesale and increased production of illicit drugs and trafficking of human beings especially in children. (Brown 2013, 1-23). Once branded as the “Whiteman’s grave” until the discovery of quinine in the mid 1880s, West Africans were well known as “hewers of wood” and “drawers of water” (Nkrumah 1963, IX; Allman 1991, 6). This generally kept the continent in the backyard of the entire world’s civilization as it was assumed.

Much focus has been paid to West Africa as a zone of organized terrorism (Nkwi 2015; Ellis 1996; Curtin 1969; Lovejoy 1982; Manning 1990). This is however done by more contemporary historians, anthropologists and political scientists. The zone as a geographical transit region has played host to three major crimes. These include the slave trade, legitimate trade, prostitution and drugs. This has not been adequately handled by researchers. The zone referred to as West Africa in this article will include Mauritania, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra-Leone and Togo.

While talking in January 2012 with regards to West Africa, the former United Nations Secretary, Kofi Annan said:

Over the last decade, West Africa has made encouraging progress; violent conflicts that had blighted the region for many years have been ended. There have been real advances in development, health and education. Economic growth is accelerating. Democratic practices although still not the norm everywhere in the region are taking root. However, we need to take action now before the grip of the Criminal networks linked to the trafficking of illicit drugs tightens into a stranglehold on West African political and economic development. (Annan 2012)

Put in its proper place one wonders whether the speech of the former UN Secretary General could be taken seriously given the fact that much conflict has been going on in the region. He emphasized illicit drugs trafficking but left out even the historical part of it which saw prostitutes, slave trade as well as even what was called legitimate trade. All said and done the point is that the region has played host, in time and space to terrorists’ acts of all sorts which needs to be properly historicized.

This article questions what have been the changes and continuities of terrorist activities in West Africa? What have been the ramifications? Who have been the key players? What explains the fact that the region is fertile for

terrorist activities? What have been the implications on the region and what attempts have been carried out by organizations to stamp out terrorism? In order to achieve these objectives the article will begin by examining the whole period of trans-Atlantic slave trade as the beginning of terrorism in the region.

Slavery in Africa is a very wide domain which cannot be captured in a single article. But it suffices to maintain that slave trade has been going on amongst West African societies long before the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. In terms of dimension, longevity and quantity of slaves procured on the continent, the trans-Atlantic slave trade is in the superlative. Once an African was captured and he/she lost his/her freedom he was a slave. The literature on the Trans Atlantic slave trade is well established. (Manning 1990; Austen and Derrick 1999; Northrup 1994; Klein 1993; Iliffe 1995). Generally it was the procurement of slave from Africa to the Americas. Despite the literature which is replete, it is still to be examined as the beginnings of terrorism in West Africa. Within a period of three hundred years more than twenty million Africans were evicted from the villages and shipped across the Atlantic to work in the plantations (Curtin 1969). European powers which included Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, carried out the trade. Following the definition of terrorism given by the AU and adopted here there is no other way one could reasonably see it more than terrorism and West Africa simply being a victim. Undoubtedly, and with some few exceptions, European buyers purchased African captives on the coasts of Africa and the transaction between themselves and Africans was nothing more than a form of trade. One could reasonably see that it was also true that very often a captive was sold and re-sold as he made his way from the interior to the port of embarkation (Rodney 1974). On a general level the process by which slaves were obtained in Africa in general and West Africa in particular was not trade at all. It was through warfare, trickery, banditry and kidnapping (Rodney 1974). When one tries to measure the ramifications of the Trans Atlantic slave trade on the African continent, it is essential and relevant to realize that one is measuring the net effect of social terrorism and/or social violence rather than just trade in any normal sense of the word.

A closer look at the social terrorism orchestrated by the European powers on West Africa also reveals the number of Africans who were kidnapped and shipped to America. The exact number of the people who were kidnapped to America has never been clear and thus has long been an object of speculation in the discourses (Manning 1995; Eltis 1983; Eltis 1987; Eltis and Walvin 1981; Eltis and Jennings 1989; Inikori 1992; Curtin 1969). Estimates ranged from a few millions to well over a hundred millions. While the numbers remain an object of speculation it is relevant for us to draw

