

ECOWAS Counter Terrorism Strategy Tracker Report September 2015



**ECOWAS Counter Terrorism
Strategy Tracker Report (Edition 1)**

**Centre for Democracy and Development
(CDD) West Africa**

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Content

Title Page.....	
Introduction.....	
The Scramble in West Africa.....	
Highlights.....	
Events in September 2015.....	
Government Response.....	
International Support.....	
Military.....	
Regional Response.....	
Conclusion.....	
Recommendations.....	

Introduction

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Counter Terrorism Strategy (CTS) Tracker is one of the components a project by the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)-West Africa with support from US Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) through Partners for Democratic Change (PDC). This is the first edition of the report. When fully functional, the tracker is expected to be an online open source data platform for monitoring and documenting extremist activities within the ECOWAS Region and government's response at member States, group and regional levels in accordance with the ECOWAS Counter Terrorism Strategy (CTS). The tracker report is released monthly; documenting trends, patterns, highlights and analysis of events, policies and effort of government at different levels to address threats to political stability and peace in the ECOWAS region. Beyond the ECOWAS Counter Terrorism Coordination Unit which is supposed to be responsible for the strategy and implementation of the CTS, this report will educate members of the public within and beyond the ECOWAS region, on how the plan is being implemented.

As part of measures to ensure the efficacy of the supplementary A/SA.3/02/13 adopting the ECOWAS strategy for combating terrorism, and its implementation plan, the Counter-Terrorism Coordination Unit was set up as an element of ECOWAS' Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan. The Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan is a measure of reducing terrorism in West Africa as well as implement larger-scale counter terrorism plan in the region and beyond. The Plan is built on a framework of three pillars namely; prevent, pursue, and reconstruct and features implementation of instruments such as the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Coordination Unit, an ECOWAS arrest warrant, an ECOWAS blacklist of extremist and criminal networks, and an ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Training Manual¹. Presently, it is hard to determine the extent of ECOWAS performance with the regards to the pillars.

Although the ECOWAS Strategy for Combating Terrorism, and its Implementation Plan came into being in February 2013, the need for a collective security in the region is not new as Article 58 of ECOWAS Treaty establishing the Authority of Heads of State and Government, and the 1999 protocol, relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security, emphasized the need to combat cross-border crimes and money laundry have already lay the background for collective security in the region before the emergence of the CTS. However, the lack of political will, requisite technical and monetary materials have continued to hamper the implementation of the ECOWAS strategy for combating terrorism in the region. Although ECOWAS does not have a standby force or trained anti-terrorism special force, many states confronting the scourge have continued to battle them alone without regional support. Again, while there is an exception likes Mali; Nigeria has turned down earlier offer for joint force by the AU to assist in countering violent extremism.

¹ <http://pilac.law.harvard.edu/africa-region-efforts/ecowas-counter-terrorism-coordination-unit>

Globally, there is an increasing military onslaught against extremist elements in the Middle East and North, West and East Africa but the threat they pose to political stability and peace are not decreasing. The major factors that have largely influenced global vulnerability includes: Presence of local radical Islamic groups and extremist cells; Conflicts, political instability, collapsed states and presence of rapacious rebel groups; The vast Sahel region weakness to check extremists and traffickers; Black markets for natural resources such as oil and diamonds; Lack of rule of law and regulatory policies; Weak law enforcement and criminal justice institutions that are prone to chronic corruption; Poverty, inequalities and lack of dynamic government policies for disadvantaged communities; Prevalence of drugs, arms and human trafficking, piracy, organized crime and money laundering, which help to sustain funding for extremist activities and climate change (the lake chad basin). Within West Africa alone, extremist activities has cost major humanitarian crisis and set lots of countries back by years. In Nigeria, the governor of Borno State (one of the States worse hit by Boko Haram), Kashim Shettima recently said Boko Haram now known as (Islamic State's West Africa Province - ISWAP) has destroyed infrastructure that may cost more than \$1 billion to rebuild in North eastern State of Borno alone².

