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# REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COUNTER TERRORISM STRATEGY IN WEST AFRICA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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## Introduction

The 9/11, 2001 terrorists attack on the World Trade Centre (WTC) marked a watershed in threats emanating from terrorism and its global network. The sophistication of the attacks and their coordination were legendary in evading global intelligence and security services. These opened up several interpretations regarding this new threat to global security and possible containments methods. The unilateral declaration of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) by President Bush administration and the following invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 yielded minimum results and regime changes. They also generated narratives of a renewed Western imperialism and the clash of civilizations. Similarly, Chechnya's rebellion and agitation for independence and its brutal suppression by Russia amongst others increased the discourse on the universal definition of terrorism and corresponding guidelines on preventing and containing its threats and spread (Balci and Mis 2008; Baev 2018; Williams, Okon and Onibasa 2018). Consequently, on September 20, 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted its Resolution 60/288 entitled "The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (Strategy)" as a framework for prevention and containment of global terrorism. This strategy defined four pillars of UN Counterterrorism such as: measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; measures to prevent and combat terrorism; measures

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to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard; and measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism (UNGA 2006, 1). The strategy has a clause which encourages member states, and regional/subregional organizations to observe the implementation of these pillars and ensures biennial reviews of such implementation processes (UNGA 2006, 3).

In relation to Africa, the implementation of the strategy has been hampered by several factors which are peculiar to the continent. The issues and challenges inherent in the implementation of the strategy in West Africa are the focus of this study which seeks to answer the following question: What are the issues and challenges in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counterterrorism Strategy in West Africa? The article is divided into five sections after the introduction. Section two reviews the relevant literature about these issues, section three highlights the methodology of study, section four discusses the issues and challenges in the implementation of the strategy in West Africa and section five closes the study with some recommendations.

## Literature Review

Counter-Terrorism (CT) as a concept and a policy gained prominence in global discourses after the end of the Cold War and the resurgence of specific socio-political and religious identities and turmoil across the globe. The rise of Al-Queda in 1990s and the attack of 9/11/2001 led to the birth of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) as the CT strategy of President George W. Bush administration. The emphasis of this policy was on regime change as evidenced in Afghanistan and Iraq, in 2001 and 2003 respectively, and it was heavily criticized for its unilateral approach and disregard for the international rule of law on state sovereignty as well as the blatant abuse of human right by US forces (Cetin 2013; Monaco 2017). Similarly, Russia's brutal suppression of Chechnya's agitation for independence escalated into hyper terrorism in 2004 with terrorists' siege and hostage in a North Ossetia school, in which about 330 persons were held hostage and about 180 children were killed. The period also witnessed the assassination of Chechnya President, Akhmad Kadyrov and the rise of insurgent movements in the Kabardino-Balkarta region. Russia's carrot and stick measures have been relatively effective in the management of these terrorist threats but the toll of several casualties and the abuse of human rights in the process were widely criticized (Baev 2018; Carpenter 2016; Clarke 2017; Williams 2015).

Therefore, the need to promote a linkage of national and regional

policies on CT led the UN to adopt Resolution 60/288 on September 20, 2006. This was necessary given the transnational nature of global terrorism which requires corresponding transnational collective measures, and an overall policy uniformity; without disrespecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states. Besides, the strategy also captured the concern of world leaders during the 2005 World Summit Outcome, where participants reiterate their beliefs on the right to sovereign equality of all states and the respect for the fundamental rights and freedom of all people irrespective of race, religion, gender and language; as well as the need for peaceful conduct of transaction and resolution of conflicts between states in manners consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, even in CT operations (UNGA 2006; Akinboye and Attoh 2005). Prominent in the preamble of 'the strategy' is the 'strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, whoever and for whatever purposes, as it constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security (UNGA 2006, 1).

The strategy is anchored on four pillars, as previously mentioned and once more stated here: measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, measures to prevent and combat terrorism, measures to build states capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard; and measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism (UNGA 2006, 4-9). These action plans of the strategy were expected to be observed and internalized by regional groupings and national governments. To this end, the UN created the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) to increase the knowledge and enhance the implementation of 'the strategy' across the globe (CTITF 2011). Similarly, the UN Security Council (UNSC) established Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) to oversee its CT policy and activities (UN 2017).

After six biennial reviews of the strategy by the UN General Assembly in 2016, Secretary General, Antonio Guterres reorganized the implementation structure of the strategy. Consequently, the office of CTITF and the United Nations Counter Terrorism Centre (UNCTC), as well as other related entities and their staff, were removed from the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) of the UN and placed under a new office: the Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT) with an Under-Secretary, who reports to the UNGA through the Secretary General. The new office has no mandate over the CTED and other entities under the UNSC, as the later continues to function and reports to the Security Council (UNOCT 2017).

The mandate of the OCT as presently constituted is to: provide

leadership on CT to the Secretary General, enhance coordination and coherence across the 38 CTITF entities. This is envisaged to facilitate effective implementation of the strategy; strengthen the delivery of the UN CT capacity building assistance to member states; improve visibility, advocacy and mobilization of the needed resources for the UN CT activities and ensure the prioritization of CT within the UN system. This mandate guides the OCT in reinforcing its strategic partnership with member states in implementing the strategy and is also consistent with the objectives of the organization's reform, which include greater efficiency, simplification, coordination, and coherence (UNOCT 2017, 2).

CTED on the other is responsible for evaluating CT measures by member states. This mandate requires periodic visits of CTED to member states with several security related entities. The goal is to enhance neutrality and to promote the elaboration of reports regarding its findings to the UNSC CT committee. Besides, CTED also acts as an early warning mechanism to the council by alerting it on emergency threats and attacks through its analysis of reports and data from over 70 research institutions which constitute its Global Research Network (UNOCT 2017). Evidently, the United Nations has a robust CT framework which could be adopted by regions and states (UNGA 2006).