conclusions that human resources were kidnapped and adapted for over three centuries. This marked the beginnings of Social terrorism in West Africa. The slaves were captured, kidnapped, convicted and completely deprived of freedom. The beginnings of industrial revolution led to the decline of the Atlantic Slave trade. Although scholars (Iliffe 1995; Eltis 1987; Curtin 1969; Fage 1969) have argued differently that it was because of the fact that the trade was evil, the general consensus that explains the end of the trade is that Industrial revolution which began in England witnessed the relevance of machines in doing the same work which human beings were doing and faster too. Slave labour was then redundant. The same European powers who had been at the heart of the slave trade introduced the legitimate trade in which West Africa again became a victim. Iliffe (1995, 148) maintains that during this period West Africa's foreign trade as a whole expanded dramatically and that trade with France and Britain multiplied six or seven times between 1820 and 1850, while imports of European cotton cloth multiplied about fifty times. He further posits that effects of such trade should not be exaggerated since to a large extent, the average per capita value of West Africa's overseas trade during the 1860s was only one-fortieth of Britain's and France.

The political stable years of immediate post independence were soon to meet their dusk. During the post colonial period and quite recently there has been an upsurge of terrorism in West Africa especially in the Sahelian sector. This has involved different actors from the pre-colonial and colonial period, but what has continued has been the act itself. Almost the whole of West Africa gained "flag independence" by the end of 1960 and enjoyed some political stability which was interrupted by the Nigerian fratricidal war. The 1980s were black years for West Africa in several domains. They were years of economic decline. West African countries were found in financial difficulties because of the world economic recession. These countries were forced to borrow money from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and so had to undergo economic liberalization in the name of Structural Adjustment Plan. Consequently, Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP) required deep cuts in public expenditure and laying off of public employees. Drastic reductions in public budgets sent many people into acute financial difficulty (Ellis 2009, 13). Added to this, the mostly unemployed claimed their classical roots of religion. In this direction most terrorist groups which had links with the Maghreb and Arab North Africa created their own terrorist groups. The new crop of terrorists groups were formed by indigenous West African youthful population. Crucial to these terrorist groups was the link which they had with other terrorists organizations in Africa. Thus, these groups in West Africa could easily

fraternize with those in the North Africa and East Africa. The key players or actors had changed. The next section examines the emergence of terrorist groups in the 21st century.

The Emergence of Terrorist Groups in the 21st Century

Terrorist groups in the West African region are many and have one main objective. They include: Boko Haram which operates mostly in the Northern part of Nigeria, Northern Cameroon, Niger, Chad and Northern tip of Central African Republic, AQIM, which operates in Northern Mali, Mauritania, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), the Janjawee of Southern Sudan. These terrorist groups have their main objective to do away with western civilization. Thus, they have as their main agenda to bring back the classical Islam which had existed in the region since the 10th Century. As I argued elsewhere (Nkwi 2013), their aim has been to achieve this objective they have launched attacks on Western installations, kidnapping of western tourists, bombing of western embassies and attacking those who stand on their way to achieve their objectives..

Their links to classical Islam needs further clarification. By classical Islam, I mean the Islam that was established in West Africa long before the jihads of Usman Dan Fodio. The pre-colonial history of West Africa teaches us that by 1066 AD Islam was well implanted in West Africa. It also teaches us that the Empires of Western Sudan survived through Islam (Ajayi and Espie 1969). The Islamisation of the Northern Nigeria in the early years of 19th Century was through the religious wars which of course were perfunctorily political. Usman Dan Fodio who had carried such wars ended by carving out the famous Sokoto Caliphate which occupied a large area of the Sahel stretching from Sokoto, through Yola down to Adamawa (Ajayi and Crowder 1971). A closer look at the terrorist groups today suggests that most of its leaders still find relevance in planting classical Islam around these areas. Thus, their objective is to do away with westernization because of the strong believe that westernization had adulterated classical Islam. Whether this is right or wrong remains a matter of conjecture.