The Scramble in West Africa

Extremist activities and groups are on the rise across Africa as renowned global terror groups, including ISIS and al-Qaeda affiliates, continue to overtake local insurgent organizations and transform them into regional and international threats³. In West Africa, there is a silent scramble by Terror groups for control of local extremist groups. In an effort to expand their terror acts, some sophisticated extremist elements that have evolved out of the member states of ECOWAS have either joined forces with foreign groups, absorbed smaller ones or become an arm of a foreign group to perpetuate violence within the region. In 2012 at the peak of the Malian crisis, began as a local movement in Northern Mali, but was successfully overtaken by The National Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb absorbed several local groups, threatening countries and even entire regions.

In the same light, there is similarity between what Boko Haram is doing now and what the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) and now ALQIM did in 2006. Pledging their allegiance to ISIS in April 2015 and renaming itself as Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP); a famous name can enhance ISWAP's legitimacy among extremists and facilitated recruitment, while enabling ISIS to burnish its international credentials and, potentially, spread to other African countries. Since the expulsion of ALQIM from its' operational base near the Mediterranean by an Algerian counter-terrorism campaign force, the group currently operates in

² ThisDay - Newsextra, Boko Haram's Cost bBorno: \$1 Billion and Rising page52, Thursday Septemebr 10, 2015

³ Al-Qaeda and Other Extremist Groups Increasing in Africa <http://dailysignal.com/2014/05/06/al-qaeda-extremist-groups-increasing-africa/> viewed 14/10/2015

the Sahel region that includes Niger, Mauritania, and Mali as its' established footholds. Similarly, the Boko Haram is also consistently ensuring interval attacks on Cameroon, Niger and Chad as a way of bolstering regional relevance. However, the danger in the scramble is the risk of eventual merger of the entire group.

Events in September 2015

In the last few months, the Boko Haram, originally known as Wilāyat Gharb Ifrīqīyyah⁴ (Arabic: الولاية الإسلامية غرب أفريقيا, and now (Islamic State's) West Africa Province, ISWAP) have consistently and successfully carried out systematic attacks in Nigeria, every 2nd of every month. On July 2nd 2015, the group according to New York Times⁵ and the British Broadcasting Corporation⁶ killed 150 people while the Cable News Network⁷ and Premium Times Nigeria⁸ reported 145 deaths. Also on August 2nd 2015, the group killed 13 people⁹ and on 2nd September 2015, a raid on horseback by members of the extremist culminated in the death of 68 people in Baanu and Kolori villages. Although the group executes regular attacks, there is a worrisome consistence with every second day of every month in the last few months. While military pounding of the sect members from air and land has intensified, many people who have returned to their villages and those in IDP camps remain vulnerable.

Nigeria's largest Internally Displaced Camps (IDPs) located in Yola, the capital of Adamawa State¹⁰ lost seven people while 20 people were injured in September. This happened when a bomb exploded in a tent close to the major warehouse of the camp where 200 persons displaced by Boko Haram from Madagali Local Government of Adamawa State were being camped. Although the police ordered immediate beefing up of security at the camp and re-screening of IDPs, the incidence raise worries about security in the IDP camps and the need to build on the security of the camps and to forestall future ugly occurrence. If the IDP camps are not save, one wonders where else IDPs can feel save. The Nigeria government has continued to receive more persons displaced by ISWAP violence from the bushes where they have been hiding and from neighboring countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Most of the IDPs who are returning from these countries have complained of hostile treatment by their host countries.

⁴ Farouk C, (2015) who are Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists? <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13809501> BBC Africa viewed 16 October

⁵ July 2nd: New York Times:http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/03/world/africa/boko-haram-is-suspected-in-shootings-at-mosques-in-nigeria.html?_r=0 viewed October 16th 2015

⁶ BBC (2015) Nigeria Boko Haram crisis: Militants 'kill 150' <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33369713> viewed October 16th 2015

⁷ CNN (2015) <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/02/africa/nigeria-boko-haram-attacks/> viewed October 16th 2015

⁸ Boko Haram: 145 killed in Borno villages <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/186010-boko-haram-145-killed-in-borno-villages.html> viewed October 16th 2015

⁹ Premium Times Nigeria (2015) <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/187687-nigerian-soldiers-repel-boko-haram-attack-on-borno-village.html> and Aljazeera <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/boko-haram-attack-reported-nigeria-village-150802193909808.html> viewed September 10 2015 both reported an attack on Malari village in northeast Nigeria's Borno state leading to the death of 13 people.