Similar to the UN Strategy is the European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2005) ratified in 2006. It arose from the 9/11 attacks on the US, the Madrid attacks of March 23, 2004 and the London attacks in July 2005. The framework has four pillars: prevent, protect, pursue and response (Monar 2007). To this end, the EU is strategically committed to prevent its citizens and others from turning to terrorism, by containing those factors considered as the root cause(s) of radicalization and recruitment into terrorist organizations; it is also strategically committed to protect its citizens and infrastructure by providing effective security for its borders, transport system and critical infrastructure, thereby reducing the vulnerability of the EU to terrorists attacks. Other strategic commitments are the resolute to pursue and investigate terrorists worldwide, as well as destroying any terrorist network, cutting their sources of finance, travelling itinerary, and bringing them to justice, and to prepare for a robust response to terrorist attacks, which would reduce the impact of such incidence on victims, through improved capabilities and coordination (EU 2005). However, the document clearly stated that it is the primary responsibility of member states to fight against terrorism, even though the EU is expected to add value to their efforts in four major ways, namely: by strengthening national capabilities by enforcing good practices and sharing knowledge and experiences to boost the four pillars

of the EU strategy; by promoting European cooperation through the sharing of information between institutions within the Union involved in counter-terrorism operations; by developing the EU collective capability and policy to response effectively to terrorist threats through Europol, Frontex and Eurojurist, amongst other related institutions; and by promoting international partnership with the UN and other relevant actors in the international system to deepen consensus, build capacity and strengthen cooperation in CT. (Ejikman and Schuurman 2011; Oldrich 2006; Rennard 2012; Vries 2005; Monar 2007).

Similarly, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published its new strategic framework for countering terrorism and targeted violence in September, 2019. The document acknowledges that terrorism and targeted violence overlaps, intersect and interact as problems, and that they need a shared set of solutions. According to the framework, targeted violence are attacks on schools, houses of worship, public spaces and transportation systems, and other forms of racially, ethnically, and religiously motivated violence that can overlap and intersect with terrorism (Fein, Vossekull and Holden 1995). Terrorism is defined as any unlawful act that is dangerous to human life or potentially destructive to critical infrastructure or key resources and that has the intention to intimidate and coerce a civilian population, to influence government policy by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping (DHS 2019).

The two concepts have a common denominator, namely: the violent destruction of lives and property of civilian population in a horrific manner, which leads to despair, trauma, and a sense of insecurity. However, while targeted violence may be an end in itself, terrorism has the objective of influencing governmental policy in a particular direction (Schinkel 2009; Sandler 2014).

The 2019 US strategic framework has four integrated goals with five missions. The goals are to understand evolving terrorism and targeted violence threats in the environment, and support partners in the homeland security enterprise through this specialized knowledge; prevent terrorists and other hostile actors from entering the United States, and deny them the opportunity to exploit the 'Nations' trade, immigration and domestic and international travel systems, prevent terrorism and targeted violence and enhance infrastructure protections and community preparedness. These goals are expected to be achieved through the utilization of 22 core capabilities that cover five missions – prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery (DHS 2019, 3). Indeed, the Strategic framework is comprehensive,

since it is built by incorporating previous lessons and experiences of the US CT operations over the years, as it is grounded on four complimentary organizational concepts: intelligence, border security, domestic prevention, and preparedness. Authentic intelligence enhances pragmatic prevention and mitigation of threats, and prepare communities to respond to threats in orderly manner and recover faster from the anticipated attack, border security checks the entrance of foreign terrorist and other hostile elements from entering the country; domestic prevention involves multidisciplinary and enhanced whole-of-society partnership; preparedness demands working in collaboration with governmental and private partners to effectively protect infrastructure against any attack and ensure effective containment of impact of such attacks on individuals and groups, as well as support the victims of such attacks to quickly recover (DHS 2019, 6).

On the other hand, Russia is heavily criticized for the lack of a strategic framework for CT. Rather Moscow is accused of reliance on brutal force (zachistkas) or cleansing operations in CT as illustrated in Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingusshetia, North Ossetia, and Kabardino Balkaria (Williams 2015; Clarke 2017). This is counter-productive since brutal force and widespread human rights abuses by Russian troops led to further radicalization by the family members of subject victims. Besides, Russia's support for Assad regime in the brutal civil war in Syria through its indiscriminate airstrike in Aleppo and other opposition controlled areas had burdened Syrian cities with enormous civilian casualties. Similarly, the 2016 Yarovaya law – an amended Russian CT legislation provides for mass surveillance through preservation of telecommunication data for six months by service providers and forbids preaching or praying outside designated religious institutions as well as participation in mass protest across the country. Moreso, Russia partnership with Lebanese Hezbollah, Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Syria in the fight against ISIS is seen as supports for terrorist organization. Given these policies by the Russian Federation its CT policy is shadowy, brutal and very difficult to align with the CT framework of Western countries and that of the UN (Carpenter 2016; Baev 2018).

Of all the content and intent of CT strategies, prevention of terrorist attack remains the priority of statesmen, scholars and policy makers, (DHS 2019; EU 2005; Monaco 2017; Rennard 2012). This noble objective requires several measures and tools, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of such tools for data collection and analysis on individuals and group(s) with the potential intent to commit terrorist acts (Cornish 2010). The utility of the technology lies on its efficiency and predictive capacity. According to McKendrick (2019, 2):

> AI allows higher volumes of data to be analyzed, and may perceived patterns in those data that would, for reasons of both volume and dimensionality, otherwise be beyond the capacity of human interpretation. The impact of this is that traditional methods of investigation that work outward from known suspects may be supplemented by methods that analyze the activity of a broad section of an entire population to identify previously unknown threats.

However, AI has significant limitations, such as the infringement on the basic rights of the citizens to privacy, since biometrics communications, associations and lifestyles of individuals and groups are placed under surveillance and are constantly monitored, gathered and analyzed electronically by states to generate the required intelligence. The excessive invasion of individuals and groups privacy inherent in AI deployment in CT does not only negates one of the pillars of the UN Strategy on the need to protects the fundamental rights of individuals in CT operations, but also threatens the principles of liberal democracy, which is similar to the intent of terrorists (Richardson 2006; Carpenter 2016; Baevr 2018).