There has been a superfluity of literature on Boko Haram. Boko Haram claims that it is out to purify Islam just like the 19th Century jihads of Usman Dan Fodio had claimed. Since the beginning of the 21st Century 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 and their conclusions have been as varied as their methodologies and backgrounds. Loimeier (2012) provides an historical background paying attention

to the Yan Izala movement of reforms within Islam. Last (2007, 2009 and 2011) have all attempted to provide an historical account. Others have defined and sustained their stand that Boko Haram is a terrorist group (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 (Rogers 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 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; Akokegh 2012, 46-55). Some of the works have remained at best skeletal and limited in scope. I have researched on the ramifications of Boko Haram in Central and West Africa from an historical and contemporary perspective (Nkwi 2013)

As I have maintained elsewhere (Nkwi 2013), the historical origins of Boko Haram have been handled by many schools of thought (Pham 2011; Pham 2012; Elkaim 2012; Marchal 2012; Rogers 2012; Aghedo and Osumah 2012; Musa 2013). Needless to repeat the historical roots of Boko Haram here but rather examine its activities as a terrorist group in West Africa. Boko Haram started as a national terrorist group with its first activities quite insignificant in 2010. In December of that year, the group attacked the Bauchi prison where it allowed prisoners to escape and also launched attacks at Abuja. Between 22 April and December 2011 ten attacks were carried out in most parts of the North and central Nigeria. So also was the situation between 5-6 January and 11 October 2012 (Nkwi 2013).

The next terrorist group has been AQIM which has focused its activities mainly in Northern Mali. This group is an offshoot of the Algeria-based Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). It is widely believed that this group first made its appearance in northern Mali in 2003. From thence it fraternized with the population through marriages and protection of smuggling paths and also preaching classical Islam. The name AQIM was first used in 2007 but its origins no doubt could be easily traced to Algeria in 1992. Onuoha (2013, 85), maintains that it was an affiliate of Islamic Salvation Army (FIS). AQIM has provided aid to other smaller terrorist organizations in the sub-region by providing logistics. It has made remarkable operations in Mauritania since 2005 by kidnapping and assassinating Western tourists, UN aid

workers and even Mauritanian soldiers. In 2009, AQIM admitted that she was behind the attempt to kidnap and murder a United State citizen in the capital of Mauritania, Nouakchott. Since then it was a threat to Western citizens. For instance, a French citizen in Southwest Mali, near the border with Mauritania in 2012 was kidnapped. To further buttress the activities of AQIM in Mauritania, a suicide bomber attacked the military barracks in 2010 and in 2011, attacked a military base in Bassiknou in southeastern Mauritania.

Political events have been working hand in glove with terrorism in some West African countries. Mali again is a case in point. In 2011 the defunct government of Ahmadou Toumani was toppled in a coup by Captain Amadou Sanogo on 22 March 2012. A vacuum was created. That vacuum was filled by the Tuareg National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MINLA), which was backed by Islamist forces combined with AQIM and MUJAO. MUJAO, defined its objectives which were mainly to spread Islam across West Africa and linked its philosophical ideologies to Islamic icons such as Osama bin Laden and the Taliban cleric, Mullar Omar. What was striking was that it laid more emphasis on 18th Century Islamic leaders such as Usman dan Fodio, Cheikh Ahmadou and el Hadj Umar (Okpi 2013, 2-3). After defining their objectives, MUJAO went ahead to take two-third of the country. MUJAO became quite active in Mali and its operations went beyond the borders of Mali. In the north of Mali it carried out attacks at Konna. Its *mudus operandi* stretched as far as to Algeria where in April 2012, it abducted seven Algerian diplomats in Gao, Mali and the next month they stroke the *Gendamerie Nationale* base in Tamanrasset, Algeria. The terrorist activities have not been going on *ad infinitum*. Regional and international organizations have attempted to combat such terrorists groups. Our attention now turns to it.

Combating Terrorism in West Africa

The activities of terrorists groups in the West African region have met with stiff resistance from international organizations and the government of countries which its activities have threatened. The international organizations include: Economic Organization of West African States (ECOWAS) which has played one of the most significant contributions in this direction. There is also the Lake Chad Basin Commission

ECOWAS: a history

This section of the article focuses on ECOWAS one of the largest re-

gional organization which is made up of the former British and French colonies of West Africa. One of the distinguishing features of Africa's political chemistry is its many protracted social and political conflicts and always attempts to resolve the terrorism so that security, peace and development could be established in the region. These conflicts do not operate in isolation and so their spillover effects have always made it imperative that national and trans-national organizations search for ways and means to contain the activities.

For the readers who might not be familiar with West African politics in the post independent period and economic blocs it will be relevant to recapitulate a brief history of ECOWAS. ECOWAS was formed on 28 May 1975 in Lagos, Nigeria. There were fifteen members initially which included amongst others: Benin, Ivory Coast, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sao Tome and Principe. Cape Verde later on joined to make the sixteenth state. The main aim for which this organization was established was to promote the development of the region through economic, social and economic cultural cooperation. The headquarters of ECOWAS is in Lagos while that of the fund is in Lome, the capital of Togo (Onuoha 2013, 85).

