

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES**



**CONSTRUCTING TO DESTROY: A CRITICAL  
EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF IDENTITY  
CONSTRUCTION IN THE STUDY OF TERRORISM  
IN WEST AFRICA**

**BY  
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## DECLARATION

I, Francis Kwabena Atta, do hereby declare that apart from documentary and other sources of material cited and acknowledged in the thesis, I am entirely responsible for the authorship and any errors which may be found in this work.

I also declare that this work has never been submitted by me or any other person to any other University for the award of any degree.

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## **DEDICATION**

*This work is dedicated to the Almighty God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It is He who gave the inspiration, strength and resources to successfully complete this study. I am forever grateful to Him.*

*Also dedicated to the memory of my parents.*

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AQIM	-	Al-Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb
ASEAN	-	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATR	-	African Traditional Religion
AU	-	African Union
BBC	-	British Broadcasting Corporation
CIA	-	Central Intelligence Agency
CNN	-	Cable News Network
CSS	-	Critical Security Studies
CTS	-	Critical Terrorism Studies
DVD	-	Digital Versatile Disk
ECOWAS	-	Economic Community of West African States
EU	-	European Union
FBOs	-	Faith Based Organizations
GCBC	-	Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference
GSPC	-	The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
GTD	-	Global Terrorism Database
GTI	-	Global Terrorism Index
IEDs	-	Improvised Explosive Devices
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
ISGH	-	Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
ISWAP	-	Islamic State West African Province

ISSER	-	Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research
ISIS	-	Islamic State
JNIM	-	Group to Support Islam and Muslims
JTF	-	Joint Task Force
JVP	-	People's Liberation Front
KNUST	-	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
LECIAD	-	Legon Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy
LPC	-	Liberian Peace Council
LTTE	-	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MNJTF	-	Multi National Joint Task Force
MUJAO	-	Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa
NACTEST	-	National Counter Terrorism Strategy
NATO	-	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGOs	-	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPFL	-	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OAU	-	Organisation of African Unity
RAND	-	Research and Development (Corporation)
RFI	-	Radio France International
TV	-	Television
UK	-	United Kingdom
US	-	United States
WANEP	-	West African Network for Peacebuilding

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>xi</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>xii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>xiii</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.0 Background of the Study.....	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem.....	7
1.2 Objectives of Study.....	10
1.3 Research Questions.....	10
1.4 Operationalization of Concepts.....	11
1.5 Scope of Study.....	16
1.6 Significance of the Study.....	17
1.7 Limitations of the Study.....	19
1.8 Organization of Thesis.....	19
Endnotes.....	21
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>23</b>
2.0 Introduction.....	23
2.1 Critical Versus Traditional Approaches to International Security Studies .....	24
2.2 Critical Security Studies and Constructivism .....	25
2.3 Critical Security Studies.....	26
2.4 Critical Terrorism Studies.....	27
2.5 Critical Security/Terrorism Studies and Empirical Research .....	32
2.6 Critical Security/Terrorism Studies: Critique .....	36
2.7 Conclusion .....	38
Endnotes.....	40
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>41</b>

3.0	Introduction.....	41
3.1	Identity Construction and Complexities .....	41
3.2	Defining Terrorism .....	44
3.2.1	Critical Perspectives on Terrorism.....	46
3.2.2	Causes of Terrorism .....	47
3.2.3	Counterterrorism .....	48
3.3	Terrorism in West Africa .....	51
3.3.1	The State, Religion and Religious Militancy .....	51
3.3.2	Contemporary Religious Militancy in West Africa .....	53
3.3.3	Implications for the West African Sub-Region.....	54
3.5	Conclusion .....	54
	Endnotes.....	56
	<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	<b>59</b>
	<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>59</b>
4.0	Introduction.....	59
4.1	Qualitative Research Methods .....	59
4.2	Data Collection Techniques .....	60
4.2.1	In-Depth Interviews .....	61
4.2.2	Recruitment of Respondents .....	63
4.3	Other Sources of Data .....	64
4.3.1	Speeches from Politicians .....	65
4.3.2	Media Reports .....	67
4.3.3	Observation .....	70
4.3.4	Secondary Data .....	70
4.4	Selection of Cases .....	71
4.5	Ethical Considerations .....	72
4.6	Data Analysis .....	73
4.7	Ensuring Validity and Reliability .....	73
4.8	Conclusion .....	74
	Endnotes.....	75
	<b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>	<b>76</b>
	<b>CONSTRUCTION OF THE IDENTITY OF THE TERRORIST IN WEST AFRICA AND THE IMPLICATION FOR COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>76</b>
5.0	Introduction.....	76

5.1	The Three-Source Approach to Understanding the Construction of Terrorism Knowledge .....	77
5.2	Examining the Identity of the Terrorist in West Africa: The Perspective of the Public .....	80
5.2.1	Religious Fanatics .....	81
5.2.2	Politically and Economically Motivated Fighters .....	100
5.2.3	Deprived, Marginalized and Desperate Fighters .....	118
5.3	Constructing the Identity of Terrorists: The Perspectives of Politicians .....	126
5.4	Constructing the Identity of Terrorists: The Role of the Media .....	133
5.5	Constructing the Identity of the Terrorist: The Role of Global Politics and Global Discourse ....	139
5.6	The Subscribed Identity of the Terrorist .....	143
5.7	Conclusion .....	151
	Endnotes .....	155
	<b>CHAPTER SIX .....</b>	<b>160</b>
	<b>CONSTRUCTION OF THE IDENTITY OF THE TERRORIST IN WEST AFRICA AND THE IMPLICATION FOR COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>160</b>
6.0	Introduction .....	160
6.1	Overview of Current Counterterrorism Strategies .....	163
6.1.1	Counterterrorism Strategy of Burkina Faso .....	163
6.1.2	Counterterrorism Strategy of Nigeria .....	166
6.1.3	Counterterrorism Strategy of Ghana .....	168
6.1.4	Counterterrorism Strategy at the Regional Level .....	170
6.2	A CTS Approach to Terrorism .....	180
6.3	Integrating Research Findings into Cts Alternative Conceptualizations and Implications for Counterterrorism Strategy .....	185
6.3.1	Terrorism Defined by Nature and Purpose of the Act of Violence .....	185
6.3.2	Terrorism as a Social Construct .....	191
6.3.3	Terrorism Not a Preserve for Illegitimate Non-State Actors .....	194
6.3.4	Terrorism as a Strategy Not a Creed .....	197
6.3.5	Emancipation .....	198
6.4	Integrating the Sources in the Social Discourse: Toward an Outside-the-Box Conceptualization of Terrorism .....	208
6.5	Conclusion .....	218
	Endnotes .....	220
	<b>CHAPTER SEVEN .....</b>	<b>222</b>
	<b>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>222</b>

7.0	Introduction.....	222
7.1	Summary of Key Findings .....	222
7.1.1	Key Driving Principles of Critical Terrorism Studies.....	223
7.1.2	Methods and Sources of Information to Critically Understand the Nature of the Identity of the Terrorist in West Africa .....	223
7.1.3	Key Actors and Social Structures that Work to Perpetuate Terrorism in West Africa .....	225
7.1.4	How the Dominant Discourse Entrenches Terrorism in West Africa.....	226
7.1.5	How Cts Offers Plausible Insight into Rethinking Counterterrorism in West Africa.....	228
7.2	Contribution to Knowledge.....	230
7.3	Conclusions.....	232
7.4	Recommendations.....	235
7.4.1	Redefining Terrorism in West Africa .....	235
7.4.2	The Crucial Role of Academics .....	237
7.4.3	Setting the Agenda for West Africa .....	238
7.4.4	Rethinking Counterterrorism: Broadening the Scope of Counterterrorism Policy and Implementation .....	238
7.4.5	Strategic Talks .....	240
7.5	Suggestions for Future Research.....	241
	Endnotes.....	242
	Bibliography .....	244
	Appendices.....	253

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4. 1 Distribution of Interview Respondents .....	64
Table 4. 2 Distribution of Selected Speeches from Politicians .....	66
Table 4. 3 Distribution of Selected Media Sources.....	69
Table 5. 1 Main terrorist organizations operating in West Africa and their preferred names.....	147
Table 5. 2 Contrasting views about ascribed and subscribed identity of terrorists in West Africa .....	149
Figure 6. 1 Deaths Related to Terrorist Attacks and Deliberate CT Operation .....	174
Table 6. 2 Difference between the dominant and CTS understanding of terrorism according to CTS scholarship and manifestation of both in West Africa based on fieldwork .....	183
Figure 6. 3 Respondents main source of information .....	210
Figure 6. 4 Respondents Contribution to Social Discourse .....	211
Figure 6. 5 Understanding the Identity of the Terrorist: A New Conceptual Framework .....	212

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. 1 Terrorism Attacks by Region – 16 <sup>th</sup> to 30 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019 .....	5
Figure 1. 2 Terrorism Related Deaths in Africa by Region – 16 <sup>th</sup> to 30 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.....	6
Figure 1. 3 Map of Terrorism Incidents from 1st to 15th April 2019 .....	8
Figure 6. 1 Deaths Related to Terrorist Attacks and Deliberate CT Operation .....	174
Table 6. 2 Difference between the dominant and CTS understanding of terrorism according to CTS scholarship and manifestation of both in West Africa based on fieldwork .....	183
Figure 6. 3 Respondents main source of information .....	210
Figure 6. 4 Respondents Contribution to Social Discourse .....	211
Figure 6. 5 Understanding the Identity of the Terrorist: A New Conceptual Framework .....	212

## ABSTRACT

Terrorism is one of the greatest security threats to many West African states currently. For instance, in the Lake Chad Basin area, Nigeria and other states are aggressively fighting the Boko Haram and the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) militants. Westward toward the Sahara is another group of five states, the G5 Sahel Group, also fiercely fighting incessant violence by jihadist groups affiliated to al Qaeda and the Islamic State. However, rather than shrinking, terrorist groups appear to be swelling in the face of national, multinational and regional counterterrorism efforts. This study questions the basic philosophy driving the current counterterrorism strategies in West Africa. It seeks to understand the identity of the terrorist in West Africa through a critical lens and the implication for counterterrorism strategy. The study is framed within Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) theory, keeping a skeptical attitude toward the dominant understanding of terrorism discourse. The methodology is heavily influenced by the choice of the CTS perspective employing multiple sources – interviews, media reports and speeches. Coded data were analysed thematically within the CTS framework. The study found that adopting a CTS approach in defining terrorism offers a more robust, more contextualized and clearer framework for defining terrorist acts unlike the existing conceptualization. It further found that terrorism in West Africa has assumed a patron-client structural dynamic. Consequently, the study identified, firstly, the “terrorist sponsor” as a complex elitist network of politicians, religious leaders, ethnic leaders and economic leaders who have diverse interests in the perpetuation of terrorism; and secondly, the “terrorist combatant” who, with the help of misinterpreted Islamic doctrine, is recruited, trained, armed and commissioned by the “terrorist sponsor” to carry out acts of violence. The relationship between the two is hinged on mutual benefits derived from the clientelist structure of society. This study, therefore, recommends a redefinition of terrorism in West Africa based on CTS conceptualisation and the sub-region’s unique structural, social and historical circumstances. CTS inspired and West African contextualized definition of terrorism will clearly identify what a terrorist incident is and what is not and will adopt appropriate preventive terrorism strategies at the structural level using political, religious, economic and communal or ethnic means to break the bond between sponsors and combatants. Again, strategy formulation and implementation should significantly involve all the three key levels – the ECOWAS Community level, national level and local community level.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background of the Study

Terrorism has been a dominant field in international security studies since the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington on September 11, 2001. It marked a new epoch in the study of international security. In the weeks following the attack, then United States President George Walker Bush declared war on the masterminds of the attack and their supporters. Bush declared in 2001 that “We’re fighting a war ... against the most evil kinds of people.”<sup>1</sup> The war on terror as it became known has been an integral part of international security discourse for almost two decades. Thus, the discourse on terrorism as an academic field of study has advanced with many books, funds and academic journals dedicated to its study.<sup>2</sup>

However, terrorism still remains one of the most contested subjects of study in international relations. Academics, observers and practitioners have debated its conceptual and methodological problems.<sup>3</sup> This resulted in the development of an alternative approach to the study of terrorism called Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS).

The theoretical and philosophical bases of CTS adopted from the key principles of Critical Security Studies (CSS)<sup>4</sup> have made a significant mark in the international Security Studies literature in the last decade.<sup>5</sup> The CTS philosophy demands a critical look at the frequently taken for granted elements of the discourse surrounding terrorism and counterterrorism. Among other things, it is committed to methodological plurality and reflexivity.<sup>6</sup> CTS scholarship is also particular about

the political and emancipatory role of knowledge and most importantly the social constructions and labeling involved in the field of terrorism.<sup>7</sup>

For instance, CTS scholars argue that states and international organizations give meaning to who a ‘terrorist’ is in order to develop a particular policy towards the terrorist. Hagmann<sup>8</sup> demonstrates how Swiss post 9/11 counter-terrorism policy was an amalgamation of politics and domestically constructed knowledge to mirror the global discourse.<sup>9</sup> According to Fitzgerald,<sup>10</sup> in the United Kingdom and France, nationals who leave to fight with extremists in the Middle East, for instance, are given labels such as radicalized persons –but not terrorist.<sup>11</sup> Even before 9/11, Jonathan Spencer<sup>12</sup> wrote that the Sri Lankan government labelled the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the People's Liberation Front (JVP) activists as ‘terrorists’ during the country’s civil war in the 1980s.<sup>13</sup> States have largely played a leading role in defining who is a terrorist and what is terrorism. However, the role of states as sources of terrorist activity, according to CTS scholars, has been taken for granted by mainstream terrorism discourse. The dominant discourse on terrorism has also largely defined terrorism based on illegitimacy of actors rather than the nature of the violence.

The difference in conceptualizing the subject matter of terrorism has consequently shaped the construction of the identity of terrorists in academic, social and in the global discourse.<sup>14</sup> The construction has undoubtedly also influenced the adoption of counterterrorism policy toward the terrorists. A major example is the kind of militarized global war on terror – which seeks to destroy all terrorists and their collaborators as commissioned by President Bush in 2001.<sup>15</sup> What is apparent, however, is that while the debate continues in practice and in the academic sphere and

the war on terror continues unabated, the challenge of terrorist attacks keeps evolving with even higher lethality as the years progress. This rise in terrorist activities is particularly true about Africa and West Africa.

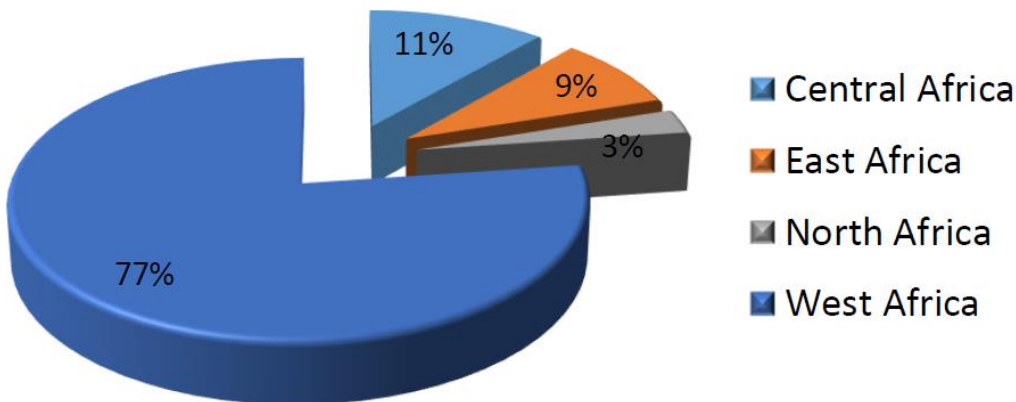
In Africa, a total of 114 attacks and 1,944 fatalities were recorded from independence up to 2006, according to the Global Terrorist Index (GTI).<sup>16</sup> However, by 2016 (a decade later), the figure had soared to 2,051 attacks and 13,182 fatalities – with fatalities representing both perpetrators and victims.<sup>17</sup> Notable among the attacks were the 2013 Al-Shabaab attack on Kenya's West Gate Mall killing 71; the 2015 Garissa University attack killing 148 and injuring over 79 people in Kenya. In the same year (2015), an armed group attacked the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako, Mali killed 20 and took 170 hostages.<sup>18</sup> Perusing further the impact of terrorism in Africa relative to other parts of the world, the Global Terrorism Index saw the region as dominant in terms of number of fatalities per attack ratio.<sup>19</sup>

Even more worrying is the West African situation. The genesis of attacks in Burkina Faso in 2015 and the prolificacy thereafter, added to the woes already experienced in Nigeria, Mali and Niger. The nature of terrorist activities in the sub-region that evolved since 2009 was heavily influenced by the crucial role of the Boko Haram group in Nigeria.<sup>20</sup> Mali and Nigeria became the terrorism flash-points in West Africa by close of 2013. The emergence of Ancar Dine in Mali in 2012 and the concurrent operations of the Al Qaida of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the Sahel region of West Africa presented a peculiar challenge to security and development in the sub-region.<sup>21</sup> In Nigeria, the Boko Haram group reached its peak in 2014 when it became the world's deadliest terrorist group, killing over seven thousand five hundred (7,500) people within a year. In all, the

Boko Haram group was responsible for over twelve thousand (12,000) deaths in Nigeria through terrorist attacks from 2013 to 2015 alone. Meanwhile, the Boko Haram death toll in Nigeria dropped significantly the following year, killing only 762 in 2016, 81% drop from the previous year (2015). The drop was attributed to various reasons, including the success of state counterterrorism strategy and internal conflicts within the Boko Haram group.<sup>22</sup>

However, while terrorist attacks and casualties dropped in Nigeria in 2016, the opposite was the case in Burkina Faso. On January 15 and 16, 2016, gunmen attacked three facilities – the Splendid Hotel, the Cappuccino Restaurant and Yibi Hotel all in the capital Ouagadougou. Thirty deaths were recorded in those attacks.<sup>23</sup> Again, on August 13 and 14, 2017, gunmen opened fire on the Hotel Bravia and the Istanbul Restaurant in Ouagadougou killing 19 people and injuring about 25 others.<sup>24</sup> On March 2, 2018 the Burkina Faso Capital Ouagadougou experienced its third major terror attack in two years. Heavily armed militants attacked the French Embassy and the Headquarters of Burkina Faso's military. The attack left about 30 persons dead and 85 others injured.<sup>25</sup> These are just a few examples of terrorist attacks the country has experienced since 2016. Roland Benedikter and Ismaila Ouedraogo<sup>26</sup> cite how two towns in the country's northeastern Sahel region – Taouremba and Baraboulé have been victims of incessant attacks, including a November 2017 attack which killed at least six in Taouremba.<sup>27</sup> These conflicts have forced over 12,000 northern residents to flee their homes, according to United Nations reports.<sup>28</sup> Mali and Niger are other states that have suffered incessant terrorist activity in the sub-region. West Africa is currently the region with highest concentration of terrorist groups. It is also the host of about seventy percent of total terrorist attacks and terrorist related deaths in Africa by April, 2019. This is represented in the second half of April 2019 edition of the African Terrorism Bulletin:

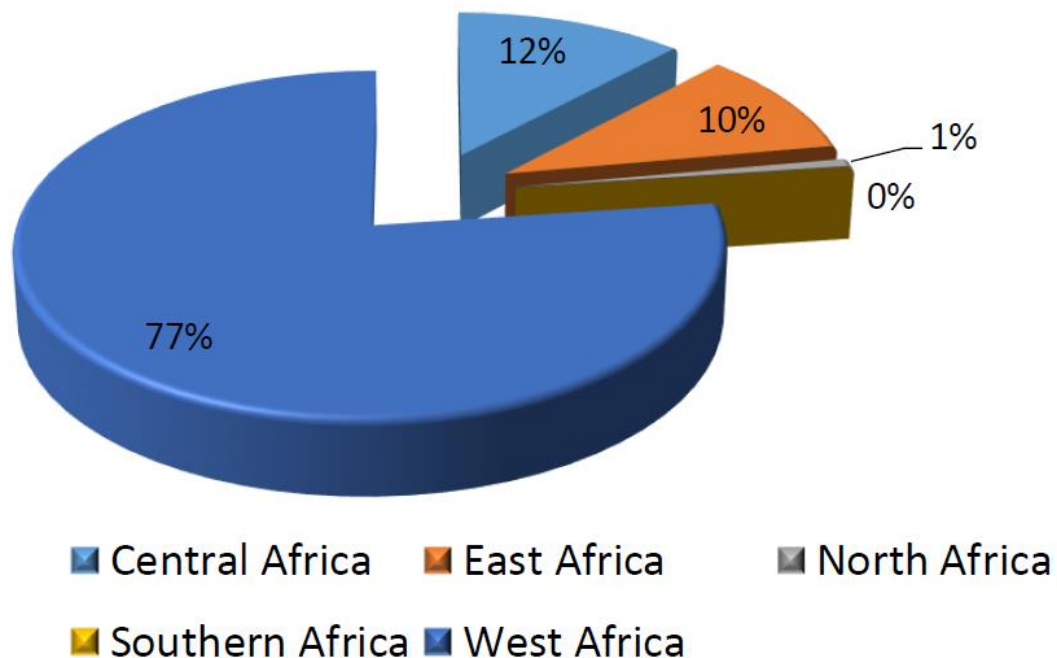
**Figure 1. 1 Terrorism Attacks by Region – 16<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2019**



Source: African Terrorism Bulletin (Edition No: 008)

West Africa alone experienced a total of fifty-four (54) attacks representing 77% of all attacks in Africa within the second half of April, 2019. This data is according to the African Terrorism Bulletin published by the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, official terrorism research institution for the African Union.<sup>29</sup> The staggering number of attacks also manifested in the total number of terrorism related deaths within the same period as represented in the chart below

Figure 1. 2 Terrorism Related Deaths in Africa by Region – 16<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2019



Source: African Terrorism Bulletin (Edition No: 008)

In the same period of 16<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2019, West Africa saw two hundred and twelve (212) deaths as a result of terrorism related acts. The deaths are distributed as follows: civilians – one hundred and twelve (112); military thirty-seven (37) and terrorists sixty-two (62). This West African number of deaths measures against thirty-three (33) for Central Africa, twenty-eight (28) for East Africa and two (2) for North Africa.<sup>30</sup>

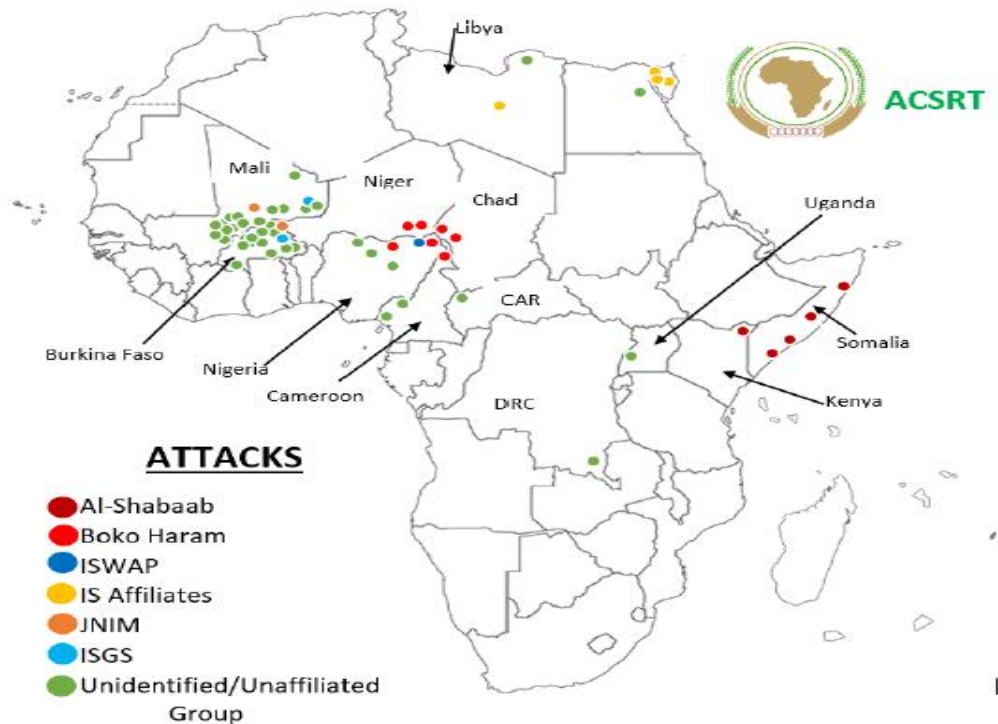
However, the overwhelming number of attacks and deaths are largely concentrated in four countries out of the sixteen countries in West Africa. The cases of Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are remarkably different from other West African countries such as Ghana. Despite being close neighbour of Burkina Faso, Ghana has never experienced a reported terrorist attack since

independence. These dynamics in the sub-region and the urgent need for solution to the challenge of terrorism present West Africa as an interesting setting to study terrorism using other less dominant approaches such as CTS.

## **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Terrorism has been one of the greatest threats to both national and human security in West Africa in the past decade. For instance, in the Lake Chad Basin area, Nigeria and other states are aggressively fighting the Boko Haram and the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) militants. Westward toward the Sahara, is another group of five states, the G5 Sahel Group, also fiercely fighting incessant violence by jihadist groups affiliated to al Qaeda and the Islamic State militants. The states affected have largely relied on the approach of the global war on terror adopted in the post 9/11 era. Nigeria adopted a national strategy in 2014 (revised in 2016) and currently operating a Multinational Joint Taskforce with its neighbours in the Lake Chad region. Countries in the Sahel operate a common strategy named Operation G5 Sahel Group, in addition to their national frameworks. At the regional level, ECOWAS adopted a strategy and plan of action in 2013 providing a framework within which member states would implement their respective strategies. These largely military reliant strategies adopted at state, multinational and community levels have not been able to contain the challenge of terrorism in the West Africa. Rather, terrorist groups have proliferated in numbers and swelled in membership in the last decade. As at April, 2019, for instance, West Africa was home to the largest concentration of terrorist groups in Africa. This translated also into number of terrorism incidents in the same period carried out by West African based terrorist groups. This is represented in the African Terrorism Bulletin below:

**Figure 1. 3 Map of Terrorism Incidents from 1st to 15th April 2019**



Source: African Terrorism Bulletin (Edition No: 007)

Meanwhile, the decade of proliferation of terrorist groups and incidents in West Africa also saw an intensified debate in academic discourse as regards the nature, causes and best way to counter terrorism. This global academic discourse on terrorism was largely influenced by the emergence of CTS discourse<sup>31</sup> which has since sought to critique the dominant understanding of terrorism and the global war on terror since 2008. Consequently, terrorism as a sub-field of international security studies has evolved greatly in the past decade. The CTS critique of mainstream study and dominant understanding of the subject of terrorism, has paved way for academics to conceptualize the subject differently in different countries and societies.<sup>32</sup> CTS has since played a very significant role in the development of the body of literature in the study of terrorism, especially in Europe. More

significantly, CTS has played a crucial role in the development of counterterrorism policy in many European countries.<sup>33</sup>

However, the CTS philosophy has seen very scant application in developing countries such as those in West Africa. Thus, alternative approaches to studying terrorism are fundamentally limited. Waeber,<sup>34</sup> a pioneer of Critical Security Studies (which anchors CTS philosophy), expressed skepticism about application of the largely Eurocentric philosophy outside of Europe and questions how the epistemological principles will fit into environments of developing countries.<sup>35</sup> While Solomon Hussein<sup>36</sup> did a phenomenal work by applying the CTS philosophy in West Africa using the cases of Mali and Nigeria, his work lacked primary field research. Solomon also defined Critical Security Studies narrowly using the Welsh School's emancipatory approach.<sup>37</sup> By conceptualizing Critical Security Studies this way, Solomon undermined the discursive elements of the philosophy: elements necessary for the full appreciation of CTS theory. It is still largely unknown how a comprehensive application of CTS philosophy in the West African context will look like and how that application can influence counterterrorism strategy in the sub-region. This CTS theoretical challenge, together with the frantic need for a more effective solution to the challenge of terrorism in the sub-region necessitates the exploration of more innovative ways to conduct research in terrorism in West Africa.

Hinged on the core principles of Critical Terrorism Studies and using Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Ghana as cases, this study critically examines how the identity of the terrorist in West Africa can be understood using a CTS lens. It further interrogates how an alternative critical conceptualization of terrorism in the sub-region could offer a better approach to building an effective

counterterrorism strategy. The study argues fundamentally that defining and studying terrorism in West Africa using CTS offer more alternative approaches to tackling the menace which has defied the current counterterrorism strategies. The research work sets forth to pursue the following objectives:

## **1.2 Objectives of Study**

The general objective of this research is to examine how the identity of the terrorist could be understood using CTS principles and the implication for counterterrorism strategy. Specifically, it seeks to achieve the following:

- To understand the key arguments of Critical Terrorism Studies;
- To examine the methodological and theoretical orientation best suitable for studying terrorism critically in West Africa;
- To explore the factors, actors and processes that drive the construction of the identity of terrorists in the societies of the selected countries in West Africa;
- To assess how the dominant discourse on terrorism contributes to the structures that perpetuate terrorism in West Africa;
- To critically examine the extent to which Critical Terrorism Studies philosophy offers an alternative approach to counter terrorism in West Africa.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

Based on the objectives above, the study is driven by the following research questions:

- What are the key assumptions and driving principles of Critical Terrorism Studies?

- What specific methods and sources of information can be employed to critically understand the nature of the identity of the terrorist in West Africa using CTS?
- How do key actors and social structures work to perpetuate terrorism in West Africa?
- How does the dominant perception and knowledge around the identity of terrorists strengthen the structures, actors and processes responsible for the rise of terrorist activities in the Sub-region?
- How does a CTS driven conceptualization of the identity of the terrorist offer a plausible insight into rethinking counterterrorism in West Africa?

## **1.4 Operationalization of Concepts**

### ***Critical***

The terms “critical” is used in this study contextually to refer to the application of the core arguments of Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) as an approach of Critical Security Studies. It means the work examines terrorism in West Africa through the lens of CTS. Firstly, it does so by using CTS philosophy and empirical data to examine the current dominant discourse or construction of terrorism in West Africa. Secondly, it assesses the implications of using CTS philosophy as an alternative approach to conceptualize terrorism in the sub-region.

### ***Terrorism***

The study recognizes that terrorism has varied definitions and meanings to different scholars, entities, states and organizations. It is, therefore, necessary to define what exactly is referred to as terrorism in this research. Since the research is set in West Africa, it is important to define the concept of terrorism in relation to the accepted definition of member states in the sub-region. This

study, therefore, adopts the definition of terrorism contained in the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, 1999.<sup>38</sup> This definition was reaffirmed by the 2013 ECOWAS Counterterrorism Strategy and Action Plan as its working definition.<sup>39</sup> Article one of the Organisation of African Union (OAU) Convention defines terrorism as:

Any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a State Party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any person, any number or group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage and is calculated or intended to intimidate, put in fear, force, coerce or induce any government, body, institution, the general public or any segment thereof, to do or abstain from doing any act, or to adopt or abandon a particular standpoint, or to act according to certain principles; or disrupt any public service, the delivery of any essential service to the public or to create a public emergency.<sup>40</sup>

The 2013 ECOWAS Strategy and Action Plan outlines the forms and manifestations of terrorism to include “acts of kidnapping, hijacking, hostage-taking and the demand and payment of ransom, bombing of public and private properties and critical infrastructures, acts of sabotage and the desecration of religious and other cultural sacred places.”<sup>41</sup> For the purpose of this study, therefore, the use of the term terrorism or terrorist activity refers to any act of violence – such as shooting, bombing, highjacking, decapitation, kidnapping – that has been acknowledged by the respective state and generally reported in the media and recognized institutional reports as terrorist act. Terrorists as used in this study refer to persons or groups who plan and carry out or intend to carry out acts of terrorism.

### ***Identity***

Rawi Abdelal et al<sup>42</sup> define identity in terms of a social grouping that differs from other groups with respect to two key dimensions - content and contestation. Content defines what constitutes the group’s shared identity which comes in four types: constitutive norms, relational comparisons,

cognitive models and contestation. Constitutive norms denote both formal and informal rules that define membership in a particular social category. Social purposes refer to the goals and aspirations that are shared by members of the social group. Relational comparisons, on the other hand, refer to the definition of the group in terms of what it is not. It defines the way a particular group sees and regards other identity groups, particularly in the instances where those opinions about the other are a defining part of their identity. Cognitive models refer to the position or understandings of political and material circumstances and interests that are fashioned by a particular identity.<sup>43</sup>

The second dimension - contestation - refers to the level of agreement members of a group have with respect to the content of their shared identity. The collective meaning given to the content of the group by its members is not fixed. It is instead the result of a process of social contestations within the group. Individuals continuously propose and reshape the meanings of the groups to which they belong.<sup>44</sup>

Rawi Abdelal et al argue that these four types of content cover the diversity of social identities, while contestation addresses the variability in the nature of identities. More significantly, every social identity manifests the four types of content in different degrees and mixtures depending on the level and intensity of contestation within the group.<sup>45</sup> Nationality, religion, ethnicity, gender, class are all forms of identity which could be understood using this framework. Again, using this conceptualization helps us to distinguish - in the context of this study – the identity of mainstream Islam from the identity of radicalized Islamist groups. The conceptualization also affords the research the chance to examine identities of groups that perpetuate terrorism in terms of how group members give meaning to the content of their identity.