¹⁰ Premium Times reported the death of 7 people and 20 that were injured in Yola IDP camp bomb blast via <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/189822-7-killed-in-yola-idp-camp-bomb-blast.html> viewed 12th September 2015

The military have made hard gains over the sect; clearing ISWAP camps and intercepting supply of arms, fuel/gas, food and other materials. In the same light, the sect too has responded in many ways. Owing to these continuous interception and blockages, by the multinational forces (Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon), ISWAP has occasionally used animals (Donkeys and Horses) as their means of transportation in carrying out unhindered attacks in remote villages (Abadan, Guzamala and Kukawa; Yafa; Karna Baga, Lassa etc). At Lassa, in the Southern part of Borno State, insurgents on horseback attacked Yafa and abducted most of its inhabitants (girls, women and young men) and those of nearby hamlets. In Karna, ISWAP stormed on horseback, killed six people, looted shops and homes, snatched the car of the Chief Imam of the village and used it to cart away their booty. There are several complaints by travellers, farmers and villagers being dispossessed of their horses. Horseback attacks are happening mainly in remote areas. ISWAP don't just raid to kill alone, they also raid for food and other materials. In Baga, insurgents in that area have formed the habit of raiding village markets for food¹¹. The use of animals for raiding has widely been practiced globally but technological advancement has made it moribund in many modern attacks for many reasons. However, the use of animals in the case of ISWAP symbolizes an interim response to the continuous interception of fuel/gas/vehicle supply. Also, the forceful adoption of villagers is no less a desperate plan to have more man-strength in the face of it dwindling forces owing to the renewed commitment of the Nigeria Military to end the menace of ISWAP.

Also, in places where they have been dislodged, there are interval reports of ISWAP poisoning water sources like wells and streams before fleeing. In the month under review, several livestock were lost¹² when Fulani cattle herds drank from ISWAP poisoned waters at Kangallam and other communities along Abadam and Marte Local Government areas of Borno State¹³. Soft targets in remote villages, markets, places of worship and parks among others have resurged, raising the question of information gathering, analysis of information into intelligence, use of intelligence to inform decisions and operations and of course, inter-agency collaboration. Although the tense competition by security agencies may have reduced on the pages of newspapers, close coordination and collaboration between the Nigeria Armed Forces and other paramilitary agencies are still in doubt before the public, due to the incremental successes of ISWAP asymmetric warfare in vulnerable places. The sect has not also relented in the use of young people in its' asymmetric war, especially young girls as suicide bombers who sneaks unscreened into crowded areas to detonate Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). This is particularly more frequent because of destruction of ISWAP camps which has dispersed lots of their elements.

¹¹ <http://dailytrust.com.ng/news/general/-boko-haram-desperate-recruiting-randomly/110477.html>

¹² Some cattle were killed after drinking water from some poisoned sources <http://sunnewsonline.com/new/boko-haram-poisons-water-sources-in-borno-villages/>

¹³ News of the new Boko Haram tactics was disclosed by the Deputy Director, Army Public Relations, Colonel Tukur Gusau, in a statement in Maiduguri, Borno State. <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/10/boko-haram-poisons-water-sources-in-borno/>

While some ISWAP fighters are surrendering, many have remained resolute, using asymmetric tactics.

Several successes by the Nigeria Air Force and Army in the dens of ISWAP resulted in rescue of several women and girls held by extremists. It is difficult to give an exact figure on numbers of rescues and those of ISWAP members who are surrendering to the Nigeria Armed Forces because most press releases by the Nigeria Army don't give exact figures. Scores of young girls, women and children, who were abducted, were rescued by Nigeria Armed Forces from ISWAP on numerous operations in the theatre of warfare. However, the kidnapping of young girls in remote areas is still ongoing¹⁴. Since the last sixteen months, Nigerians and the international community have endlessly been waiting for the release or rescue of over 200 girls kidnap in Chibok Girls Secondary School in Borno State. Government has continued to assure the world that the girls will be rescued but former President Olusegun Obasanjo has expressed doubt of some the girls returning¹⁵.

While the role of the military keep emerging globally especially in the context of civil military relations and military aid to civil authority, there are too many roles that the Nigeria Armed Forces are currently saddled with. With recent gains recorded by the military over ISWAP, the battle front-line has continued to expand and becoming more blur; this has compounded the work of the military. In September, the Department of State Security Service reported arrest of 20 suspected ISWAP elements in Lagos, Enugu, Plateau, Kano and Gombe. More than ever before, security agencies need to up-their-game in intelligence gathering and preventive operations.