The organization has the following aims: to eliminate duties on imports from member countries; removing quantitative and administrative restrictions on trade between member states; establishing common external tariffs; removing all restrictions on the free movement capital, services and persons among member states; harmonizing agricultural policies and the promotion of common projects in the member states; harmonizing the economic, social and cultural policies of member states; creating a fund for cooperation, compensation and development and evolving a common policy in, and the joint development of transport, communication, energy and infrastructural facilities. These objectives did not remain static. They were constantly revised by the member states. During the crisis that rugged Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s the organization tug under their objectives another objective which was to intervene in member countries during the periods of conflict and crisis (Ellis 2009). It was also during those crises that ECOWAS formed a military wing known as ECOMOG. This was because ECOWAS group had felt the effects of the civil war to a much greater extent than did countries outside of the region. In response to both regional instability and a heavy refugee flow, ECOWAS created the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a force aimed at resolving the conflict, restoring order and establishing a democratically-elected government (O'Neill 1993) The ECOMOG force was the first African sub-regional peacekeeping body to intervene in another state. ECOWAS has since the Boko Haram crisis intervene in several ways to bring the insurgence to an end and to give Nigeria the stability it deserves.

Condemnation and Resolution in Meetings on Terrorist Activities

In a broader spectrum, ECOWAS have adapted several mechanisms as well as instruments. Some of these instruments were aimed at collective suppression of these challenges, and include the protocol on Non Aggression and the protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defence which came into operation in 1978 and 1981 respectively. In 1999, ECOWAS, also adopted the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for an Conflict Prevention, Management Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (Bolaji 2010; ECOWAS 2013). This was carried out for a greater efficiency in its approach to check terrorist activities in the region. After three years (2011), ECOWAS went ahead to adopt the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance to ensure the development of law and consolidation of democracy (Onuoha 2013, 107). What appeared quite crucial recently, was that ECOWAS adopted the Political Declaration and Common Position against Terrorism. Such a declaration provided for a regional Counter Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan to help member states fight terrorism. Besides, such a strategy was also to smooth the progress of the implementation of regional, continental and international instruments in combating terrorism. It further provided a common operational framework a community-wide action to prevent and exterminate all terrorists' related acts (Onuoha 2013, 108; Bolaji 2010)

ECOWAS have worked hard to put some terrorist activities under control especially Boko Haram. On Wednesday 24 February 2014 in one of the Boko Harams activities in colleges, she attacked and killed some fifty students at the Federal Government College in Buni Yadi, Yobe State (Forest 2012; Act 2011). ECOWAS quickly met at Abuja the Federal capital of Nigeria and through its Commission strongly condemned the unprovoked attack by a terrorist armed group on a Federal Government College which had resulted in the deaths of some 50 innocent students in the early hours of Wednesday 24th February 2014. Furthermore on behalf of the Community Institutions, the President of the Commission His Excellency Désiré Kadré Ouédraogo showed deep concern and expressed his heartfelt condolences to the President of Nigeria, His Excellency President, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, the Government and People of Nigeria, as well as the bereaved families (Forest 2011).

The ECOWAS set up an on-the-spot commission which was known as Abuja. Commission. The first thing the commission did was to assure the

Government and good people of Nigeria that the entire Community stood solidly behind them in that moment of grief and in the collective efforts to rid the country and the region of terrorism, a dangerous cankerworm that had not spared any part of the globe (Nkwi 2013). It added that the latest terrorist attack was a wake-up call, not just on the Nigerian authorities, but on every Member States and all community citizens to remain vigilant and more importantly, to join hands with all relevant agencies in the battle against terrorism in not only in Nigeria but in the entire West Africa .The Commission also reaffirmed its commitment and determination to collaborate with all Member States and other partners in the struggle to make the region terror-free, and to promote the necessary environment for peace and security towards realizing the overarching goal of regional integration and development thereby keeping states within the brackets of political stability. The ECOWAS members further met at Ivory Coast in the month of June to reaffirm its commitment and responsibility towards keeping Nigeria stable out of the chaos of Boko Haram (Nkwi 2013).