### *Identity construction*

According to David Laitin and James Fearon,<sup>46</sup> social construction of identity means “social categories, their membership rules, content, and valuation are the products of human action and speech.”<sup>47</sup> Following Castells,<sup>48</sup> three forms of social identity could be identified: legitimizing identity; resistance identity; and project identity.<sup>49</sup> Legitimizing identity is one created by dominant institutions such as the media, governments and intellectual elites and applied to specific social groups in order to justify and reinforce existing social structures. Secondly, resistance identity evolves within social groupings who appear devalued and marginalized by the dominant discourse. This identity is constructed “in response to the prevailing discourse about their group.”<sup>50</sup> Finally, project identity is newly created by social actors with the help of available cultural resource in order to redefine their place in society and to change the structures.<sup>51</sup> This view of identity construction, especially with regard to the first two forms, is also shared by many other scholars.

For instance, Jie Dong (2018) refers to ascribed identity and subscribed identity.<sup>52</sup> These terms are used to describe attributed identity and self-constructed identity respectively: Subscribed identity could also be termed as “achieved identity through which people claim allegiance to a group.”<sup>53</sup> This form of identity parallels Castells’ resistance identity. On the other hand, ascribed identity (similar to Castells’ legitimizing identity) is an identity ascribed to a group by others and often imposed rather than claimed by group members. This form of identity could be seen in “othering” processes, where pronouns like we, us, our, they, them, are used to create distinction between “us” and “them.”

Therefore, in this study, identity construction of terrorists is conceptualized to mean the intersubjective discourse that takes place in society from which shared knowledge about the “terrorists” is created. This social discourse involves a complex interaction involving media reports, speeches and comments of influential members of society, academic writings, activities of terrorist groups, activities of states and international organizations, global politics, and also importantly, the perceptions, experiences and opinions of everyday members of a particular society. Activities and doctrines of terrorists define their subscribed identity while their social environment defines their ascribed identity. Jarvis<sup>54</sup> posits that mechanisms such as media reports, speeches of political leaders, official documents, views of experts, popular culture, academic scholarship and opinions of everyday people are instruments that can be used to measure how the identity of terrorists are constructed.<sup>55</sup> Black<sup>56</sup> corroborates this view with his investigation into the construction of the identity of terrorists among British society using newspaper reports about the London Bridge attack in 2017.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Intersubjective Social Discourse***

Alex Gillespie and Flora Cornish<sup>58</sup> define intersubjectivity simply as having a shared definition of an object.<sup>59</sup> The shared definition is realized from the variety of possible relations between people’s subjective perspectives. Intersubjectivity is based on the assumption that social life is founded on interactions.<sup>60</sup> In an intersubjective social discourse, therefore, varied subjective perspectives from different actors interact to create a shared and an agreed (seeming objective) definition or meaning to an object. For this work, intersubjective discourse is conceptualized as the complex social interaction of different perspectives that eventually create shared and dominantly agreed meanings about terrorists and their identity.

### ***Dominant discourse***

The term dominant discourse in CTS scholarship is used to refer to the everyday knowledge of terrorism and terrorists. This is the kind of discourse prevalent in the media, in speeches and in everyday conversations among citizens.<sup>61</sup> The term is conceptualized in this study in the same sense. Dominant discourse on terrorism refers to the universally accepted knowledge about terrorism. Dominant discourse is often interchanged with “prevailing discourse” or “dominant terrorism knowledge” and often referred to in contrast to CTS discourse in the study.

### ***CTS Discourse***

CTS discourse is the understanding of terrorism based on the principles of Critical Terrorism Studies. It is often used in contrast to the dominant discourse. CTS discourse is viewed as an alternative and lesser known view about terrorism and the terrorist.

## **1.5 Scope of Study**

The study generally examines the role of identity construction in the study of terrorism. However, it is limited to the specific context of West Africa using the cases of Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Ghana. It makes reference to other key states in West Africa and Africa. The study is also situated in the international context and discourse on terrorism. Though mainly set in the post-9/11 period, this research work is not limited to a specific time period. It makes reference to specific historical events and activities.

More significantly, the research examines the basic perceptions of terrorism in West Africa using a CTS lens. It seeks to understand the discourse on terrorism in West Africa. As a critical approach it relies on the knowledge of everyday people as well as influential policy makers to examine how knowledge about the identity of terrorists is collectively understood. It does not have as a main

objective to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of counterterrorism strategies in West Africa. However, it explores the implication of the prevailing understanding of the subject of terrorism for counterterrorism strategy in the sub-region.

Finally, this research leans more toward theory. It situates Critical Terrorism Studies theory in the West African context. It critically examines the usefulness of CTS theory in the study of terrorism in developing societies such as West Africa. Then it takes a critical look at CTS itself examining its limitations as regards conceptualization of terrorism in developing countries where the theory is largely alien to. The study therefore, views terrorism more as an issue area to help examine the basic CTS principles. As a result of this focus and interest of the research, the core fieldwork is largely limited. Fieldwork is limited because it is driven by the theory and the theory has influenced the selection of, for instance, interview respondents, reliance on speeches and newspaper reports, among others. Secondly, fieldwork is limited because, the fieldwork is balanced with theory throughout the work. It does not make space for concentrated field report in any particular chapter. It rather balances theory and empirical research throughout the chapters to ensure robustness of analysis and critique simultaneously.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The risk posed to the world by terrorist activities continues to rise. The rise in terrorist attacks across the world since 9/11 moved parallel with the number of studies in the field in the same period. A large corpus of the studies in terrorism that spurred during this time was largely based on traditional mainstream understanding of the subject. The problems perceived in this mainstream understanding of terrorism gave rise to a new wave of studies in the field called Critical Terrorism

Studies, officially incepted in 2008 together with an internationally peer reviewed journal: *Critical Studies on Terrorism*.

After a decade of critique of traditional terrorism studies, CTS cases have largely been centered in Europe and to an extent North America, to the neglect of regions such as Africa, South America and Asia. In Africa, especially, alternative approaches to studying terrorism have been fundamentally limited. Waever (2004) expresses skepticism about application of the Eurocentric Critical Security Studies (the anchor of CTS) outside of Europe and questions how the epistemological principles will fit into different environments. Efforts to try an application of CSS in the developing world has still been very low.

This makes contribution of this work to the field particularly an important one. The study stands to significantly contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism but with an African lens. Aside contributing to knowledge, this research work serves as an important reference point for future researchers. The plethora of new research questions and areas this study brings out contribute to opening up the place of Critical Security Studies and for that matter Critical Terrorism Studies theory.

The contribution of this research to the social good is also immense. Terrorist activities breed violence, especially in Africa. Whatever the form and nature, violence leads to the breakdown of law and order and threatens civil liberties. As such, both international and national security is threatened. Development is bound to retard due to destruction of both human resource and property, creation of fear, anxiety and instability. Social, economic and religious activities are

often brought to a halt. Ultimately, there is a drain on the image of the states involved. This research work contributes significantly to the effort to find lasting solution to the challenge of terrorism in West Africa.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

Terrorism is a very sensitive topic globally and even more sensitive in West African countries, especially Burkina Faso and Nigeria due to the incessant attacks. This situation posed a limitation on the research in terms of primary data collection. The environment was not convenient for any other method of reaching respondents than to employ a strict snowball system. Despite the effort to get all the necessary data for this work, some proved futile. Prospective respondents refused to participate in the research due to the sensitivity of the topic under study. This challenge, however, did not impede the completion and quality of this work. The researcher and field research assistants were determined to get the necessary respondents needed to make the work complete. This challenge was mitigated with the use of high-profile interviews from institutions such as the Armed Forces of the countries studied, the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the African Terrorism Bulletin and the ECOWAS Counterterrorism Strategy and Action Plan. At the end it was worth carrying out the research despite the challenges.

### **1.8 Organization of Thesis**

This research work is arranged in seven chapters:

Chapter One is the introduction to the study. It outlines the background to the study, research problem and objectives. The chapter also sets the research questions that guided the research. Is also discussed how key terms were conceptualized as well as significance and organization of the thesis.

Chapter Two sets the theoretical framework for the research. It discussed in detail the core philosophies of critical security studies and its key paradigms or approaches, particularly Critical Terrorism Studies on which the research is hinged theoretically.

Chapter Three reviews relevant literature in the research area. It discusses among other things the definitional challenges and debates surrounding the concept of terrorism. It further discusses in detail how the identity construction of terrorists has been treated in the academic literature. A detailed discussion of the study of terrorism in West Africa is also done to give insight and in-depth understanding to the study.

Chapter Four outlines the methodology driving the research. It discusses in detail the philosophy of qualitative research and the key guidelines that direct such research. It further addresses the data collection techniques including selection of respondents and how other sources of data were acquired aside the interviews.

Chapter Five presents the field work results and analysis of data. It discusses how the use of source and theory triangulation, a key analysis tool of in critical security studies was used to present and analyze the data sourced from the field.

The findings are interpreted and discussed in Chapter Six. The discussion is driven by the five key arguments derived from CTS conceptualization of terrorism. The chapter also examines the implication of a CTS conceptualized terrorism for counterterrorism strategy in West Africa.

The thesis then concludes with a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations in Chapter Seven.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.0 Introduction

The broad objective of this study is to examine the identity of the terrorist in West Africa through the lens of Critical Terrorism Studies and the implication for counterterrorism strategy. This chapter outlines the theoretical framework for the research. It answers the first research question driving this study by examining the key assumptions and driving principles of Critical Terrorism Studies theory. Peter Burgess<sup>1</sup> defines theory as a system of ideas that offers the basis for attributing meaning to raw data. He argues that “pure data only yield meaning when linked to a set of general ideas whose truth and rationality do not enter into question, including the link they implicitly or explicitly make to the data.”<sup>2</sup> The research is underpinned by Critical Terrorism Studies as an approach of critical international security studies. In their 2009 seminal work, Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen surveyed the key debates that had characterized the evolution of international security from the post-1945 period to the post-Cold War era. Their conclusion was that it was a necessity to conceptualize security away from the overly state centric-hardcore-military-style to a more diverse set of understandings which are both self-reflective and self-critical.<sup>3</sup> This broadening debate had of course started more than a decade earlier with key broadening scholars such as Ken Booth,<sup>4</sup> Keith Krause and Michael Williams,<sup>5</sup> Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen,<sup>6</sup> Richard Jackson,<sup>7</sup> Lee Jarvis,<sup>8</sup> among others, leading the crusade with their influential contributions in the field. They became the bearers of the various critical approaches of critical security studies.

## **2.1 Critical Versus Traditional Approaches to International Security Studies**

Critical Security Studies approaches challenge the core assumptions of traditional (most importantly neo-realist) international security paradigms. They question the relevance and effectiveness of the neo-realist ideas of rationality and their state-centric position on international security. Critical security scholars challenge the predominance of military power in an anarchic environment, importance on order and predictability as well as the structural understanding of international politics.<sup>9</sup> Critical approaches essentially contest positivist and rationalist ontology and epistemology. By this, Critical scholars reject positivist, universal knowledge claims and value-free truth. Critical approaches argue that knowledge is always socially and inter-subjectively constructed.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Critical scholars argue that security is not an object out there to be studied but a product of construction by human minds. As such, the conventional notion of security as the preserve of the state and its military is a biased construction, which should be challenged. Critical approaches also contest the material obsession of realism, arguing materialism limits analysis to physical variables ignoring ideas and context.<sup>11</sup>

These perceived problems Critical scholars identify with (neo) realists and positivist approaches lead Critical scholars to challenge prevailing characteristics of the state, such as sovereignty, national interest, security and even knowledge itself.<sup>12</sup> It thus, demands from producers of knowledge to be self-critical – to question their own motives vis-à-vis what they present as knowledge. Critical Security Studies scholars, therefore, rather than assuming value neutrality, overtly acknowledge and accept the relationship between politics and structures of power and how these structures are represented in their scholarship.<sup>13</sup>

Critical Security Studies philosophy could be summarized in four key features. Firstly, in terms of epistemology, they question positivist approaches to knowledge, and state that there cannot be neutral, empirically proving fact about the social world. Secondly, ontologically, they challenge rationalist understanding of human nature and action but rather emphasize social meanings given to identities of actors or subjects of study. Thirdly, methodologically, they reject a single scientific method but advocate methodological plurality. And finally, normatively, critical theorists reject value-free theorizing.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.2 Critical Security Studies and Constructivism

From an ontological standpoint, critical approaches adopt constructivism. To a very large extent, the distinction between critical epistemology itself and that of constructivism appears to be a blurring one. For example, Karacasulu and Uzgören assert that:

The generation of critical theorists in the 1990s was labeled “constructivists” because of their characteristic concern with the social construction of world politics”. On the reverse ... “constructivism is critical in the sense that it aims to recover the individual and shared meaning that motivate actors to do what they do.”<sup>15</sup>

From the above, it appears critical theory and constructivism move together naturally. As pointed out by Karacasulu and Uzgören, both theories complement each other and in the field of international security, sometimes used interchangeably, or presumed to be functionally the same. Nicholas Onuf<sup>16</sup> coined the term constructivism in International Relations in his groundbreaking book *World of Our Making*.<sup>17</sup> He is considered the pioneer of International Relations Constructivism. The significance of constructivism in International Relations was, however, influenced by Alexander Wendt. Nicholas Onus argues in *World of Our Making* that facts are not elements of objective knowledge because they somehow display an inherent correspondence to

reality. Rather, facts, whether social or natural, are constructions and that “people and societies construct, or constitute, each other.”<sup>18</sup>

Slaughter<sup>19</sup> sees Constructivism as “a set of assumptions about the world, human motivation and agency and that its counterpart is not Realism, Institutionalism, or Liberalism, but rather Rationalism.”<sup>20</sup> The literature on constructivism in International Relations and for that matter International Security Studies has been a matter of intense debate as to the real identity of Constructivism in the field. But Hannes Peltonen argues it is odd to assume that the evolution of constructivism has somehow been “wrong.”<sup>21</sup> Hannes’ argument is that social constructivism is itself socially constructed, thus implying that there is no “right” or “wrong” way for it to evolve. This argument is both interesting and valid. For if constructivists undermine and reject value-free objectivity in knowledge construction, then there cannot be an objective agreement about the place of Constructivism itself in IR and International Security Studies.

### **2.3 Critical Security Studies**

Arguably, security is the IR sub-field that has seen the widest expression of critical theory. Krause and Williams<sup>22</sup> present the core assumptions of critical security: First, the main players in world politics are “social constructs, and products of complex historical processes that include social, political, material and ideational dimensions.”<sup>23</sup> Second, they are “constituted (and reconstituted) through political practices that create shared social understanding.”<sup>24</sup> Thirdly, international politics evolves through social processes but not static. Again, there is no single neutral fact in the social world and, therefore, accepted methodology should be an interpretive one. Finally, the rationale of theory is not for explanation but focus on understanding.<sup>25</sup>

Essentially, all the assumptions enumerated above cut across the various approaches of critical security studies – such as securitization, Critical Terrorism Studies, feminist positionality, Emancipation/Human Security, among others. They also share common features with Constructivism as indicated earlier. These as well constitute the basic critique of the dominant (neo) realist thought on security and international politics.

The Copenhagen School, the Aberystwyth (Welsh) School and the Paris School have dominated the critical security studies approaches. These schools are group of scholars based in their respective cities and champion specific strands of CSS theory. For instance, Barry Buzan and Ole Waever in the Copenhagen School have been known to champion Securitisation theory. The Welsh School, led by Ken Booth, is known for Emancipatory Security while the Parish School has advanced the scholarship ideas related to Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. Despite their different perspectives, these Schools largely share in the core philosophy of CSS and have collectively shaped the field of study over the last decade.

## **2.4 Critical Terrorism Studies**

Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) is one of the many approaches of Critical Security Studies. In effect, CTS shares in the basic philosophy of critical security studies and Constructivism. Like Critical Security Studies, CTS bases its premises on the inherent weaknesses in research that is hinged on the traditional security studies. CTS scholars lay the foundation for their argument by referring to four main criticisms of the traditional terrorism studies literature: Firstly, CTS cites acute methodological and analytical flaws, including a dependence on poor research methods and procedures and over-dependence on secondary information. Secondly, traditional terrorism studies

has its philosophical and established origins in conventional and mainstream security studies. As a result, much terrorism research adopts state-centric priorities and viewpoints and inclines to replicate a narrow set of assumptions and accounts about the nature, causes and responses to terrorism.<sup>26</sup>

The third criticism is the level to which terrorism scholars are openly linked to state institutions and sources of power in ways that make it problematic to separate state from academic domains.

The main consequence of such links is that together with certain state, military, think-tank and public intellectuals, the leading terrorism studies scholars now constitute an influential and exclusive ‘epistemic community’ – a network of ‘specialists with a common world view about cause and effect relationships which relate to their domain of expertise, and common political values about the type of policies to which they should be applied.’<sup>27</sup>

By this argument, CTS scholars contest the political influence states exert on the subject of terrorism in academic circles. The objection is further premised on a key principle of critical theory – that knowledge production is an exercise of power and that the one who produces knowledge also possesses power. For critical theorists, this power in the scholar’s possession should be used to emancipate those under subjugation – but not to further suppress.

Finally, CTS critiques that the dominant knowledge of the field of traditional terrorism studies is that of ‘problem-solving theory.’ They posit that the mainstream literature does not interrogate how the status quo (the hierarchies and operation of power and the inequalities and injustices generated) contributes to the challenge of terrorism itself. Furthermore, by employing social scientific language and methods, traditional terrorism scholars make political assumptions about terrorism and disguise them as technical issues. These supposed scientifically inquired results are then used by the wielders of power to decide terrorism’s major ethical and political issues.<sup>28</sup>

After critique, CTS scholars set to define CTS scholarship. In his work, “The Core Commitments of Critical Terrorism Studies” Jackson defines CTS as follows:

CTS refers to terrorism related research that self-consciously adopts a skeptical attitude towards state-centric understandings of terrorism and which does not take existing terrorism knowledge for granted but is willing to challenge widely held assumptions and beliefs.<sup>29</sup>

Ontologically, CTS regards terrorism not as a creed or kind of politics in itself. However, terrorism is seen as a “tool used at specific times, for specific periods of time, by specific actors and for specific political goals.”<sup>30</sup> The implications of this viewpoint is that the ‘terrorist’ label is not a fixed identity and that ‘terrorists’ may choose to abandon the “terrorism tool” as an approach for achieving political aims.<sup>31</sup>

Epistemologically, CTS regards knowledge as a social process constructed through language, discourse and inter-subjective practices. Secondly, CTS argues that knowledge is always closely connected to power – knowledge is “always for someone and for some purpose.”<sup>32</sup> CTS, therefore, starts with an insistence on the non-existence of impartial knowledge about terrorism. CTS rather demonstrates a serious concern to the ways in which terrorism knowledge can be used as a political tool to perpetuate hegemonic ends. CTS, therefore, sets off by putting to question “who is terrorism knowledge for, and what functions does it serve in supporting their interests?”<sup>33</sup>

Methodologically, keeping to the core principles of Critical Security Studies, CTS adopts “methodological and disciplinary pluralism; in particular, a willingness to adopt post-positivist and non-IR-based methods and approaches. In this sense, CTS refuses to privilege materialist,

rationalist and positivist approaches to social science over interpretive and reflectivist approaches.”<sup>34</sup>

Normatively, CTS completely admits the ethical and political content inherent in the topic of terrorism. Rather than trying to uphold a false neutrality or objectivity, CTS openly observes the principles of universal human and societal security. This is in direct opposition to the traditional, closely defined conceptions of national security in which the state takes priority over any other actor. Additionally, as an approach of Critical Security Studies, CTS adopts a core tradition of Critical Theory – emancipation. CTS is thus committed to a wide conception of emancipation, which is understood as the realization of greater human freedom and human potential and improvements in individual and social actualization and well-being.<sup>35</sup>

In summary, terrorism could be “critically” defined based on the following key attributes as outlined by Jackson<sup>36</sup> and Jarvis:<sup>37</sup>

- i. Terrorism is a social construction. No act of violence in itself automatically becomes terrorism – it is rather a product of intersubjective social discourse.<sup>38</sup> It is the act of producing, constructing or labelling something “terrorist” – be it a shooting, bombing or hijacking – that transforms any particular bombing or hijacking into an act of terrorism.<sup>39</sup>
- ii. An act of terrorism is a deliberate and pre-determined strategy of political violence which can be used by any actor – individual, group or state – in pursuit of a specific strategic goal. (a) As a strategy it means that actors can decide to abandon its use and seek other means or strategies to achieve their goal including peaceful means. (b) As a political violence it can be distinguished from other forms of violence meant to terrify populations.

Such forms of (non-terrorist) violence may include acts of organized criminals seeking to obtain financial reward, the fear caused by a serial killer. (c) Used by “any actor” means this act of political violence could be separated from the individual or group perpetuating the violence. Most significantly, the same actor using violence today does not necessarily mean they will use violence tomorrow. It also means it is not employed by non-state actors alone but can be employed by states as well.<sup>40</sup>

iii. Targets of acts of terrorism are the audiences of the violence not necessarily its victims. It is a form of political communication in which the victims are used as instruments to convey a message to the audience. Victims are selected purposely for symbolic reasons. Example is the use of disappearances, torture and killing by states as a strategy to send a message to opponents that the state is ruthless in dealing with opposition.<sup>41</sup>

iv. Terrorism is intended to cause fear and intimidation. The goal to cause fear can typically be seen from the kinds of targets, context and expected consequences of the violence. For example, actors’ indiscriminate use of bombs and other weapons in public places are clearly intended to terrify the wider society.<sup>42</sup>

From the foregoing, it could, therefore, be said that terrorism is a socially constructed concept used to describe acts of political violence by state and non-state actors that target a strategically selected portion of a population in order to send a message to a specified audience. Inferring from this definition and the central arguments in this chapter, four fundamental elements of CTS can be summarized as follows: (a) terrorism is understood to be a social construct, (b) it puts states into the “perpetuators of terrorism” group, (c) the act of terrorism is separated from the persons who commit it such that they can abandon it for other methods or strategies and (d) inferring from these

three points, the focus of terrorism knowledge and practice should be aimed at emancipation of the human individual rather than the state.<sup>43</sup> Violent acts considered terrorist may include but not limited to targeted and indiscriminate shooting, bombing, highjacking, decapitation, kidnapping, use of mines and torching. These core element of CTS guide the interpretation and discussion of the field data. This CTS conceptualization of terrorism defined based on the nature of the act is fundamentally different from the dominant conceptualization which focuses on the nature of the actors involved. Indeed, the OUA/AU and ECOWAS definition of terrorism as stated in Chapter One of this study is informed by the dominant discourse – defining terrorism in terms of non-state actors. This study, therefore, seeks to reconceptualized the existing understanding of terrorism in West Africa, examining the implication for counterterrorism strategy.

## **2.5 Critical Security/Terrorism Studies and Empirical Research**

Critical scholars have employed Critical Security Studies or CTS as framework for their empirical studies. Bonditti et al<sup>44</sup> used genealogy as an historical method to study security. The researchers used online resources to study kettling as a police tactic in the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany. This was done by using transnational digital collaboration among the researchers who worked across different languages. The researchers also relied heavily on the depth of local historical knowledge of protests in their various countries or locations. They then consolidated their perspectives on specific political contexts and institutions in different countries for the analysis. Bonditti and his colleagues found this genealogy method as an effective way of studying security, an alternative to the use of traditional empiricist methods.<sup>45</sup> While this form of CSS work is not a core CTS study, the authors' use of political and institutional context is very significant. This largely supports the argument that a proper study of terrorism and security in West Africa

must be set within the historical and socio-political context of the sub-region. The study of Bonditti et al illustrates how non-traditional methods could be employed in security studies without compromising on quality and validity.

In “Representations of terrorism and the making of counterterrorism policy” Hagmann<sup>46</sup> draws on social theory to form the framework for the analysis of representations of terrorism in Switzerland.<sup>47</sup> Applying social theory to contemporary Swiss terrorism politics reveals the realities of the political powers involved in the construction of danger in terrorism discourse in Switzerland.<sup>48</sup> Using a form of social theory he termed as “dialectical causal framework,” Hagmann was able to research into the peculiar ways in which terrorism was constructed in Switzerland, “the implementation of a number of specific outcomes – such as the reinforcement of national intelligence services, the deepening of international security cooperation and the tightening of financial control by Swiss authorities.”<sup>49</sup> Unlike the work of Bonditti et al above, Hagmann’s study is a core CTS study informed by CTS philosophy. His discussion of the contribution of socially constructed terrorism knowledge to the designing of Swiss counterterrorism policy is a confirmation of the power in knowledge construction. Like Hagmann, the present study argues that academics, media, politicians and other key stakeholders in society play a key role in constructing terrorism knowledge and for that matter contribute significantly to the kind of counterterrorism policy eventually adopted at the state or regional level.

Black<sup>50</sup> uses the principles and methodological propositions of CTS to study representation of the identity of the terrorist in the United Kingdom following the London Bridge attack in 2017. The analysis was drawn from an initial sample of 359 newspaper reports, which were collected from

the major news outlets in the UK: *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times* and *The Guardian*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* and *the Sun*. These newspapers collected on the days following the attack were subjected to qualitative thematic analysis.<sup>51</sup> Black's conclusions reveal the extent to which newspaper coverage of the London Bridge attack helped to maintain representation of UK Muslim community as a threat to British values and security of the public.<sup>52</sup> Black's research tailored along the philosophy of CTS brought out the often taken-for-granted aspect of terrorism studies. Perhaps the largest contribution to this study from Black is his focus on the media as key drivers of social discourse. However, unlike Black who appears to overemphasize the role of the media to the neglect of other key players, this study uses the media as just one of five different sources in understanding the construction of the identity of terrorists.

Hansen,<sup>53</sup> unsatisfied with how gender was being treated at the Copenhagen School, uses the story of the "Little Mermaid" to protest how Buzan and colleagues had mishandled the subject in the School. The Copenhagen School is used to refer to the group of scholars (such as Buzan and Waever) known to be lead scholars in Securitisation, a strand of Critical Security Studies. Using the term "security as silence" Hansen used an anecdote to demonstrate what happens when insecurity cannot be voiced. According to her, women "raising something as a security problem is impossible or might even aggravate the threat being faced."<sup>54</sup> She states in the opening of her work that her main intention was to point out the 'striking absence of gender' in security discussions at the Copenhagen School.<sup>55</sup> Hansen uses the cases of honour killings in Pakistan to demonstrate that gender insecurity manifest not only as social redistribution but essentially also as matters of survival, noting that the security of specific individuals is deeply rooted in collective constructions of subjectivity and security.<sup>56</sup> Hansen's work is not a core CTS study. However, the

idea of giving voice to the voiceless and vulnerable who are the most affected sections of society is instructive.

Relying on the Copenhagen School's Speech-Act Theory (Securitization) and using Sierra Leone as a case study, MacKenzie<sup>57</sup> explores the place of women in post conflict reconstruction. She employs discourse analysis to explore what she terms the "construction of 'soldier' and 'victim' by post-conflict programs in Sierra Leone."<sup>58</sup> She argues that the identity of females who actively fought in the country's decade-long civil war was constructed socially in the post-conflict period through titles such as "females associated with the war," "dependents," or "camp followers."<sup>59</sup> This, according to her, had expression in the unwillingness of reintegration agencies to recognize females who took part in the war as soldiers. She further posits in her conclusions that men and masculinity "are securitized in post-conflict situations while women—even when they act in highly securitized roles such as soldiers—are desecuritized and, in effect, de-emphasized in post-conflict policy making."<sup>60</sup>

MacKenzie's work is a true example of how Critical Security Studies philosophy and methods could be used in research. She used three core methods of CSS: Case study, speech-act discourse analysis (as proposed by Buzan et al in Securitization) and finally feminist positionality. All three find expression in interpretivist methodology - which is the core methodological standpoint for CSS. Also, by adopting a feminist standpoint, she assumes a self-reflective position, hence does not claim value neutrality. Thus, MacKenzie's work leans more toward the securitization strand of CSS than CTS. However, her use of multiple methods is very significant.

## 2.6 Critical Security/Terrorism Studies: Critique

Critical Security Studies has been criticized for its Eurocentrism. All the major schools – the Copenhagen School, the Paris School and the Welsh School whose scholars have been spearheading the agenda of CSS have all been Europe based. Virtually all the leading scholars of CSS and CTS are based in Europe. CSS, according to Steven Miller,<sup>61</sup> is a narrow view of international security from the lens of Europeans. Writing to counter the 2009 work by Buzan and Hansen,<sup>62</sup> Miller asserts that traditional security scholars view the debate differently and the idea of the dominance of the traditional security studies is a mere misconception conceived in the view of European critical scholars.<sup>63</sup>

Closely related to the foregone is what Jarvis refers to as the “straw person” criticism.<sup>64</sup> CTS is critiqued for assuming there is an existing unified mainstream terrorism for which reason there is supposed to be a CTS alternative. Critics argue that a greater part of the CTS critique against traditional terrorism studies had indeed existed before the birth of the CTS discourse and that there is really nothing new in the core claims of CTS.<sup>65</sup> The theory is again criticized for its lack of coherence, particularly as regards its relationship with the Frankfurt School’s Critical tradition.<sup>66</sup> For instance, while Critical scholars such as Krause and Williams view the “critical” as “willingness to encourage pluralism and inclusivity,”<sup>67</sup> others like Booth<sup>68</sup> and Hussein<sup>69</sup> interpret it more narrowly to mean the Frankfurt School’s “emancipatory” conception of security. This defeats CTS’ claim of representing a unified body of knowledge.

Ole Waever,<sup>70</sup> himself a pioneer of CSS, expresses pessimism about the success of the philosophy of critical security studies outside Europe. Waever acknowledges that the success of CSS in Europe

is due to specific factors that are peculiar to Europe - such as the relationship that exist between policy makers and academia, structures of academic funding and the natural tendency for European scholars to build security communities as an adaptation to communal life among European states.<sup>71</sup> He contends these factors are different from the American situation. Security debate in the United States would more likely be about soft realism versus hard realism rather than critical versus traditional security as pertains in Europe. He therefore proposes the study of CSS in fields other than Europe such as developing countries and continents with fundamental differences from Europe in order to know its real universality and applicability.<sup>72</sup>

Mike Bourne and Dan Bulley<sup>73</sup> criticize the over reliance on ethics in critical security approaches. Singling out the Welsh School approach which views security as emancipation of the “human,” Bourne and Bulley argue that Critical Security Studies as propounded by Ken Booth and his companions rather present a “fundamental insecurity of ethics.”<sup>74</sup> Using the 1998/99 Kosovo crisis as the test case, the authors contend that military intervention must be given a place in Critical Security Studies. They argue this is helpful in situations where it is necessary to deal with real cases where the “human cannot easily be secured, where ethics is not simple – such complexity and insecurity must be embraced.”<sup>75</sup>

The criticisms notwithstanding, CTS still provides the best framework for this study. This research indeed contributes to addressing some of the criticisms such as the critique of Eurocentrism and Waever’s concerns about applicability in developing countries.

## 2.7 Conclusion

Critical Security Studies approaches, though largely share common epistemological and ontological standpoint, differ in many ways. The different approaches emanate from the various schools - Copenhagen School (Securitization), Paris School (works based on ideas of Bourdieu) and Welsh School (Emancipation).<sup>76</sup> Feminism/Gender and Critical Terrorism studies have also gained grounds as formidable approaches to critical security studies.<sup>77</sup>

Critical Security Studies further show intense differences in terms of methods and politics. Scholars in same schools do employ varied methods and ideas in expressing their version of a particular approach. Thus, critical approaches are self-critiquing.<sup>78</sup> Another striking element of Critical Security Studies is the pluralism of methods. Scholars freely adopt different interpretivist methods such as genealogies, anecdotes, case studies, surveys and discourse analysis.<sup>79</sup> Adopting pluralist methodological and political standpoints makes a crucial distinction between critical approaches and traditional approaches.<sup>80</sup>

This chapter has examined critical security studies and its different approaches especially Critical Terrorism Studies. It has assessed the relationship between critical security theory and traditional security theory and the place of Constructivism in the analysis. The chapter has also examined some empirical works that have used critical epistemology and methodology as well as some of the criticisms leveled against critical scholars. Key among the criticisms is the overly Eurocentric nature of critical approaches. This research work seeks to confront this challenge by assuming two lenses: examining the study of terrorism in West Africa through a Critical lens and an African lens simultaneously. The research progresses by using the key arguments of Jarvis and Jackson as

framework in exploring how terrorism is perceived and understood in West African states and whether or not CTS is able to explain the phenomenon in the sub-region.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 90.
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- <sup>21</sup> Peltonen, Hannes., 2017. op cit. p. 2.
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- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
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- <sup>26</sup> Jackson, Richard., 2007, p. 2.
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- <sup>29</sup> Jackson, Richard., 2007. op. cit. p. 3.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 5.
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- <sup>37</sup> Jarvis, Lee., 2019. op. cit.