Similarly, a place like Gwoza was deserted when it became the theater of warfare but with the fierceness abating, the area has become too quiet and too large for the military alone to occupy. Community members have return owing to this but have also fallen victims of ISWAP guerrilla tactics. Extremist elements hiding and operating in the bushes have continued to take advantage conquered territories without military presence to inflict violence on returnees. In some cases, more people are forcefully kidnapped and forced to join the group. This raises many questions about the Nigeria government's plan for affected people; the status of IDP camps; the welfare of displaced persons and among others. There are reports of Cholera and diarrhea outbreak in IDP camps. In September, sixteen people died out of a case of one hundred and seventy two infections of Cholera¹⁶. There are worries that majority of those in IDP camps are children and women owing to the poor condition of IDP camps while other people have fled to neighbouring states and cities, roaming the streets and sleeping in public places uncared for.

¹⁴ <http://dailytrust.com.ng/news/general/-boko-haram-desperate-recruiting-randomly/110477.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/13/us-nigeria-violence-schoolgirls-idUSKBN0EO11R20140613>

¹⁶ Medicines Sans Frontiers/Doctors Without Borders (MSF), a group that specializes in rendering medical assistant <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/article/nigeria-cholera-spreads-camps-displaced-people-borno-state>

Mali

Despite the peace agreement between rebel leaders and government in June 2015¹⁷, hostility between government and rebel forces has continued. The crisis in Mali unlike the case with ISWAP in Nigeria and neighbouring countries, there are too many extremist groups (Ansar Dine, Massina Liberation Front, Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (Mujao), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al- Murabitun, the Signed-in-Blood Battalion and the National Movement for Liberation of the Azawad), making it difficult to find elements that government can negotiate with. In April, Azawad and Ansar Dine both declared merger but they failed to sign the final phase of the agreement over ideological difference. It will be recalled that both ECOWAS and Bamako had rejected the merger and declaration of Islamic state. In September (the month in view), while there were moves to consolidate on the gains of the soured peace agreement between Tuareg and government, violence clashes among militant groups on the one hand and militants and government forces on the other hand have continued.

Clash between rival armed groups near Mali's desert border with Algeria in September claimed at least 15 lives in a fresh violation of a U.N.-backed peace deal¹⁸. Since 2012, the UN has maintained a Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali - United Nations Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA); currently with an authorized troop ceiling of 11,240 military personnel, including some 40 military observers to monitor and supervise the new agreement¹⁹. However, Bamako has maintained that the peace agreement has largely been ineffective owing to the paucity of technical, material and financial resources necessary for the realization of the agreement. While ECOWAS, Bamako, the UN and other international bodies have placed too much attention on the signing of peace agreement, the turn of event has shown that signing peace agreement is not enough to guarantee peace.

The renewed fighting has dashed mediators' hopes that the peace deal would bring a measure of stability and allow the government and supporting regional and Western powers to focus on combating Islamist militants also active in the area²⁰ comprising Algeria, the United Nations/MINUSMA, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and Niger have remain resolute to bring CMA to the table for peace. In the same

¹⁷ Mali's Tuareg rebels sign peace deal <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33213931>

¹⁸ Reuter report Mali militias clash near Algerian border, killing at least 15 <http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/09/17/mali-violence-idINKCN0RH34520150917> viewed September 20th 2015

¹⁹ At General Assembly, Mali leader lauds UN for helping to restore peace to war-torn north <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=52030#.VieAM2tcDBI> viewed 29th September 2015

²⁰ Ibid

vein, the UN has continued its pressure on Bamako to pursue dialogue. Also, the UN has continued to encourage the Platform (pro government militai group) to withdraw from Ménaka.