In spite of these shortcomings, predictive AI is effective in preventing terrorist attacks on infrastructure through the application of security checks and the promise of punishment. Moreover, it denies terrorists the capacity to strike by arresting the suspects before they carry out the attack; it also checkmates recruitment and radicalization of potential terrorist and restricts their movement (McKendrick 2019). Thus, it is important to strike a balance between respecting individuals and group(s) privacy and preventing terrorism. While the former enhances citizens' freedom, liberty and integrity, the latter promotes public safety and human security.

Another CT instrument is the reconstruction of divisive narratives and theories which exacerbate binary hierarchical division between groups and civilizations. According to Kose (2009, 78):

> The language of interaction at both inter-cultural and inter-civilization level is historically shaped and institutionalized along dialectic lines, where the broader category of the cultural, religious, ethnic and racial "other" becomes systematically de-legitimized for particular material and non-material goals. "Eurocentrism", "Orientalism", "Occidentalism", "Antisemitism", "Islamophobia", "religious intolerance", and "fundamentalism" are just a few of the dialectic discourses that helped to legitimize certain practice of violence and discrimination against the categories of "cultural other".

The assumption of cultural and civilizational hierarchy and supremacy is at the root cause of some conflicts with violent and terror outburst as they

protest against the perceived oppression or impurity of the contesting culture or civilization. Historically, the reformation of the Catholic Church led by Dr. Martin Luther and his protestant elements with the 39th Theses and the counter-reformation by the Catholic Church in the 15th century had a hallmark of terrorism as both parties fought to instill fear in minds of opposing followers with unspeakable inhuman treatment and violence (Schirrmacher 2011; Ng'etich 2016). However, Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" which debuted at the end of the Cold War was prophetic (Wilkinson 2001). While the 'third wave of democracy' was celebrated in the West, some other civilizations recoiled and struck back in protest as illustrated with the emergence of Al Qaeda and its affiliates across the globe (Cetin 2013; Richardson 2006). The desire to resolve intercultural differences and enhance global harmony led to the initiation of the "Dialogue among Civilizations" (DaC) by former Iranian President Mohammed Khatami in 1998. By November 2001, DaC had enjoyed universal acceptance and UN Resolution A/5616 gave it the global backing; but changing global security environment orchestrated by the post 9/11 attack and subsequent upliftment of the GWOT discourse overshadowed DaC and accelerated its demise as a global project (UNAOC 2009; Balci and Mis 2008).

The brutal and derogatory manner of the US conduct of the GWOT in terms of invasion and regime change in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003, the treatment of Abu Ghraib prisons as well as the massive human rights abuses by US soldiers in these countries prompted anti-US/Western sentiments in the Muslim world. Similarly, the bombing of Madrid, Istanbul, London and other attacks on Western countries by terrorists raised the level of Islamophobia across Europe and indeed the narrative was almost turned to the clash of Islam and the West (Considine 2017; Kumar 2012; Smith 2013). It was in this charged environment in 2005 that Turkish and Spanish Prime Ministers – Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero initiated the "Alliance of Civilizations" during the 59th General Assembly of the UN, as a platform for intercultural / intercivilizational dialogue, with the aim of containing the prejudice, misunderstanding and hatred heightened in the post – 9/11 era (Kose 2009, 87).

This initiative was recognized by the UN General Assembly in 2009 through its Resolution A/RES164/14 "Alliance of civilization" which appreciate the effort of the forum in promoting intercultural, interreligious, and inter-civilizational dialogue and understanding, in order to contain extremism and radicalization of individuals and groups by divisive narratives common in the aftermath of 9/11 attack and subsequent GWOT operations. Its numerous pragmatic projects on dialogue, youth, media, and education have enhanced

cultural and civilizational harmony, thus preventing radicalization and terrorism within the UN system. Consequently, the UN General Assembly affirmed the initiative as an entity within its fold through its Resolution A/RES/69/312 "United Nations Alliance for Civilization" (Balci and Mis 2008; UNAOC 2009; Kose 2009).

In Africa, CT framework and rhetoric preceded the events of 9/11. In 1999, the late Organization for African Unity (OAU) ratified its Convention on the prevention and fight against terrorism. This was further strengthened by other protocols and the AU Action Plan for the Prevention and Fight Against Terrorism in 2002. The Action Plan facilitated the establishment of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism in Algier, Algeria in 2004; the appointment of the AU Special Representative for CT cooperation in 2010; and the development of the African model law on CT in 2011. All these measures were grounded on the desire to promote the regionalization of UN Strategy and other global counter-terrorism frameworks in Africa as well as to promote CT legislations, intelligence gathering and effective coordination of CT policies by African states (Omenma and Onyango 2020; Williams 2017). The commitment towards the implementation of these instruments varied across countries and regions; and it was dependent on the level of integration, the threat of terrorism and the strength of political will in these regions; ECOWAS is rated as the most advanced subregional entity in Africa, with the capability of implementing most of the global and continental CT frameworks in the subregion (Elowson 2010; Ipe, Cockayne and Millar 2013). Indeed, ECOWAS ratified its CT Strategy in 2013 which is similar to the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy (ECOWAS Strategy) is a continuum of security and conflict prevention protocols ratified by member states over the years. Such protocols include: the ECOWAS protocol on the Fight Against Corruption (2008), the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (2008); the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and other related materials (2006); the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (2001), the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (1999), the Convention on Extradition (1994), the ECOWAS Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (1992), the Convention for Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs matters (1982), the Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defence (1981); the Protocol on Non-Aggression (1978); and Inter-Governmental Action Group against money Laundering (GIABA)

(2000) (ECOWAS 2013, 6-7; Salihu 2015).

The ECOWAS Strategy is an attempt to harmonize the CT policy of the community members in preventing and combating terrorism, as well as providing support to the victims of terrorist attacks in the subregion (ECOWAS 2013). To this end, it has three pillars, namely;- prevent, pursue and reconstruct. The central objective of 'prevent' pillar is the identification of key actions by the signatories to detect and prevent terrorism, and such actions include: total rejection of terrorism, elimination of conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, enhance coordination of early warning and operational intelligence, denying terrorist the means, space, and technical capacity to operate, prevention of radicalization and extremism and promotion of democratic practices and the protection of human rights.