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- <sup>38</sup> Jackson, Richard., 2007. op. cit. p. 4.
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- <sup>46</sup> Hagmann, Jonas., “Representations of Terrorism and the Making of Counterterrorism Policy,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol. 6(3), 2013. p. 442.
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- <sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 246.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 261.
- <sup>61</sup> Miller, Steven., “The Hegemonic Illusion: Traditional Strategic Studies in Context,” *Security Dialogue*, Vol 41(6) 2010, pp 640.
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- <sup>64</sup> Jarvis, Lee., “Critical Terrorism Studies After 9/11.” In Jackson, Richard. (Ed)., *Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies*, (London: Routledge, 2016), p 32.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid, p 33.
- <sup>67</sup> Krause, Keith & Williams, Michael., op. cit. p. 243.
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- <sup>76</sup> Waever, Ole., 2004a, op. cit., CASE Collective, 2006. op. cit.
- <sup>77</sup> Hansen, Lene., 2000. op. cit., Sylvester, Christine., 2007. op. cit., Jackson, Richard., 2007. op. cit.
- <sup>78</sup> For instance, Lene Hansen and Christine Sylvester belong to the Copenhagen School but critique the Securitization theory that emanated from the same school. Hansen, Lene., 2000. op. cit., Sylvester, Christine., 2007.
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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter has defined the theoretical framework for this study. This chapter reviews relevant literature pertaining to the research. It seeks to examine in detail the contributions of other scholars to the field of identity construction and terrorism.

#### **3.1 Identity Construction and Complexities**

James Fearon and David Laitin<sup>1</sup> define identity as “a social category that an individual member either takes a special pride in or sees as an unchanged and socially significant trait.”<sup>2</sup> Such categories could be an Ashanti, man, lesbian, Igbo, journalist, Protestant, among others. For Laitin and Fearon, to say identities are constructed socially “means that social categories, their membership rules, content, and valuation are the products of human action and speech, as such, they can and do change over time.”<sup>3</sup> Belonging to a category or having a sense of identity could have both good and bad sides for the behaviour of the individual member.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, Sen Amartya<sup>5</sup> argues that sense of identity can be cause of deep pride and joy and as well lift up self-confidence.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, identity can be a major source of violence - killing without any regard. This is because a strong and exclusive sense of belonging to one group may lead to the perception of distance and disagreement with other groups.<sup>7</sup>

The above notwithstanding, the importance and dynamics of identity significantly differ from circumstances. Sometimes other factors such as economic benefits can take precedence over identity belonging in an individual’s rational choices. For instance, using the 1992-95 Bosnian

intra-Muslim war in northwestern Bosnia as case study, Fotini Christia<sup>8</sup> employs consumer choice theory to explain why individuals engage in trade-off between identity and economic payoffs during civil wars.<sup>9</sup> This portrayal of identity complexity by Fotini Christia is corroborated by Katharina Schmid, Miles Hewstone, and Ananthi Ramiah.<sup>10</sup> The authors contend that contact with varied range of circumstances can give rise to “more complex multiple in-group perceptions.”<sup>11</sup>

Social identity construction and its complexity is elaborated in another perspective by Rawi Abdelal et al.<sup>12</sup> They define identity as a social grouping that differs from other groups with respect to two key dimensions - content and contestation. Content defines what constitutes the group's shared identity which comes in four types: constitutive norms, relational comparisons, cognitive models and contestation. Constitutive norms denote both formal and informal rules that define membership in a particular social category. Social purposes refer to the goals and aspirations that are shared by members of the social group. Relational comparisons, on the other hand, refer to the definition of the group in terms of what it is not. It defines the way a particular group sees and regards other identity groups, particularly in the instances where those opinions about the other are a defining part of their identity. Cognitive models refer to the position or understandings of political and material circumstances and interests that are fashioned by a particular identity.<sup>13</sup> The second dimension - contestation - refers to the level of agreement members of a group have with respect to the content of their shared identity. The collective meaning given to the content of the group by its members is not fixed. It is instead the result of a process of social contestations within the group. Individuals continuously propose and reshape the meanings of the groups to which they belong.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps the most conspicuous agreement between identity as viewed by Fearon and Laitin on one hand and Abdelal et al on the other is the in-group contestations that shape the evolution of the social group instead of being a static social entity. This also suggests that membership of groups is not mutually exclusive such that an individual may join more than one group and pattern of behaviour in one group may influence the behaviour of the individual in another group. All of these are necessary conditions to ensure the social group keeps evolving. This makes construction of the identity of the group, firstly, a social process and secondly, dynamic. It also means both group members and outsiders contribute to defining the identity of a particular social group. This is very significant, because while certain group identities such as males, females or ethnic groups may appear to be a natural phenomenon and taken as a given (but not social construct), what it means to be a member of these groups or the roles and certain membership attributes are socially constructed. This is done through an intersubjective social discourse involving both group members and outsiders.

This is elucidated by Castells.<sup>15</sup> Three forms of social identity could be identified, according to Castells: legitimizing identity; resistance identity; and project identity.<sup>16</sup> Legitimizing identity is one created by dominant institutions such as the media, governments and intellectual elites and applied to specific social groups in order to justify and reinforce existing social structures. Secondly, resistance identity evolves within social groupings who appear marginalized by the dominant discourse. This identity is constructed “in response to the prevailing discourse about their group.”<sup>17</sup> Finally, project identity is newly created by social actors with the help of available cultural resource in order to redefine their place in society and to change the structures.<sup>18</sup> This view of identity construction, especially with regard to the first two forms, is shared by other scholars.

For instance, Jie Dong<sup>19</sup> refers to ascribed identity and subscribed identity. These terms are used to describe attributed identity and self-constructed identity respectively: Subscribed identity could also be termed as “achieved identity through which people claim allegiance to a group.”<sup>20</sup> This form of identity parallels Castells’ resistance identity. On the other hand, ascribed identity (similar to Castells’ legitimizing identity) is an identity ascribed to a group by others and often imposed rather than claimed by group members.<sup>21</sup> This form of identity could be seen in “othering” processes, where pronouns like we, us, our, they, them, are used to create distinction between “us” and “them.”

By far, the literature examined appears to agree that group identities are socially constructed. The construction involved a complex social process in which both outsiders and group members contribute to creating an agreed and shared understanding of a particular social group. Secondly, other factors such as economic benefits could affect loyalty to a particular group. Thus, individual members may still have personal goals that may be at variance with larger group goals. This often results in various contestations responsible for the evolution of the group. This study explores the extent to which members and non-members of terrorist groups both contribute to the understanding of the identity of terrorists in West Africa. It argues that the understanding of the nature of the identity of a particular social group largely depends on the philosophy (lens) with which the identity is viewed.

### **3.2 Defining Terrorism**

Michael Burleigh<sup>22</sup> historically examines the concept of terrorism from its roots in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Western European societies to the present.<sup>23</sup> He traces the origins of terrorist groups to the early

“Russian nihilists, the Black International Anarchists, the Nationalist Irish Republican Brotherhood, to post 1960s terrorism in the form of Palestinian groups, the Red Brigades, the Red Army Faction.”<sup>24</sup> David Rapoport<sup>25</sup> emphasizes the notion of the “four historical waves of modern terrorism: The Anarchist Wave in the 1880s, the Anti-Colonial Wave in the post-World War I era, the New Left Wave (International Terrorism) in the 1970s and the Religious Wave which began in the 1980s.”<sup>26</sup> For him, terrorism could be defined and understood in its contemporary form only in the context of its historical origins and evolution.

Another historian, Ziad Munson<sup>27</sup> argues that the term terrorism originated from the French Revolution (1789 - 1799) where the term was used to define repressive actions by the junta to strengthen its hold on power by intimidating political opponents.<sup>28</sup> However, the term terrorism adopted an opposite connotation later. It became linked with defending new concepts of “justice and democracy against an old establishment viewed as tyrannical and corrupt.”<sup>29</sup> Terrorism became a tool for the weak and downtrodden to utilize to overcome more powerful and oppressive opponents.<sup>30</sup> Recognizing the challenge in agreeing on a common historical trajectory of terrorism, Brigitte Nacos<sup>31</sup> adopts a different approach to her study. She talks about “global terrorism,” “terrorism in the American context,” “religiously driven terrorism,” and “state terrorism.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, from the onset, the longstanding disagreement on a common definition for the term terrorism could be understood by the literature as the over politicization of the concept from its very origin.<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps the most important point from this longstanding definitional problem for terrorism is the overemphasis on the “actor.” From ideas above, most of the authors focused on whether or not a perpetrator of a terrorist act was a (powerful) state or a “weak and downtrodden” non-state actor.

Other references to “Russian nihilists,” “Nationalist Irish Republican Brotherhood” “religiously driven terrorism,” and “state terrorism” emphasize how scholars in terrorism studies have been obsessed with actor-focused understanding of terrorism over the past years. This actor-focused understanding of terrorism has been a dominant part of the main global discourse on terrorism in the post 9/11 period. Terrorism in this modern period has been largely understood in the dominant global discourse (including West Africa) to be violent acts perpetrated by non-state Islamist groups (mainly affiliated to al Qaeda or more recently the Islamic State). This understanding, from the discourse above, has its origins from historical scholarship on terrorism. This research, however, takes a different and very skeptical view about this dominant conceptualization of terrorism. This alternative approach adopted is the critical perspective on terrorism.

### **3.2.1 Critical Perspectives on Terrorism**

Richard Jackson, Lee Jarvis, Jeroen Gunning, and Marie Breen Smyth are the leading writers on Critical Terrorism Studies. In *Terrorism: A Critical Introduction*, Jackson et al outline their critique of what they describe as “conventional” terrorism studies by providing a counter explanation of terrorism.<sup>34</sup> These critical scholars largely define terrorism based on the nature of the violence – as a political tool. With this understanding, they argue, the “tool” of terror could be abandoned by those who employ it at any time. They also argue strongly for an attention to state terrorism and the need to pursue terrorist activities championed by states.<sup>35</sup>

The understanding of terrorism, according to critical scholars goes beyond definition. It also includes issues such as the scale of the threat posed by suspected terrorist groups and individuals, the efficacy of the existing counterterrorism strategies, raises moral questions like employment of torture in interrogations and targeted killings. CTS scholars as well question the actual labeling of

the individual as “terrorist.”<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, the use of concepts such as ‘traditional’ or ‘dominant’ versus ‘critical’ by Critical scholars has also been challenged. Critics argue that some of the ‘critical’ perspectives can be very rigid and biased in their own right.<sup>37</sup> In summary, while critical scholars focus on the type of violence to define terrorism, dominant scholars are more likely to define terrorism in terms of “who” is causing the violence.

### **3.2.2 Causes of Terrorism**

The literature on terrorism reveals significant differences in examining the main causes of terrorism. For instance, Wilkinson<sup>38</sup> identifies ethnicity, ideology, injustice and poverty as some of the remote precursors of terrorism.<sup>39</sup> Aside these social factors, he identifies political power struggles and the aftermath of such conflicts as well as a range of economic and cultural factors that do trigger acts of terrorism.<sup>40</sup> These precursors of terrorism are confirmed by Hall.<sup>41</sup> Like Wilkinson, Hall attributes the scourge of terrorist activities in society to the disparities and effects of the outplay of political, religious and ideological activities.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, Feliks Gross<sup>43</sup> on his part, argues that the precursors of terrorism in democratic societies are different from those found in autocracies. Gross cites the al-Qaida scourge against that US and the rest of Western societies as examples of terrorism waged against democracies and democratic societies.<sup>44</sup> He again avers that in autocracies, primarily in Eastern Europe, the major form of terrorism is individual terrorism targeting advocates of democratic systems.<sup>45</sup> In effect, Gross distinguishes group terrorism in the form of the al-Qaeda network specifically and jihadist groups in general against individual terrorism carried out mainly in non-Western societies.

In what he describes as “hybrid concept” of causes for terrorism, Sebastian Wojciechowski identifies what he terms as “radical ideologies and the attempts to implement them, the consequences of selected socio-economic problems, and specified destructive psychological processes”<sup>46</sup> as the core causes of terrorism. He calls these factors the “fuel of terrorism”<sup>47</sup>

The literature discussed have largely cited different and variant forms of precursors of terrorism. While societies differ and offer different social dynamics which may or may not facilitate terrorist acts, it remains difficult to pinpoint specific factors as the sole causes of terrorism in particular countries, regions or systems of government. Different indicators come together to provide conducive environments for terrorist activities to take place and get perpetuated. This may imply that every society has its unique structural, economic and political, cultural and social dynamics which work together to constitute the risk factors for terrorist activities.

### **3.2.3 Counterterrorism**

Emanuel Gross examines the legal difficulties and ethical problems confronted by democratic societies and governments in overcoming the challenge of terrorism. For him, the core problem lies within pursuing security on one hand and protecting civilian rights and rule of law at the same time.<sup>48</sup> Gross finds the cause of the major challenges in the fight against terrorism inherent in the difficulty with determining what actually constitutes terrorism. After this is the challenge of formulating the laws of war in countering terrorism. The problems regarding the laws of war are varied and may range from proper means to question captured suspects, influence of army commanders in terrorist prone territories, the treatment of civilians when state of emergency has been declared, and perhaps more importantly “the use of civilians by terrorists or armies as human shields, and thwarting terrorist acts through targeted killings of terrorist leaders and operatives.”<sup>49</sup>

Ben Saul agreed with Emanuel Gross on the particular difficulty the lack of consensual definition of terrorism poses to its fight. For him, a consensual international definition is a matter of necessity if any meaningful and substantial progress on counterterrorism can be achieved.<sup>50</sup> With terrorist operations daily threatening civilian liberties and peaceful political processes around the world, Saul argues that a definition based on consensus would be one that is able to differentiate between political and “private” violence and allow governments to use “acceptable proportionality” in their counterterrorism strategies.<sup>51</sup>

Using the United Kingdom as his case, Clive Walker<sup>52</sup> examines the relationship between counterterrorism law and politics. Walker examines the effect of European, international and trans-national counterterrorism legal systems “international cooperation in the extradition of terrorists, in countering terrorist activities, and how they relate to adherence to human rights considerations.”<sup>53</sup>

Following the lead of Walker, Amos Guiora<sup>54</sup> studied the counterterrorism strategies of seven states: India, Israel, Russia, Spain, the United States, China and Colombia.<sup>55</sup> He explores operational decisions surrounding governmental counterterrorism strategies and tactics, through a comparative study of the seven selected countries. He then eventually concludes that new forms of threats may need the adoption of new laws and counterterrorism strategies. He recognized the substantial differences in the threats that each of the states he studied faced.<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, in a separate study, Maria O'Neill<sup>57</sup> examined the role of the EU in formulating legal regimes on counterterrorism.<sup>58</sup> O'Neill's concerns from her study of the EU were supported by Ana Maria Salinas De Frias, et al.<sup>59</sup> Applying counter-terrorism policies domestically and internationally, the authors argue that governments often have the dilemma of facing various policy choices such as “balancing security and civil liberties, the tensions between criminal justice, counterterrorism and military measures, and legal aspects associated with counter-radicalization programmes.”<sup>60</sup>

Writing on the challenges to ASEAN countries counterterrorism efforts, Marguerite Borelli<sup>61</sup> argues that the structure of ASEAN as an international institution constituting different independent states requires consensual agreements on virtually all cases involving counterterrorism. This makes the organization limited in decision making. This limitation on the supranational institution, according to Borelli, results in four main challenges in ASEAN's counter-terrorism endeavour in South East Asia. These are slow process, weak concrete impact, precedence of domestic issues and unresolved territorial claims translating into opportunity for terrorists.<sup>62</sup>

As discussed earlier, different countries, regions and political systems have unique encounters with and experiences of acts of terrorism. This has automatically translated into counterterrorism policy by states and multinational groups seeking to formulate counterterrorism policies that will be relevant to their circumstances. Assessment of the counterterrorism strategies of the various countries as presented above presupposes that one of the very significant ways to adopt an effective counter measure against terrorism is to look at the basics underlying the challenge of terrorism.

This comes in the form of examining the social relations and structures of power that may be fueling terrorism. Understood from this perspective, any counterterrorism policy that will be drawn will in effect tackle the very foundational challenges that give rise to terrorism. This is why this present study seeks to understand the very social and structural factors that drive terrorism in West Africa. It argues, however, that the best way to examine this is look into the identity constructions and labeling given to the terrorists by their environment and by terrorists themselves. This could be a good beginning for an effective counterterrorism strategy for West Africa.

### **3.3 Terrorism in West Africa**

A lot of scholarly work has been done in examining the current terrorism incursion in West Africa. The works have largely focused on the reasons for the spread of terrorism in West Africa, the orientation and philosophy of the forms of terrorist groups in West Africa, the particular role of the Boko Haram group and the overall implication for the sub-region.

#### **3.3.1 The State, Religion and Religious Militancy**

It is generally agreed in academic scholarship that when it comes to development in Africa, religion has played a crucial role. For instance, Agbiji and Swart<sup>63</sup> contend that all the three main religions in Africa – Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR) play an important role in fighting poverty in the continent.<sup>64</sup> They emphasize that that these contributions are usually done through the shaping of moral values which are necessary for the development of every society.<sup>65</sup>

On Christianity, specifically, Ogonnaya<sup>66</sup> specifically examines how Catholic and other Christian Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) have been involved in national development in Nigeria.<sup>67</sup> In separate study in Ghana, Saa-Dade<sup>68</sup> found how tremendous the Catholic Bishops' Conference has

contributed to governance in Ghana since independence.<sup>69</sup> Particularly, during the transition period from the revolutionary days to the current Fourth Republic, Saa-Dade discovered that the GCBC was steadfast, consistent, persistent, bold and clear in its positions both in support and against government policies. The GCBC was frank about issues concerning bribery and corruption, ethnicity and tribalism, neo-patrimonialism, peace and security, environmental issues and economic issues.<sup>70</sup>

On the two other forms of religion prevalent in Africa, Awuah-Nyamekye<sup>71</sup> demonstrated how the oldest religion in Africa, the African Traditional Religion has offered concrete measures to ensure development in the continent. For Awuah-Nyamekye the very philosophies sustaining development both in the traditional and the contemporary times are inherent in ATR.<sup>72</sup> Ellis and Haar<sup>73</sup> related to the significant growth in Islamic NGOs offering service and development in health and education in many countries in Africa. The operations of the facilities operated by these Muslim NGOs were largely combined with proselytization.<sup>74</sup> Ogbonnaya<sup>75</sup> examines how both Islam and Christianity have contributed greatly to the development of both the West African state and the society. They both brought new patterns of life and worship, and in most cases contributed to the modernization of the society.<sup>76</sup>

The enormous support states got from religious institutions also played a negative role in development. Religion became a source of inspiring violence against the state. This challenge became even worse with the economic distress in the 1980s. Adebayor<sup>77</sup> outlines how the debt crisis in the 1980s resulted in the threat of collapse of most economies in Africa. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank responded by imposing a pro-liberalist policy in Africa,

the Structural Adjustment Programme, in order to restructure the African economies. The programme consisted major currency devaluation, exchange and interest rate liberalization, public enterprise privatization, liquidation and commercialization. It also involved removal of all subsidies and the launch of user charges on varieties of welfare services as well as freeze on public sector recruitment.<sup>78</sup>

The overarching result of all this was that the state increasingly became unresponsive to grievances of citizens; it was unable to provide security and law and order. Failure to perform these duties, the state increasingly began to lose control over its citizens. Citizens transferred their loyalties to more responsive authorities, groups or figures such as religious, clan, or group leaders.<sup>79</sup>

The issue of religion, therefore, became a two-edged sword for the African state. Religion was a source of development and at the same time was exploited to compete with the state for loyalty of citizens. To a large extent, the weakness of the state and more specifically inability to exert control over its citizens and the territory precipitated the rise of the challenge of violence. In contemporary West Africa, religion still plays an important role in violence in the sub-region.

### **3.3.2 Contemporary Religious Militancy in West Africa**

Contemporary religious militancy in West Africa associated with Islam far outweighs those associated with any other religion. Contemporary West Africa has seen a series of attacks against the state and individuals by Jihadist militants seeking to establish Islamic states in some West African countries. Key among those organizations have been *Boko Haram* in Nigeria, *Ansar Dine* in Mali, and the *Al-Qaeda* of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), operating in the Sahel region of West Africa. More recently, there is the formation of the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (JNIM),

the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP), and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGH). The main focus of these movements has been linked with the broader objective of the global *Al-Qaeda/Islamic State* Jihadist networks seeking to establish Islamic theocratic rule in their areas of influence.<sup>80</sup>

### **3.3.3 Implications for the West African Sub-Region**

Obi Cyril<sup>81</sup> argues that West African conflicts are usually regionalized. Obi, by this assertion draws attention to the fact that post-Cold War civil wars in West Africa have had spillover effects, moving in the form of a chain from one country to the other. The decade-long civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone fought throughout the '90s ended with another civil war in Guinea-Bissau between 1998 and 1999. A military coup d'état in Cote d'Ivoire in 1999 led to a civil war in 2002. Between 2002 and 2011 when the second civil war was waged, Cote d'Ivoire society was characterized by intermittent violence between the government and rebel forces. Further in the Man River sub-region has been the long running insurgency in the Casamance region of Senegal which has long bordered on quest for secession.<sup>82</sup> The AQIM attacks in Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso in 2016, in Burkina Faso in 2017 and 2018 and sporadic attacks in Mali give credence to Obi's assertions. Factors such as the flow of refugees, ex-combatants, mercenaries and arms across the region's porous borders facilitate transfer of violence from one country to another.<sup>83</sup>

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of the pertinent literature and themes around identity construction and terrorism in West Africa. While terrorism remains a contested issue definitionally, there is still a need to explore ways to define the phenomenon in the context of West Africa, as the literature has shown, ability to define terrorism and the identity of the terrorist is

necessary to promulgate and enforce laws to curtail the menace. The literature has largely been very sparse in terms of attempting to conceptualize terrorism that is context-specific to West Africa. This study, therefore, attempts to conceptualize terrorism away from the dominant discourse which has informed almost all counterterrorism strategies ranging from national, multinational to the regional level. In the desire to contribute to the terrorism literature in West Africa and CTS, this study asks a simple question: How will CTS conceptualized terrorism in West Africa identify the terrorist and what implication could such a conceptualization have on counterterrorism strategy? This question is answered in the study.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

The previous chapters have outlined the key theories and literature underpinning this study. This chapter examines the methodology employed in understanding the identity of terrorists and implication for counterterrorism in West Africa. The chapter answers the second research question for the study. It explores the methods and sources of information that could be used to critically study terrorism in West Africa using CTS. The theoretical aspect as discussed in previous chapters relies on the philosophy of Critical Security Studies but narrowed further specifically to the approach of Critical Terrorism Studies. The empirical aspect of the research used qualitative methods. Data were collected and analyzed using qualitative scientific research principles.

#### **4.1 Qualitative Research Methods**

According to Krauss,<sup>1</sup> to do a qualitative work is to engage in qualitative research work is to engage in a rigorous learning process where new knowledge and information is created. Thus, “qualitative research and qualitative data analysis have the potential of being transformative learning tools through their ability to generate new levels and forms of meaning, which can in turn transform perspectives and actions.”<sup>2</sup> Qualitative research data is often sourced through interviews, focus group discussions, observations and social artifacts. Methods employed under qualitative research commonly tend to lean towards interpretive paradigms.

These qualitative approaches view reality as socially constructed, complex and dynamic and therefore need more nuanced analysis than that which is employed under quantitative methods.

Qualitative research allows for deeper and more nuanced analysis and understanding of the phenomenon being researched. This value of qualitative research methodology makes it the favourite research approach for Critical Security Studies approaches – more especially CTS. The issue of identity in relation to terrorism studies is a complex phenomenon and highly contextual. This requires a holistic way of analyzing the data which could best be done using qualitative approaches. The reflexivity and flexibility that comes with qualitative studies allowed the phenomena of identity and terrorism to be studied within the local context yet set in the broader global discourse.

Furthermore, qualitative data tend to be gathered in their natural setting by which the researcher is able to interpret things based on the meaning people give to it. Through qualitative methods, issues such as historical dynamics are appropriately used to treat more nuanced perspectives. This research work involved an intensive examination of the contextual and historical issues regarding terrorism in all three countries studied. Their unique context and histories within the larger global discourse on terrorism and identity construction provided a better lens for the critical issues to be properly examined. It also afforded the researchers flexibility to tease out some critical but subtle identity challenges in the study of terrorism. Despite the above justification for the use of qualitative method, selection of respondents and sources of data for this study were also heavily influenced by the CTS theory used. Data collection methods and sources of data were heavily influenced by a CTS framework proposed by Jarvis,<sup>3</sup> a lead CTS scholar.

## **4.2 Data Collection Techniques**

The qualitative data for this study were collected through in-depth interviews, observations and media reports. Plurality of data sources is a core principle of Critical Security Studies and CTS.

Krause and Williams,<sup>4</sup> Buzan and Hansen<sup>5</sup> and Salter and Mutlu<sup>6</sup> argue that the most salient way to carry out research in Critical Security Studies is employment of multiple sources of data. Such data are analyzed using data triangulation.<sup>7</sup>

#### **4.2.1 In-Depth Interviews**

The first and most prominent source of data for this study is the “Public.” Semi-structured interview guides were used to conduct in-depth cross-sectional interviews of sections of the public from the three countries being studied. In this study the term “Public” is used to designate what Jarvis calls “everyday life and vernacular constructions.” The present study segregates members of the “Public” into two categories. The first category comprised Senior Military Officers with counterterrorism experiences drawn from the armed forces of the three countries. Others were experienced religious clerics and security practitioners with expertise in terrorism issues in West Africa. The second category involves ordinary residents who have experienced terrorist acts or have deep understanding in the subject of terrorism.

Interviews for both experts and ordinary residents were conducted simultaneously based on the availability of respondents. The lead researcher was assisted by two research assistants, one from Ghana and the other from Burkina Faso. Both spoke English and French and served as interpreters during the interviews. Prior to the departure from Ghana to Burkina Faso, the researcher was given an official letter from the University of Ghana through the Legon Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD) introducing him to the Ghana Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ghana Embassy in Ouagadougou. In addition to this, the lead researcher and his assistants made informal contacts with known residents in the country. By the date of arrival, the necessary contacts had been done to facilitate the interviews. During the interviews, the researchers spent

one week and three days in Ouagadougou and three days in Koudougou, the capital of the Centre-West region of Burkina Faso. A large part of the interviews was conducted in the residence of the respondents and on few occasions in their offices or at the campus of the University of Ouagadougou. The interviews for the military officers however took place at the main military barracks in Ouagadougou.

### *Experts*

In Burkina Faso, three senior military officers were interviewed. In Ghana, two security experts, one senior military officer of the Ghana Armed Forces and a Senior Islamic cleric were interviewed. In the case of Nigeria, two security experts were also interviewed. The interviews of these experts sought to seek their views about the nature of the identity of the terrorist, the role of these identities constructed in the rise of terrorist activities in West Africa as well as best ways to deal with the challenge of terrorism in the west African subregion.

### *Ordinary residents*

In addition to the security experts, some ordinary residents of the three countries being studied were interviewed for this study. The interviews were done in Burkina Faso and Ghana. The researcher could not travel to Nigeria. This challenge was remedied by tracking Nigerians who had come to Ghana for a short stay, mostly for academic purposes. Through informal contacts, the respondents were traced and interviewed face to face.

The purpose of this level of analysis to examine how ordinary people contribute to the construction and understanding of the identity of the terrorist. The selection of respondents from different

countries is to know the difference or similarities of people who have experienced terrorism and those who have not.

#### **4.2.2 Recruitment of Respondents**

Terrorism or security studies is a very specialized and sensitive field. Hence there is always the need to get the most qualified persons to give expert views in such studies. This necessitated the purposive sampling techniques considered to be the most appropriate instrument to select respondents with specific characteristics. Purposive sampling is a method of data collection used to select respondents due to specific characteristics or expertise needed to answer the research questions. This method was used to target individuals who had the necessary expertise in security and terrorism in West Africa. The purposive selection also involved experts in Islamic scholarship and theology. This expertise was needed to put the study in perspective. The purposive method was used to select the experts for interview. However, after using purposive to get some experts, those experts were made to recommend other experts who had some specific knowledge and information. This resulted in the introduction of a second method of selecting respondents – snowballing.

Similarly, the purposive and snowball methods were used to select ordinary residents from all the three countries. The choice of these two methods was also a matter of necessity. The sensitivity and threats around the subject of terrorism in West Africa made it difficult to employ other methods. The use of the snowball method to select participants was, therefore a matter of necessity than choice. Again, it was realized that by use of these approaches, respondents felt freer to express their ideas during the interviews. This was because they were introduced to the researchers by people they could trust.

However, just like the case of persons with special expertise, selection of ordinary residents was guided by predefined criteria. The criteria for the selection of ordinary residents were foremost people aged eighteen years and above and stayed in their respective countries continually for at least the last five years. In total, thirty-eight (38) cross-sectional interviews were conducted for this study. The detailed distribution of this number is summarized in the table below.

**Table 4. 1 Distribution of Interview Respondents**

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>ORDINARY RESIDENT</b>	<b>MILITARY OFFICER</b>	<b>SECURITY EXPERT</b>	<b>RELIGIOUS LEADER</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>BURKINA FASO</b>	12	3	-	1	16
<b>NIGERIA</b>	6	-	2	-	8
<b>GHANA</b>	9	1	3	1	14
					<b>38</b>

**Source:** Author’s own construction

### **4.3 Other Sources of Data**

Any study hinged on Critical Security Studies relies on plurality of data sources and methods as stated earlier. This is an important principle of Critical Terrorism Studies. This study, therefore, makes use of other sources of data to compliment the interview data. Specifically, as proposed by Jarvis,<sup>8</sup> three sources of data are crucial for the understanding of the nature of the identity of terrorism knowledge. One of these sources is the opinions of members of the public. This is achieved by the interview responses as described above. The other two sources are speeches from politicians and popular culture. However, for the purpose of this study, the media are substituted for popular culture. This is because the media plays a stronger role in shaping public discourse on

issues such as terrorism than other popular culture elements do. Selection of these sources is discussed below.

### **4.3.1 Speeches from Politicians**

As illustrated by Jarvis, speeches and comments made by senior politicians constitute one of the most authoritative sources of information to examine the construction of terrorism knowledge in a society. In this study, therefore, some speeches and comments made especially by the Presidents of the three countries were analyzed. As Jarvis puts it, terrorism knowledge can “be found in the actions of those responsible for establishing counter-terrorism responses: politicians themselves.”<sup>9</sup>

In this research, speeches and comments made by top politicians in the three countries were selected for analysis. The selected speeches and comments include those made by the sitting Presidents of all three countries. The speeches were selected based on relevance to this study as they highlight or give a hint of what the speaker perceives about terrorism or the terrorist. Apart from sitting Presidents, comments made by former Presidents and top ministers of state were also selected as appropriate. To qualify for selection, a speech or comment must be made by a top politician. Top politician in this study is a President, Former President, Minister of State or Member of Parliament and their equivalents in opposition. Secondly, the speech or comment should concern the subject of terrorism or terrorists. Finally, the speech or comment must have been made not earlier than the year 2016 (when terrorism emerged as a real and serious threat in West Africa). In all, six (6) speeches made by top politicians were selected from all the three states. The speeches are, however, not evenly distributed among the countries. Burkina Faso has the highest number of selected speeches. The speeches were selected based on the relevance to the overall objective of this research. The selected speeches are summarized in the table below.