There are however reports that several foreign extremist fighters have arrived in recent weeks (September) in the Kidal region. Though Ansar Dine suffered a heavy defeat mid-August to Anefis, (pro-government groups), Azawad “raked wide to get reinforcements.”²¹ Findings in September reveals that Ansar Dine (linked with al-Qaeda) are massively recruiting foreign fighters to help them prosecute their war in Mali. This is similar to the unfolding moves by ISWAP, which has declared allegiance to ISIS. Meanwhile, extremist and asymmetric attacks as well as criminal threats against the Malian Defence and security forces and MINUSMA persisted throughout the reporting period, and have spread to formerly safer regions in central, western and southern Mali and along the borders with Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire and Mauritania²². On 2nd September, unidentified armed men attacked Malian armed forces soldiers in Kera village, 28 km from Ténenkou, Mopti region, injuring seven soldiers. On 12 September, six unidentified armed men attacked Ouankoro village, Bankass Cercle in Mopti region, approximately 5 km north of the border with Burkina Faso, killing one gendarme. On 11 September, unidentified armed men ambushed a MINUSMA logistics convoy 15km north of Gao on the Gao-Anéfis road, leaving two peacekeepers injured. Al Mourabitoun claimed responsibility for the attack²³. Many peacekeepers that have been killed in Mali died in several multi-casualty incidents, often involving improvised road bombs or targeted attacks.

There is growing concerns that the crisis in Africa, particularly West Africa is claiming more lives of peacekeepers. Although a report released by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on 28 September 2015 on fatality trends in United Nations peace operations reveals a steady decline in the rate of peacekeepers dying while in UN service, the number of fatalities due to malicious acts has indeed increased quite sharply since 2013, this has mainly been the result of the high number of fatalities in only one mission, Mali²⁴.

There is heavy pressure on Bamako and extremist groups to find a common ground for dialogue that would culminate in restoration of peace and stability but the continuous lack of political will and required resources has continued to undermine adherence to peace agreements. Confronting the problem headlong, Bamako has set up a ministerial committee with the aim of reconstructing the north but the crisis and limited resources have been hampering meaning progress. The committee is already meeting with the Movement of Azawad with the aim of resolving grey areas of dispute after the peace agreement. These meetings are supposed to find a definite cease

²¹ Bamako craint le retour des djihadistes dans le nord du Mali <http://www.afrique7.com/maraboutages/12583-bamako-craint-le-retour-des-djihadistes-dans-le-nord-du-mali.html>

²² Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1528471.pdf>

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ Policy Brief Peacekeepers under Threat? Fatality Trends In UN Peace Operations (September 2015) <http://books.sipri.org/files/misc/SIPRIPB1509.pdf> page 7, 8

fire to the hostility in the region and to allow for the deployment of Malian soldiers. The agreement has earlier been ignored by both sides and hostility has been on. The weakness of Bamako to command respect among even its larger population has made undermining of peace easier for spoilers. However, Platfom militia group have started withdrawing from northern Mali but that also signals likely violence break out as the areas they are moving into are stronghold of some other groups²⁵. The Malian crisis has degenerated into an enterprise. While the clashes between militia groups have largely been around the struggle for the control of cocaine trade route, the climate condition brought about its' own struggle. While West Africa has emerged as trade route for hard drugs manufactured in South America, allowing the Malian crisis to linger longer than necessary might throw the region into unhampered anarchy.

The various dimensions to the Malian crisis have resulted in untold hardship and human rights violations on the people, especially on vulnerable people (women, children and old people). Armed banditry, inter-communal violence, indiscriminate attacks by extremist groups and retaliation from armed groups due to suspected support to the opposite group constituted the main threats of physical violence to civilians.²⁶ As many as 4.2 million Malians are now in need of humanitarian assistance. International Medical Corps is working in the north of Mali, providing emergency health, nutrition and protection services to Malians affected by the conflict²⁷. Burkina Faso shelters some 34,000 Malian refugees, while Mauritania and Niger each host some 50,000 Malian refugees, respectively²⁸. Climate change is increasingly fostering devastating effect in northern Mali. This has brought different dynamics to the crisis. According to numbers published by the United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), about 54,600 people representing 7660 households and their cattle herds were affected by the lack of water in the Gao and Tombouctou regions in July.

Government response

To compliment on what the military is doing and prevent further influx of illegal migrants and foreign fighters joining ISWAP, the Nigeria government has ordered the deployment of men and personnel of the Nigeria Immigration Service to all borders. Whilst the new Chief of Defence Staff has made personnel motivation as one of his key priorities, especially those at the war front, 3,032 of the 5,000 soldiers summarily dismissed by the immediate past administration were recalled back for the battle against ISWAP in September.