Central to 'pursue' pillar is the building of the community members' rapid response/deployment capability to terrorist attack and other measures capable of disrupting the activities of terrorist organizations and their members. This is to be achieved through: effective implementation of regional, continental and international CT instruments; enhance cooperation on criminal justice matter; enhance cooperation on border control and surveillance in every sector, including maritime and aviation; the suppression and criminalization of terrorism financing and associated money laundering; and the protection of critical infrastructure and diplomatic areas and interest; and improving the capacity of community members criminal justice system in terrorism. The "Reconstruct" pillar of the ECOWAS strategy focused on the rebuilding of society and healing of wounds caused by terrorism and CT. This is to be done through the protection of the rights of victims; supporting and reconciliation of communities affected by terrorism; the repair of social contract between the people and state; and the development of CT strategies (ECOWAS 2013; Salihu 2015; Ipe, Cockayne and Millar 2010; UNSC 2014). As pointed out earlier in this review, the ECOWAS Strategy is the regional internalization of the UN Strategy.

## Study Methodology

The methodology of this paper is based on a case study design as it probes deeply, intensively, and analyses the interaction between factors involved in the focus of the paper (Idaka and Anagpogu 2012). This has the advantage of identifying issues and challenges in the implementation of United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in West Africa. It also has the advantage of providing a yardstick for similar studies in other regions of the world. This study focuses on West Africa but covers issues of common concern

to all regional groupings pressed by the responsibility of implementing the strategy; especially those in the Global South. It relies on secondary data from the literature such as textbooks, magazines, communiqué, UN resolutions, journals, and the internet. These data were presented qualitatively and content analysis technique was used in the analysis of the research findings.

## Regional implementation of 'the UN Strategy' in West Africa: Issues and challenges

Evidently, ECOWAS has taken steps for the implementation of the UN Strategy. These steps are: ECOWAS condemnation of terrorism in all of its forms and manifestation; Nigeria, Niger and Benin Republic membership of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) combating Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region; all member states' signatories to a minimum of seven, out of eighteen universal instruments on CT as required by the Security Council Resolution 1373; and no state party in the subregion should sponsor terrorism (ECOWAS 2013b, 4; Onuoha 2014; Salihu 2015). However, effective implementation of the four pillars of the strategy had been flawed by issues and challenges and they are discussed in this section.

## (i) Measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism

The main goal of this pillar is to address "prolonged, unresolved conflicts, dehumanization of victims of terrorism, lack of rule of law and violation of human rights, ethnic, national and religious discrimination, political exclusion, socioeconomic marginalization and lack of governance" (UNGA 2006, 4). Conflicts in most West African countries center on the nature and structure of the colonial states which are not easily subject to effective conflict resolution. For instance, the skewed nature of the Nigerian state and redistribution of national resources have been the major causes of socio-political discontent in the country. These have led to 'national question and the agitation for separate states by the Niger Delta; South West and Middle Belt elements in the country.

Similarly, Cassamance separatists continue to challenge the sovereignty of the Senegalese state which has led to socio-political tension in policy. In the same vein, the Tuaneg in the Northern Mali's quest for greater autonomy from the central government precipitated into violent uprising in 2013 which almost consumed the whole country. The same scenario also

played out in Cote'd'ivoire in the first decade of the new millennium (Chauzal and Damme 2015; Piccolino 2018; Theobald 2015; Tella, Doho and Bapeto 2014). The impact of the colonial states, among others, is the absence of internal cohesion and national consensus on national issues, rather the 'flag sovereignty' is sustained by both internal and external coercive instruments of the states and ex-colonial masters. Indeed, resolving such conflicts may result in the reverse of colonial boundaries and formation of new states which are seen as a zero sum outcome by a couple of elites and their foreign partners who benefit from the internal contradictions within these states. Hence the challenge of building a nation-state capable of mediation in a conflict between individuals and groups from numerous nationalities remain a thorny issue in the implementation of CT strategies in the region (Umoh and Adeyi 2019; Wing 2013).

Also, the promotion of a culture of peace, justice, ethno-national and religious tolerance is difficult in the parochial Global South, where ethnicity and religion have become catalysts for conflicts. Indeed, identity and stigmatization between religions and ethnic nationalities are at the root cause of most conflicts within ECOWAS member states and the culture of tolerance is becoming more difficult, since effective indoctrination by religious sects ensures that their members see others as infidels and abominable who are not worthy of meaningful interaction. This situation is exacerbated by religious leaders who seek uniqueness in their messages and ways of life to command a huge group of followers in backward societies. For instance, it is indeed the radical interpretation of the Quran that led to the foundation of the Boko Haram extremist group among others in Nigeria (Basedau 2017; Basedau and Shaefer-Kehnert 2018; Onuoha 2014; Theobald 2015).

In spite of inter-faith and other forms of dialogues across the subregion, which most of the time are elitist, many followers of different faith and members of ethnic groups lean towards stigmatization and hate speeches as well as the display of stereotypical hatred towards one another through viral messages on social media (Onyekwere and Chukwu 2019; Yakubu 2019). The need to to de-emphasized religion and ethnicity in public space as well as regulate the activities of religious leaders and ethnic champions in a manner that basic rights are mutually respected should be added to current dialogues. Community members are also lacking in citizenship education that could have enhanced a State identity, other than the supremacy of other forces such as religious or ethnic, that prevails in domestic politics and are essential elites assets. Hence, divorcing ethnicity and religion from national politics and discourses remains an enormous challenge for the implementation of the 'Strategy' in West Africa (Chauzal and Damme 2015; Basedau and Shaefer-

Kehnert 2018).