Thus at Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire, ECOWAS, urged member states and the international community to assist Nigeria in its efforts to combat Boko Haram. The Leaders of the 15-member bloc strongly condemned the terrorist aggression perpetrated by the sect, and directed the ECOWAS Commission to participate in the efforts to halt the terrorist aggression (Bolaji 2010, 207-222). The members of ECOWAS also reminded themselves that the Boko Haram, which meant "Western education is sin" in the local Hausa language, had killed over 1,200 since 2009, when it launched its violent campaign aimed at imposing the Islamic Sharia law on the predominantly-Muslim north, among other objectives.(Musa 2013, 234-260). The terror attacks by the sect have continued despite the efforts by the Nigerian government, including the deployment of troops to the affected region and the imposition of emergency rule on the worst-hit areas. The previous month had witnessed attacks on churches in northern Kaduna state which also triggered reprisal attacks by Christians and raised the specter of religious warfare in Africa's most populous state, which was almost equally divided between Muslims and Christians.

The Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff (CCDS) Speaks Out

The Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff (CCDS) of the Economic Community of West African was not in a slumber. The member States met in Abuja from 18-19 June 2013, with the Boko Haram insurgency in the north eastern Nigeria dominating the agenda and discussions (Yoroms 2007). The Boko Haram sect, since the killing of their leader in police custody, has been

detonated explosives in several places, including the police headquarters and the UN building in Abuja. The Chief of Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Oluseyi Petinrin said the meeting became necessary following the upsurge in acts of terror in some countries including Nigeria. The meeting attempted to proffer lasting solutions to the terrorists attack and related crimes. He said threats to national security and regional peace in West Africa were deeply rooted in social, political and economic factors. "It is on this that our deliberations will seek to vigorously addressing security issues, in order not only to avert the negative consequences of these threats but rather promote the prospects of socio-economic and political development." (Igbe and Ndahi 2014, 2160). He said naval chiefs of all member countries were attending the meeting to deliberate an increase in sea robbery, within the Gulf of Guinea as well as proliferation of small arms within the region. The Commissioner for Political Affairs Peace and Security of the ECOWAS, Mahamane Toure said the meeting will receive reports from the defence chiefs of Nigeria and Niger on the development relating to direct threat on Sahel-Saharan ECOWAS members states following the AQIM and Boko Haram renewed attacks and the Libyan crisis impact on the region (Igbe and Ndahi 2014). The members of lake Chad Basin Commission members were not slow in the process.

Lake Chad Basin Commission and Terrorism

In direct parallel to ECOWAS is the Lake Chad Commission Basin. Except otherwise cited all the information gotten here as the background of Lake Chad is taken from Mahamadou (2007, 28). In terms of scope and financial potential, it is no match to ECOWAS. However, it will be relevant to have an idea about the short history of Lake Chad Basin Commission before examining its role in the Boko Haram crisis. The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC or CBLT in French) is an intergovernmental organization of countries near to Lake Chad which coordinates actions that might affect the waters of the lake. The organization's secretariat is located in N'Djamena, Chad. The LCBC is Africa's oldest river or lake-basin organization. In its founding document (the Convention and Statutes relating to the Development of the Chad Basin) the parties commit themselves to a shared use of the basin's natural resources. It is a member of the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO).

The membership and funding is quite relevant to us here. Hydrologically, the Chad Basin (not all of which feeds Lake Chad) includes eight countries, which in descending area of land included are: Chad Niger, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Sudan, Algeria, and Libya. Amongst these

countries, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Chad (the four countries directly containing parts of Lake Chad and its wetlands) signed the Fort Lamy (today N'Djamena) Convention on May 22, 1964, which created the Lake Chad Basin Commission. The Central African Republic joined in 1996, and Libya joined in 2008. Sudan was admitted in July, 2000, but has observer status because it has not ratified the founding convention. Algeria has not participated.

The activities of the commission are many and varied. The activities are tugged under the Commission's Basin Committee for Strategic Planning (BCSP), coordinates local activities between the member states. The LCBC controls the hydro-active regions in the Chad Basin called the *Conventional Basin*. The initial Basin consisted of approximately 427,500 km² of the total area of the Chad basin in 1964. The definition says it excluded the majority of the terminal depression consisting of desert that provides little or no effective hydrological contribution to the Basin. This was subsequently expanded to include additional watersheds in northern Nigeria southern Chad, and northern Republics with a current total area of 967,000 km² (Carvenka 1969). One of the most popular areas in which Lake Chad Basin had tackled terrorism in the sub region is on Boko Haram.