²⁵ Africa Times. 2015, Militia withdraws from contested northern Mali town <http://africatimes.com/2015/09/17/militia-withdraws-from-contested-northern-mali-town/> Editorial Board 17 September 2015

²⁶ Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1528471.pdf>

²⁷ Critical Health Services Reach Underserved Communities in Northern Mali http://reliefweb.int/report/mali/critical-health-services-reach-underserved-communities-northern-mali-0?utm_source=Nederland+2.0&utm_medium=twitter

²⁸ United Nations World Food Program; Mali Regional Crisis Situation Report <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP%20Mali%20Regional%20Crisis%20External%20Situation%20Report%20%236,%2004%20September%202015.pdf> 4 September 2015

On the softer side, the Nigeria government announced in September the harmonization of both 2011 and 2013 Terrorism Prevention Act²⁹ to tackle terrorism and money laundering. The harmonized document is expected to be presented to the National Assembly soon. In the same vein, the Nigeria government has announced that retired General Theophilus Y. Danjuma will lead its initiative for the North East. The initiative seeks to take a broader measure to address the crisis and rebuild the affected states. Although the Nigeria government has continued to assure the world of a holistic approach to resolving ISWAP issues and the victims of the crisis, the whole process remain overshadowed by military measure. Softer measures remain only at the front of newspaper headlines. It is true though that government has intensified its effort to bring back all Nigerians displaced by the crisis back to Nigeria; the welfare of returnees is nothing to write home about.

International Collaboration

As more international support continues to pour in for Nigeria, Israel through its Speaker of Parliament Knesset Yule-Yoel Edelstein has pledged support to Nigeria for the renewed fight against ISWAP. The renewed effort of the Nigeria Government to end Insurgency has continued to attract foreign support. In a recent event, the French Defence Attache in Nigeria commended the effort while promising France backing. While President Muhammadu was also in France on a working visit recently, the French government pledged arms, intelligence support to MNJTF to counter ISWAP. However, only time will tell how much this new international interest will aid in countering terrorism considering previous experience.

There are several local and international reports against the military of states in the region. Amnesty International indicted the Nigeria Army in June calling for investigation and prosecution of some persons over human rights violations and corruption. Nigeria President Muhammadu Buhari has promised to investigate and take required actions in accordance with the Nigeria law but nothing has been done in that order more than four months into his reign as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Although the Army has on number of occasions released suspects who were found to innocent after investigation but there are worries that many continue die in military detention cells while family members of arrested suspects are not allowed access to their family members. In spite of increasing arrest of suspect, many people in Military detention cells are largely unknown. Also, the Nigeria media and international media have continued to criticize the Nigeria Military denying media access to news.

There are signs that the poor condition of IDP camps might improve in Yola if the new grant (116 million naira) given by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to the American University of Nigeria (AUU) for Internally Displaced Persons are well utilized. Also, there are already some international bodies on ground assisting people in IDP camps in several areas. Some of these groups include the Red Cross, the United Nations Population Fund,

²⁹ ThisDay, FG Harmonises Terrorism Prevention Acts of 2011 and 2013 page 9, Thursday September 10, 2015

(UNFPA), United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (UN-CERF), the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) among others. With limited government resources, these groups have assisted raped victims, provided clothes and drugs to IDPs. There is a collective call for international support by the ranks of Nigerian political leaders at every international event. In all his international trips and home audience to international community and diplomatic mission in Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari has continued to solicit international collaboration and support against ISWAP. Although the sincerity and integrity of the President has continued to galvanize practical supports but the lack of an executive cabinet has continued to limit the ability of the Nigeria government to be more holistic in addressing upshot problems of Boko Haram displacement and soft approach against terrorism in the North East.

Recently in September, President Obama hosted a group of world leaders at the United Nations in a summit to discuss the ongoing fight against the terror group ISIS and the global spread of violent extremism. The summit offered a platform for representatives of countries currently confronted by violent extremism to discuss alternative approaches to addressing the menace of extremism globally with representatives from West Africa well represented.

At the ECOWAS level, there is growing regional cooperation across all sectors. Irrespective of the shortcomings with ECOWAS, there is a renewed cooperation among states and technical assistance in all fields. This remains a corner stone for the successful implementation of ECOWAS CTS. At the 15th International Economic Forum on Africa, held in Berlin, Germany, recently, ECOWAS Commission President Kadre Desire Ouedraogo pledged to cooperate with the rest of the world towards meeting the African Development Agenda.