**Table 4. 2 Distribution of Selected Speeches from Politicians**

COUNTRY	POLITICIAN	OCCASION	MEDIUM OF ACCESS AND DATE
Burkina Faso	Roch Marc Christian Kaboré (President)	Address to the nation after January 15/16, 2016 terrorist attack in Ouagadougou.	L’Observateur Paalga (Newspaper) January 18th 2016.
		Address to the nation after inter-communal clashes in Yirgou, Burkina Faso in January 2019.	Sidwaya.info Online news platform <a href="https://www.sidwaya.info/blog/2019/01/06/drame-de-yirgou-la-compassion-du-president-du-faso/">https://www.sidwaya.info/blog/2019/01/06/drame-de-yirgou-la-compassion-du-president-du-faso/</a> 10 <sup>th</sup> June, 2019
	Salif Diallo (Speaker of Parliament)	Address to Members of Parliament after January 2016 terrorist attack in Ouagadougou.	L’Observateur Paalga (Newspaper) 20 <sup>th</sup> January, 2016. Accessed in April, 2019.
	Maiza Sereme (Attorney General)	Press conference after March 2018 twin attack on Army Headquarters and French Embassy in Ouagadougou.	L’Observateur Paalga (Newspaper) March 7 &8, 2018. Accessed in April, 2019.
Nigeria	Muhammadu Buhari (President)	2016 interview with Al-Jazeera network	<a href="https://punchng.com/38715-2/">https://punchng.com/38715-2/</a> Published March 6, 2016. Accessed in May, 2019.
		June 2019 Democracy Day Speech	<a href="https://punchng.com/for-the-record-buharis-democracy-day-speech/">https://punchng.com/for-the-record-buharis-democracy-day-speech/</a>

			Published June 12, 2019. Accessed in June, 2019.
	Olusegun Obasanjo (Former President)	Address to the Second Session of the Seventh Synod of the Anglican Communion, Oleh Diocese, Delta State., Nigeria.	<a href="https://punchng.com/bharan-herdsmen-fighting-to-islamise-nigeria-africa-obasanjo/">https://punchng.com/bharan-herdsmen-fighting-to-islamise-nigeria-africa-obasanjo/</a> Published May 19, 2019. Accessed in June, 2019.
Ghana	Nana Akufo- Addo (President)	Address to Muslims on 2019 Eid-ul-fitr ceremony.	Ghanaweb.com <a href="https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Terror-attacks-Report-suspicious-characters-to-Police-Nana-Addo-to-Ghanaians-752358">https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Terror-attacks-Report-suspicious-characters-to-Police-Nana-Addo-to-Ghanaians-752358</a> 5 <sup>th</sup> June 2019.

Source: Author's own construct

### 4.3.2 Media Reports

Black<sup>10</sup> and Jarvis<sup>11</sup> argue that media reports constitute one of the most effective mechanisms to understand how society understands and constructs the identity of terrorists. The third major source of qualitative data collected for this research was media reports on terrorism selected from the most read newspaper outlet in each country. These data analyse the identification of or labeling of terrorists in the media as drivers of social discourse. Terrorism stories of the top newspaper and the most visited local online news portal in Burkina, Nigeria and Ghana were collected. Choice of online portal was based on ranking on alexa.com the main website traffic and statistics site.

Newspaper selected in Ghana was *The Daily Graphic*. This is the most read and most circulated newspaper in Ghana, according to Geopoll, the main media research institution in Ghana. In Burkina Faso, the paper selected was L'Observateur Paalga. The paper is the most read newspaper in Burkina Faso according to [alldailynewspapers.com/burkina-faso/](http://alldailynewspapers.com/burkina-faso/). For Nigeria, the *Punch* newspaper was selected due to its popularity in Northern Nigeria. In effect, these three newspapers were selected for the study due to their wide coverage, credibility and accessibility in their respective countries.

Two media authored news stories were selected from each of the three newspapers. The stories collected covered different reports of terrorism from different countries ranging from January 2016 to June 2019. The day 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2016, marked the day Burkina Faso experienced its first high profile terrorist attack in its capital Ouagadougou, albeit Nigeria has had the Boko Haram experience already for nine years. The cutoff in June 2019 was solely to get a time frame for the purpose of this research. The most important criteria for a story to be selected was that the main theme was about terrorism; it was authored and edited by the media house and not a direct quote from an external source. Those accessed online were verified using other sources for authenticity. These were later transcribed, coded into themes and categories for analysis and interpretation.

In addition to reports from the four newspapers, terrorism stories from the most visited local news websites were collected. According to alexa.com, the most visited news web sites in Ghana and Burkina Faso are [ghanaweb.com](http://ghanaweb.com) and [lefaso.net](http://lefaso.net) respectively. In Nigeria, it is [Vanguardngr.com](http://Vanguardngr.com). These three sites were selected because they had the widest coverage and accessibility in their respective countries at the time of this research. The need for online reports was also to cater for

news consumers who source information from online portals. Two reports were collected from each of the three sites. The stories collected covered different reports of terrorism from different countries and ranged from 16<sup>th</sup> January 2016 to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2019.

The purpose of collecting these data was to examine the discourse surrounding the subject ‘terrorism’ and the label ‘terrorist’ in the countries under study – from the perspective of the media. The discursive construction of terrorist attacks, the identity of the attackers, the debate around the causes of terrorism and the politics of terrorism were analyzed. Black<sup>12</sup> stresses how media coverage of terrorism can be employed to study fundamental societal constructs inherent in the representation of key features of terrorism in the society.<sup>13</sup> The three newspapers and three online news platforms from all three countries fairly represent the media landscape as drivers of social discourse. At the same time, they provide easy accessibility to library information which is crucial for this study. Summary of the media sources is presented below:

**Table 4. 3 Distribution of Selected Media Sources**

COUNTRY	NEWSPAPER AND NUMBER OF STORIES	ONLINE PLATFORM AND NUMBER OF STORIES	NEWS	TOTAL STORIES	
Burkina Faso	L’Observateur Paalga	2 stories	<a href="http://lefaso.net">lefaso.net</a>	2 stories	4
Nigeria	The Punch	2 stories	<a href="http://Vanguardngr.com">Vanguardngr.com</a>	2 stories	4
Ghana	The Daily Graphic	2 stories	<a href="http://ghanaweb.com">ghanaweb.com</a>	2 stories	4
					12

**Source:** Author’s own construct

### **4.3.3 Observation**

Field observation has been identified as one of the key qualitative methods of collecting data. In field observation, the researcher observes the study subjects in their natural environment paying particular attention to the interaction with other subjects. The researcher then takes notes of what is observed right in the field to aid analysis. These data provide rich resource to the investigator during the analysis of the data collected. The study made use of field observation notes in the analysis. During his trip to Burkina Faso and during interview sessions in Ghana, the lead researcher made field notes of observations which were used in the analysis as relevant.

### **4.3.4 Secondary Data**

This research also made use of the existing literature as a source of data. Aside the literature on terrorism, this study analyses documents such as official reports, policy documents and the counterterrorism strategy documents of the various states as well as the ECOWAS Counterterrorism Strategy. The study analysis, however, made special reference to three key stakeholder reports. Specifically, it used editions 007 (1st – 15th April 2019) and edition 008 (16th – 30th April 2019) of the “Africa Terrorism Bulletin” published by the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, Algiers, 2019. These two editions were the latest available for this research. The third key stakeholder document used was the summarized research report produced by the West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP) in 2018 titled “Current Dynamics and Challenges of Violent Extremism in West Africa.” The WANEP report was the result of a field research work conducted in 2018 to assess the terrorism situation in West Africa. While the main source of data for the study remained the field work conducted in Burkina Faso,

Ghana and Nigeria between March and June, 2019 for this thesis, reference to these three documents was made to validate the field work.

#### **4.4 Selection of Cases**

Ghana and Burkina Faso virtually stand in contrast to each other in terms of relationship to terrorist activity. Ghana has never experienced a terrorist attack since independence. While the terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso are relatively a new phenomenon with attacks beginning in 2015, the case of Nigeria is different. Nigeria has been under constant attack, though in varied levels, since the scourge of the Boko Haram challenge in 2009. Nigeria is largely seen as the epicenter of terrorist activity in West Africa. The country is at the same time the dominant economic and human resource power in the sub-region. A study such as this one will definitely be incomplete without the experience of Nigeria.

Burkina Faso has consistently experienced terrorist attacks in its territory, particularly in the last five years, the most remarkable being its capital Ouagadougou. In a space of two years – between 2016 and 2018, the city of Ouagadougou experienced three high profile attacks. The country is also host to a military base accommodating both US and French soldiers involved in counterterrorism operations in the Sahel region. Using Ouagadougou as the main site for data collection is significant and reflective of the Burkinabe society. It is the capital of Burkina Faso and has government and state institutions and campuses whose students and experts were crucial to the research. Like Accra, Ouagadougou is a cosmopolitan city that host people of different backgrounds from different regions of the country.

The individual experiences, differences and similarities among the three countries present a robust basis for this study and to a very large extent, reflect the different security situations in West Africa. The inclusion of Ghana, a state without experience of terrorist incident corroborates Barry Buzan's Regional Security Complex concept.<sup>14</sup> According to Buzan, states in the same region exhibit similar characteristics in terms of threats and security, and conflict in one country can easily cross over to neighbouring countries. Therefore, the most effective way to analyse security is to frame the analysis at the regional level.<sup>15</sup> Thus, including Ghana in this study provided a broader framework for analysing terrorism in West Africa.

#### **4.5 Ethical Considerations**

This research was conducted with rapt attention to ethical considerations. An ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Ghana Ethical Committee for Humanities at the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER). All respondents used in the study were taken through and made to understand the purpose of the study and informed consent was expressly granted before the interviews were conducted. Respondents were also made to understand the strict adherence to confidentiality and anonymity principles for this research. Anonymity was granted to all respondents at the level of the general public respondents. However, at the level of experts, anonymity was granted based on the preference of the respondents. On the other hand, all respondents were assured maximum confidentiality before, during and after the interviews and informal interactions. Permission was sought to gather all other materials for this study. An official letter signed by the Director of the Legon Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD) was presented to the respective institutions before the necessary data and documents were sourced.

#### **4.6 Data Analysis**

The data generated through interviews, media reports, speeches and statements, documents, reports and field observations were duly transcribed, coded into themes and categories for analysis and interpretation. All these sources of data were analyzed based on the research objectives and questions. They, thus constituted the key inputs for the analysis of the role of identity construction in the study of terrorism in West Africa. As a typical critical discourse analysis perspective, these data sources were interpreted in close reference to the contextual, social and historical dynamics of the societies studied.

#### **4.7 Ensuring Validity and Reliability**

The use of the snowball method to select interviewees as well as observation made by the researcher on the field present a challenge for reliability and validity of the study results. While the study does not intend to generalize findings, it is still imperative that the findings and conclusions are free from personal biases as much as possible. This has necessitated the use of Triangulation as a means of addressing this challenge of validity. Triangulation is the use of multiple data sources in an investigation to produce understanding.<sup>16</sup> Heale and Forbes argue that “studies that use triangulation may include two or more sets of data collection using the same methodology, such as from qualitative data sources.”<sup>17</sup> The form of triangulation using the same methodology is known as source or data triangulation. Johnson avers that triangulation is a method that enables validation of data via cross authentication from two or more sources.<sup>18</sup> For Sarantakos,<sup>19</sup> triangulation helps the researcher to do four key things in research: use diversity of information to investigate the same issue; use the strength of one method to overcome the “deficits of the other; achieve a higher degree of validity and reliability; and overcome the shortcomings of single-method studies.”<sup>20</sup> Johnson, however, cautions that researchers need to be careful not to

confuse their audiences with the variety of data sources used. For this he suggests that always researchers must ensure they have a clearly focused research question.<sup>21</sup> In this study, information from the African Terrorism Bulletin (Editions 007 and 008), the WANEP Report on Counter-Extremism, 2018 and concepts such as the Economic Theory of Conflicts, Lumpenproletariat and Clientelism were used in different sections to confirm or disprove specific themes from the primary data. Again, the three main sources: interviews, political speeches and newspaper reports were also used to validate or disprove generated themes.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the basic processes used to collect data as well as the key methodology used for the research. Among other things, it has clearly outlined and explained the importance of using the qualitative research methodology for the study. It has outlined the basic data collection techniques – use of semi-structured interview guide to conduct interviews, field observation, speeches, media reports as well as the use of secondary data and reports from key stakeholder institutions. Finally, the chapter has outlined the process used for analysis of the data in addition to how critical validity issues were handled.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Krauss, Steven Eric., “Research Paradigms and Meaning Making: A Primer” *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 10 (4), 2005, p. 763.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Jarvis, Lee., 2019. op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Krause, Keith & Williams, Michael C., “Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies: Politics and Methods” *Mershon International Studies Review*, Vol. 40(2),1996, pp. 229-254

<sup>5</sup> Buzan, Barry & Hansen, Lene, *The Evolution of International Security Studies*, (New York, Cambridge University Press. 2009), p 205.

<sup>6</sup> Salter, Mark & Mutlu, Can (Eds.), *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, (New York: Routledge. 2013), p 16.

<sup>7</sup> Wodak, Ruth & Meyer, Michael., *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, (London: SAGE Publications. 2001), p2.

<sup>8</sup> Jarvis, Lee., 2019. op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 5

<sup>10</sup> Black, Jack., “The Subjective and Objective Violence of Terrorism: Analysing ‘British values’ in Newspaper Coverage of the 2017 London Bridge Attack,” *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 2018 p 2. Accessed from <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2018.1498191> on 4th March, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Jarvis, Lee., 2019. op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> Black, Jack., op. cit. p 2

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Buzan Barry., “Regional Security Complex Theory in the Post-Cold War World,” In: Söderbaum F., Shaw T.M. (eds) *Theories of New Regionalism: International Political Economy Series* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2003), p 140.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Honorene, Johnson., “Understanding the Role of Triangulation in Research” *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, Vol. 4(31), 2017, p 91.

<sup>17</sup> Heale, Roberta & Forbes, Dorothy., “Understanding Triangulation in Research,” *Evidence-Based Nursing*, Vol. 16(4), 2013, p. 98.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Sarantakos Ibid. p. 92.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

# **CONSTRUCTION OF THE IDENTITY OF THE TERRORIST IN WEST AFRICA AND THE IMPLICATION FOR COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

The main objective of this study is to examine the identity of the terrorist in West Africa through the lens of Critical Terrorism Studies philosophy and the implication for counterterrorism study. This chapter does a presentation and analysis of the data. The chapter answers research questions three and four of this study. Firstly, it examines the key actors and social structures that work to perpetuate terrorism in West Africa. Secondly, the chapter assesses the extent to which the existing conceptualization of terrorism strengthens these structures and actors that perpetuate terrorism in West Africa. As stated earlier, for a robust analysis and to help check biases, this chapter employs triangulations of sources and theories. Olsen<sup>1</sup> defines triangulation simply as mixing approaches to get two or three views about the things being studied. As a critical approach, the CTS theory that drives this study validates the principle of triangulation as CTS also advocates pluralism of sources in the study of terrorism.

Therefore, the varied data in the form of interviews, observation, informal interaction, speeches and media reports are used in different ways to examine the construction of the identity of the terrorist through a CTS framework. The analysis also relies on other key stakeholder reports. Specifically, it uses editions 007 (1st – 15th April 2019) and edition 008 (16th – 30th April 2019)

of the “Africa Terrorism Bulletin.” The third key stakeholder document used is the summarized research report conducted by the West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP) in 2017 titled “Current Dynamics and Challenges of Violent Extremism in West Africa.” While the main source of data for analysis remains the field work conducted in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nigeria between March and June, 2019, reference to these three documents are made as necessary.

### **5.1 The Three-Source Approach to Understanding the Construction of Terrorism Knowledge**

Lee Jarvis, a leading scholar in CTS proposed three key sources of information which could be used by CTS researchers when researching the construction of terrorism knowledge in a society.<sup>2</sup> In his article, a product of his December 2018 inaugural lecture and published by the journal, “Critical Studies on Terrorism,” Jarvis draws on important CTS works and examines the dominant construction of (counter)terrorism knowledge. He used the UK and the US as his cases to explore how the construction of terrorism knowledge in society could be studied. The three sources proposed and used by Jarvis are: (a) speeches and comments from politicians, (b) everyday life and vernacular constructions and (c) popular culture. Data presentation and analysis in this chapter adopts this three-source framework, albeit modified to suit the context of West Africa. These are the three main variations made to Jarvis’ original framework.

Firstly, while Jarvis uses the three approaches to critique the dominant construction of terrorism and counterterrorism knowledge in UK societies, this study uses the approaches to understand the dynamics of the construction of terrorism knowledge in West African societies. Secondly, in place of the third approach which is “popular culture” in the work of Jarvis, this study uses media reports.

The reason is that in the context of West Africa, popular culture in relation to terrorism as described by Jarvis is not a significant variable compared to the role of the media. Finally, based on the themes derived from the coding of field data, two more sources are added to Jarvis's three sources. These additional sources are "the dynamics of global politics" and the "point of view of terrorists."

Firstly, using the term "Parliamentary discourse" to represent comments and statements made by politicians, Jarvis argues that "the first source of critique ... can be found in the actions of those responsible for establishing counter-terrorism responses: politicians themselves."<sup>3</sup> Comments made by politicians are "significant because they offer a productive point of entry into elite conceptions and constructions of national identities" and the political process that lead to their construction.<sup>4</sup> Politicians often use these comments and speeches as an opportunity to contribute to or critique the dominant understanding of terrorism.<sup>5</sup> Using examples of parliamentary debates in the United Kingdom (UK) and various comments made by then US President and Vice President George Bush and Dick Cheney, Jarvis empirically examined how politicians contribute significantly to shaping the discourse on terrorism in society.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, Jarvis uses the term "everyday life and vernacular constructions" to refer to the ordinary residents who do not hold political positions and not likely to directly contribute to political decision-making on counterterrorism policy. Jarvis posits that studying terrorism in a social discourse without inclusion of the voices of everyday residents offers a very partial picture of the social and cultural landscape. Such a study "misses all of the other places in which the threat of terrorism is thought, spoken, or written about."<sup>7</sup> Again, failing to look "beyond elite political

discourse assumes that the reception of such discourse – for instance, amongst general publics – is either unimportant, or predictable.”<sup>8</sup> He, therefore, argues that:

Research I have undertaken with Michael Lister (Jarvis and Lister 2015, 2017a) – as well as the work of others (Jackson and Hall 2016; Stevens and Vaughan-Williams 2017) – indicates that conceptions and constructions of terrorism and counter-terrorism amongst “ordinary” citizens – for want of a better phrase – are both more important and less predictable than we might expect. Speaking to citizens about such topics, I suggest, therefore offers a really vital way of engaging with the richness of public opinion around security politics, providing insight into citizen experiences of social and political life more broadly.<sup>9</sup>

In this study, the term “Public” is used to designate what Jarvis calls “everyday life and vernacular constructions.” The present study segregates members of the “Public” into two categories. The first category comprises experts in the field of terrorism and security studies. They include security experts, top military officers and religious experts. The second category involves ordinary residents.

Finally, Jarvis uses the term popular culture to refer to media such as books, films, television shows, videogames, jokes, street art, political cartoons and others. Citing successful films such as *Four Lions* and *Team America: World Police* as examples, Jarvis demonstrates how popular culture could be a relevant source into the study of terrorism knowledge in Western society. However, for the purpose of this study and for relevance in the context of West Africa, this study uses the mass media, more specifically, newspaper and online news reports in place of the broader popular culture in Jarvis’ framework. These three sources are used to examine the ascribed identity of terrorist groups in West Africa. As mentioned earlier, the ascribed identity of a group is constructed by members outside the group. This is directly opposite of subscribed identity where group members construct their own identity – through what they say and do.

## **5.2 Examining the Identity of the Terrorist in West Africa: The Perspective of the Public**

This section analyzes data from interview respondents made up of two categories (a) selected ordinary residents of the three states: Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Ghana and (b) security and religious experts. Both categories are, however, considered the same under the “Public.” They are differentiated from the other two sources in Jarvis’ framework simply on the basis that they are neither politicians nor authors of media reports. As stated earlier, this study seeks to investigate the construction of the identity of the terrorist in West Africa through CTS philosophy. The research data collected in the three states were carefully transcribed, translated (as necessary), and verified. The final transcribed data were coded into key themes and categories. Coding, according to Flick,<sup>10</sup> is the process of finding a label that permits the grouping of numerous elements under one concept to produce a more “limited number of codes rather than a large variety of diverse phenomena.”<sup>11</sup> In this research, coding was done using the data-driven coding method. Data driven coding involves codes development based on data from the field on which the researcher is working.<sup>12</sup> The other two forms of coding are theory-driven coding by which coding is driven by the theory and research questions; and research-driven coding which is based on research findings conducted by others.<sup>13</sup> The themes identified under this section were largely coded based on two key questions posed to interviewees. These questions sought to solicit their understanding of what terrorism is. Two questions were asked: (1) Who do you think are the people called terrorists (2) What do you think make them act the way they do/what are the causes of terrorist activities? Responses are analyzed under the various themes below.

### 5.2.1 Religious Fanatics

A very significant majority of the interview respondents, both experts and ordinary residents, identified religious affiliation as one of the core identifications of terrorists. In varied reasons and interpretations of what they mean by religion's role in defining who is and who is not a terrorist, respondents generally agreed terrorism is a religiously induced activity. This perception cut across all the three countries where respondents were selected. It also cut across the religious divide. Christians, Muslims and people of minority religions all share a similar generic view about the role of religion in terrorist activity. This notwithstanding, each respondent had their unique reasons or explanation for the role of religion in identifying terrorism in West Africa. A 38-year-old Christian respondent from Ghana spelled out how he thinks religion manifests in terrorist activity: *Well, that is feeling they (the terrorists) are the chosen ones and everybody else should not live or should not enjoy. So, they are more or less like the implementers of their God's laws so they take up arms to enforce it.*<sup>14</sup>

The view is also shared by a 38-year-old Burkinabe Muslim Demographer: *They convince some people to become terrorists so they get what they want. Terrorists have no hope and have been manipulated into terrorism. They do that to please God, that is their ideology.*<sup>15</sup>

Likewise, a student resident in Zaria, Kaduna State of Northern Nigeria, shared her opinion, adding her personal experiences:

*My parents always advise us not to talk about issues that are happening. Because you don't know who is listening and who will come and attack you since we are Christians living in the midst of the enemies. So, we don't really get to contribute; when they talk, we just say that is fine we don't say this is right or this is wrong.*<sup>16</sup>

This respondent who has a personal experience, unlike the first two respondents from Ghana and Burkina Faso, sees her Christian identity as very important to her and defines her perceived “enemies” based on that – us (Christians) against the religious other. She further highlights the effect of that differentiation on the social discourse around her. First, her parents’ role in guiding how family members should contribute or not contribute to social discourse; and secondly the perceived culture of silence imposed on Christians. Details of her personal experiences could shed more light on this perception.

*There is a Catholic church on the next street from our house. On one Sunday morning they bombed this church. We were preparing to go to church and we felt the vibration in our house. Because it is just a street away. The Catholics, they go for morning Mass and a lot of people died. The church is very big; you know how Catholics build their church. It is a serious Catholic church so a lot of people died. This happened when we were in Zaria.<sup>17</sup>*

In an attempt to illustrate the role of religion in identifying terrorists, this same respondent went ahead to share another experience, this time much closer to her.

*The last time when we were in Kaduna City, Christian won a political position in Kaduna State and the Muslims started fighting. They bombed my grandmother’s house and scattered her things. She was lucky my Daddy came to pick her five minutes earlier. My auntie was still in the house so when they came, she had to escape through the fence. If not, they would have killed her. But they burned down my grandmother’s house and all the TV and those things they burned them all. All this time we were not sleeping at night we were always ready to run. If there is anything our Daddy*

*will call us and we will run. We had an escape route we used. We always slept with one eye closed and one eye opened.*<sup>18</sup>

In this latest experience, the respondent introduces the political dimension to the violence she witnessed but maintained that the violence was of a religious one – *the Muslims started fighting*. Significantly, she mentions the religious other – the Muslims and describes in details how her family suffered the attack. Her grandmother's house was attacked because she was Christian, according to the respondent. However, there is a possibility too that the house was attacked because the household was viewed more as political supporters of the victorious party. What is significant, however, is the propensity to perceive and construct political violence as religious. Probably more significant is the tendency to describe all perceived religious violence as terrorist. This respondent is more particular about the religious dimension of the violence than differentiating between what is a terrorist attack and what is not. A Burkinabe Christian respondent also by implication highlighted the role of religion in terrorism in the country: *Sometimes the terrorists claim that they do it because of some religious reason. This phenomenon is linked to some religion.*<sup>19</sup>

However, another Nigerian respondent, a Muslim undergraduate student also resident in Kaduna State clearly draws a distinction between mainstream Islam and radicalized Islam. While agreeing with the earlier respondents about the role of Islam in identifying terrorists, this respondent draws a clear distinction between the mainstream peaceful Islam and radical Islam. Describing the Boko Haram group, he related how the group *claims they are Muslims but then the Muslim organizations went against them that this is not the teaching of the Muslims. So, the time the Muslims came out against them that they are not Muslim, we don't do this, we are known to be religion of peace, then*

*they started going after them, started bombing the mosque and all that.*<sup>20</sup> He expatiated this further by saying this about Boko Haram:

*It is their own understanding. It is a Jihad thing. Like brain washing, they've captured them and then they have interpreted the Quran in their own way to suit their own interest. There are some parts of the Bibles and Quran that were relating to what happened back then and not even to what is happening now. So those men have picked out the verses and changed the meaning because Arabic is not Africans language it is when you interpret it and whatever you interpret that is what those guys will believe. That is why they will be running when they kill the soldiers shouting God's name and they will be going with joy.*<sup>21</sup>

The use of the term “brainwash” was also used by a male Ghanaian Christian respondent when asked the same question:

*I believe they have been brainwashed. It cuts across religious lines as we know they believe by killing others they are doing good, which is wrong. So, a terrorist is someone who basically harms another person with the idea that he is doing good.*<sup>22</sup>

These respondents introduce an important perspective to the discourse around the role of Islamic doctrine in terrorism. They implicitly or explicitly create a distinction between two groups in the camp of the terrorists. They identify first, those who capture and brainwash others with wrong Jihadist teachings to suit their own interest, and secondly, those who are being brainwashed and used to achieve an interest. Who then are the brainwashers, who are the brainwashed and what interest are being serviced? Ultimately, in what way does religion serve as a fertile ground for actors to achieve goals that may or may not be religious in nature? The framework proposed by

Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler<sup>23</sup> are useful in answering the foregone questions. In conceptualizing the role of religion in world conflicts, Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler identify five main forms and manifestations of religion that make it sometimes susceptible for exploitation into violent acts. These are: basis for identity, belief systems, formal religious doctrines, source of legitimacy and religious institutions.<sup>24</sup>

**Identity:** According to Fox and Sandler the identity aspect of religion is the most important source of conflict. Identity can either be individual or group. In agreement with Fox and Sandler, Burton and Rubenstein argue that the most important human need that every political society must assure is the need for identity.<sup>25</sup> Important as it may be, the relational, differing and oppositional dynamics of group identity, according to Fox and Sandler, makes it an ideal instrument for mobilization for conflict. Every group thus wants a good name and by that wish bad name for the opposition group, this is usually done through socialization processes where socialization imposes certain attributes on individuals which in turn create collective conscience. Religion as a basis for group identity therefore has the capacity, through its norms, myths, values, rules symbols and processes, to induce solidarity among members that differentiate them from others. Sosis and Candace confirm this assertion by their proposition that religion's most important role in violence "may be its incorporation of emotionally evocative and highly memorable symbols, myths, and rituals that serve to individually motivate and collectively unify diverse individuals under a common banner."<sup>26</sup>

**Religious doctrine and belief system:** Fox and Sandler further see religious beliefs as having the potential to greatly influence the behaviour of people to be violent. This happens even in times

when it becomes apparent the groups are pursuing purely secular goals, such as the *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam* (LTTE), who were Hindus fighting a Buddhist majority in Sri Lanka.<sup>27</sup> Religious beliefs and doctrines also tend to define the rewards that combatants can attain. Religion could also offer presumed benefits in the afterlife that can rarely be matched in this world.<sup>28</sup> The interpretation of these beliefs and doctrines is also a major source of religious conflicts. Religious doctrines could sometimes be vague, ambiguous, ambivalent and as such subject to various interpretations. This has the tendency of creating sects within religious traditions with radical, moderate and nominal believers in the same religious tradition. The same doctrine within a religious tradition may thus be interpreted belligerently or in a pacifist way. Those with the belligerent interpretation usually attempt to enforce it on the others and even on non-members of that religion. For instance, the global *al-Qaida* network, and all of its affiliates are creations of misinterpretation or interpretation of the Islamic jihad. In the same vein, the differences in Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal and Charismatic doctrines within Christianity have been attributed to differences in the interpretation of the Bible.

**Source of legitimacy:** Religion can often be used to justify any policy or action even those that otherwise may seem unjustifiable. It is used by leaders to justify their continuous stay in power as well as to justify those who overthrow them. Sosis and Candace further argue that while religion may not be the cause of most conflicts involving terror, religion is the means by which terrorists translate a local political struggle into a cosmic war. In other words, terrorists often frame their disputes in religious rather than political terms. This has various advantages, most significantly in motivating others to sacrifice themselves for the cause. The transformation from political to religious struggle encourages actors to perceive that they are participating in something of divine

significance that transcends individual self-interest. Among Sikh militants in the Punjab, they describe joining the struggle as “motivated by the heady sense of spiritual fulfillment and the passion of holy war”<sup>29</sup> In the same vein, the Israelis justify their conflict with the Arabs in Palestine by the fact that Yahweh gave them Canaan and their struggle and wars are legitimate by God’s gift of Canaan.<sup>30</sup>

**Religious institutions:** All religions have their own institutions which wield authority and command loyalty of their adherents. Mostly their moral authority and prominence give their opinions weight as they are authoritative arbiters of religious legitimacy. These institutions, like any other established institutions, can provide the logistical basis for mass mobilization.<sup>31</sup> In Islamic states such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, the state sometimes acts as a religious institution at the same time. In Iran for instance, the Ayatollah wields much religious power that his proclamations must be obeyed. These religious institutions also have their own proselytization history. An attempt to convert non-believers into a religious tradition can be a major source of violence. Sometimes proselytization and acquisition of land and territory are embedded in each other such that it becomes difficult to separate one from the other.

This five-point framework explains why religion could be used to cause violence – as basis for identity, its belief systems, its formal religious doctrines, source of legitimacy and religious institutions. Also, very significantly, Fox and Sandler’s framework re-emphasizes the three key questions posed out of the respondents’ opinions – the separation between (a) the one who employs religious doctrine, belief systems and institutions as a tool to achieve an interest; (b) the one who is being subjected to these religious attributes (brainwashed as stated by the respondents); and (c)

the particular interest that (a) is seeking to achieve which could be religious or non-religious in nature.

The complexity of the part of Islamic doctrine that makes it susceptible to multiple interpretation and sometimes misinterpretation is explained by a senior Islamic cleric interviewed in Accra.

*Interpreters of old probably have already gone through Islamic books to find that why shouldn't we divide the world into two and call one the world of Islam and the other half the world of war. So, it means that if you are a Muslim you have a duty to ensure that the other half is also brought under the aegis of Islamic authority. Now that wrong impression also came because you know when the Prophet was in Mecca, he was simply a preacher so his identity and status was limited to this role. But when he entered into Medina, he entered Medina as a political leader because of the kind of invitation he received. In fact, he received invitation to enter into Medina so when he was entering, he entered as an authority. So that was the political dimension of the Prophet's life. And in all these cases revelations were coming directly as to what he should do in addition to being a Prophet and Messenger. That is why in Medina he was like a head of state. He was a politician. He enacted a constitution that guaranteed the right of religion and freedom of religion to the Jews and in Medina he lived with Jews and Christians and the early Muslims and those who were idol worshipers. The Constitution of Medina guaranteed the right of religion to Christians, Jews and Muslims.*

*But because of that political dimension and the clash that he had with those who were opposed to him, that resulted in some of the wars. Those after him assumed that it was their duty to continue. The wars (fought by those after him) were not limited to the circumstances but it was a means to*

*go ahead and conquer the whole of the world. And I think that that is the ideology ISIS and co are using. That is why they want to establish the caliphate. The caliphate is a system of succession after the Prophet and the caliphate is an English corruption of the Arabic work “khalīfah.” It means succession. So, after the prophet there were those called the prominent rightly guided caliphs. And caliphs are those successors of the Prophet. So, some of them engaged in some fights and because of that there are those who believe that is what provides the basis for a continuous war even to areas that Islam has not reached. So, it depends on how one sees it. So those who hold that view still maintains that mindset.<sup>32</sup>*

This historical background to the jihad and the Islamic caliphate supports the overview narrated by Alshdaifat.<sup>33</sup> Alshdaifat defines the Islamic Caliphate as a form of Islamic government headed by a caliph, a person regarded as a political and religious successor to the Prophet Mohammed and a leader to the entire Muslim world.<sup>34</sup> Historically, the Islamic Caliphate and the Caliphs, who held temporal and spiritual authority, directly succeeded Prophet Muhammad as leaders of the Muslim community. Briefly, after the death of Prophet Muhammad on AD 632, four successive Caliphs, beginning with the Prophet’s father-in-law, Abū Bakr, led the Islamic community in expansionist warfare. Soon, the Caliphate grew quickly through conquest during its first two centuries to include most of Southwest Asia, North Africa, and Spain. Fights over succession later led to the weakening of the Caliphate. With the Mongol destruction of Baghdad in 1258, the Caliphate finally ceased to exist.<sup>35</sup> However, the concept of the Caliphate reemerged and took on new significance in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a form of government in the declining Ottoman Empire.<sup>36</sup> With the birth of the modern state and subsequent decline of the role of religion in statecraft, the concept of the caliphate gradually became less appealing form of government. However, the concept has been invoked

several times by both state and non-state actors since the 20<sup>th</sup> century perhaps in a bid to reintroduce the system. Examples are the Islamic Brotherhood in Egypt and the Al Qaeda and Islamic State global networks.