Lake Chad Basin and Boko Haram

Speaking in the organization's summit, on 30 April 2012, Chad's President Idriss Deby immediately proposed setting up a task-force to fight the Islamic extremist movement, Boko Haram. The president made the proposal in Libreville, Gabon at the opening of the annual meeting of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) (Nkwi 2013). "The time has come to act and we must decide today," said the president. The LCBC was set up to monitor conservation of Lake Chad and its basin and is made up of 16 countries, including Nigeria. "Our basin," said Deby, "is exposed to insecurity because of Boko Haram's permanent threat. If we don't eradicate them, we won't be capable of saving our Lake Chad." (Mc Elroy 2013). Among those present who signed on to the idea was Francois Bozize, president of the Central African Republic, who offered to supply troops to the multinational contingent.

With all the meetings and commissions set up to contain Boko Haram it is still a little wonder why much has not been achieved to bring an end to the insurgency. Perhaps with different cultures and traditions of colonial backgrounds these organizations are diversified in the way which they felt could solve the problem. ECOWAS, For example is one bloc which has countries with Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone backgrounds. Lake Chad commission is another which has members as far as to the Maghreb.

All these is suggestive of the fact not much could be done. Above all internal wrangling of most of these countries have been also a stumbling block to allow them to effectively translate their memoranda into concrete action. One will expect quite little from a country like Mali or Central African Republic to intervene in Nigeria when both countries have internal squabbles. Intervening in the internal affairs of states needs financial resources which most of the time most of the member countries are not willing to vote budgets to such effects. The abduction of teen girls in a boarding school was to be one of the events that was to test the international community in checking Boko Haram and also brought Boko Haram into the lamp light international community. But to what extent was the international condemnation of the act to keep Boko Haram in check successful? Nigeria herself did not make matters any better. The Nigerian government opposed to any regional power interfering in her domestic policies to stamp out Boko Haram. The Nigerian government to oppose internal interference in its territory only went ahead to increase the atrocities of Boko Haram. When the situation became so parlous as Boko Haram was attacking her neighbours Nigerian government then agreed to a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) (Theroux-Benoni, 2015). Following the African Union's authorisation the MNJTF was requested by member states of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) – Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria – as well as by a non-member state, Benin, after a 20 January, 2015 ministerial meeting in Niamey, Niger. The planning conference to develop the MNJTF's concept of operations took place in Yaoundé, Cameroon, last week from 5 to 7 February (Theroux-Benoni 2015). In early September 2015, the MNJTF went into operation. It is however still too early to judge the extent of the success.

Conclusion

Terrorism has not been a new phenomenon in West Africa. Its roots go deeper than the literature has portrayed. Researchers and scholars have concentrated on terrorism in the contemporary period. By the contemporary period I mean the period since 2001 in which the World Trade Center was bombed in the United States. From thence, there is no gain saying that terrorist activities increased exponentially in West Africa. The Western civilization became abhorred by these terrorist groups.

This article has reflected on the conventional manner in which terrorism has been treated in the extant literature and attempted to break away with that conventionality by contending that for a better understanding of terrorism in the region one has to take a deeper historical perspective. Yet it has also added substantially by arguing that West Africa is not just a bastion

of terrorist activities but has also been a victim of terrorism since the days of slave trade. To achieved that the essay has contended that for a fuller and deeper understanding of terrorism a full historical perspective is needed and thus changes and continuities which have occurred in the region in time and space need to be galvanized and significant conclusions drawn. The article has further shown how organizations have attempted to combat terrorism. In whatever manner we looked at the terrorist activities in the region, there is no doubt that it has had a very negative impact on the region's developmental efforts.

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the history of terrorism in West Africa in the first half of the 21st Century and attempts by regional and international bodies to combat it. It argues that although recently much attention has been paid to the sub region as a zone of terrorism, such terrorism has deeper historical roots and as such pre-dates the position taken by most contemporary scholars. West Africa has been a victim of terrorism over the years and to take on board only recent happenings is to do injustice to history. What has changed and continued? Who have been the key players? What attempts have been carried out by the respective organizations to stamp out terrorism?

KEYWORDS

West Africa; Terrorism; History.

*Received on July 08, 2015.
Approved on February 04, 2016.*