Military

There is a dead silence on the takeoff of the 8,700-strong regional “Multinational Joint Task Force” (MNJTF) to fight Boko Haram. This is particularly disheartening considering the fact that the ECOWAS CTS is anchored on regional and international cooperation. Nigeria agreed with Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Benin³⁰ June 2015 to set up Force to fight Boko Haram but the last that was held in September was the release of Fund³¹. Although respective countries are making individual efforts against ISWAP at different fronts in their respective countries, instances of

³⁰ Parliamentary Network for Conflict Prevention <http://pnpcp.net/news/regional-multinational-joint-task-force-combat-boko-haram> viewed 11 September 2015

³¹ The Federal government has released 25 million dollars for the take off of the Multinational Joint task force of three Countries Headquartered in Njamena. Commander, Multinational Joint Task Force, Major General Iliya Abba said this while on tour duty to Gamboru, Borno state when Nigerian troops hosted the National Flag after routing extremists. <http://www.nta.ng/2015/09/15/fg-releases-funds-to-multinational-joint-task-force-to-fight-insurgency/>

joint air bombardment and land operations were recorded on several occasions. In Nigeria, both the military and ISWAP are engaged in tactical chess operation game. Just the same way the Boko Haram has responded to Nigeria Military measures, the Nigeria Military has continued to respond with different measures. In September, the Nigeria Military was very effective with interception of ISWAP logistics. Several kingpins and logistical supplies like fuel, drugs, stimulants, food and weapons were intercepted. Again, while the MNJTF is a welcomed development, a regional force is needed to surmount the present challenges that West Africa is confronted with. The lack of defined structure for regional cooperation in the area of intelligence, investigation, prosecution and counter-terrorism operation, a prerequisite for effective CTS has continued to hamper success in ECOWAS CTS.

In accordance with the Nigeria Constitutions and relevant international laws and protocols that Nigeria is signatory to, the Nigeria Army has continued release of innocent people who were arrested as suspects but were found innocent after thorough investigation. On the 9th of September, 128 suspected members of ISWAP were released by the Army. This action complies with the Nigeria Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) by making deliberate effort to ensure adequate protection of fundamental human rights in states where active counter terrorism activities are ongoing. This principle is one of the objectives of both the Nigeria Counter Terrorism Strategy and the ECOWAS Counter Terrorism Strategy. Again, the core principle guiding the ECOWAS CTS is the primacy of prevention and the respect for human rights. Also, one of the objectives of “pursue pillar” of both the ECOWAS CTS and the Nigeria CTS is the elimination of impunity and punishment only to the limit allowed by law.

As a way of maintaining its regional relevance beyond Nigeria, ISWAP has continued its attack on non-Nigeria territories. In Cameroon, no fewer than 10 people were killed and at least 100 injured when 3rd of September 2015 a suicide bomber detonated a bomb near an army camp in northern Cameroon where soldiers are confronting ISWAP extremists. On October 20, 2015 Amnesty International reported that ISWAP has slaughtered close to 400 civilians in northern Cameroon, while a heavy-handed response by government security forces and inhumane prison conditions have led to dozens more deaths. As alleged against Nigeria, Cameroonian security forces have raided villages, destroying homes, killing civilians and detaining over 1,000 suspects, some as young as five years old. Serious incidents have not been effectively investigated, including a case of at least 25 deaths in custody. More than 130 people remain missing³².

Regional Response

In pursuance of the objectives of the ECOWAS CTS to give effect to regional, continental and international counter terrorism instruments and provide a common operational framework, for

³² Amnesty International, Cameroon: Hundreds slaughtered by Boko Haram and abused by security forces <https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2015/09/cameroon-hundreds-slaughtered-by-boko-haram-and-abused-by-security-forces/>

the prevention and combating of terrorism and related crimes in West Africa³³, ECOWAS Chiefs of Defence Staff met in September 2015 over regional security. As a multinational approach to end security related challenges within the ECOWAS member nations, the 35th edition of ordinary meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff (CDS) was held in Dakar, Senegal. Among other things, the meeting deliberated on the new structures of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) and the Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD). Nigeria Defence College has particularly continued to champion regional training among senior personnel of ECOWAS member states and beyond. In the month under review, participants of Course 24 of the Nigerian National Defence College (NDC), based in the capital city of Abuja, called on the ECOWAS Commission to strengthen its role in the promotion of economic integration, peace, security and social justice in the region. This is particularly imperative, coming in the same month of the 35th edition meeting of the Chief of Defence Staff.