Despite the longstanding doctrine of the Caliphate and Jihad, the senior Islamic cleric stated that Islamic law advocates a peaceful coexistence between Muslims and other faiths.

*There is a recognition for interfaith diversity (in the Quran). So, if you go into the Quran once you talk about Jihad it also talks about relationship between Muslims and Christians. For example, the Quran will say there is no compulsion in religion (Quran 2:256). It means it is a recognition of the fact that there are people who do not belong to your faith so you have no grounds to compel them to take your religion. When the Quran refers to people of the book for example as part of the interfaith composition in Medina it was referring to Jews and Christians. The Prophet provided a constitution of Medina in which he guaranteed freedom of religion for Jews, Christians, Muslims and idol worshipers. So, given the fact that Islamic law (Quran chapter 5:5 downward) says “on this day I have made all the good things lawful to you; the food of those who were given the book before you is lawful to you and yours is lawful to them”. ... It also says “Allah does not forbid you with respect to those who do not fight you for your faith nor chase you out of your homes because of your faith, that you treat them kindly and justly for Allah loves those who are just” (Quran 60:8). What is the ground of all these if Jihad is to kill all non-Muslims – Christians, Jews? Where do we place this particular text? That is why Quranic revelation regarding war must be put in context so that we don’t make it a general rule that Islamic mission in the world is to move maraud across to the world and meet any Christian community and slay them.<sup>37</sup>*

While the Constitution of Medina referred to by the Senior Cleric does not mention Christians, Articles thirty (30) and thirty-one (31) state emphatically that the Jews (referred together with Christians as People of the Book in the Quran) will be treated as one community with the believers (Muslims) and Jews will keep their religion.<sup>38</sup> Article thirty (36) of the same Constitution drawn by the Prophet Mohammed to regulate inter-tribal and inter-faith relations in Medina warns that “anyone who kills another without warning (there being no just cause for it) amounts to his slaying himself and his household, unless the killing was done due to a wrong being done to him.”<sup>39</sup>

However, that said, Quran 2:190-191 says:

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors. And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith.<sup>40</sup>

These two verses are among those verses that talk about war in the Quran. Taken in context, these verses are explained by mainstream Muslims as a call for self-defense for the Islamic faith and could only be invoked in the context of self-defence for the Muslim and for the Islamic faith. On the other hand, pro Salafist sects interpret these verses more belligerently and literally - assuming that Allah has ordered Muslims to carry as a sacred duty the conversion of the whole world into Islam through use of force.<sup>41</sup>

This elaborate explanation of the commands of the Prophet Mohammed concerning relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims and the jihad is very significant for various reasons. First of all, it explains why different sects interpret the law of war in Islam differently. Extremist interpreters have misapplied the meaning of the text regarding self-defense which was granted to the Prophet to defend himself and the faith. Misapplication or misinterpretation of doctrine and

belief systems, according to the framework of Fox and Sandler, therefore, makes religion susceptible to abuse for goals which may not necessarily be religious. This view is supported by a Nigerian security expert:

*The different groups ... are basically those we consider to be induced by religious ideology. So, at the moment there are basically those who are confronting citizens and the state through violent means and through propaganda to achieve different goals. Sometimes the goals are known other times the goals are not known and therefore when the goal are not known there is public conjecture about what exactly is fueling that.*<sup>42</sup>

The emphasis on “different goals” is very important. As stated in the Framework of Fox and Sandler, the ultimate goal could be in total divergence from the teaching and practice being advocated – religion here could be used as a legitimising factor. This point has been illustrated by Webster and Adu Boahen<sup>43</sup> to indicate the fact that the use of Islamic ideology by leading jihadist groups and individuals to drive social and political goals was prevalent in West Africa in the pre-colonial period. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed a seeming decline of Islam in West Africa. The collapse of the Songhai Empire in the 14th century, according to Webster and Adu Boahen, resulted in perceived disregard for strict Muslim standards and rules as Muslims increasingly combined Islam with secular practices. This resulted in the formation of broader movements of “spiritual renewal, reform of religious practice, and revival of religious enthusiasm which touched nearly every part of the Islamic world from the mid-18th to the beginning of the 20th century.”<sup>44</sup>

As a result, some pro-jihadist groups began to fight Between 1769 and 1776 some Muslims in the Senegal/Guinea areas waged a Jihad and established three Muslim states – *Futa Toro, Futa Bondu*

and *Futa Jalon*. “The success of the jihads in the *Futa* kingdoms was an inspiration to the Fulani all over the Sudan (name used for now West Africa), who looked upon the Futas as their homeland.”<sup>45</sup> It also provided “a source of hope for the revival of Islam and Islamic standards of living for the courts and ruling class which were viewed as corrupt and unfaithful.”<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, the largest of the pre-colonial Muslim jihads was fought to create what is known presently as the *Sokoto* Caliphate in Northern Nigeria. It started when a Fulani who belonged to the *Qadiriyya* religious sect and the Sufi brotherhood, Uthman Dan Fodio (1754-1817), travelled through the Hausaland preaching and reproofing corrupt Islamic observances and tyrannical Hausa rulers.<sup>47</sup> In 1802, Dan Fodio championed and led the jihad that overthrew the Hausa kingdoms and established a theocratic institution headed largely by Fulani Emirs. This, according to Webster and Adu Boahen, “led to centralization of power in the Muslim community, education reforms, and transformations of law.”<sup>48</sup>

The creation of the Sokoto caliphate and the role of Dan Fodio served as a motivation for other pro-Fulani jihadist leaders. Hamad Bari, also a Fulani, fought for the establishment of the *Macina* caliphate<sup>49</sup> which thrived until 1862 when it was captured by al-Hajj Umar to establish the *Tokolor* Empire, the last jihadist empire before colonial rule.<sup>50</sup> The *Tokolor* caliphate was second only to the *Sokoto* Caliphate in terms of power and territorial acquisition.<sup>51</sup>

Close analysis of the work of Webster and Adu Boahen as regards the features of the pre-colonial jihads give evidence to the effect that some of these pre-colonial jihadist fights were not necessarily to achieve pure religious goals. Islam was used as a legitimating force to mobilize support. Almost

all jihads fought in the precolonial period in West Africa were used to establish political authorities, a common feature of proselytization. This is typically so due to the prescriptive nature of religion to cover all aspects of life. In effect, religion does not differentiate what is religious from what is not religious. This makes it very easy to use religion to advance goals that are purely nonreligious.

Some have called Umar a military adventurer using Islam merely as a cloak to hide his ambition for personal power and it is indeed true that the military aspect was of first importance. A further complication was that Umar's preaching tours were mainly among the Mandinka and Tokolor while his empire was built over the Bambara and the Macina. The Jihad thus appears as Tokolor imperialism resulting in a Tokolor empire.<sup>52</sup>

In this quoted passage, Webster and Adu Boahen reemphasized that the precolonial jihads fought in the then Sudan (now West Africa) had other motives that were not necessarily religious. The Tokolor jihad led by Umar was mainly for empire building. Islamic doctrine was invoked to serve two purposes. Firstly, to make the war a legitimate one and secondly to galvanize support for the fights. In effect, those who were engaged in the battlefield as combatants did not necessarily know the real reason for the fights. They had been made to believe they were fighting a holy war. This act of convincing others to fight a holy war parallels what the interview respondent described as brainwashing. Yet again in the Umar example cited above by Webster and Adu Boahen, the three-element differentiation is apparent. Umar, having his own interest (in the form of empire building with associated goals) uses Islamic doctrine (jihad) to recruit combatants to fight. For the combatants, they are fighting a holy war (jihad) which is purely religious – to establish God's kingdom. But the goals of the leader could be different.

Another important feature of the pre-colonial jihads described above is the question of identity. It is a fact that virtually all the leaders of these pre-colonial Islamic Jihadist movements had Fulani

background. Lindsey elucidates that the Fulani were principally involved in Islam due the alternative source of identity and governance Islam prescribes.<sup>53</sup> She avers that “these itinerant pastoralist Fulani, therefore, saw their common identity in Islam as their trade did not permit them to own permanent land and especially as they had interests often at odds with settled agricultural populations and their rulers.”<sup>54</sup>

A discussion of the manifestations of contemporary jihadist groups in West Africa is significant in establishing whether the experiences and perceptions of respondents match with the activities of the jihadist groups. The key jihadist organizations in West Africa have been *Boko Haram*, operating mainly in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin; *Ansar Dine*, operating in the Sahel region, particularly Mali, the *Al-Qaeda* of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), operating in the Sahel region; Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) operating mainly in Lake Chad Basin and the JNIM (Group to Support Islam and Muslims) also operating in the Sahel region and Burkina Faso. JNIM is a relatively new group which serves as the operational umbrella group for AQIM, Ancar Dine, the Macina Liberation Front and Al-Mourabitoun under the leadership of the Algerian Iyad Ag Ghaly.<sup>55</sup> The main focus of these movements has been linked with the broader objective of the global Jihadist networks seeking to establish Islam in the whole world.

The *Al Qaeda* of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), initially *the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat* (GSPC), affiliated itself to Osama bin Laden in 2007 for greater financial support and name recognition. The Mali based Islamist Ancar Dine (Defenders of the Religion) formed by Iyad ag Ghaly, a prominent leader from the Touareg rebellion of 1990-1995, was created in late 2011. *Ancar Dine* is linked to *AQIM* and their basic aims and objectives have been linked with

those of the global al-Qaeda network, fighting against Western influence and establishment of Islamic states. On March 21, 2012, *Ancar Dine* began to administer a *shariah*-run regime in the northern cities of Mali, threatening to fight those advocating the creation of a *Democratic Republic of Azawad*. To show their determination to implement a *Salafi* Islamist regime, *Ancar Dine* militants destroyed the shrine of *Sidi Mahmoud Ben Amar*, one of Timbuktu's venerated medieval saints, claiming that the traditional Muslim piety of the area was not genuinely Islamic.<sup>56</sup>

Interest in territorial acquisition motivated the *AQIM* and *Ancar Dine* groups to join forces with the *Azawad National Liberation Movement* (MNLA) to declare independence in Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu in Mali in 2012.<sup>57</sup> In January 2013, France intervened in Mali and restored the northern Malian cities which were captured by the Islamist militants. *Ancar Dine* and its allies have since resorted to armed and suicide attacks against various targets, mainly government institutions and Christians. Currently, *Ancar Dine* and *AQIM*, the two major groups in the Sahel operates under one umbrella (JNIM) though they still maintain their individual identities.<sup>58</sup>

Though these militant groups described above could be viewed as religious groups, deeply seated within their grievances is the question of territorial acquisition and politics. The involvement of *Ancar Dine*, *AQIM* and *MUJAO* in the 2012/2013 Malian crisis resulting in the creation of the state of Azawad indicates how religion can be exploited for political gains. The same religious ideals that were invoked in the establishment of the 19<sup>th</sup> century *Sokoto Caliphate* were employed by these groups in their attempt to establish an Islamic state in northern Mali. The destruction of the Sufi shrine of *Sidi Mahmoud Ben Amar* in Timbuktu by these radical *Salafi* movements, reminiscing the *Tijaniyya/Qadiriyya* rivalry during the building of the 19<sup>th</sup> century *Tokolor*

Empire, further reiterates the similarities between the contemporary jihadist movements and those of precolonial periods.

The parallels between the older Islamic jihads and the contemporary ones appear to be more significant. The fuel of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century form of militancy was religious (jihadism) but along with the religious concerns were issues of politics, economics and ethnicity. The contemporary militant groups also, though claiming to be fighting the state for religious purposes, have other political and socio-economic objectives. The aims and objective of Islamic militancy against established political systems in West Africa since the 18<sup>th</sup> century have not changed fundamentally. Religion has largely been employed as a cloak in order to legitimize the use of violence and to mobilize support. The difference, however, is that the modern West African state is more organized, sophisticated and internationally recognized such that modern international law does not permit new Islamic states, unlike the precolonial period.

Furthermore, the relationship between the old jihadist movements and the contemporary ones is worth noting. They seem to have the same geographical setting. Northern Nigeria's *Sokoto* Caliphate is now home to *Boko Haram*, the *Macina* theocratic state is home to present day Mali with the *Ankar Dine* and *AQIM* Jihadist movements fighting to reestablish same Macina theocratic state<sup>59</sup>. The first *Jihad* which established the *Futa* Islamic states and the last ancient *Jihad* which also established the *Tokolor* Islamic Empire both took place in modern day Guinea and Senegal. Though Senegal and Guinea have not experienced major religious militancy activities, the protracted unrest in the Casamance region in Senegal make those two countries particularly susceptible to violent extremism.

Finally, the mode of operation of these Jihadist movements is significant. These militant groups, both old and new, have worked by way of building networks and motivating one another. For instance, in the old jihads, Uthman Dan Fodio, the founder of the *Sokoto* Caliphate offered much inspiration and support to both Hamad Bari and Al Hajj Umar who later embarked on their own jihads. In the same way, the contemporary jihadist movements, such as *Boko Haram*, *AQIM* and *Ancar Dine*, have not worked in total isolation. They share resources and expertise and are largely linked to the global jihadist network.

From the above it could be said Jihadist activities in West Africa are both ubiquitous and resilient. Ubiquitous because it is everywhere, and not limited to a particular geographical location and time. It is also resilient because by its nature it is intractable. In West Africa, in particular, Jihadism is not a recent phenomenon. It dates as far back as the 18th century, until established colonial rule and later Cold War put it in abeyance, only to be revived after the Cold War. Contemporary jihadism in West Africa is, therefore, just a reemergence of what was prevalent in the sub-region in the pre-colonial period. More importantly, the historical role of religion as a legitimising factor for violence to achieve ends that are not necessarily religious has been widely examined. Both historical and contemporary examples give evidence to the fact that religion has a feature that makes it easily exploitable for divergent means. This is widely evident too in West Africa, serving as a tool for mobilization both in precolonial period and contemporary period.

Reflecting on the power of religion as a mobilizing tool, one of the security experts interviewed, while explaining mode of recruitment into terrorist groups in the Sahel, posited that religion provided easy mobilizing tool by “religious war lords.”

*Why are they using the same verses in the Quran and the same information in the Quran to interpret it in their own way. Whether it is wrong interpretation or not, people are buying that. You see how they are recruiting women – they come that it is not good to stay unmarried and we have men ready to marry you. If they come with that narrative it sells for them. These are women who want to be fulfilled, they want to be happy. So, if you can provide the needs, they are ready to be relocated.<sup>60</sup>*

Throughout this section of the chapter, the three elements identified from both respondents and existing literature have in different ways built on how misinterpretation of religious doctrine could be used as galvanizing force to mobilize people for violence. This has consequently played a role in partly defining the identity of the terrorist as religious fanatics or violent extremists. What is apparent is the seeming evidence that it is possible to identify three separate elements from the discourse of the identity of the terrorist so far: (a) the “religious warlord” who misinterprets religious ideology as a tool for recruitment (b) the person recruited, radicalized with religious ideology and commissioned to carry out a terrorist act and (c) the unclear nature of the interest and goal which the act of terrorism seeks to achieve. This idea is best illustrated by the African Terrorism Bulletin’s intimation of what the reasons for terrorist acts in Africa could be:

Their intent appears to be to dominate and control territory in order to impose their ideological will on the civilian population. It could be deduced that there is indeed a mutually reinforcing insurgency that is being waged by the various Militant Jihadist groups in order to dominate and control the Sahel, Lake Chad and Horn of Africa regions.<sup>61</sup>

It takes only political power and authority to dominate and control territory at least according to International Law. The “ideological will” refers to jihadist ideology. However, the African Terrorism Bulletin assumes compact “Jihadist groups.”

### 5.2.2 Politically and Economically Motivated Fighters

Davis Easton<sup>62</sup> defines politics as “authoritative allocation of values.”<sup>63</sup> By this, politics is seen as a set of social exchanges by which values are authoritatively allocated for a society. The allocation of “values” refers to the allotment of the material, ideational and symbolic assets of a society to its members.<sup>64</sup> The values distributed may include economic resources, distribution of rights and responsibilities to members of society and regulation of social and religious values.<sup>65</sup> This section examines another theme that ran through responses of both experts and ordinary residents interviewed. The link between resources distribution and the identity of terrorists in West Africa is discussed in detail. Terrorist groups have been described in varied ways as politically and economically motivated fighters.

When asked what they think are the causes of terrorist activity, a 57-year old male resident in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso gave the response below.

*What I hear is that it is political disagreement. If our leaders agree and get united no one can come between them and attack us. It is just the conflicts in our politics. In a house, if the people do not agree, anyone can enter and harm people in the house.*<sup>66</sup>

This respondent believes terrorism in Burkina Faso is a result of political conflict at the national level. He uses the house analogy to emphasize the fact that there is conflict in the country because there is no unity – unity at the state authority level. This is a very localized view about terrorism in Burkina Faso. This view is corroborated by 60-year-old male resident of Koudougou, capital of the Central West Region of Burkina Faso:

*The violence is all about conflicts among the political class. It is all about power struggle. Wars and violence happen because politicians want to lead the country and that could let our own people*

*get foreigners enter the country and cause violence so that they will get what they want. They use money to buy the violence for the country.*<sup>67</sup>

While confirming the position of the earlier respondent, this respondent further explains that it is about leadership of the country. He again highlights two other key things, firstly the violence is sponsored by Burkinabe politicians but perpetuated by foreigners. Secondly, there is a form of complicity between the said politicians and the leadership of the terrorist groups. The core reason for this alliance is to destabilize the country so that the politician party to this agreement could score political points.

This idea of a fight to control resources in Burkina Faso is supported by one of the military officials interviewed. This respondent however, expands the argument to cover the entire Sahel region and reemphasizes the role of foreigners in perpetuating violence in the region:

*For militaries in Africa, the terrorist is a creation of the white man. African countries have rich resources – uranium, oil, water, etc. under the desert. The same in the north of Burkina Faso and Mali. In Niger, the resources are already exploited but the people are poor.*<sup>68</sup>

For this respondent, terrorism in the Sahel region is a fight to control resources in the area. While coming from a military background, he talks less about the political side of the violence and relies heavily on the economics side. However, as David Easton defined politics, it is difficult to separate economic interests from political interests. This is because it takes political control over a territory to exploit the economic resources in the territory. The point about foreign interest is also significant. Unlike the earlier respondent who referred to foreigners as the fighters, this respondent

sees foreigners as the economic beneficiaries of terrorism in the Sahel region. To explain his point, this respondent who is a very experienced Officer for the Burkina Faso Armed Forces argued:

*Terrorists are rewarded between 15,000 and 100,000 francs per operation. Payment is reserved and paid based on the intensity of the impact of the operation. It is a commercial activity. If the people involved are this poor, who gives them this money and the complex EIDs. People get into terrorism to get money. The three northern regions are the poorest – Nord, East and Sahel.<sup>69</sup>*

This same line of argument is supported by one of the experts interviewed in Accra:

*You know I am from MRU, I am from Sierra-Leone. I was there when the war was going on. I was there throughout the war. I saw people who made money through the war. The economic side of the war was what they were interested in, not for it to end. I believe there are merchants – people who are making business. There are political elements but there are people who are making business out of it.... In northern Mali, Timbuktu area there are huge deposits of mineral resources there. That is why the place is still unstable and ungovernable. If you go to the north of Burkina Faso and the north of Nigeria, the resources are wide. There are some economic advantages. They cannot go and fight where there is no economic advantage to gain. Boko Haram is going into Chad, going into Cameroon, going into Niger. If you go to that Diffa and Agadez area there are wide resources there. If people are doing kidnaping why are they doing kidnapping, because there is something to gain.<sup>70</sup>*

This respondent's reference to the Sierra Leonean civil war is very important. The Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars in the 1990s have been used severally by scholars as case studies to understand the nature of armed violence in West Africa. One of the most useful theories to explain armed violence in West Africa is the Greed theory advanced by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler.<sup>71</sup>

Statistically analyzing data based on civil wars from 1965 to 2004, Collier and Hoeffler argue that grievance is neither a cause of conflict, nor an accidental by-product of it. While the sense of grievance may be based on some objective grounds for complaint; it is mostly fabricated by rebel leaders to entrench preexisting prejudices. By so doing, rebel groups win public sympathy legitimising their rebellion.<sup>72</sup>

For Collier and Hoeffler, the ability and possibility of getting access to 'lootable' resources to generate enough funds to sustain the war is what truly motivates warlords to wage civil wars. No matter the reasons for which the war is being fought, rebels can fight a civil war if they are financially viable during the conflict. Since they cannot begin a war just on hopes, they do very good calculations to know the possibility in engaging in predatory behaviour during the conflict as a means of financing the conflict. This predatory behaviour is the use of force to extort goods or money from their legitimate owners or capture and control natural resource deposits.

In this case, it is the feasibility of predation which determines the risk of conflict. Predation may be just a regrettable necessity on the road to perceived justice or power, but it is the conditions for predation which are decisive. Whether conflict is motivated by predation, or simply made possible by it, these two accounts come to the same conclusion: rebellion is unrelated to objective circumstances of grievance while being caused by the feasibility of predation.<sup>73</sup>

Collier and Hoeffler conclude that rebellion is motivated by greed, so that it occurs when rebels can do well out of war; they are motivated by grievances, imagined or real, but rebellion occurs only when rebel leaders or warlords can do well out of war. This notwithstanding, usually those who support the rebellion from afar and real fighters (combatants) are often being duped into believing that they are fighting for a just cause. Among the people who are most vulnerable to the tool of grievance are those who care most keen about repression, discrimination, and prejudice.<sup>74</sup>

Take the recently settled conflict in Sierra Leone. A rebel organization built itself into around 20,000 recruits and opposed the government. The rebel organization produced the usual litany of grievances, and its very scale suggested that it had widespread support. Sierra Leone is, however, a major exporter of diamonds and there was considerable evidence that the rebel organization was involved in this business on a large scale. During peace negotiations the rebel leader was offered and accepted the vice-presidency of the country. This, we might imagine, would be a good basis for rebel grievances to be addressed. However, this was not sufficient to persuade the rebel leader to accept the peace settlement. He had one further demand, which once conceded, produced (temporary) settlement. His demand was to be the Minister of Mining. Cases such as this are at least suggestive that something other than grievance may be going on beneath the surface of the discourse.<sup>75</sup>

However, in their 2006 work “Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War,”<sup>76</sup> an update of their earlier works, Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler and Dominic Rohner identify other possible causes of civil war – economic factors such as the level, growth and structure of income; “whether the country was under the implicit French security umbrella, the proportion of its population who were males in the age range 15-29, and the extent to which the terrain is mountainous.”<sup>77</sup> The new variable referring to the French security umbrella is also a subject of interest for contemporary studies of terrorism in West Africa. This is because apart from Nigeria which is an Anglophone country, all other states battling terrorism in West Africa are Francophone states – Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. This notwithstanding, any violent conflict in whatever form it takes, is always multi-causal. People fight and engage in wars for different reasons and for different motivations. This analysis of warfare in West Africa is illustrated by the work of William Reno.

Writing at the time when the Liberian and sierra Leonean wars were at their peak, William Reno relates how war lords and rebel leaders overtly and covertly exploited natural resources in order to sustain their rebellion. This work is significant because it provides vivid examples to support the claims in the Greed theory. Reno argues that the patron-client politics that existed during the Cold

War era did not erode after the war but rather metamorphosed into a new form. In West Africa, new political coalitions emerged with novel political arrangements that still operated in the form of patron-client affair.<sup>78</sup>

For instance, in Liberia, right after launching his rebellion against the Samuel Doe government in 1989, Charles Taylor went ahead to take control of much of Liberia, portions of Sierra Leone, and border zones of Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. He then began to conduct vigorous trade in timber, minerals, and agricultural products. He achieved this with help from a broad range of foreign investors and regional commercial networks who were ready to take risk in dubious trade. The survival of his political goals and rebellion hinged on his ability to control and exploit these resources.<sup>79</sup>

Royalties from foreign trade were managed by Taylor's own brother who ran a quasi-private company called Bong Bank. He also managed a "Forestry Development Authority"<sup>80</sup> overseeing logging contracts. This entity purportedly received arms from foreign suppliers. These logging and other commercial operations gave Taylor the opportunity to integrate Ivoirian and Americo-Liberian commercial networks into his NPFL. The Americo-Liberian ties also included Lebanese-run businesses along the borders of adjoining Ivory Coast. These Lebanese traders had little capability to employ recognized dealers and therefore must strike deals with rebel leaders to remain in business.<sup>81</sup>

Significantly, pro-government forces and opponents of Charles Taylor were also actively involved on exploitation of resources. After the murder of president Doe in the course of the war in 1990,

his former associate, and head of the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), George Boley built alliance with the United States-supported Nigerian peacekeeping troops, who saw him as a substitute to control Taylor's influence. Boley's fighters also superintended over illicit export operations. A Monrovia journal reported, for example, that 6,000 LPC captives worked the formerly American-run Liberia Agriculture Company rubber plantation near Buchanan. Liberian trade figures showed considerable hike in rubber exports from Buchanan from the time the port fell under the control of the rebels.<sup>82</sup>

This involvement of pro-government officials in looting activities was a key feature in both the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s. In Sierra Leone, President Momoh's own military officers and political associates mobilized disgruntled farmers and soldiers exploited by past regimes to mine diamonds. Those who did not join these new networks faced “sobels” (soldier at day time and rebels at night looting with fighters). These same challenges left the country's military junta with no choice but to adopt rebel strategies. Government forces also joined the wagon of illicit mining and trading activities as well as looting in order to survive.<sup>83</sup>

This role of politicians and organizers of violence was also an important theme that run through the opinions of Nigerian respondents for this study. Nigerian respondents largely agree with Burkina Faso respondents in citing the role of politicians in the perpetuation of terrorism in their country. As explained above, Burkinabe respondents partly attribute terrorism to perceived political conflicts among politicians for which terrorism is used as a tool to gain political advantage. This involves politicians hiring terrorist organizations or working with them to perpetuate political instability while the terrorist group benefits economically. Similarly, Nigerian respondents think the role of Nigerian politicians is that of complicity with the terrorist groups to

gain political advantage. For them, both opposition and government politicians offer covert support to Boko Haram and other groups for reasons unknown to the general public. This view is perfectly illustrated by a story told by one of the Nigerian respondents during an interview.

*Back then I think 2015 or 2014, the government brought the U.S army into Nigeria to come and help fight the Boko Haram. So now when the U.S came, I read a funny thing. One of the Generals said he doesn't think the Nigeria problem will ever end because what happened was, they planned that they were going to infiltrate that Boko Haram camp at night using gas. This will not kill them. It will rather render them weak so they could be arrested. This is not a few Boko Haram members we are talking about; we are talking about the main camp with hundreds of them in the camp. The US team said they had already planned that they will wear mask so it wouldn't affect them. So funny enough, guess what happened when they got there, they saw the Boko Haram guys wearing masks. So, who gave them the information? ... They have info, that's all. ... So that made the US army know that the government knows what's going on so if you don't know, I don't think something like that will happen and this is not something that we have planned over a long period of time. We informed the government of this plan in the afternoon, that same night they went into the camp and this happened.<sup>84</sup>*

The story told by the respondent cannot be said to be factually true or not, since there is no source to verify it. However, this is a real perception that a section of the Nigerian society has about the relationship between the political leadership of the country and terrorist groups. This respondent concludes his story with an emphatic remark about the group Boko Haram:

*...people are saying that the politicians are using them for their own things and I reason with that because I have friends in the military because I attended a military school. So, from there, you can join them. I keep contacts with them and I have friends who are part of them. And they tell me problems.*

The respondent's link to his friends in the military is very significant. His association and source of information are key to understanding his story and the conclusion he makes. It again gives a peep into the perception of a section of the Nigerian military men mandated to fight the group. Other Nigerian respondents interviewed for this study also shared their perceptions and experiences when asked two questions: (a) Who do you think are the people called terrorists and (b) what do you think are the causes of terrorism? One respondent said among other things:

*Another thing is that there have been rumours that some of the political leaders are supporting them. Because these Boko Haram boys it is not like they have jobs. So how do they get their guns, how do they get their funding? They have cars they have vans that move them from place to place, they will definitely eat, they will camp somewhere. So how do they get all those facilities. So, there are rumours that some politicians are involved in those things. They are using it to sabotage a particular government say this government is bad so they keep funding Boko Haram.<sup>85</sup>*

Another respondent takes another angle to the issue:

*For example, let me take it from the aspect of leadership. Let us say some tribe, they will be expecting the leaders to come from their side. For example, in Nigeria, the President is from Fulani while maybe some part of the Ibo side they may like somebody from their tribe to be the leader. In the case of voting and everything after the Fulani won the election the Ibos were not happy. And*

*in the time of Goodluck the Hausa and Yoruba were not happy. So, they tried to fight him to remove him from his seat. This brings about the terrorists, trying to kill people, shedding blood and the like.*<sup>86</sup>

This respondent speaks to the very basis of the political dynamics of Nigeria and how that can be exploited for varied interests. At the time when the Boko Haram group was at its peak under President Goodluck Jonathan, the menace was largely seen as a political and economic struggle between the Muslim Hausa North and the Christian South.<sup>87</sup> The problem was compounded at the national level as political power had long been held by leaders from the north until 1999 when democratic rule shifted power to the Yoruba as General Olusegun Obasanjo became President. At the time, Ali Mazrui, Albert Schweitzer, et al argued that the introduction of the sharia legal system in 1999/2000 was a response to the political decline of the northern elite after the election of General Olusegun Obasanjo. It became clear, however, that Northerners had voted against their own political pre-eminence in Nigeria. The *Shari'a*, therefore, became a cultural assertion by Northern elites at the state level to recompense for their political decline at the federal level.<sup>88</sup>

The north/south conflict over the presidency became even more complicated with the informal power-sharing agreements known as “Zoning” between the North and South. Assuming that nothing goes wrong, the agreement seemed to promise political stability. The death of President Yar’Adua resulting in the transfer of power to Vice President Goodluck Jonathan and his subsequent election in 2011, however, resulted in increasing tensions and threat to the survival of the arrangement and the political order.<sup>89</sup>

The Boko Haram problem was largely seen as a Northern reaction to the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan. In a study in 2013 titled “Religious Militancy in West Africa: The Case of Boko Haram, Atta<sup>90</sup> interviewed two security experts<sup>91</sup> about the Nigerian political dynamics and the growth of the Boko Haram group at a time when Goodluck Jonathan was President. In the two separate interviews conducted in 2013, Ahorsu and Ofuafor, argued that the Nigerian political society is an antithesis of a nation-state. The three main regions that make up the country are different in many respects with different cultures, aspirations and educational systems. Since colonial era northerners have generally dominated the ruling class because they were dominant in the military which has been a source for political leadership courtesy coup d’états. Yorubas have been the intellectual base of the country while the Ibos have been the economic hub.<sup>92</sup> Again, while the north has advantage of population, it hosts the country’s poorest people and at the same time the richest.<sup>93</sup> The result is that there is a few rich political elitist class with a large poor majority under them. Patronage becomes very easy under such circumstances as rich politicians can easily mobilize poor youth to “do dirty politics” sometimes for them.<sup>94</sup>

Consequently, arms are left in the hands of these poor, unemployed and desperate youth who must also survive, which sometimes may mean going to war. Eventually, the society ends up revolving round politics, economics and religion. To a large extent Ahorsu sided with Ofuafor that the most significant remote causes of the *Boko Haram* uprising were the complex intertwined relationship between the struggle for political power and the scramble for “oil dollars.” In the immediate, however, it takes religious overzealousness and intolerance. Religion, properly utilized as the “opiate of the masses,” is used to mobilize support for a politically motivated activity and to

legitimise terror.<sup>95</sup> The *Sharia* best serves this purpose as it is mostly made to believe that it is the solution to all the ills in the society.