Tackling poverty and unemployment in the subregion also remains a challenge to member states. This could be attributed to the nature and structure of the subregional economy. As a region in the Global South, its economy was allocated into the periphery of the global capitalist system; so, it produces primary products with low-aggregated value. Most West Africans are farmers with low incomes. Even the prices of crops produced in the region are sold at prices determined by importers in the Global North, through a complex and manipulated price mechanism which ensure minimum income from the sale of these products (Okon, Ojakorotu and Agi 2019; Spero and Hart 2010). Even oil and minerals producers in the subregion are not immune from general poverty. The revenue from crude oil, diamond, gold and other minerals hardly trickle down to the masses due to acute corruption by section of the elites. This leads to marginalization and socioeconomic exclusion. In some cases, these resources lead to conflict and income from these these resources are used to procure arms which further escalate the conflict and perpetrate poverty, as illustrated by 'blood diamond' in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and crude oil in Niger Delta region.

This cycle validates the 'resource curse' thesis in the region. Again, the absence of production value chain leads to enormous job loss in the region since these products are sent to the Global North for processing. Indeed, the restructuring and transformation of the economy of the subregion from its present rentier and consumption to developmental and productive is central to jobs creation and poverty reduction. This would reduce the population of idle and vulnerable youths available for terrorist recruitment and radicalization (Asanga 2017; Okon, Ojakorotu and Agi 2017; Torres and Seter 2016). Economic transformation of this magnitude implies the breaking away from the exploitative relationship with the ex-colonial masters and indeed the shaking off of the peripheral status in the world economic system. The challenge therefore lies in achieving such transformation without generating the wrath of the Global North which benefits immensely from the present state of West African economy (Rodney 1972; Spero and Hart 2010).

Also challenging is the entrenchment of good governance in the subregion. This is contrary to the expected outcome after the ratification of the supplementary protocol on Democracy and Good Governance by member states in 2001. Beyond periodic elections and reasonable number of electoral turnovers; political participation is very limited in the region and legislators hardly consult their constituencies on national issues. Moreso, Transparency International (TI) has consistently rated Nigeria, Mali and other countries in the subregion within the last 50 in Corruption Perception Index (CPI) in the

past two decades, this corroborates with the Extractive Industries Transparent Initiative (EITI) findings on the disparity between remittance of resource rich countries in the subregion to the states' treasury and the actual worth of the resources sold by governments. Indeed, there is very little transparency and accountability in the running of government across the subregion as government contracts and procurement processes are done in secret.

In many ECOWAS member states, the communication gap between the government and the governed is disastrously wide (Agwor 2015; Bleck, Dembele and Guindo 2016; Wing 2013). Furthermore, extra judicial killings by state security operators are rife in the subregion. Recall that, it was the summary execution of Mohammed Yusuf by the Nigerian Police in 2009 that escalated the Boko Haram insurgency. Similarly, many political activists were imprisoned, and others were tortured to death in The Gambia during Yahya Jammeh dictatorship which ended in 2018; Campaore's regime in Burkina Faso reached a similar hallmark. Evidently, most West African States are run by dictators who abhor respect for human rights and the rule of law, but disguise themselves as democrats. Besides, electoral fraud is common in the subregion and elections themselves become the legitimation of the committed fraud as illustrated in the Nigerian Presidential elections in 2019. These lead to political exclusion of dissent voices and contribute to violent outbursts and terrorism in the subregion (Engels 2015; Onwuama 2018; Sanyang and Camara 2017).

Another burning issue is the contradiction between the women/girls rights as contained in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the prevailing social norms, values and practices in West Africa, especially the Islamic injunctions on adult women and female teenagers and children. Women are still victims of domestic violence and the offenders are hardly prosecuted and brought to justice. Female teenagers and children are denied education and are subjected to underage marriage in Islamic communities in the subregion. Legislations on child's right are not universally passed by states in the subregion. Even where they are approved at national level as done in Nigeria, many component units in federating states have refused to internalize them. The net impact of these process includes the prevailing of child abuse, child labor and lack of a social security net for West African women and children and these make them vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization.

Boys in Islamic regions are exposed to Almajiri culture as in Northern Nigeria where many learn unwholesome habits on the streets in the process of religious tutelage. Similarly, teenage hawkers in other regions are school dropouts who are making living in the streets. They become vulnerable

elements to kidnapper, drugs peddlers, rapists and recruitment into crime syndicates as well as terrorism. Therefore addressing basic rights abuses, as well as the respect for the rule of law are issues and challenges which feed into other deficits of good governance across the subregion and enhance economic and socio-political misgivings and discontentment and eventually radicalization and terrorism (Okoli and Umeche 2018; Amnesty International 2010; Abbo, Zain and Njidda 2017).

## (ii) Measures to prevent and combat terrorism

In line with the subregional political declaration and common position against terrorism ratified in Yamoussoukro in February 2013; no ECOWAS member state have sponsored terrorism or deliberately organize, instigate, tolerate, or facilitate terrorism in its domain. However, preventing the use of their territories for terrorist activities is an enormous task due to poor penetration of state power and the abundance of ungoverned spaces across the subregion. West Africa has a number of its members within the Sahel region of Africa which stretches from Mauritania to Eritrea, specifically, Mali, Senegal, Niger, Nigeria and Burkina Faso fall within this region that separates the Sahara desert in the North and Savannah in the South (Raleigh and Dowd 2013, UNSC 2013:2). This harsh terrain is difficult for poor states to secure since it is less inhabitable and very demanding to maintain military and other security forces. Hence, the choice of the Sambisa forest as the operation base by the Boko Haram terrorist group and its prosperity around the Lake Chard region; as well as Al-Queda in the Islamic Maghreb and the Mouvement Pour l'unicite et ;e jihaden Afrique de l'Quest in Northern Mali preference of their bases in the Sahel. In the same vein, the Gulf of Guinea is a wide maritime territory which stretches from Senegal to Angola and into the Atlantic Ocean with very little state penetration and has become ungoverned space for pirates. The swamps and creeks of this terrain in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria are used by Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) as their base; from where they perform kidnaps and carry out violent attacks on oil installations in Nigeria. One of the challenges for the prevention and the fight against terrorism in West Africa is the effective governance of the ungoverned spaces and territories in the subregion (Taylor 2016; Anyimadu 2013; IPI 2014; UNSC 2013).