Although the ECOWAS was set up to promote economic integration across the region, it has since become very effective across other facets, including security. The East Africa already has a Standby Brigade while the African Union Standby Force (ASF) is expected to commence training in October and become fully operational by December 2015³⁴. The ASF is expected to free Africa of non-Africa Forces in conflict resolution within the continent. Considering the conflict that Africa is drawn in, 25,000 strong ASF may not be sufficient for deployment. However, the ASF will be highly resourceful in many ways when operational irrespective of strength in number. The strongest feeling about operationalising the ASF is the capacity of AU to fund its one billion United States Dollars estimated budget for its' complete set up. The AU has greatly being hampered financially.

Also in September, stakeholders of ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) agreed that taking ownership of the project is one of the major ways of ensuring greater stability in West Africa region. The ECOWAS member states forces have become known for their penchant for human rights abuses. The ECPF compliments the CTS in many ways, especially on the issues of human rights violation in security operation within the region.

Within the Sahel belt of the ECOWAS, there is a deliberate integration often hampered by political decisiveness. Although the MNJTF has been quiet of late, it signals the incremental cooperation within the region. Currently, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria that are within the Sahel belt met in September to strategise on a common comprehensive data base initiative. There is currently a lack of economic information and data requirements for modeling and orientation decisions which can help propel common and integrated development in the region.

³³ Dr Deo B. (2013) ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan Draft Director, Institute Of Security Studies Regional Office for West Africa

³⁴ Campbell J. Good News about the African Standby Force <http://blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2015/10/20/good-news-about-the-african-standby-force/>

The Coup in Burkina Faso no doubt was one of the most engrossing tasks that confronted the ECOWAS in September 2015. With a collective voice, the ECOWAS eventually restored the interim government and its initial set mandate to power. There is no doubt the effort reflects the sophistication of the regional body in peaceful resolution of crisis in the region but the question in every one's lips has been “what actually happened to ECOWAS early warning system? With three attempts to overthrow the government in the past and if the early warning system was functional, why was the ECOWAS unable act early enough? The re-installation of Burkina Faso's Transition President Michel Kafando on September 23 by West African regional leaders marked the end of a one-week coup that had been carried out by former guards of the country's ex-President Blaise Compaore.

Given the abuses committed by Boko Haram extremist group in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroun and Chad, and those by extremist elements in Mali, leaders from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the timely avowed commitment to ensure the Burkina Faso crisis does not degenerate into a major crisis in the sub-region was a big gain for the region. Another country in the region embroiled in arm struggled would have been a heavy blow on ongoing effort to curb rising arm violence by terror groups within the region.

Conclusion

Among several things deducible in the month of September is evident by increasing threat to regional stability, security and peace in the ECOWAS region. Again, while approaches of CTS in ECOWAS have been overly military in approach, responsive and forceful, it has often ignored the primacy on cause elimination, preventive measures and respect for human rights. While nations within ECOWAS continue to battle the scourge of terrorism, good governance measures and democratic culture are often left at the base of counter terrorism strategy by member states. Again, there are no robust and proactive institutional capacities by ECOWAS to assist member states in their quest to prevent and fight terrorism. This is particularly one of the challenges that have undermined peace agreements in Mali. More so, there is a sheer lack of capacity of states security forces and weakness of state institutions to address the remote and immediate cause. In Mali, government forces have not been able to provide security to the larger north and in Nigeria, intelligence gathering and interagency cooperation continued to hamper the defeat of extremist elements. This is worsened by the lack of capacity of the ECOWAS to ensure the coordination of member states activities in the fight against terrorism and structural dysfunctionalities in member states.

Recommendations

1. Primacy of prevention and respect for human rights among member states
2. The balance of both military nonmilitary strategies and tools
3. Good governance and democratic culture as a guiding principle for Counter terrorism

4. Improved intelligence gathering and succor to affected victims terrorism
5. Improved transparency in the management and handling of suspects with regular publication of suspect names in military detention
6. Improved technical capabilities for sustainable peace agreements before they are signed
7. Sincerity of purpose of and political decisiveness among member states
8. Clearer framework for soft approach to countering terrorism in ECOWAS