However, with the assumption of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, there was a general optimism that with a Fulani Muslim Northerner in the helm of affairs, the Boko Haram issues could be managed. This assumption was probably based on the theory that Boko Haram was a conspiracy against the Goodluck Jonathan's government. However, a study conducted by the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in 2018 revealed that the political, religious and economic interests are deeply rooted in the Nigerian society far beyond the ability of one government to tackle:

In Nigeria information derived from the field study also revealed the politics of oil in the Lake Chad Basin and corruption amongst the top hierarchy of the military, the political class and the traditional ruling elites in the local communities as one of the root causes of VE (violent extremism). The number of corruption cases presently in court linked to the former National Security Advisor, Rtd. Colonel Sambo Dasuki who allegedly took \$2 billion dollars meant for the procurement of arms for the military is a graphical case in point.<sup>96</sup>

Thus far, the opinions of the Nigerian respondents as regards the role of political and economic interest in the growth and influence of terrorism has been validated by different other sources. It is also very significant the intertwined relationship between the corruption of religion, politics and economics to boost the industry of terrorism in the country. This challenge makes the identification of terrorists a major challenge in Nigeria. Who then is the real terrorist? The poor person conscripted and radicalized through corrupted religious teaching or the religious or politico-economic state official clandestinely providing resources for operations? Again, the three-element argument advanced under the religious identity section could be important in attempt to answer this question. The differentiation of (a) the "religious warlord" who uses religious ideology as a

tool for recruitment (b) the person recruited, radicalized with religious ideology and commissioned to carry out a terrorist act and (c) the unclear nature of the interest and goal which the act of terrorism seeks to achieve. Under this section, it appears that political and economic actors in the country also play a role very similar to the “religious warlord” described above. Both could fit into the category of “terrorism sponsor” with different interest. However, whatever the case, there is at least varied sources of evidence up to this stage to support the general view that the identity of the terrorist may go beyond just the suicide bomber or the radicalized person who enters a church or mosque to shoot worshippers.

This perception is not too different from opinions of Ghanaian respondents. A 28-year old television commercial scheduling officer interviewed in Accra opined as follows when asked what he thought the people called terrorists were.

*I say wrong ideologies about most religious lines. That is what I will say and secondly, sometimes it depends on the outplay of politics that go on in a particular nation or area. But some of the terrorist attacks are not based on religious lines but they are based on political issues and social issues. And sometimes ethnic lines.<sup>97</sup>*

A 57-year old manager in media organization largely agrees with this perspective:

*A terrorist! Terror. Someone who uses different weapons, anything he can lay hands on to destroy lives for a very subjective political agenda.... Number one reason is political reasons. They have been recruited by political leaders to fight a cause. Some don't even have a conscience they have the conscience of their political leaders. They don't understand the reason why they are fighting yet they are fighting. They have been brainwashed into a belief system. And that system is been*

*subjected to some treatment and they want to free themselves, they want to drive home their agenda. The social ones are not so much. Socially they want to recognized their legitimacy within a particular region. Some areas because of fighting for some properties – certain landed properties. They believe certain territories - this area of land is for them and they are fighting to reclaim the land the Gollan Heights and others.*<sup>98</sup>

Though very long, this respondent seems to have summarized the views of all respondents from all the three states. Significantly, he clearly separates fighters from sponsors: *They have been recruited by political leaders to fight a cause. Some don't even have a conscience; they have the conscience of their political leaders. They don't understand the reason why they are fighting yet they are fighting.* He goes ahead to elucidate the political, religious, economic and social elements that drive terrorist activity. By citing examples from Africa and the Middle East, the respondent seems to argue for a generic way to view terrorism globally, or at least in the developing world. A 33-year-old female Administrative Assistant emphasized the political element more: *I think it is a misunderstanding with the political system in a country. Because they usually come out always against the government.*<sup>99</sup>

However, significantly, unlike respondents from Burkina Faso and Nigeria, some Ghanaian respondents are more cautious and more likely to “reason with” the terrorists. By this, it means these respondents tend to put attackers in the “victims” bracket. For instance, a 30-year-old Muslim female respondent said this when asked of her opinion about the identity of terrorists: *I just think they are people who see things differently. I have a whole view of them, I think they are not loved and so because of that, they don't value the other person's life. Because if you are loved and you know what life means you don't want to hurt the other person.*<sup>100</sup>

Another Ghanaian respondent, a 46-year-old Broadcast Engineer also said this:

*In my opinion, when somebody has some kind of ideals, believes and certain philosophies that he feels are not being accepted by the kind of society that he lives in it, he thinks he needs to do something drastic to as it were draw attention to himself. But obviously whatever he or she feels is right might not be right if you subject it critically to civilized ways of discussing issues and analyzing things critically. I see a terrorist as somebody who feels that he is not being heard he is not been given the necessary attention he needs; he is being marginalized.<sup>101</sup>*

In the foregone two responses, the implicit separation between sponsors and combatants as seen in earlier responses were missing. Again, these respondents, though do not approve of the violent methods employed by terrorists, they tend to reason with their circumstances. This view is similarly expressed by another respondent:

*Terrorists are a group of people coming together, they think people are not listening to them so they want a particular voice to be known to people so they create some panic attacks for people to listen to them. People who are involved in terrorism are people who want attention. They just want attention.<sup>102</sup>*

A senior military officer also interviewed in Accra, Ghana expresses similar opinion:

*Terrorists are people who believe in a cause and want to attain that cause but think that they cannot find any avenue to attain the objective that they want to attain through any peaceful mean, through negotiation, and the only avenue is to cause mayhem to attain the objective they want to attain or bring at least attention to that cause that they want to achieve.<sup>103</sup>*

While Ghana has never experienced a terrorist attack, the country has engaged in high profile terrorist debates in recent history. In 2015, a former student of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi allegedly left the country to Syria to fight for the Islamic State group. The news of this young Muslim man's departure to Syria became a headline news story and heavily debated in public spaces, in private and in the media. The same issue came up again about a year later when news reports emerged that Nazir Nortei Alema, the Ghanaian young man who left for Syria had been killed while fighting for the Islamic State group. This was one of the high-profile discourses on terrorism in the country.

The second most popular discourse on terrorism in Ghana was the arrival of former detainees of the Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba. The two suspected ex-terrorists were detained by the United States in Guantanamo under the global war on terror under President George Bush. However, with President Obama's eagerness to close down the camp which had been a dent in the image of the US, two detainees were released and brought to Ghana in a deal with the then John Mahama government. This became a great public discourse which had to take the government lots of effort to explain to concerned Ghanaians why it was not a security risk to accept the two suspected ex-terrorists in the country. In illustrating their points, some Ghanaian respondents cited this controversy surrounding the two former Guantanamo Bay prisoners. For example, one female respondent used it to illustrate the closest she has ever come to a terrorist activity:

*There was this transfer of terrorists to Ghana from the US. When they came in, I felt that these people are really closer to us here o. So, I felt anything can happen. And you know after they got here too or before they got here there were issues around these terrorist attacks. I remember they said the mall was going to be a target place so people should not go to the mall and those things.*

*Those things made me really get close to terrorism and it was a bit alarming. I thank God nothing happened.*<sup>104</sup>

Another respondent, a male indicated:

*You remember the two terrorists that were shipped to Ghana to harbour them? Everybody was afraid in the country because a terror has been mentioned; a terror is in town. We felt our lives were not safe. Those people as we perceive them, they don't really care about the means to your death, the means to their death.*<sup>105</sup>

The narrative from the transfer of the Guantanamo Bay prisoners thus became a major discourse which largely contributed to the construction of the identity of the terrorist. In the two examples stated above the detainees were seen as embodiment of terror and was cause for worry. Their presence was also a reminder of past terrorist threats the country faced.

However, most recently, the incessant terrorists' attacks in its northern neighbour, Burkina Faso, has been the most recent source of concern and discourse for the Ghanaian public. The three high profile attacks in the Burkinabe capital in January 2016, August 2017 and March 2018 were all widely discussed in Ghana. The proliferation of attacks on Churches in the first half of 2019 were, however, the most important sources of discourse in Ghana. For instance, according to the Africa Terrorism Bulletin published by the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, the security situation in Burkina Faso remained unstable for the entire period of April, 2019.<sup>106</sup>

Neighboring countries such as Benin, Ghana and Togo faced a heightened threat of terrorist attacks. These threats came as a result of increased attacks in Burkina Faso. Some of those attacks were the 1st April, 2019 attack in the town of Zoaga, located 2km north from (the) border with Ghana in which 8 civilians were killed. On the same day, on 1 April, an attack carried out by Ansarul Islam, in which a religious leader was executed sparked inter-communal violence. The Arbinda town was attacked in revenge resulting in 62 deaths and 9 injuries.<sup>107</sup> Again, schools and churches were primary targets of attacks in the Soum Province in the second half of April.<sup>108</sup> On 26th April, for instance, unidentified armed men attacked a school in the Kulpélogo province killing a total of six (6) persons including five (5) teachers. Further, on 28th April, 2019, unidentified armed men attacked a church during church service in the village of Silgadji in the Suom Province, killing Six (6) persons. Both ISGS and JNIM claimed responsibility for attacks in the country.<sup>109</sup>

The implication of all these for Ghana was an increasing awareness and discourse on terrorism despite the fact that the country has not been attacked directly. Despite this, the awareness of terrorism generally as a security threat in Ghana is much lower than Burkina Faso and Nigeria. While Ghanaians could still go about and talk about terrorism in almost all public places such as in the media and even in the market without having to think twice about the security implication, same cannot be said about Burkina Faso and (northern) Nigeria.<sup>110</sup> This difference between Ghana on one side and Burkina Faso and Nigeria on the other side, could explain why Ghanaian respondents tend to be softer and more reasonable toward the terrorists than respondents from the other two countries. This notwithstanding, a significant number of respondents do support the majority view about the identity of the terrorist – the tendency to separate combatants from

sponsors and point to a goal or interest that combatants might not know about or not even religious in nature. This is despite the fact that the violence is mostly fueled by religious doctrine.

### **5.2.3 Deprived, Marginalized and Desperate Fighters**

In developing their point about the identity of the terrorist in West Africa, respondents across the three states would often depict combatants as deprived, marginalized and desperate people fighting for their rights. As stated earlier, majority of respondents do separate “sponsors” from “combatants” and view combatants largely as marginalized people in society. By separating sponsors from combatants, as mentioned in the analysis under religious fanatics and politically motivated actors, respondents view “sponsors” as powerful individuals who through powerful social, political and economic networks recruit, condition or radicalize marginalized individuals and commission them to cause terrorist acts. Another important element is that the true motive for the terrorist act may mean different things for the sponsor and the radicalized combatant. This section explores this theme further with a detailed look at the terrorists as marginalized social entities.

As said earlier, most of the respondents interviewed for this present study tend to view terrorist combatants as socially marginalized individuals radicalized by religious ideology to fight for goals that are not obvious. What constitutes marginalization, however, is interpreted differently by respondents. While some respondents tend to view marginalization more broadly to constitute other things including poverty, others see poverty as the most defining feature of marginalization. As regards the former, one security expert sees marginalization in terms of lack of participation in political, social and economic activity: *Basically, we talk about participation. This cuts across the poor and rich. So, when people feel they are not participating in the decision-making process in*

*their community or state that is one of the indicators.... That when people move away, when they ostracize themselves from society - begin to identify themselves in a different mood, talk to themselves in a different mood, are dressed in a different way – it increases the likelihood of terrorism.<sup>111</sup>*

This respondent defines lack of participation to include the rich in society. Similarly, many other respondents think marginalization is largely lack of participation. This could include poverty and other correlates. One Ghanaian ordinary resident thinks likewise: *I see a terrorist as somebody who feels that he is not being heard he is not been given the necessary attention he needs; he is being marginalized and what have you. So, he needs to do something so he could be heard.<sup>112</sup>*

A Senior Military Officer also corroborates this view, though stated differently:

*The person may feel underprivileged. He lives in a country where he feels he is subjugated and cannot enjoy the freedom that they deserve to enjoy. In some countries they are the minority group in other countries too, another country is occupying them, other countries re occupying their land.<sup>113</sup>*

These three respondents all define marginalization more broadly to include even the rich feeling marginalized, or foreign occupation and suppression of freedom. Other respondents, however, mostly Nigerian and Burkinabe respondents tend to see marginalization more in terms of poor economic conditions. In explaining the relationship between poverty and the probability of seeking recruitment into terrorist organizations, a Senior Military Officer in the Burkina Faso Army who

serves on the G5 Sahel Operation added when talking about the activities of the G5 Sahel Group's counterterrorism activities and impact:

*Terrorism comes with poverty. So, if we are able to develop the area of influence of those terrorists – to help youth to have jobs, help women to have what they need, develop the area – it can be reduced, even if not totally eradicated it will reduce their influence. Because someone who is rich, if you promise him to come and join terrorists, he will think twice. Because he will want to live and enjoy life. It is important to develop their area of influence so that even if it will not be fully overcome it will be reduced.<sup>114</sup>*

The response of this Senior Military Officer who is responsible for the execution of counterterrorism policy in the Sahel region is very important. This perception about the role of poverty in the perpetuation of terrorism affirms the opinion of some ordinary residents of Burkina Faso and Nigeria. One ordinary resident in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso shares his opinion among other things when asked what he thought terrorists were:

*For me they are people who are not satisfied with the kind of life they want to live. Sometimes they have no hope for their lives so they just want to end it. For others, it is to defend a good cause. This is the right thing and people do not want to believe. Doing their best to represent the things of God. If a group of people need something from the country, they can use this violent means to get it. They convince some people to become terrorist so they get what they want. Terrorists have no hope and have been manipulated into terrorism. They do that to please God, that is their ideology.<sup>115</sup>*

This Burkinabe respondent, a 38-year-old Master's degree holder, Muslim male and Demographer working with the National Institute of Statistics and Demography, appears to have a lot on his

mind with the thought of who a terrorist is. First of all, he talks about hopeless people who just want to end their lives, probably referring to suicide bombers. He is explicit on the fact that they have been manipulated into terrorism, most probably with misinterpreted religious doctrine. Secondly, he is convinced that sometimes, terrorism is carried out to convey a religious message – doing their best to represent the things of God. This respondent touches on key themes that other respondents have already touched on in different sections of this chapter. The idea that people who do not have hope are manipulated into terrorist activity suggests an implied person who is responsible for the manipulation. This could be no other than the “religious warlord” who is taking advantage of desperate people’s hopelessness to achieve an objective – which could be religious, political, economic or social.

Another male Burkinabe ordinary resident, a male Evangelical Christian and graduate of the University of Ouagadougou is in total agreement with this view point. He said this when he was asked about the causes of terrorist activity:

*First is poverty. When you are poor and you don't know how to manage, how to make ends meet the first offer that comes to you, you take it. And you know these group of terrorists they come with financial proposals. So, one of the main causes is poverty. They succeed in enrolling people because of poverty and difficult conditions.<sup>116</sup>*

This respondent is, however, explicit about the source of the financial proposal – the “group of terrorists.” However, if the group of terrorists is made up of all poor people recruited because of financial benefits, who then awards the benefits? This same question was posed by one of the Burkinabe Senior Military Officers when he attempted to explain why the challenge of terrorism

in the Sahel is a matter of business venture in which poor and helpless combatants are merely used as tools to achieve different interests: *It is a commercial activity. People get into terrorism to get money. If the people are this poor, who gives them this money and the complex commercial EIDs.*<sup>117</sup>

He goes ahead to state some of the avenues the Burkina Faso military discovered as the sources of the “terrorist sponsors in the Sahel.”

*Some NGOs are also terrorist organizations. They construct clinics, schools, mosques and other social facilities to get the trust of the population but later transform the population against the government. They radicalize the population over a period of time – as charity organizations.*<sup>118</sup>

A Nigerian respondent also shared a similar view, giving another clue of who she thinks are the terrorist sponsors and where they come from:

*And the annoying thing is that most of these terrorists they are not even Nigerians. Most of these people are from Niger, Arabs, so they come and then they recruit Nigerians who are illiterate, recruit them and brainwash them. They deploy them to engage in suicide bombing and all. They tell them that when they get to heaven, they will get virgins and all that. They just brainwash them and then they will send these people, they will carry those bombs, enter supermarkets and kill themselves. They know they are going to die but they are still happy doing it.*<sup>119</sup>

Another Nigerian respondent put the problem succinctly:

*The northern part of Nigeria has the highest percentage of children out of school. So now these children that are out of school, these terrorist guys get them and maybe they give them food and money and they promise them that maybe when they kill people and even they die in the process, they will go to heaven so there is that thing that they promise them that there are seven virgins*

*waiting for them in Heaven.*<sup>120</sup> This view was corroborated by a Security Expert interviewed in Ghana: *If for example there is opportunity for me to join a group that will cater for my needs, I think I will go toward that direction. In that case it is easier for these cells to expand into formidable groups and destabilize a particular country.*

The economic and political motivations explained in earlier sections are more or less inseparable from the marginalization and poverty analysis. They are two sides of the same coin. The needs of poor and marginalized youth meet with the needs of a network of politico-economic and religious gangs and a beautiful marriage of convenience is unstoppable in a poor society like West Africa. The description of Boko Haram fighters below by a Nigerian respondent epitomizes all the arguments aforementioned:

*These kids are usually dirty boys. They don't even speak English; they are not well dressed. Nothing. They don't eat. They don't dress – hair everything like that but that same education that they are trying to abolish, if it is what they had, I'm sure their perception would have changed. But they don't have schools to go, they don't have employment so these guys come from nowhere and they promise them a lot of things.*<sup>121</sup>

Following from the analysis above, the concept of the Lumpenproletariat helps understand the role of social structures in producing perceived violent fighters in society. The concept has its origins in the “Manifesto of the Communist Party” by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.<sup>122</sup> Considered as the lowest class in society, the Lumpenproletariat is described by Marx and Engel as the “dangerous class” and “social scam” who could easily be swept into a “proletarian revolution.”<sup>123</sup> In the 1960s, Frantz Fanon gave the concept a new meaning situating it within the anti-colonial

protests prevalent at the time, particularly in Africa.<sup>124</sup> According to Fanon, the structure of the colonial society, comprising a network of powerful colonial officials and the colonized elites had led to a subjugation of the natives of the colonial territories. These natives were viewed by the colonial elites as persons who had not yet “reached maturity in political consciousness.”<sup>125</sup> Consequently, in an apparent reference to Algerian natives fighting French colonial rule, Fanon critiqued the dominant perception of the colonial elites toward the native Algerians:

The North African is a criminal; his predatory instinct is well known; his intense aggressivity is visible to the naked eye. The North African likes extremes, so we can never entirely trust him. Today he is the best of friends, tomorrow the worst of enemies.<sup>126</sup>

The concept of the Lumpenproletariat, as illustrated by Marx, Engel and Fanon, is significant to this study. It demonstrates how dominant social structures can shape the identities of social groups and use dominant institutions to ascriptively entrench perceptions about those social group. Meanwhile, adopting a subscribed view of the situation shows a different perspective, as Fanon argues, the one who is “insensible to shades of meaning,”<sup>127</sup> is actually a very sensible and rational person whose action is informed by the desire for survival. This desire for survival may lead a person into a relationship that will put them in a position of benefit.

So far, the analysis of primary data, existing literature and relevant concepts in this chapter appear to agree that terrorism, like all other forms of violence that West Africa has seen in recent history, hinges on a complex relationship between the haves and the have-nots in society. This is a form of clientelist relationship that is largely rampant in Africa.

Clientelism is a Political Science concept that involves a politician (“patron”) giving out material benefit to a supporter (client) in exchange for the vote or support of the “client”.<sup>128</sup> Wantchekon<sup>129</sup>

defines it as transactions between politicians and citizens whereby material favours are offered in return for political support at the polls.<sup>130</sup> Scholars in Comparative Politics argue that political clientelism is not only prevalent in developing countries but rather ubiquitous feature of modern politics across the globe.<sup>131</sup> In the case of Africa, van de Walle argues that structural factors involving poverty, economic stagnation and fiscal crisis particularly prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa militate against efforts to move away from elite clientelism in African politics.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, analysing data on the partisan preferences of 24,000 individuals from 16 African countries, Philip Keefer<sup>133</sup> concluded that there was enough evidence to support the claim that African politics is dominated by “Big Man” and clientelist promises rather than on competing promises to pursue policies on behalf of co-ethnics.<sup>134</sup> Wantchekon used a unique field experiment organized during the first round of the March 2001 presidential elections in Benin. The experiment randomly selected villages and were exposed to “purely” clientelist and “purely” public policy platforms. He found that while the empirical results showed that clientelism works for all types of candidates, it mainly works well for regional and incumbent candidates.<sup>135</sup>

The point of all this is that like van de Walle argues, the poor socio-economic and patriarchal political history of African states make it very easy for clientelist behaviour to thrive. This form of patron-client relations, is, however, not only present in political contests, but also highly prevalent in virtually all aspects of society. As the analysis in the previous sections support, patron-client relations are prevalent in West African-style violence. The evidence from the theoretical perspectives and the responses from the interview respondents show a strong link with patrons recruiting clients through religious and political influence. The mutually beneficial relationship then creates a conducive environment for political and religious violence to thrive.

### **5.3 Constructing the Identity of Terrorists: The Perspectives of Politicians**

The earlier sections have in different ways demonstrated how residents in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nigeria – both ordinary residents and experts – have defined the identity of the terrorist. While it is difficult to point to a particular way of identifying the terrorists, the opinions of these residents point to terrorists as religious fanatics, politically and economically motivated fighters, desperate and marginalized African youth and finally constructs of global politics. This section focuses on the second source of identifying the constructed identity of the terrorist, according to the framework proposed by Lee Jarvis.

This section defines politicians as the main terrorism policy makers and implementers. More specifically, it assumes the President of the state as the chief politician. Other politicians are members and leadership of Parliament of the respective states, ministers of state and former presidents and ministers of state. Their original speeches and comments as contained in the media have been analyzed. The speeches and statements of politicians are distinguished from media reports in the respect that they are not news stories authored by media reporters. Though contained in various media platforms, these speeches and comments are the verbatim messages from the politicians selected.

Following the twin attacks on the Splendid Hotel and Cafe Capuccino in Ouagadougou on the dawn of 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2016, the President of the country addressed the nation to update residents of the attacks and aftermath. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Burkina Faso, described the act of terror as a barbaric criminal act. He would, however, state what he understood the goal of the attackers was:

*These criminal acts, of a rare barbarity, perpetrated against innocent people that the al-Qaeda criminal organization in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has just claimed, aim at destabilizing our country and its republican institutions and undermining the efforts to build a democratic, peaceful and prosperous nation.*<sup>136</sup>

An attack aimed at destabilising a country and undermining its institutions surely could be regarded a political attack. The president introduced another theme in his address to the nation suggesting there is a political division. The president called for unity in order to tackle the challenge of terrorism is very important:

*I am convinced that with unity and national cohesion, we will come out victorious of this war that they are imposing on our people and on all the other peoples of the world who love peace and freedom.*<sup>137</sup>

After laying emphasis on the purpose of the terrorist attack in the country and calling for unity of purpose, the President of Burkina Faso went ahead to define the identity of the attackers. It is of course mentioned earlier that the President had already called the terrorist group as barbaric criminals, he goes ahead to describe them as “evil forces.” The expression “evil forces” was used twice in the speech of the President but used in different ways in relation to terrorism. Firstly, he provided a distinction between terrorism and “evil forces” but put them side by side on the same scale: *United and determined against terrorism and all the evil forces directed against our country, the people of Burkina Faso will always remain victorious.*<sup>138</sup>

In the second instance, the President uses the term “evil forces” in place of the terrorist activity:

*Given the heavy human toll that these evil forces have inflicted on our people and friends from other countries visiting Burkina Faso, the Burkinabè nation remains in shock.*<sup>139</sup>

President Roch Marc Christian Kabore's use of "evil forces" for terrorists parallels a similar expression used by US former President George Bush in the post 9/11 period. In arguing for the establishment of military tribunals for suspected terrorists in 2001, President Bush declared that the world was fighting the "most evil kinds of people."<sup>140</sup>

In the same year, 2016, the President of Nigeria in an Aljazeera television interview made known what seemed to be his view about terrorism. The President was reacting to reported concerns by some Nigerian Christians about Nigeria's membership of a Saudi Arabian led organization named "Islamic Coalition Against Terrorism." The Christians had accused the government of plans to change the religious identity of the country but the President thought otherwise and argued the move was purely a strategic decision taken to help tackle the Boko Haram menace:

*We are part of it (the Islamic Coalition) because we've got terrorists in Nigeria that everybody knows which claim that they are Islamic. So, if there's an Islamic coalition to fight terrorism, Nigeria will be part of it because we are casualties of Islamic terrorism.*<sup>141</sup>

The Nigerian President, Muhammadu Buhari, who is a Muslim himself, argued further while explaining why it was necessary for Nigerian to join the Islamic Coalition:

*I've just told you it is the Boko Haram itself that declared loyalty to ISIS. ISIS is basically based in Islamic countries. Now, if there's a coalition to fight Islamic terrorism, why can't Nigeria be part of it, while those that are fighting in Nigeria as Boko Haram claim to be Muslims? But the*

*way they are doing it is anti-Islamic... No religion advocates hurting the innocent and just because the Muslims are the ones that claim to be Boko Haram and they are killing innocent people whether in the church, in the bus or in the market place, then I will just sit and look at them because I too am a Muslim? Islam is against injustice in any form.<sup>142</sup>*

This assertion by the Nigerian President corroborates what the Burkinabe Speaker of Parliament addressed to the nation while speaking to Members of Parliament following the January 2016 attack in Ouagadougou.

*These people who are claiming that they are living for a particular religion are themselves not reflecting the religion. These people should not make us fold, we should stand firm and not be discouraged. Burkina Faso is the country where its men and women are coming from different tribes and religions, live in perfect harmony. This barbaric and senseless act should not let us bow.<sup>143</sup>*

Salif Diallo, the Burkinabe Speaker of Parliament and President Buhari, both acknowledge the widely known claim of the various terrorist groups of championing Islamic ideals. They, at the same time, separate the terrorist form of Islam from mainstream Islam. This is very reflective of and confirms the views of respondents analyzed in early parts of this chapter. The Islamic identity claimed by terrorist groups is exemplified by the JNIM group that attacked the French Embassy and Burkina Faso Army Headquarters in March 2018. In relating evidence from the crime scene to the Burkina Faso public, the Attorney General of the country, Maiza Sereme said this about the incident, among other things:

*This attack has been claimed by the terrorist group named “The Group Supporting Islam and Muslims” (JNIM) from Iyad Ag Ghali. ... They were wearing on their forehead or on themselves white calico with the inscription “there is no other God than Allah and Mohammed is his messenger.” ... We can’t say they are Burkinabe or of other identities, however, they were speaking Bambara and Arabic.<sup>144</sup>*

This view is also expressed in a different way by the President of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo. Warning the Ghanaian public to be wary of the threat of terrorism, the Ghanaian President shared his thought about the identity of the terrorists:

*I know you have read the threats and actual attacks by Christian and Muslim miscreants in the West African region and other parts of the world. We do not want that phenomenon to ever occur in our country.<sup>145</sup>*

While it is not clear why the President of Ghana mentioned “Christians” in his statement, the use of the term “miscreant” which is another term for criminal to qualify the type of Christian and Muslims he refers to is very significant. This is the same as saying Christians and Muslims who are criminals. The President of Ghana also creates a distinction between good Christians and Muslims on one hand and miscreant Christians and Muslims on the other hand. He asks Ghanaian to look out for and report the miscreant ones to the authorities. Given the fact that the President of Ghana was addressing the threat of terrorism in West Africa suggests that he was actually defining the identity of the terrorists by that statement.

While the groups appears to be championing Islamic values, according to the evidence from the Burkina Faso Attorney General, Nigerian President Buhari, Burkinabe Speaker of Parliament,

Salif Diallo and Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo argue that the actions of the groups are far from any true religious identity. The ascribed versus subscribed forms of identity construction discussed earlier in this thesis comes to bear. Jie Dong's<sup>146</sup> differentiation of ascribed identity from subscribed identity<sup>147</sup> could explain the argument of the two Presidents and Speaker of Parliament about the identity of the terrorist groups operating in West Africa. Jie Dong uses these terms to describe attributed identity and self-constructed identity respectively. Subscribed identity could be termed as "achieved identity through which people claim allegiance to a group."<sup>148</sup> On the other hand, ascribed identity is an identity given to a group by outsiders and often imposed rather than claimed by group members. Ascribed identity could be seen in "othering" processes, where pronouns like we, us, our, they, them, are used to create distinction between "us" and "them." Jihadists groups' insistence on their identity as Muslims (the ideal type of Muslims) depicts a subscribed identity. The groups have subscribed to an identity which has become their source of common ground to bond. This also explains why all Jihadist groups in West Africa and now the global ISIS network connect seamlessly – they share a subscribed identity (the Muslim Ummah).

While the Jihadist groups see themselves as the pure Muslims living in the Islamic State (Ummah) and have subscribed that identity to themselves, the world around them rather identify them as terrorist and all the other associated names. Their ascribed identity which group members reject, therefore, becomes terrorists. The President and Speaker's distinction becomes a good example of how a group could possess two opposing identities – one given by members themselves (subscribed) and the other given by the environment, the dominant actors like politicians, the media and the public (ascribed identity).

Furthermore, on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019, over three years after the President of Nigeria expressed the above views about the terrorist groups, he did what appears to be an attempt to do a deeper search into the identities of terrorist groups in Nigeria and West Africa. While addressing other heads of foreign states and the state of Nigeria on the twin event of his second term inauguration and celebration of 2019 Democracy Day, the President of Nigeria said among other things while addressing the issue of terrorism and other related violence in the country:

*Most of the instances of inter-communal and inter-religious strife and violence were and are still as a result of sponsorship or incitements by ethnic, political or religious leaders hoping to benefit by exploiting our divisions and fault lines, thereby weakening our country.*<sup>149</sup>

In the opinion of the President, inter-communal, inter-religious strife, violence and terrorism thrive because of sponsorship from political, religious and ethnic leaders. In effect, the President confirms the theme of politico-economic and religious marriage of convenience which has provided fuel for terrorism to thrive. The President states why the political and religious leaders sponsor religious and communal violence: *to benefit by exploiting our divisions and fault lines*. These leaders take advantage of social divisions – religious, economic, political – and sponsor fighters to fight for their benefit. After identifying the sponsors and the reason for the sponsorship (benefit) who then is the sponsored? The religious and communal fighters including the terrorist groups.

On the other hand, this statement from the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, came less than a month after former President Olusegun Obasanjo alleged that the twin problem of Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria had deeper meaning than what is widely known. Referring

to Boko Haram's collaboration with ISIS in forming the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWP), the former Head of State of Nigeria declared that:

*It is no longer an issue of a lack of education and employment for our youths in Nigeria which it began as, it is now West African Fulanisation, African islamisation and global organised crimes of human trafficking, money laundering, drug trafficking, gun trafficking, illegal mining and regime change.*<sup>150</sup>

While the two Nigerian leaders, President Buhari and Former President Obasanjo stand in stark opposition along political ideology and affiliation, the core of their message run parallel. Former President Obasanjo's comment which has caused a great controversy in the country could be seen as a validation of President Buhari. Both leaders suggest three main things in their message: (a) the challenge of terrorism and associated crimes are sponsored by influential leaders in society – politicians, ethnic and religious leaders (b) though the fight is mainly done by the marginalised - because of poverty and unemployment – the real beneficiaries and motives of the terrorist fights are beyond the grievances of the marginalised (c) the true purpose of or interests in the terrorist or communal violence is a grand agenda which is probably only known by the network of sponsors and architects. This three-element theme has run through the discussions in this chapter. There is a near consensus among respondents to this thesis that these three elements are prevalent not only in Nigeria but across the West African sub-region where ever terrorism is prevalent.

#### **5.4 Constructing the Identity of Terrorists: The Role of the Media**

So far, this chapter has examined the first two sources for understanding the identity construction of terrorists in society, according to Jarvis' framework. The first examined in detail was the opinions of the public. Opinions of residents of Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Ghana have been

discussed in detail in the first section. The second source (speeches and comments by politicians) has been examined above. The final source, according to Jarvis' CTS framework, is the views of the media. Regarded as the fourth estate of the realm, the media is a very powerful institution in West Africa and has played a very significant role in the construction of the identity of terrorist groups. The media have provided the platform for interaction between the first two sources discussed (the public and the politicians). Aside providing platform for interaction, the media engages in activities that directly contribute to the understanding of the identity of terrorist groups in West Africa.

This section analyses media reports from six media organisations from all three countries. From each country, stories are taken from the most circulated and most read newspaper and most visited online news website. In Burkina Faso, stories were selected from the newspapers *L'Observateur Paalga* and the news website *Lefaso.net* for analysis. In Ghana, stories from Daily graphic and ghanaweb.com were used. finally, stories were selected from *The Punch* newspaper and *Vanguardngr.com* in Nigeria. Stories were selected at random and as accessible. However, to qualify for selection, a story had to be a news story authored by the media house without attribution to an external individual. Under this section, no quotation in a story was treated. All stories or passages discussed were original stories written by the journalist.