In terms of checking illicit arms and drug trafficking, ECOWAS does not possess the tools for the containment of these menaces. For instance in 2006, ECOWAS ratified its convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) their ammunitions and other related materials, and in 2008 it made a

political declaration on the Prevention of Drug Abuse, illicit Drug Trafficking and an organized crime in West Africa. Member states are also signatories to the United Nations Conventions against; these twin evils, yet they continue to prosper in the subregion. The devastating role of SALW and Drug trafficking in terrorist and insurgency operations is globally acknowledged (Caleb and Okafor 2015; Ellis 2009; FATF and GIABA 2013). The subregional vulnerability to these threats is anchored on the implementation of the free movement of goods and services protocol, its location in the south end of the ancient trans-Sahara trade routes, as well as external factors, such as the political development in the Maghreb region and the triangular trade routes of illicit drugs from Latin America through the West African coast through Europe.

While the free movements protocol facilitates the two ways flow of human, illicit arms and drugs from Maghreb to Atlantic coast, the proceeds from illicit drugs are used to purchase these arms for organized crime, terrorism and insurgency in the subregion (GIABA 2013; Csete and Sanchez 2013; Marsh 2017). Unfortunately, some of these illicit activities are linked to highly connected and powerful political exposed persons (PEPs) in the subregion. For instance, Former President of the Gambia, Yahya Jammeh was accused of drug trafficking from South America through the Gambia to Europe; he was also mentioned in arms deals involving Victor Booth of Tajik Arms (Sanyang and Camara 2017, 9). Similarly, a sitting senator in the 7th Senate in Nigeria had a link with an arrested spokesperson of Boko Haram who indicted him and other powerful elements as part of sponsors of the terrorist group. These and other instances illustrate the involvement of Political Exposed Persons (PEPs) in arms/drug trafficking, money laundering and terrorism in West Africa (GIABA 2013, 27). The involvement of PEPs in organized crimes, arms and drug trafficking, money laundering and terrorism weakens the resilience of law enforcement institutions to investigate and prosecute the offenders. Besides, reporting institutions across the subregion lack the capacity to identify suspicious transactions related to terrorist financing, as terrorist organizations utilize the large informal, cash based economy to finance their operations. Moreso, security and surveillance at most of the national borders are ineffective due to numerous illegal border cross point.

This facilitates the infiltration of terrorist elements into member states with illicit SALWs. Again, competition among agencies in member states weakens interagency intelligence/information sharing, cooperation and collaboration and therefore provides the lapses for illicit flow of fund and SALWs across national borders to the terrorists. Again, poor understanding of applicable laws by CT authorities in the subregion impedes effective

combating of terrorist financing and indeed terrorism as a whole. Therefore member states find it difficult to implement the forty recommendations on money laundering and nine special recommendations on terrorist financing of the Financial Action Task Force (GIABA 2013, 7; UNGA 2006; FATF and GIABA 2013).

Also demanding is the capacity of member states to control the internet content in their domain. The revolutions in the information and communication technology and the production of android phones and similar devices have increased internet connectivity. This promotes information dissemination and penetration to communities across the globe in an unprecedented manner. These devices had helped terrorist recruitment, financing and propaganda dissemination at an unprecedented pace. ECOWAS member states lack the technology to filter harmful propaganda penetrating their domain. Similarly, most ECOWAS member states lacks the capacity to use the internet advantageously in countering terrorist narratives, money laundering, recruitment and cyber-attacks; therefore poor cyber security is another difficulty for ECOWAS implementation of the UN strategy (Mahmood and Jetter 2019; Weimann 2006).

Another thorny issue is the challenge of border security in West Africa. Colonial states imposed artificial boundaries across the subregion, therefore people of the same ethnic groups are separated by national boundaries. To the people, such boundaries exist on the paper, as they continue to interact with one another as an entity, due to longstanding socio-cultural and economic ties. Indeed, most population on the borders of West Africa states enjoy dual citizenship of both countries and therefore crisscross the border at will, as experienced in Nigeria/Benin border, where Yorubas on both sides of the border continue with their ancient ties and easily migrate to the country without any restriction. In this scenario, the loyalty of these population lies with the ethnic affinity rather than the superficial state. This is similar to the epicenter of Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeastern Nigeria where Kanuri ethnic group in Borno State spilled over to Chad and Cameroon in the Lake Chad region, thus the fluidity of movement across the borders.

The porous borders in the subregion promote the ease movement of terrorist fighters and logistics to the desired destinations. Indeed, most West African states have no border walls to separate them from their neighbors, and there are several bush tracks for uncontrolled migration and transportation of illicit arms between member states. This is exacerbated by the free movement protocols ratified by member states, which have been thoroughly abused by both ECOWAS citizens, and foreigners, since many travel across the region without valid documents. Moreover, the corrupt nature of border security

officers in the subregion makes it difficult to check the flow of illicit arms and uncontrolled migrations. These factors have negative impact on counter terrorism in the subregion. Indeed, border security into the subregion and within the subregion is an outstanding challenge to the implementation of the strategy in West Africa (Blum 2014; Lamptey 2013; Musah 2009; Opanike, Aduloju and Adenipekun 2015).

Related here is poor and uncoordinated database management system whereby individuals' identities are not easily verified, since most of the citizens in the informal sector of the economy are hardly captured in national identity database. Forensic audit of databank, documents and identities are still at elementary stage due to poor infrastructure and equipment, as well as lack of governments' commitment to such project and the endemic corruption in government circle. The net effect of these amongst others is an incessant impersonation and identity theft at entry points and within the subregion. These actions make it easy for terrorists and their agents to travel into, and through the subregion without detection. Thus, all these issues impede the implementation of the UN Strategy (Atta-Asamoah 2009; Ebem, Onyeagba and Uguonah 2017; Hadayati 2012; World Bank Group 2017).

Also challenging is the security and protection of public places and infrastructural facilities. The sights of equipped security personnel are ubiquitous in the subregion. Most public schools in Nigeria have no perimeter fence. Similarly, many more public buildings and streets have no AI gadgets such as the CCTV cameras which could detect and deter attacks by terrorists. These explain why Chibok and Dapchi secondary school girls were kidnapped with ease and some schools and churches are burnt down without restrain. The challenge therefore includes the re-engineering of the internal security architecture and infrastructure as well as improvement in the quantity and quality of security operators and their equipment in a manner that matches the terrorist threats of the moment. Unfortunately, such massive transformation and orientation are lacking in the subregion (Mekendrick 2019; Bilaminu, Iya and Purokayo 2017; Lebovich 2017).