In a news story published by The Punch newspaper on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2019, the Boko Haram group was referred to with four separate terms or names. The report titled "Boko Haram kills 'several' soldiers in Borno attack" in different paragraphs used the terms jihadists, terrorists, insurgents and

Islamists to refer to the Boko Haram group. Below are portions of the paragraphs and the contexts in which the terms were used:

*Boko Haram jihadists have raided a military base in northeastern Nigeria near the border with Niger, killing several troops and stealing weapons, military sources said Friday.*<sup>151</sup>

*The terrorists attacked the 153 Troops Battalion in Kareto around 4:00 am (0300 GMT) and subdued the soldiers who were forced to withdraw after a hard fight. He said the insurgents ransacked the base and carted away weapons and vehicles. The Islamists “took troops by surprise” while they were working to fix communications equipment that had been destroyed in a rainstorm.*<sup>152</sup>

These four terms are used in this story interchangeably meaning the positions of the terms could be changed without altering the content of the story. Most likely, the journalist did not have to struggle to put any of those words where they appear. This presupposes that all these expressions are used in everyday life to refer to the Boko Haram group in Nigeria. What is significant, however, based on the earlier discussions in preceding sections, each of the terms used by this newspaper to refer to Boko Haram represent a particular character or feature of the terrorist group. For instance, “jihadists” and “Islamist” represents the group’s religious nature, “terrorists” refers to the terror and intimidation they employ as a method and “insurgents” is a representation of their political character since insurgents usually fight to acquire a territory. This representation of the Boko Haram group is summarized by another report by the same newspaper published on June 11, 2019. *Boko Haram’s decade-long uprising to establish a hardline Islamic state in Nigeria’s northeast, which has killed more than 27,000 people and left 1.8 million homeless, has spilled into neighbouring Niger, Chad and Cameroon.*<sup>153</sup>

As mentioned earlier, firstly, their insurgency lies in their quest to establish a *hardcore Islamic state in Nigeria's northeast*. Secondly, the *Islamic state* which is the result of jihad denotes the group's religious character. Finally, their ability to kill twenty-seven thousand (27,000) people in ten years highlights the effectiveness of their terrorist strategy to achieve their religious and political goal. On the contrary, two separate stories published by another Nigerian news platform, Vanguard online news published on May 5, 2019 and June 4, 2019 used solely the term terrorist to refer to the Boko Haram group. The two stories titled "Boko Haram sacks military base in Borno community" and "Commander, others missing after Boko Haram dislodged troops in Borno" together used the term terrorists eight times without replacing it with another term.

The tendency to use other terms interchangeably with the term terrorist was also noted in the Ghanaian media. For instance, a report in the November 11, 2016, edition of the Daily Graphic used the term "violent extremism" to refer to terrorism in the story titled "Workshop on how to fight terrorism underway in Accra." The story, authored by Timothy Ngenbe, juxtaposes terrorism and violent extremism but goes on to mention well known terrorist groups as examples of "terrorism and violent extremism."

*Terrorism and violent extremism have been a major headache for African countries over the past few decades. Countries such as Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso have experienced devastating attacks by terrorist groups such as al Qaeda, Al Shabab, Boko Haram, throwing those countries into insecurity. ... a current study had revealed that there were more than 40 different extremist groups in Africa ....*<sup>154</sup>

The story then continued using the terms terrorism and violent extremism and their correlates terrorists and violent extremists interchangeably. Similarly, in a story published by ghanaweb.com on June 14, 2019, two different terms – insurgents and extremists were used to describe terrorists. In the story titled US “Defence deal attracting terrorism – Asiedu Nketiah,” the journalist used the term terrorist dominantly but on occasions used the terms “extremists” and “insurgency” to refer to terrorists and terrorism respectively:

*Moreover, he said the country is a fertile ground for extremists because of the idle vigilante boys, who are likely to be used by terrorists to unleash attacks on the country. ... Mr Asiedu Nketiah told Kasapa 102.5 FM that it's regrettable that the NPP government didn't heed to his advice that the country was likely to be on the radar of terrorists and insurgency attacks following the agreement.*<sup>155</sup>

A critical look at the excerpts of the story indicates a possible confusion of the use of the terms. While the core theme of the story was about terrorists and terrorism, the writer used the terms “extremists” and “insurgency” without establishing appropriately the relationship between those terms and terrorism. There appears to be deliberate effort to use the terms interchangeably to avoid repetition of the terms “terrorists” and “terrorism.”

Meanwhile, like the case of Nigeria, some journalists in Ghana did not use any other term in place of terrorism or terrorist. For instance, in a story published by the Daily Graphic on August 11, 2016, the term terrorism was used throughout the report without the use of any other term in place of terrorism or terrorist. The relatively short story filed by Michael Quaye from Wa, the Upper West Region of Ghana, uses the term terrorism/terrorist seven times without interchanging with any other term.<sup>156</sup>

In the case of Burkina Faso, the situation is not too different from the Nigerian and Ghanaian reports. However, the terms “jihadist” and “jihadism” are more popular in the Burkina Faso media and more likely to be used in place of “terrorist” and “terrorism” in a report. In other words, the use of expressions such as “insurgency” and “extremism” as seen in the Nigerian and Ghanaian media is lesser in Burkina Faso. However, use of “jihadism” is more prevalent. For instance, in a page two report in the 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2018 print edition of the *Observateur Paalga*, the journalist used the terms “terrorists” and “jihadists” interchangeably. In describing the situation in the neighbourhood during the terrorist attack on the Burkina Faso General Army Headquarters in Ouagadougou in March 2018, Hugues Richard Sama, the journalist used the following expression as part of his narration while describing the reaction of some shop owners nearby: *They were asking one another if it was terrorist attack. Some of them disagreed saying they did not think it was jihadists, it should be among themselves. Soldiers will not run away before jihadists.*<sup>157</sup>

Yet about two years earlier, following the country’s very first high-profile terrorist attack in Ouagadougou, another journalist writing for the same newspaper also used only the terms “terrorist” and “jihadist” in his report. The *Observateur Paalga* reporter Thibault Aboubacar Derme wrote in 2016 as part of his report:

*Three days after the violent terrorist attack that hit Ouagadougou, the President Roch Marc Christian Kabore and President of the Republic of Benin Thomas Yayi Boni went to the Kwame Nkrumah Avenue to inspect the scene of the attack. President Yayi from Benin came on behalf of his peers from the sub region to solidarise with President Kabore and the people of Burkina Faso following the jihadists attack Burkina Faso faced on 15th January 2016.*<sup>158</sup>

While these media reports, just like those from Nigeria and Ghana do not explicitly indicate the sponsor-combatant distinction, their use of attributes such as “jihadists”, “Islamists,” “insurgents” and other terms implicitly indicate the religious and political features of terrorists. Thus, this section has shed light on how the media use various expressions to highlight some significant attributes of terrorism. These attributes clearly, may not mean anything to the journalist more than just making attempt to avoid repetition of using “terrorist” and “terrorism.” However, critically, analysed, these terms do shape public opinion and influence public views about terrorism. They also shed light on the various attributes of terrorism that have been made apparent in the preceding analysis in this study.

The views of the media in their reportage constitute the third and final source of information to understanding the identity of the terrorist using Jarvis’ CTS framework. Thus, the preceding sections have analysed the views of the Public and Speeches of Politicians, with this section analyzing the role of the Media. As indicated earlier, the next two sections examine the two additional sources derived from the fieldwork for this study. These are Global Politics (Discourse) and Terrorist themselves. The study, therefore, proceeds in the next section by examining the role of global politics in shaping the identity of the terrorist in West Africa. Data in this section is largely drawn from field interviews.

## **5.5 Constructing the Identity of the Terrorist: The Role of Global Politics and Global Discourse**

The discourse and play of global politics also contribute significantly in shaping the understanding of the identity of the terrorist in West Africa. Through various channels such as the media,

respondents indicated how global politics and the discourse at the global level especially as carried through international media shape their understanding of the identity of the terrorist.

Firstly, majority of respondents across the three states define terrorists as creations of global politics. Such respondents are quick to point to the role of the United States in interventions in foreign countries. This perception cuts across experts and ordinary residents and as well cuts across the three countries. For instance, a 38-year-old Communications Engineer after identifying terrorists as religious fanatics argues again as follows:

*The second is world politics. You know. One country invading another country all in the name of bringing them good civilized lifestyle, in the name of instilling democracy but in the background for bigger ulterior motives only known to them. ... So, if America is after Iraq, going into Iraq to drop bombs, the Iraqi people will also get up and fight for themselves. You understand. So, I don't see them as bad people. I only see them as people fighting for their rights to live.*

This point is largely corroborated by a Senior Islamic Cleric interviewed in Accra. After giving a long explanation of how Islam is exploited into fueling terrorist acts, the Cleric has a caveat:

*But in recent times, international politics has also played an important role – including policies of America and other places. In Libya for example and how NATO entered there under the influence of the West causing the slaying of Gadhafi and has left Libya now. Take the case of Iraq for example. what has happened in Iraq has actually fueled that kind of ideology thinking that it is the West that intends to weaken the Muslim world. Those who carry that kind of ideology think that this is the justification – because we are a target. So therefore, we must also rise up. That is why in most of the cases they say they are targeting white people – Americans.*

For these two respondents, while terrorists in West Africa could be seen largely as religious fanatics, global politics, particularly American policies toward other countries could equally be said to have created these terrorists. The cleric went further to identify one key politico-religious protracted conflict in the Middle East and points out the role of the US in the conflict and how that role of the US creates terrorist acts. He sees it as the third most important defining factor of terrorist activities:

*The third is the Palestinian issue. There is a link between how the Muslim Arab world is responding to the Palestinian issue. In fact, it is one of the realities. So, whenever there is any information about what is happening in Palestine look at the American position to it. Then they (terrorists) say so this is injustice. We are suffering injustice and these are our brothers and sisters so if they alone cannot fight for themselves, in the spirit of the universal Islam brotherhood then we must act on their behalf.*

This argument significantly points out clearly the key arguments advanced in this chapter: a depiction of an inseparable marriage between politics and religion. While the Israeli-Palestinian long-standing conflict has been largely political – over contentious territory in East Jerusalem and others – the philosophy of the spirit of Islamic Community (the Ummah) which is a feature of the Islamic caliphate and the Jihad doctrine has fueled and motivated the actions of fanatics against the US globally. Due to the fact that the Islamic Community is a global one, jihadists everywhere see it as their duty to fight on behalf of their brothers in Palestine. A Senior Military Officer also specifically cited the Palestinian and Arab issues:

*Most of the Arabs are like why are you always here to worry us. We live in our country and you are in your America we don't come there to worry you why are you worrying us in our region.*

*Why don't you leave us alone why are you always on us?... He feels aggrieved and wants to obtain his right.*

Another Senior Military officer interviewed in Burkina Faso identifies the role of global politics in the creation of terrorists in the global political economy. He sees the global problem to be an amalgamation of political and economic interests:

*African countries have rich resources – uranium, oil, water, etc., under the desert. The same in the north of Burkina Faso and Mali. In Niger, the resources are already exploited but the people are poor. Remember the parallels between World War II and the economic recession of 1929 on one hand and the economic decline in 2008 and the upsurge of terrorism. To fight terrorism, you have to buy weapons, food, vehicles, uniforms, etc. War is created to boost the economy.<sup>159</sup>*

This Senior Burkinabe Military Officer backs his point with the economic ambitions of the French-led G5 Sahel Group's operation BARKHANE.

*Inside the military the ineffectiveness of BARKANE and the economic interests inherent in it is widely known but the political leaders do not agree to this view. ... The quest to establish an airline in the Sahel region and embark on railway projects under the G5 regime clearly demonstrates the economic ambitions inherent in this operation.<sup>160</sup>*

Another Burkinabe Senior Military Officer who is a member of the Burkina Faso Forces in the G5 Sahel Group confirmed the economic and infrastructural ambition of the Group. In explaining the mandate of the Group, he stated among other things:

*The G5 is not just about armed forces but also to create development among the five countries. It will bring a lot of development – roads, railway, dams and even an airline. All these projects are expected to start this year in the five nations. This is to create jobs for the young guys to alleviate poverty. You know poverty is a major cause of terrorism.<sup>161</sup>*

The data presented in this section of the chapter have demonstrated how respondents interviewed define the identity of the terrorist in relation to what creates it. In the concluding section of the next chapter, the role of international media which has informed the worldview of these respondents as regards their understanding of the identity of the terrorists is discussed. In the meantime, analysis of what terrorists say about themselves also provides an interesting insight into the identity of terrorists. The next section analyses the subscribed identity of terrorists. This is the final source of information this study uses to examine the identity of the terrorist in West Africa based on the adopted CTS framework.

## **5.6 The Subscribed Identity of the Terrorist**

As stated in earlier parts of the thesis, the identity construction of every group is comprehensively understood when examined in its two forms. The ascribed identity of the group which is constructed by non-group members through their interaction in social discourse. This form of identity construction has been examined in detail in this chapter so far. The second form of identity construction is subscribed identity. This is the form of identity given to themselves by in-group members. Group members, through their acts and words tell their social environment what their group stands for and other attributes. This is mostly done explicitly but other times the social world is made to decipher the group's preferred identity. So far, the chapter has discussed the terms "terrorism" and "terrorist" and their affiliated terms used to describe the ascribed identity of

terrorists in West Africa. Some of these affiliated terms used are “violent extremists,” “jihadists,” “Islamists,” “militants” and “insurgents.” All these terms are used to describe the various salient characteristics of the ascribed identity of the terrorist groups. This section discusses the second form of the identity of the terrorist in West Africa – the subscribed identity. This section answers the questions: what is the terrorist’s perception about themselves?

This question could best be answered with a reference to the ideology of West African terrorist groups. As discussed in detail in earlier sections of the chapter, the fundamental ideology of terrorist groups in West Africa is hinged on misinterpreted Islamic doctrine of the jihad. The jihad also referred to as Holy War is invoked under a legitimate Islamic authority as a necessity for self defence and to defend the Islamic faith and community (*Ummah*).<sup>162</sup> However, this doctrine has been interpreted in varied ways and used as legitimating tool to attack civilians and state institutions. Beyond this what do terrorist groups perceive themselves to be? Fierke<sup>163</sup> argues that terrorists largely see themselves as fighters of injustice (martyrs).

Fierke begins her argument by stressing the need to recognize the two forms of viewing the identity of the terrorist and the acts they carry out. Distinguishing between ascribed and subscribed identities is important because “actors situated in different social worlds may bring distinct frameworks of social meaning to a single act”<sup>164</sup> More specifically, observers of terrorist acts attach meaning to an act different from the meaning given by the one carrying out the act. Fierke argues that by deciding to join a terrorist group, one takes a decision to be a martyr (though sometimes people are forcibly conscripted into terrorist groups).<sup>165</sup> The definition of a martyr, according to the Cambridge dictionary is “a person who suffers very much or is killed because of

their religious or political beliefs, and is often admired because of it.”<sup>166</sup> The significance of this concept lies in the fact that firstly, the martyr suffers in the hands of others and is killed (by others) due to their religious or political stance. Secondly, the martyr is admired because (mostly in terms of religious martyrs) they give up earthly life with the promise of continuing life in paradise. In effect, the martyr does not kill themselves but is rather killed for standing up for their conviction – either religious or political. Specifically, in the view of the jihadist who uses himself as a bomb, he believes the act is, firstly, to give reverence to *Allah* (God); and secondly to restore justice for the *Ummah* (Islamic community).<sup>167</sup>

For instance, militants who engage in suicide acts see the social importance of the act – which is his pledge to fight perceived injustice meted out to Muslims, as well as the compensation he will get for his family.<sup>168</sup> The terminology of ‘martyrdom operations’ is, therefore, the favourite term for jihadist groups to describe their operations. Thus, martyrdom gives a different meaning to an act of self-destruction, providing a different justification for the act, positioning it within a moral framework.<sup>169</sup> Martyrdom operation thereby creates a context within which the deployment of resources and the objects of violence are justified. The language may be employed strategically by those who organize violence, but this is only possible because it already has an emotional reverberation among relevant populations.<sup>170</sup>

In addition, Fierke establishes a nexus between humiliation and trauma suffered by a population and the likelihood of members joining extremist groups to fight the source of the humiliation. Mostly this experience of humiliation and trauma is reinforced by the individuals doing the recruiting and conditioning:

The dramatic increase in the number of people willing to become human bombs as levels of violence increase, suggests that the marriage of 'being already dead' (Speckhard, 2006), with a religious justification and a belief that one is contributing to a better future for the community, constitute the conditions under which a decision to give up one's life, appears to be not only a viable option but a heroic one. Resistance to occupation and sacrifice for the struggle is highly praised and commemorated in Palestine, regardless of the form it takes.<sup>171</sup>

Considering this viewpoint, the person conditioned to fight as a terrorist is genuinely fighting a situation which is an injustice to him. The violence he is prepared to die for at any stage of the resistance is a personal sacrifice. He believes his sacrifice will help resolve the injustice and compel the receiving end to grant justice to the suppressed population. However, on the other hand, the outsiders who are non-members of the group and do not understand the essence of the sacrifice view it as a terrorist activity. The outsider also sees the act of sacrifice by the supposed terrorist as injustice. It is injustice because he is causing harm to an innocent civilian population. These two opposing viewpoints eventually result in what Fierke calls a "structural logic"<sup>172</sup> which produces two separate traumatized populations.

Two different 'games' are played within an asymmetrical relationship, which generates a particular logic. ... terrorism provides a justification for states to retaliate in the name of protecting a traumatized population; state retaliation reinforces the trauma and the sense of injustice experienced by communities that have produced 'martyrs.'<sup>173</sup>

This situation best describes the challenge of terrorism in West Africa in the present moment. As indicated in Fierke's thesis above, terrorist groups operating in West Africa have adopted names to reflect their identity as (a) custodians of the Islamic faith and (b) fighters of injustice. The names and attributes of the main terrorist groups operating in West Africa have been summarized in the table below.

**Table 5.1 Main terrorist organizations operating in West Africa and their preferred names**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Preferred name (in English)</b>	<b>Areas of influence</b>	<b>Leaders (s)</b>
Boko Haram	Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad.	Lake Chad area (Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger.)	Abubakar Shekau
ISWAP (originally part of Boko Haram)	Islamic State West Africa Province	Lake Chad area (Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger.)	Abu Musab al-Barnawi (Son of Boko Haram founder Mohammed Yusuf)
AQIM	al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb	Sahel region (Mali, Libya, Niger, Mauritania, Burkina Faso)	Abdelmalek Droukdel
MUJAO	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa	Sahel region (Mali)	Hamada Ould Mohamed Kheirou
JNIM	Group to Support Islam and Muslims (Umbrella body for Ansar Dine, Al-Mourabitoun, AQIM and the Macina Liberation Front (All al Qaeda affiliates)	Sahel region (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Libya)	Iyad Ag Ghaly
Ancar Dine Became member of JNIM in 2017	Defenders of the Faith	Sahel (Mali, Mauritania)	Iyad Ag Ghaly

ISGS	Islamic State in the Greater Sahara	Sahel Region (Mali, Niger, Mauritania)	Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi
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Source: Author's own construct

West Africa has the highest number of terrorist organizations in Africa and one of the highest in the world. All of them claim to be fighting the cause of Islam as shown in the names they have adopted. Also, by affiliating to the two main global jihadist groups (a Qaeda and the Islamic State), the West African groups have become active members in the global jihadists network. Seeing themselves as members of the global Muslim *Ummah* (Islamic Community), for instance, these groups could strike a target in West Africa but in solidarity to the Palestinian cause.<sup>174</sup> They see it as a sacred duty to fight injustice in commiserating with the Palestinians and all Muslims globally. Again, as custodians of the ideal and pristine form of Islam, it is their duty to ensure the religion is purged of any form of corruption. That is why even Muslims who they view as corrupted become their targets.

From the perspective of the terrorist, therefore, the global system is corrupted with two main evils and it is their duty to correct the evils in honour of *Allah's* commandment. Firstly, the pristine form of Islam founded by the Prophet Mohammed has been corrupted by democracy. There is an urgent need to go back to the Islam preached and taught by the Prophet and this can only be done in a pure Islamic State governed by Sharia laws with all people living under an Islamic authority. This is the command of *Allah* and it is the duty of every Muslim to fight for this cause.

Secondly, the world is full of injustice against the Muslim world. This injustice is perpetuated by the US and the West and it is the duty of every true Muslim living everywhere in the world to fight

for colleague Muslims everywhere. These groups cite the Palestinian struggle against the Israelis and the US support for Israel, the US invasion in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the NATO in Libya. They, therefore, see it as a sacred duty to avenge the suffering of the Muslim world. These two themes run through the names of all the seven groups listed above. Involvement in fights against Western powers and death in the process, therefore, becomes an honour to the one fighting for the Islamic Community. Fighters are hereby motivated by the doctrine of jihad which offers an envious reward in the afterlife. This fits into the doctrine of the martyr.

Meanwhile, in West Africa, the discourse around terrorist violence is largely driven by the ascribed identities of terrorists only. This is largely informed by the adoption of Westernised philosophy about terrorism. The table below illustrates some differences between ascribed and subscribed views about terrorism. As shown in the extreme right column, the interpretations in dominant discourse directly mirror the act of terrorism as ascriptively interpreted but not the subscribe interpretation.

**Table 5. 2 Contrasting views about ascribed and subscribed identity of terrorists in West Africa**

<b>Description/Activity</b>	<b>Interpretation in Ascribed Identity</b>	<b>Interpretation in Subscribed identity</b>	<b>Impact on real world in West Africa</b>
Act of violence carried out by jihadist actors	Terrorist attack (killing innocent civilians)	Participation in fight against injustice, humiliation and victimization	

Killing oneself and others in planned operations	Suicide terrorist attack	Martyrdom operation (highest form of spiritual experience in support of the struggle against oppression)	Subscribed identity interpretation of acts not known or overlooked in the discourse
Killing of suspected terrorists by state forces	Counterterrorism operation is acceptable and necessary response to terrorism	Evidence of secular (state) effort to humiliate and oppress the suspect (our) community	
Who are jihadist fighters	Terrorists	Fighters of injustice against the “Muslim Community” and pious ones who carry out the will of Allah	
View about suicide attackers	Evil and enemies of society who die uselessly	Martyrs who successfully embark on holy and selfless operations and deserve to be celebrated	

Source: Author’s own construct

As illustrated above, terrorism is largely understood in the dominant discourse only ascriptively.

The subscribed identity of the terrorist is largely overlooked. However, there is great analytical

value and practical significance in viewing terrorism and the identity of the terrorist based on both their ascribed and subscribed identities. In ascribed identity, terrorist group members see themselves as victims of injustice and, therefore, are fighting for their community even to the point of death. They die as martyrs when they die in the warfront (a) fighting injustice and (b) carrying out the command of Allah. In their names, deeds and words, we understand what terrorist groups think about themselves. It also shows the rationality in someone engaging in martyrdom operations. This same act is described in ascribed identity as suicide attack but in the subscribed identity of the terrorist it is a martyrdom operation. People who engage in martyrdom operations have reached the highest level of their spirituality and are celebrated, but not mourned.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined both the ascribed and subscribed identity of terrorists in West Africa. The ascribed identity of the terrorists was discussed through the 3-source framework proposed by Jarvis.<sup>175</sup> However, based on the coded field data, two additional sources were added to Jarvis's original three sources. These additional sources are the dynamics of "global politics" and subscribed identity which is the terrorists' own identification of themselves. These five sources engage in a complex interaction taking into consideration the historical, political and religious context of the countries studied. The following were found in the analysis in this chapter.

Firstly, patron-client nature of the structure of West African society has a manifestation in the identity of terrorist groups operating in the West African sub-region. The sharp economic disparities across societies in West African countries promotes this form of relationship. Patron-client relations become rife as widespread poverty pushes clients to depend on patrons for upkeep and basic necessities. Patrons also take advantage of such relationship for ulterior interests. It is

generally agreed from the various sources and responses in the data analyses that we can distinguish “patron terrorists” from “client terrorist.” “Patron terrorists” by their nature could best be described as “terrorist sponsors” while the “client terrorists” are described “terrorist combatants.” “Client terrorists” are “terrorist combatants” because they are the ones deployed for terrorist operations. However, the client need not necessarily know the true purpose of the fight. In their knowledge and conviction, they are fighting a religiously holy war. They are martyrs fighting injustice. So therefore, any counterterrorist move against them is viewed as a deepening of the injustice against their community.

Broadly viewed, this patron-client relationship was a major feature of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars in the 1990s. Patron-client relations in West Africa is largely a permanent societal structure that manifests in politics, religion, economics and easily lends itself to violence as well. The current wave of terrorist violence could, therefore, be described as a transformation of violence from civil war to extremist guerrilla form of violence. Though the method and combat strategy has changed, the structural dynamics that promoted the highly lethal civil wars in the 1990s is still providing a conducive medium for the current wave of deadly terrorism to thrive. This is a case of marriage of convenience between Paul Collier’s “Greedy Warlord” and the “hopeless Lumpen-proletariat.”

Therefore, the identity of the terrorist in West Africa could best be understood if the menace is looked at from two perspectives. Firstly, segregate “terrorist sponsors” from “terrorist combatants.” What this means is that the terrorist sponsor who controls a part or all of the means of recruitment, conditioning (training) and resources with his network of powerful political,

economic and ethnic aides could be identified separately. Then the terrorist combatant who is seen as a vulnerable and marginalized individual recruited and conditioned to become a fighter could also be identified. These two groups are both terrorist but have widely different interests and motivations in the single terrorist act they jointly commit. The thread that joins them together is religious ideology.

Secondly and flowing from the first, separating the two forms of terrorists also means separating their interests in the act of terrorism. The “terrorist sponsor” works in relationship with actors who have varied interests. These actors supply the resources and could be politicians in government or in opposition, business people, criminal gang leaders or ethnic leaders. All these categories have different complex interests. The recruited and trained combatant who occupies the lowest rank in the group organogram is conditioned to carry out what he has been asked to do. His economic, political or religious reward is tied to what the superiors are ready to pay him. When he is cut off, the recruiter moves on to recruit more. When he is eliminated by the state agent, he achieves his religious reward. The recruiter moves on to recruit more community members who feel more victimized and traumatized by the act of the state. In other words, instead of weakening the recruiter by killing his recruits, state actors rather empower and give potential fighters more reason to join the recruiter’s wagon – apparently to fight the injustice. This is a key principle of martyrdom.

Thirdly and finally, another way to understand the identity of the terrorist critically in West Africa is to study the terrorists through their subscribed identity in addition to the ascribed identity. To look at terrorists subscribed identity is to take a moment to view things from their point of view. Who do terrorists say they are? What do they want? Why does their number keep swelling when

everyone outside sees them to be evil? While this viewpoint does not make the researcher a terrorist, it speaks to the rationality in being a member of such a group. The rationality in fighting for a brother who is under oppression by a foreign entity; the rationality in sacrificing your life to fight against humiliation; the rationality in carrying out a religious duty that promises much more joy than what this rugged world can offer; and ultimately the rationality in being a hero by sacrificing yourself to fight for your family and community that are being humiliated by an unjust and unstoppable bully. This is how the average terrorist thinks. That is their construction of their identity – their subscribed identity. The wholeness of the identity is better appreciated when what terrorists perceive about themselves (their subscribed identity) is studied alongside what outsiders perceive about them (their ascribed identity). These three key findings from the data analysis have significant implication for CTS and for rethinking counterterrorism strategy in West Africa.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>4</sup> Ibid
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 6.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 7.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 8.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 9.
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- <sup>13</sup> Ibid
- <sup>14</sup> Personal interview in Accra on 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.
- <sup>15</sup> Personal interview in Ouagadougou on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.
- <sup>16</sup> Personal interview in Accra on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid
- <sup>19</sup> Personal interview in Ouagadougou on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.
- <sup>20</sup> Personal interview in Accra, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid
- <sup>22</sup> Personal Interview, Accra, 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.
- <sup>23</sup> Fox, Jonathan & Sandler, Shmuel., “The Question of Religion and World Politics,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Taylor and Francis Inc. 2005.
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- <sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 4.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid
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- <sup>37</sup> Personal interview, Accra, 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.
- <sup>38</sup> Constitution of Medina, Articles 30 & 31. Accessed at <https://www.constitution.org/cons/medina/macharter.htm>
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid. Art. 36.
- <sup>40</sup> Quran 2:190-191.
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## CHAPTER SIX

# CONSTRUCTION OF THE IDENTITY OF THE TERRORIST IN WEST AFRICA AND THE IMPLICATION FOR COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

### 6.0 Introduction

The general objective of this study is to understand the identity of the terrorist in the West African context through the lens of CTS theory and the implication for counterterrorism strategy. This chapter discusses the findings from the previous chapters. It examines the implication of the findings for CTS theory and counterterrorism strategy in West Africa. Specifically, this chapter critically examines the CTS alternative conceptualization of terrorism against the dominant discourse in relation to the findings from the previous chapter. The chapter as well explores how the CTS conceptualization of terrorism and the findings stimulate a rethink of the counterterrorism strategy adopted by West African states. By this, the chapter answers the fifth and last research question for the study. The framework for defining the CTS conceptualization of terrorism is derived mainly from the works of Richard Jackson<sup>1</sup> and Lee Jarvis,<sup>2</sup> notable scholars in CTS theory. However, before proceeding, the chapter does a summary of the findings from the previous chapter in this introductory section.

The previous chapter has analyzed the field data and presented the results according to the framework proposed by Jarvis<sup>3</sup> a lead scholar in CTS theory. The work has so far examined the current construction of the identity of the terrorist in West Africa using a CTS framework. Five sources were critically examined taking into consideration the historical, political and religious context of the countries studied. Integration of this complex intersubjective social discourse

provided a broader and more contextual view about the nature of the identity of the terrorist when viewed with Critical Terrorism Studies lenses. From the analysis three broad findings were reported.

Firstly, sharp economic disparities across societies promote a form of relationship where clients are pushed to depend on patrons for upkeep and basic necessities. The relationship manifests daily in politics, religion, economics and also crucially in violent conflicts. For instance, this structure was largely responsible for the highly lethal civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s. It is generally agreed from the various sources and responses in the data analyses that we can distinguish terrorist sponsors from terrorist combatants. Terrorist sponsors are those responsible for recruitment, training and supply of resources for combat. Terrorist combatants are those on the field conditioned with religious ideology to fight for their patrons. However, the client need not necessarily know the true purpose of the fight. In their knowledge and conviction, they are fighting a religious holy war. They are martyrs fighting injustice. Therefore, any counterterrorist move against them is viewed as a deepening of the injustice against their community. While the terrorist sponsor and terrorist combatant are both terrorists, they have widely different interests and motivations in the single terrorist act they jointly commit. The thread that joins them together is religious ideology.

Secondly, separating the two forms of terrorists also means separating their interests in the act of terrorism. The terrorist sponsor works in relationship with actors who have varied interests. These actors supply the resources to ensure the terrorism industry is kept nourished. The actors could be politicians in government or in opposition, business people, criminal gang leaders or ethnic

leaders. All these categories have different complex interests. The recruited and trained combatants who occupy the lowest rank in the group are conditioned to carry out their mission. Their economic, political or religious reward is tied to what the superiors are ready to pay them. When one is cut off, the recruiter moves on to recruit more. When they are eliminated by the state agent, they achieve their religious reward. The recruiter moves on to recruit more community members who feel more victimized and traumatized by the act of the state. In other words, instead of weakening the recruiter by killing his recruits, state actors rather empower and give potential fighters more reason to join the recruiter's wagon – apparently to fight the injustice. This is a key principle of martyrdom.

Finally, studying the terrorists through their subscribed identity in addition to the ascribed identity provides a great insight into who they are. Terrorist subscribed identity is observed when things are viewed from their community's point of view. This viewpoint sees the rationality in being a member of a terrorist group. For instance, the rationality in being a hero by sacrificing oneself to fight for their loved ones and community who are constantly humiliated by an unjust and unstoppable bully is a worthy cause. The idea of being venerated as a martyr on earth why your soul enjoys in heaven is worth every sacrifice. The idea of contributing to a struggle against injustice is always a worthy cause in any community. This is how the average terrorist combatant thinks. The wholeness of the identity is better appreciated when what terrorists perceive about themselves (their subscribed identity) is studied alongside what outsiders perceive about them (their ascribed identity).

## **6.1 Overview of Current Counterterrorism Strategies**

Before proceeding to examine the CTS conceptualization of terrorism, the chapter does a brief overview of the current counterterrorism strategies of Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Ghana and the ECOWAS. These three countries selected as cases for this study are expected to operate within the regional ECOWAS counterterrorism framework.