### (iii) Measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard

The central focus of this pillar is the UN's recognition that strengthening capacity building in all states is core to the prevention and fight againts global terrorism. The pillar emphasizes the need for UN collaboration with states, sub-region and regional entities in order to enhance coordination,

coherence and cooperation in countering terrorism (UNGA 2006, 7). To this end, several measures were outlined to achieve this objective, such measures include: the involvement of private sector in capacity building of ports, maritime and civil aviation security facilities; the sharing of best practices in counterterrorism capacity building through extant subregional, regional and international framework; cooperation on the exchange of information and technical assistance among member states institutions dealing with counterterrorism, as well as the development of states capacities to implement relevant UN Resolutions.

Other measures include: the strengthening of dialogue among stakeholders across relevant regional, subregional and international organizations in order to improve the coherence and efficiency of technical assistance delivery in the field of counterterrorism; the involvement of Bretton Wood Institutions, UNODC and Interpol in containing money laundering and financing of terrorism; strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other relevant institutions' capacity to check terrorist access to nuclear materials, chemical and biological weapons and other WMD. Further measures are: supporting the World Health Organization (WHO) to improve its technical assistance to states' health system as prevention and preparation for possible biological attacks by the terrorists; and the improvement of national, subregional and regional border management by all stakeholders within the UN system, amongst others (UNGA 2016, 8).

All these measures outlined in the strategy are noble but their implementation is demanding. States in West Africa are generally poor and have very low capacity building capabilities. Even the private sectors are highly underdeveloped. In most of these countries, states are the only viable source of funding any capital project compare to western countries where private sector is the major source of funding for building ports, maritime and aviation facilities. Moreso, the UN itself depends on donors for its activities and most of the time the donor determines the aspect of capacity building best fit their interests. Given the peripheral status of ECOWAS in global politics, very low attention is given to the needs of the region in the global strategic security configuration (Congressional Research Service 2020; Okon, Ojakorotu and Agi 2019).

Related here is the low capacity of the UN agencies such as the UNODC and the WHO. The UNODC has been grossly underfunded and this has reduced its capacity to collaborate effectively with member states across the globe. This is exacerbated by the weak capacity of corresponding institutions in the subregion as they are excessively exposed to governmental manipulation and intervention as highlighted in the previous section (Bewley-Taylor and

Trace 2016; Reddy, Mazhar and Lenchuchia 2018; Klantschnig 2016). Credit must given to the IAEA and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical and Biological weapons for their doggedness in ensuring that WMD are not accessible to terrorist organizations and their agents (Pedraza 2012; Ballard and Forman 2017).

This is important as the unfolding pandemic of COVID-19 has shown that the WHO does not have the technical capacity to deal with biological weapons attack by terrorists. Its inconsistency in the diagnosis of the pandemic and drugs prescription to contain it has revealed a huge gap in knowledge and capacity. Given the prevailing scenario in this pandemic, it is obvious that WHO cannot provide the required technical assistance to West Africa Health Organization (WAHO) and ECOWAS member states if similar virus attack is carried out by terrorists in the region. Once more, it should be reminded that the health sector in West Africa is highly underdeveloped due to poor infrastructural facilities and inadequate governmental political will to improve health facilities and medical personnel remunerations. This has led to massive exodus of highly skilled personnel to other parts of the world. Besides, the obsession with medical tourism by West African elites has weakened their resolve to embark on capacity building of the health sector (Khan, Khan, Anim and Chelliah 2020; Nwakaeze and Kandala 2011).

Also worth considering is the impact of French interest in West African countries, specifically the Francophone states. France considers these states as its sphere of influence and has been a major determinant in what happens in these states. For instance, ECOWAS decision to adopt a common currency ECO has been hampered by French intervention and subsequent creation of its version ECO different from what was conceived by the ECOWAS. A common currency and monetary policies has enormous positive domino effects on the integration and economy of the subregion. This threatens French influence and is effectively checked by the Europeans. In addition, it is believed that the French used its influence in the UN to create the misunderstanding between the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS on which institutions should be the legitimate first responder in the Malian crisis of 2013 in order to intervene and expose the weakness of Africans institutions to solve Africans problem and simultaneously made itself the savior of the Malian state. With these realities, it is debatable if much could be done by the UN in terms of capacity building in Francophone ECOWAS member states without the approval of France or in accordance with the French interest (which most of the time are not compatible with the general interest of the subregion) (Melly and Darracq 2013; Yusuf, Ahmad, and Wali 2018).

Another challenge is the significant institutional corruption in most

West African states. Funds budgeted for both soft and hard infrastructural capacity building are sometimes diverted and embezzled. Besides, the trickling capacity building efforts from the UN and other intervention agencies are also seen as bureaucratic decisions and are allocated according to parochial demands without taking into account the overall objective of such interventions. This attitude and other internal dynamics weaken the capacity of CT entities in the subregion, and hamper the efforts of UN entities in the implementation of the strategy in the subregion (Bleck, Dembele and Guindo 2016; Banini 2020; Ogbuehi 2018; Transparency International 2015).

### (iv) Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism

This pillar of the strategy focuses on human rights and the rule of law and the conditions for their promotion as the basis for containing terrorism. It therefore recognizes that effective CT measures are not in conflict with the protection of human rights, but they are complementary and mutually reinforcing (UNGA 2006, 9). ECOWAS member states are signatories to major international instruments, such as the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights which established the African Commission for Human Rights ratified in the June 1948 and 1981 respectively. Besides, the subregional organization has established the ECOWAS Court of Justice where human rights abuses by individuals and states are handled (Ebobrah 2012; Alter, Helfer and McAllister 2013; UN 2015). Due to their internalization, the subregional body and its member states have sufficient legal instruments to promote human rights and the rule of law in its CT policies. However, the promotion of socio-economic, environmental and political rights of the citizens remains the best method for tackling terrorism. This is due to its capacity to checkmate the conditions which engenders recruitment, radicalization and terrorist activities as highlighted in this study (Bleck, Dembele and Guindo 2016; Ojo 2020).

On the other hand, there are complex issues relating to the protection of the rights of women and children affected by improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and who are on terrorist mission. The challenge lies on defusing the device without hurting anyone, but it is expedient for a terrorist to be sacrificed in lieu of others. Therefore guaranteeing the rights to life under some circumstance is a zero-sum game. Another problem in CT operations is the nature of the enemies who are non-state actors and hardly subscribed to the universal norms and values of human rights. ISIL brutality as replicated by Boko Haram through beheading and other extra-judicial killings of soldiers

and vulnerable population negates the assumption of Article 1 of UDHR which states that all human beings are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood (UN 2015, 4).

In the theatre of CT operations, it becomes difficult to reciprocate the brutality of terrorists with excessive resort to civilized norms since every man is inherently endowed with a survival instinct and ruled by the tendency to reciprocate similar gesture in the battle for survival and personal security (McMahan 2004). Another burning human rights issue is the use of torture in eliciting information from captured terrorists. Can a hardened terrorist voluntarily confess and give valuable intelligence without torture? Evidence from the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and in Guantanamo Bay show that torture is useful in getting intelligence from detained terrorists. Similarly, Nigerian Armed Forces have been accused of torture and extrajudicial killings in their CT against Boko Haram by Human Right Watch, without providing alternatives to dealing with the critical issue of personal survival instinct as well as the intelligence gathering through the interrogation of captured terrorists (Bellamy 2006; De Beer 2018; Evans 2007). Therefore, the balancing of human rights protection and the demands of CT operations remains a challenge in the implementation of the UN Strategy in the subregion.

As highlighted earlier in this study, ECOWAS countries are plagued with weak and inept institutions. This includes the criminal justice system. Besides, terrorism is a recent development in the subregion, and the legislation or domestication of anti-terrorism law is slow, so also are their interpretation and application. Consequently, the judicial system lacks enabling laws and experts to fast track and ensures fair trials of terrorism related cases. Moreso, the dearth of universally acceptable definition of terrorism threatens effective adjudication; terrorists may be seen as freedom fighters who engage in insurgency for the freedom of their people (Schinkle 2009; Sigsworth 2019). Also challenging is the issue of rehabilitation and resettlement of victims of terrorists' attacks. The number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) has increased exponentially due to terrorists attack in the subregion as experience in Northeastern Nigeria, Southern Niger, and Northern Mali, yet there are no corresponding accommodation and infrastructural facilities to attend their basic needs.

There is no social security policy in most West African states to deal with the disadvantaged and vulnerable populations. Moreover, where the IDP camps are available, the occupants are exposed to sub-human standard of living, since water, food and other basic needs are not guaranteed. In some places, women are exposed to gender-based violence, such as rape and sex forms of sexual harassment. Also challenging is the absence or the inadequacy

of schools for children in these IDPs camps as well as the lower quality of manpower required for basic education. Among other, the implications, among other, are the deprivation of the women and children rights to basic education and secured environment (Amodu, Richter and Salami 2020; Akuto 2017; World Bank Group 2014).

Furthermore, poor legislations on child rights expose children in the subregion to terrorist recruitment, radicalization and deployment. The Amajiri system in the Islamic Northern Nigeria is an instance where boys do not only beg for food in the streets, but are also expected to beg and support the Islamic teachers. This culture exposes the boys to unwholesome habits on the streets. Besides, most of them grow up without reasonable means of livelihood and are recruited as foot soldiers by terrorist groups. Even Child Rights Act signed into law by the Nigerian government is not domesticated by many states in the Federation due to conservative cultural imperative. Unfortunately, West African states do not have the political will to check these abuses. Thus, checking the cultural imperative of Islamic and others harmful cultural practices in terms of respect and promotion for the rights of women and children are fundamental challenges to the implementation of the UN Strategy in West Africa (Abbo, Zain and Njidda 2017; Amnesty International 2010).

## Final Remarks

The response of the UN member states to the resurgence of terrorism in the new millennium was a source of concern for the UN. While the GWOT was unilaterally declared by the US in post 9/11 and its conduct in Afghanistan and Iraq was brutal and could have led to the radicalization of many more Muslims around the world, Russia's suppression of Chechnya insurgency had similar hallmarks and concern. This development led to the adoption of the General Assembly Resolution 60/288 in September 2006 as the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy with universal mandate. Its implementation has met with several challenges and issues in the ECOWAS subregion, and this was the subject of this discourse.

The study observes that ECOWAS does not lack the enabling instruments and institutions for the implementation of the strategy, but is constrained by weak post-colonial states with inherent contradictions; inept and corrupt governmental institutions with low capacity to perform optimally; inadequate political will and funding by the UN to render the required technical assistance to member states; and the complexity in observing the

rule of law and protection of human rights arising from the developmental challenges in the subregion. It is therefore imperative for ECOWAS member states to improve on their state/nation building activities and strengthen governmental institutions. They also need to enhance human security indicators in their countries and embark on massive renewal of infrastructural facilities. Besides, the UN needs to reinvent itself beyond the dominance of the five Super Powers, since the menace of terrorism has a universal reach, and a biological attack in the most remote part of the world may become a global challenge as illustrated by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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## ABSTRACT

The paper discusses issues and challenges marring the regional implementation of the United Nations Global Counterterrorism Strategy in West Africa. It highlights economic, technology and socio-political factors that hinders the effective implementation of the strategy in the subregion which has become the hotbed of global terrorism. The study concludes that ECOWAS has the enabling instruments and institutions to implement the strategy. It therefore recommends the strengthening of existing institutions, enhancement of human security indices, and massive investment in infrastructural facilities, as measures to facilitate the implementation of the strategy in the subregion.

## KEY WORDS

United Nations Global Counterterroris; Strategy; West Africa; Implementation.

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