### **6.1.1 Counterterrorism Strategy of Burkina Faso**

Burkina Faso does not have a national strategy independent of the strategy of the G5 Sahel Group. Its national strategy is integrated into the broader G-5 Group's strategy. The Sahel G-5 is a political and security cooperation among five countries geographically located in the Sahel region of Africa. The five countries comprising the G5 Group are Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. The mandate of the G5 Sahel Group is four-prong: The first is cooperation in defence and security. This is the core mandate of the group - to reinforce peace and security within the five nations. Second, the cooperation is to create friendly relations among the governments of the five nations. The third mandate is infrastructural. The infrastructural mandate is to develop the transport and communication networks among member state. The final mandate is human development. This last mandate of the G5 Group is aimed at improving the resilience of the local populations within the states. It aims specifically to improve the condition of living.<sup>4</sup>

In Burkina Faso, both the national and multinational forces work with the state Military Police. When suspects are arrested by the military, they are handed over to the military police for investigation and prosecution. When asked about the effectiveness of the operations of the G-5 Forces, a Senior Burkinabe Military Officer and one of the Focal Point Persons for the Burkina Faso Army at the G-5 was much optimistic about the achievement of the Group:

*It is very difficult to directly measure the effectiveness of our operations. We have a wholistic approach. It is not only the forces but there are other stakeholders who perform different roles and everybody is performing in their area. But if you want to mention, I can say the results is between 7-8 out of 10. Because everybody including the five nations is working in their area of operations.*<sup>5</sup>

However, interrogated further, one would realise the operations of the Group is fraught with many challenges. These challenges range from logistics to finance. For instance, after over four years under incessant terrorist attacks, Burkina Faso is yet to acquire sophisticated weapons enough to fight terrorism.

*Half of the financial support is available but the procedure is not as easy as you think especially when you talk about the EU. Also, before you can acquire military equipment the procedure is more difficult than even civilian equipment. That is why it is taking time to procure equipment but we know that very soon we will have the equipment. Apart from the EU money, the Emirati countries have also contributed but we don't have the committee of financial support. This has been created long time in Nouakchott but there were no personnel available. The office was activated in January so that those who have pledged will now be able to contribute. The committee was not available to activate collection of contributions. But they have been active since January 2019.*<sup>6</sup>

Despite this challenge, Burkina Faso forces and other countries in the Sahel have had to fight militants who have very sophisticated weapons. These weapons are acquired from four main sources. This is explained by the Burkinabe Senior Military Officer.

*First, when the Libyan crisis started the terrorists got all the weapons, explosives, everything they needed. The barracks of Libya were full of arsenal. The second is the Mali conflict. It was in Mali they used to attack Burkina Faso, Niger and others. When they came to Mali, they started attacking our barracks. Imagine if you have a platoon or a company and provide security for the area and you are not many. When these people are coming, they have information about how many soldiers are there and multiply that number by three and surprise you. And when they surprise you, they will kill some of your guys and enter to pick whatever weapons they get, ammunitions and everything. The third is ISIS. You know ISIS is a very big machine. They have a collaboration with ISIS and ISIS support them. We don't know how they supply them the weapons but they do. The fourth way is the haves. We may have some underground countries. It could be European countries but we cannot mention the names of the countries supporting them even some Arab countries or North African countries.<sup>7</sup>*

This challenge is even exacerbated by the perception among some sections of the Armed Forces of these countries that the G-5 Group was losing its core focus. The desire to enter into infrastructural and communication projects appears to portray an institution that has not taken control over its core mandate but seeking to enter more difficult ventures. This point is succinctly stated by another Senior Officer of the Burkina Faso Army who is not a member of the Burkina Faso Battalion to the G-5 Group.

*For instance, the quest to establish an airline. France has so much influence in the military of the member states. Since its institution, G-5 has embarked on about 10 operations but unsuccessful – unable to get terrorists but there are attacks right after the operation. But bilateral operations get more results. Some military members do not have interest in G-5 operations unless they are directly involved. Bilateral operations are allowed under the G-5 arrangement but BARKANE would always want to participate. Inside the military the ineffectiveness of BARKANE and the economic interests inherent in it is widely known but the political leaders do not agree to this view.<sup>8</sup>*

Some of these sentiments inside the militaries of the countries fighting terrorism in West Africa raise questions about the plausibility of the current counterterrorism regimes in the states. These challenges are worsened by the difficulty in funding and equipping operations. Burkina has its own challenges while Nigeria also has its unique challenges.

### **6.1.2 Counterterrorism Strategy of Nigeria**

Unlike Burkina Faso, Nigeria adopted a national counterterrorism strategy in 2014. This was the year the Boko Haram group reached its peak as the world's deadliest terrorist group. The National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) is a broad counterterrorism policy framework for the Nigerian government to tackle terrorist activities in the country. The original document was revised two years later in 2016 after change of political power from the Goodluck Jonathan led government to the Buhari government. Nigeria's counter terrorism efforts were largely based on the provisions of the NACTEST until the adoption of the Multinational Joint Task Force which saw the expansion of the national strategy to cover other countries in the Lake Chad area. The NACTEST was premised on the use of both soft power and hard power to tackle the challenge of

terrorism in the country referred to as “carrot and stick approach”. The “carrot” involved granting of amnesty to sect members who would relinquish their radical and militant activities. The carrot also includes government pragmatic programmes to address problems in northern Nigeria such as poverty, unemployment, social injustice and public corruption.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, the “stick” employed involved the use of state security forces to crack down on the members of terrorist groups. In this regard, a Special Joint Task Force (JTF), known as “Operation Restore Order” (JTORO) was established to specifically tackle the *Boko Haram* threat. The JTF achieved successes. It won praises for the effective use of military checkpoints and temporary bans of motorbikes which were used by extremists in drive-by attacks. Subsequent military operations under different codenames like Operation Boyana and Operation Zaman Lafiya were deployed to the North-Eastern part of Nigeria during the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan. However, in the early days of the operations against the group, even before the adoption of the NACTEST, the Nigerian Security Forces, received criticism for harsh tactics that injured civilians and damaged property. Onuoha argues that the radicalization of the sect was the result of the terrible extrajudicial murder of the sect’s members and leaders, especially Mohammed Yusuf, during the July 2009 revolt. On February 2010, Al-jazeera television carried a ghastly recording showing security agents in house-to-house arrest operations against members of the Boko Haram sect. Some alleged members of the sect arrested by security agents were lined up and summarily shot at the back. A voice was heard in the background saying “shoot him in the chest not the head, I want his heart”. Other voices were heard shouting “no mercy, no mercy.”<sup>10</sup> Under President Buhari, the military has launched Operation Lafya Dole, Operation Crackdown and Operation Gama Aiki against Boko Haram. President Buhari also initiated the establishment

of the Multi-national Joint Task Force comprising soldiers from Benin Republic, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria with a takeoff grant of 200 million dollars.<sup>11</sup> The Multi-National Joint Taskforce has since been an important part of the fight against terrorism in Nigeria. However, its operations cut across national borders in the Lake Chad area. The African Terrorism Bulletin reported in April 2019 that although the Multi National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has considerably degraded the capabilities of Boko Haram and the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) in the Lake Chad Basin, the threat from the groups remains significant.<sup>12</sup>

In Nigeria, specifically, the African Terrorism Bulletin reported that the North Eastern states of Borno and Adamawa have suffered the most devastating attacks from Boko Haram and ISWAP since the upsurge of the group. On 16th April, 2019, Boko Haram attacked a Military post in Cross Kauwa and wounded twenty (20) soldiers. A counter offensive by the MNJTF resulted in the “neutralization” (killing) of thirty-nine (39) Boko Haram militants. On 26th April, ISWAP also attacked a Military post in Mararrabar Kimba and killed five (5) soldiers. On 30th April, coordinated attacks by Boko Haram on the villages of Madagali and Kuda in the Adamawa State killed a total of 51 civilians.<sup>13</sup>

### **6.1.3 Counterterrorism Strategy of Ghana**

Ghana does not have a substantive counterterrorism strategy neither is the country a party to any multinational joint task force, unlike Burkina Faso and Nigeria. However, in 2008, the Parliament of Ghana passed an anti-terrorism Act (762) which sought to criminalise terrorism in the country. Among other things, the Act sought “to combat terrorism, suppress and detect acts of terrorism, to prevent the territory, resources and financial services of this country from being used to commit terrorist acts, to protect the right of people in this country to live in peace, freedom and security

and to provide for connected purposes.<sup>14</sup> The Act criminalises acts of terrorism and offenders found guilty are liable to a term of imprisonment of not less than seven years and not more than twenty-five years.<sup>15</sup>

The lack of a substantive counterterrorism strategy in Ghana is a characteristic of the standard attitude toward terrorism and adoption of counter measures in West Africa. A careful analysis of most substantive counterterrorism strategies in West Africa indicates that the strategies were drawn only at the time when the parties faced serious terrorist attacks. For instance, the G-5 Group's Operation BARKHANE is a product of the 2012/13 appropriation of Northern Mali by Ankar Dine militants and ethnic Tuareg rebels leading to the creation of the Azawad state. After the intervention of French forces, the G-5 Sahel Group was created subsequently under the support of the French Government to tackle the challenge of terrorism in the Sahel region. The Sahel region of Africa is dominated by former colonies of France. Formation of the G-5 Group and its multinational strategy is a direct product of terrorist attacks in Mali in 2012.

In Nigeria, as indicated earlier, the adoption of the comprehensive national counterterrorism strategy in 2014 coincided with the staggering rise of the Boko Haram group becoming the deadliest terrorist group in the world in the same year. Even the creation of the regional ECOWAS counterterrorism strategy could be said to have been influenced by the situation in Mali in 2012 and 2013. These examples indicate how the current strategies could be described as reactionary policies. It is not surprising, based on this trend, if Ghana which has zero experience of terrorist attack has no comprehensive counterterrorism strategy. ECOWAS member states are mandated to

establish their counterterrorism framework within the community level strategy. It is important, therefore, to look at the counterterrorism strategy at the regional level.

#### **6.1.4 Counterterrorism Strategy at the Regional Level**

At the regional level, ECOWAS adopted a counterterrorism strategy and action plan in 2013. This was period terrorism was at its peak in Nigeria and Mali. This Strategy is based on three main pillars for actions against terrorism in the Community – Prevent, Pursue and Repair. By this strategy, member states were given priority to make every possible effort to prevent terrorism from occurring. Failing that, they would pursue and bring to justice at all cost the perpetrators of terrorist acts and repair any damage that such acts may bring to bear on victims and society as a whole.<sup>16</sup>

In a bit of details, the Strategy makes it explicit what each of the three pillars means exactly, beginning with the “Prevent” pillar:

The goal of the ‘Prevent’ pillar is to identify key areas where Member States should take actions with a view to detect and prevent terrorism before it emerges. The ‘Prevent’ pillar therefore seeks to address and eliminate conditions conducive to terrorism as contained in the UN General Assembly’s 2006 Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. States are encouraged to promote policies aimed at addressing the root causes of terrorism, including poverty and widespread unemployment, economic and political marginalisation of some groups, human rights abuses, corruption, weak security institutions and illicit trans-border activities. Specific policies should also be developed to counter terrorist propaganda, dissuade and deter people from turning to terrorism and deny terrorists access to funds, materials and space with which to plan and launch their attacks.<sup>17</sup>

The second pillar is also explained below:

While priority will be given to every endeavour to prevent terrorism from occurring, in the event where terrorism does occur, Member States shall take all necessary measures to minimise its impacts on communities and on national security in general. The ‘Pursue’ pillar is aimed at enabling Member States to undertake rapid, timely and effective responses to terrorism when it occurs. The main objectives are to disrupt terrorists’ planning, networks and activities; investigate and bring terrorist leaders and their followers, supporters and sympathisers to justice to the full extent provided by the law.<sup>18</sup>

The final pillar focuses on reconstruction:

The aftermath of terrorism and even counter-terrorism could destroy the social fabric of society. People lose confidence in the state and its ability to protect them, and at times terrorism pits social groups against each other in accusations and counter-accusations. The 'Reconstruct' pillar is aimed at rebuilding society and enabling the state to heal social wounds caused by terrorism and counterterrorism.<sup>19</sup>

While these three pillars appear to provide a robust strategy to overcome the challenge of terrorism in the region, what is still clear is that terrorism has continued to be on the rise since the adoption of this strategy and action plan. The first challenge with this strategy is what a security expert terms as the disconnect between regional policy and national policy.

*There are two things about the strategy. The first thing is that the strategy is at variance with national strategy. The regional strategy does not speak to the national strategy. The second thing is that the strategy talks about how countries implement strategies. The flip side of the coin is that terrorism in West Africa should have been approached as a community issue and not a national issue. So national forces should be brought together to have a community approach. Because if Boko Haram can hit Nigeria and enter into Cameroon what are you talking about. So, it should have more of a community approach. The other top gap in my opinion is that the strategy is talking about countering terrorism strategy. Nothing to do with preventing extremism. So, if you are talking about prevention, you invest more energy in soft security – issues of education, issues of peace education, peer education, community resilience projects more. The title of the document itself is problematic.*

This respondent raises three crucial issues with the current regional strategy. The first two points address the difference between regional aspirations and national aspirations. This is a strategy that delegates implementation to the member states, at the same time the strategy does not speak to and does not fit into the individual national policies. While terrorist groups have gone transnational,

the strategy to counter it is expected to be implemented nationally. The second important point made by this security expert is the question of the title of the document. Counterterrorism implies a reactive approach – to counter an operation which has already been planned. This reinforces the earlier point about the reactive nature of West African counterterrorism policies. Comprehensive strategies are drawn in panicky moments and in such cases, it become easier to think counterterrorism than to think “preventive terrorism.” This is the kind of strategy that would aim at preventing the menace of terrorism from happening but not aim to “counter” it after it has happened.

From a critical point of view, fundamental problems raised by the respondent is inherent in the fact that the strategy adopted a dominant view to terrorism. The document was highly influenced by the global war on terror and so was produced to mirror the global war on terror in philosophy and in practical terms. Philosophically, the strategy assumed that member states cannot perpetuate terrorism themselves hence requiring member states to oversee implementation of the three pillars. Conspicuously, all the three pillars mention “member states” should take a particular action. What if the actor carrying out the attack is a member state attacking its own citizens? The other philosophical problem with the ECOWAS strategy is the assumption that all terrorists are of the same category and status. Though it mentions terrorist leaders and terrorist supporters in the second pillar, it seems not to recognize the structural dynamics driving the problem of terrorism in West Africa.

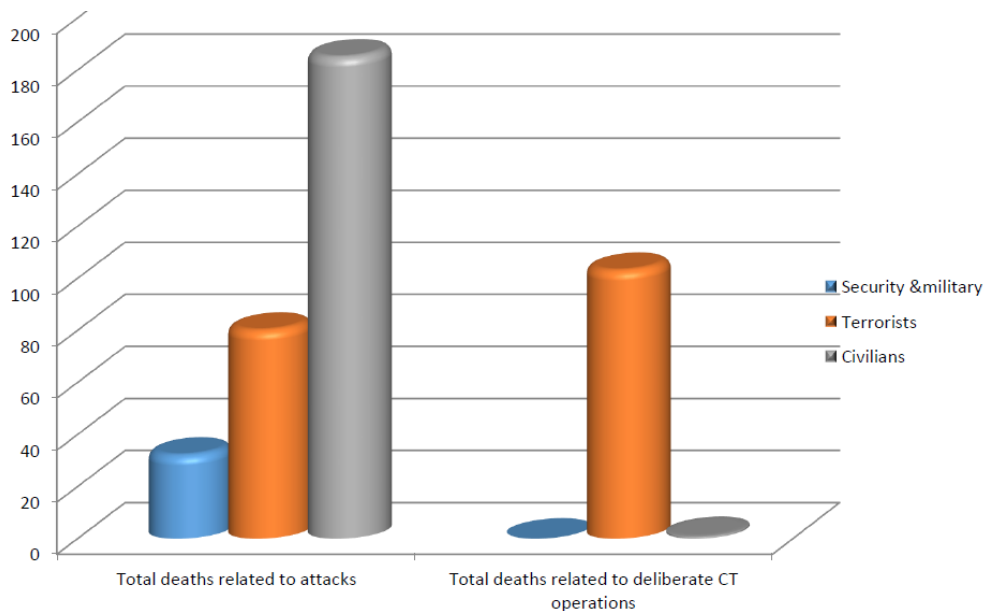
The result of these two shortfalls in the philosophy of the ECOWAS strategy in practical terms is an assumption that a simplistic way of going after terrorist and terrorist leaders and getting them

prosecuted will defeat terrorism. This is simplistic because, terrorism in West Africa is not like any criminal incident known by our legal instruments. Terrorism is not like armed robbery or piracy operation involving about ten or fifteen criminals who would be pursued, arrested, prosecuted and imprisoned and the problem ends. Terrorism has assumed a complex dynamic in the societies they operate involving varied interest – politicians (both government and opposition), religious leaders and ideologues, ethnic leaders involving diverse interests – including economic, political, religious and social. While simple legal processes can handle armed robbery, a simple legal process cannot handle terrorism. Terrorism in West Africa has assumed a structural status involving a complex social interaction in a typical patron-client relationship. It necessarily needs these same structures to deal with it. Any strategy falling short of tackling the problem from the organizational and structural levels may fail.

Not surprisingly, as observed by the findings of this research and evident in the figure below, counterterrorism in West Africa has assumed a cycle of killings in terrorist operations and “counterkillings” in national and multinational counterterrorism operations. As indicated earlier in this study, success of the present counterterrorism strategy is largely measured by the number of suspected militants killed in operations. It has become a case of killing and counterkilling between terrorist groups and state forces. States seemingly have the approval of the larger portions of their population for killing in their deliberate counterterrorism operations largely because terrorism has been successfully securitized in the sub-region. In this securitization, terrorism has been presented as an existential threat to the populations of the states concerned and this has given states and their governments authority to raise the fight of terrorism above normal internal political processes. Consequently, the use of emergency powers and executions during deliberate counterterrorism

operations appears reasonable. This has led to significant terrorism related deaths resulting from state deliberate counterterrorism operations. The figure below depicts the number of deaths resulting in terrorist attacks and deliberate counterterrorism operations in Africa:

**Figure 6. 1 Deaths Related to Terrorist Attacks and Deliberate CT Operation**



Source: African Terrorism Bulletin 007, April 2019.

As shown in Figure 6.1, a significant number of the total terrorism related deaths were as a result of deliberate counterterrorism operations conducted by national and multinational taskforces. While this figure represents the general African situation, West Africa alone recorded 70% of the total 400 terrorism related deaths for the first half of April 2019. The West African figures are summarized in table 6.1 below:

**Table 6. 1 Deaths Related to Terrorist Attacks and Deliberate CT Operations**

Category	Terrorist Attack	Counterterrorism operation	Total
Military/Security	11	0	11
Civilians	165	1	166
Terrorists	14	92	106

Source: African Terrorism Bulletin 007, April 2019.

In both the African and West African statistics, the majority of casualties were civilians mainly killed by terrorist attacks. The number of terrorists killed in deliberate counterterrorist operations is also very significant. Firstly, these data compiled for the first two weeks of April, 2019 is a confirmation of the situation of killings and counterkilling prevalent in the sub-region at the moment. Secondly, as shown in the various national and ECOWAS counterterrorism strategies above, there seems to be very insignificant legal changes to existing regimes to tackle terrorism. In other words, the maximum use of military force does not correlate with necessary and substantial legal, social and political adjustments. Thirdly, and probably most significantly, there are no independent verifications that confirm that the individuals killed under the deliberate counterterrorism operations are truly terrorists. Stated differently, how are military forces able to tell that all the people killed are really terrorists? This final point makes the following story narrated in the lefaso.net Burkinabe online news platform instructive:

On the night of 22nd to the 23rd May, 2019, in the village of Konga, in Gomboro district, in Sourou province, two Fulani Muslim brothers Hassane Diallo and Idrissa Diallo were awoken from their sleep and summarily executed. The witnesses identified the killers as the Defense and Security Forces of Burkina Faso, apparently in a deliberate counterterrorism operation. In the story titled

“Summary Executions in Konga (Sourou): ‘They told me: it is better to die than to join these terrorists,’” the journalist Tiga Cheick Sawadogo interviewed a brother of the two executed persons. The brother of the two deceased, a journalist himself, narrated the execution of his two brothers who had left behind fourteen orphans and four widows to a father of over 66 years old. While there is not enough space to recount the views of this Fulani Muslim Burkinabe, it is worth quoting excerpts of his expressions, after all, critical scholarship is about emancipation of subjugated voices. Firstly, he speaks about the Fulani community:

*In any case, members of the Fulani community were worried because their friends in the Samoan community had told them that there was a list of alleged terrorists that had been drawn up and that most of the Fulani youth had their name on this list.<sup>20</sup>*

*Right next door, in the town of Thiou, these are common facts. Last February, I became aware of about 40 cases of summary executions of this kind. For example, on Wednesday, in daytime, it was market day in Doma (Province of Tangaye), six Fulani were arrested in the market. Sometime later, their bodies were found.<sup>21</sup>*

Secondly, he talks about his executed brothers and why he is sure they are not terrorists but innocent responsible citizens unjustly killed by the Burkinabe forces. He speaks first about his elder brother, then his younger brother:

*In the aftermath of the tragedy, almost the entire village was home. Everyone was affected, especially the San community, with whom he shared so much. Today, when you go to the village, you can feel the pain of members of the Samo community. The big brother was a very helpful person.<sup>22</sup>*

*The two victims went to Koranic school. But the big brother came back since 2000. The younger brother told me several times that his Koranic teacher was always telling him that: "Jihad is over since the time of the prophet Mohamed. Nowadays, the only jihad that is worth is that of the heart, not that of weapons. I do not know how many times he told me that. Unfortunately, he died, not killed by these bandits, but by those who were supposed to protect him. This is what is very painful."<sup>23</sup>*

*There is a kind of panic. Currently, to be honest, since the deaths, people cannot even go to greet the family because it is as if the Fulani is systematically likened to the terrorist. They feel so vulnerable that it is difficult to find someone at home.<sup>24</sup>*

*Let's pray God that this does not help to strengthen these gangs of bandits. Because when those who are supposed to protect you do not do it, and the others who are the real enemies come to be saviours, the risk is great when you do not master all the issues.<sup>25</sup>*

*Since the events happened, that's my other battle. I tell my parents that although the pain is strong, it is very difficult to accept such a situation when you have the deep conviction that those who have been killed are innocent. But whatever the situation, we must not give in to the call of the enemies of Burkina that are the terrorists. This is the message that I give anytime I have the opportunity to discuss with them. This was my message before the killing of my two brothers and I keep saying it. I have lost a lot of family members, but we only have one country. We all have an interest in helping to overcome this phenomenon.<sup>26</sup>*

*We must know that this is not the matter of a community or an ethnic group. We can kill all the Fulani of Burkina, but I am not sure that we will get rid of terrorism.*

*What is disappointing nowadays is that people feel that they are thirsty for blood. As soon as we say that someone has been executed, it is happiness everywhere, especially on social networks. And as soon as there is a discordant voice that says that there is summary execution and that as a responsible country, we should not act like terrorists, they see you as enemy and as someone who wants to demoralize the troops.<sup>27</sup>*

There are many implications for this feeling of perceived victimization of the Fulani community in Burkina Faso. This directly refers to the discussion under the subscribed identity of the terrorist in the previous chapter. While according to this narrative, the Fulani community is perceived as terrorists, the community members see themselves as victims of state injustice. According to the narration, there is no well spelled out criteria to determine who is terrorist. However, there is one key indicator – being a Fulani. The incident referred to in this narration is just one of several killings that involve Fulani victims suspected as terrorists. Clearly, every single killing adds to the feeling of humiliation, intimidation and injustice. In effect, as the narrator puts it, if the people supposed to protect you against terrorists are the very people killing you, then it becomes easier to join the terrorist to protect yourself and your family. This is in tandem with the argument of Fierke in the previous chapter, this form of counterterrorism operation breeds a cycle of incessant terrorism and counterterrorism.

The second implication could be identified from the last paragraph of the quotation above. The community of the narrator is indignant not only toward the military but to the public as well. There

is a perception that while the military is able to identify and execute someone, it means the counterterrorism fight is progressing. The act of the military is thus hailed by non-community members. This sense is largely driven by the dominant discourse of terrorism where terrorism is defined largely by the actor not the nature of the act. Viewed with the lens of the dominant discourse, it becomes easy to hail the military for the targeting and killing of “terrorists” in their (the military) “legitimate” killings. Their killing is legitimate because it is done by a legitimate agent (the state) unlike the killing done by the terrorists which is done by illegitimate non-state actors. On the other hand, viewed from CTS perspective, the nature of the killing described in this narrative could squarely fit into the definition of terrorism. There is no doubt that the killings were done to send a message to the suspected terrorist community that the state has intelligence and is capable of eliminating anybody associated with terrorism. In effect, the Burkina Faso government which authorized the operation (according to the narrative) is equally guilty of terrorism.

Thirdly, this narrative exposes the intrinsic weakness of the current counterterrorism strategy of Burkina Faso. This is simply because, the state is unable to pull all the population to support the kind of counterterrorism strategy being implemented. The fact that there is a community that feels targeted in the fight against terrorism is big cause for concern. It becomes fertile recruiting ground for terrorist sponsors.

Finally, perhaps the most important point about this narrative is that, the current counterterrorism strategy cannot deal with terrorism. This is a strategy where the military, based on credible and reliable intelligence, has embarked on a counterterrorism operation but the community feels that

innocent people have been killed by government forces. It is possible that these brothers killed were truly terrorist. It is also possible that they were not terrorists.

However, this story, confirmed by the statistics of the African Terrorism Bulletin, exposes the inherent weaknesses in the present counterterrorism strategy prevalent in West Africa. It is undoubted that West African militaries engage in execution in their counterterrorism operations, based on the African Terrorism Bulletin. On the other hand, there are sections of the population that feel victimized and targeted in these killings. Meanwhile, there is evidence to the effect that communities which feel targeted, humiliated and victimized in counterterrorism operations easily get recruited into terrorist groups. This is mostly done to protect themselves and their families. In the event when Islamic martyrdom beliefs are involved, potential recruits then join terrorist groups to exact revenge for the killed community members, fight the perceived injustice against their community and ultimately enjoy the fruit of this jihad in paradise. The next section examines the CTS conceptualisation of terrorism and the implication of that to rethinking counterterrorism strategy in West Africa.

## **6.2 A CTS Approach to Terrorism**

Critical Terrorism Studies is a strand or an approach of Critical Security Studies. CTS, therefore, draws its key principles and assumptions from CSS. Other approaches of Critical Security Studies apart from CTS are Securitization, Feminist Positionality, Critical Security Studies (Emancipatory Security Studies/Human Security of the Welsh School) among others.<sup>28</sup> These approaches are, however, not mutually exclusive but rather depend on one another for robust analysis. CTS could best be described as the terrorism strand of critical security studies.

The CTS definition of terrorism is summarized in the works of Jackson<sup>29</sup> and Jarvis.<sup>30</sup> The core understanding of terrorism in CTS, is therefore presented in the summary below:

- i. Terrorism is a social construction. No act of violence in itself automatically becomes terrorism – it is rather a product of intersubjective social discourse.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, it is the act of producing, constructing or labelling an act “terrorist” – be it a shooting, bombing or hijacking – that transforms any particular bombing or hijacking into an act of terrorism.<sup>32</sup>
- ii. An act of terrorism is a deliberate and pre-determined strategy of political violence which can be used by any actor – individual, group or state – in pursuit of a specific strategic goal. (a) As a strategy, it means that actors can decide to abandon its use and seek other means or strategies to achieve their goal including peaceful means. (b) As political violence, it can be distinguished from other forms of violence meant to terrify populations. Such forms of (non-terrorist) violence may include acts of organized criminals seeking to obtain financial reward, the fear caused by a serial killer. (c) Used by “any actor” means this act of political violence could be separated from the individual or group perpetrating the violence. Most significantly, the fact that a particular actor uses a terrorist strategy today does not necessarily mean they will use the same strategy tomorrow. (d) Terrorism as a strategy is not employed by non-state actors alone but can be employed by states as well.<sup>33</sup>
- iii. The referent object of the threat of terrorism is not the state but the human individual resident in the state. The focus of counterterrorism strategy should be the protection of the individual. This also means the individual should be empowered to actively contribute to matters affecting his security (emancipation).<sup>34</sup>

From the foregoing, it could, therefore, be said that terrorism in CTS perspective is a socially constructed idea denoting acts of political violence by state and non-state actors that targets portions of a population in order to send a message to a specified audience. Inferring from this definition, five fundamental elements of CTS can be identified: (a) a terrorist act is determined by the nature and purpose of the act of violence; (b) terrorism is understood to be a social construct; (c) states are put back into the “perpetrators of terrorism” category, (d) the act of terrorism is separated from the persons who commit it such that they can abandon it for other methods or strategies and (e) the focus of terrorism knowledge and practice should be aimed at emancipation of the human individual rather than the state.<sup>35</sup>

These elements are fundamentally different from the dominant discourse or understanding of terrorism. The dominant discourse is heavily critiqued by CTS scholars. Below is a summary of the dominant discourse of terrorism, according to Jackson<sup>36</sup> and Jarvis.<sup>37</sup> The first and perhaps most important point of departure between CTS conceptualization and the dominant conceptualization is this: CTS views terrorism according to the nature and purpose of the particular act of violence while the dominant discourse views it according to the legitimacy of the actor who commits the act of violence.<sup>38</sup> Below is a summary of the key attributes of terrorism, according to the dominant discourse.

- i. Terrorism is a brute fact. Terrorists exist to cause evil acts of violence against innocent civilians. The actor who carries out the act of terrorism cannot be separated from the act and, therefore, the actor is a terrorist who needs to be eliminated through special emergency state powers.<sup>39</sup>

- ii. Terrorism is a special kind of violence perpetrated by specific illegitimate non-state actors. The fact that a specific kind of violence is carried out by a specific group of people (generally viewed as illegitimate) makes the incident terrorist. In effect dominant terrorism knowledge ‘takes the word “terrorist” as it finds it, because it is carried out by a specific illegitimate non-state actor.’<sup>40</sup>
- iii. The prime focus of counterterrorism strategy is protection of the territorial integrity of the state. The security of the state overrides the security of the human individual and so when it becomes necessary, the human individual could be sacrificed to protect the state.<sup>41</sup>

The differences derived from the foregone summaries are illustrated in table 6.2 below:

**Table 6. 2 Difference between the dominant and CTS understanding of terrorism according to CTS scholarship and manifestation of both in West Africa based on fieldwork**

<b>Dominant discourse on terrorism</b>	<b>CTS understanding of terrorism</b>	<b>Manifestation of the dominant discourse in the West African situation.</b>	<b>How the empirical research in West Africa explains the CTS understanding</b>
A terrorist act is determined by the legitimacy of the actor to use the violence.	A terrorist act is determined by the nature and purpose of the act of violence.	Distinguishing between what is terrorist act or not is difficult and confusing.	Many acts reported as terrorist do not qualify as terrorist acts. What is a terrorist act can be clearly defined with CTS.
Terrorism and terrorists are real	Terrorism is a social construct. An incident	The major aim of counterterrorism	The identity of terrorists is constructed in

facts out there. The fact that a particular incident is caused by a particular (illegitimate) group of people or individual in a particular location means it is terrorist act.	is described terrorist because society has collectively (intersubjectively) agreed to call it terrorist.	policy and operations is to kill terrorists “who are out there”.	complex social discourse. Terrorists can be categorized into combatants and sponsors.
Terrorism is caused by illegitimate non-state actors (terrorists).	Legitimate institutions (states) also cause terrorism.	Terrorist acts are attributed to only jihadist groups and counterterrorism is largely military focused.	Many acts of states in counterterrorism operations could be described as terrorist.
The act of terrorism cannot be separated from the actor. The actor is an irrational evil in society who can never use other (peaceful) means to achieve his goal. The best way is to kill him.	Terrorism is a strategy and could be abandoned by the actor. Therefore, the actor could be separated from the strategy he employs at a particular time for a particular goal. The actor can change and use peaceful means to achieve his goals.	Measurement of effectiveness of counterterrorism operation is largely measured by number of suspected terrorists killed.	Terrorist groups use jihadist ideology but employ acts of terrorism as a strategy for varied goals depending on whether the actor is terrorist combatant or terrorist sponsor. Terrorist combatants are not irrational evil killers but “martyrs of injustice” based on subscribed identity.
The focus of terrorism	The focus of terrorism knowledge and policy	Many civilians are killed in state	Counterterrorism policy will involve the ideas

knowledge and policy is for the security of the state first before the individual.	should be aimed at protection and emancipation of the human individual first before the state.	counterterrorism operations in collateral damage.	and active participation of ordinary residents/ the human individual. The death of one civilian will signify a major failure of counterterrorism operations.
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Source: Author's own construct

The next sections of this chapter examine table 6.2 above in detail, discussing the implication of each of the five differences for counterterrorism policy.

### **6.3 Integrating Research Findings into CTS Alternative Conceptualizations and Implications for Counterterrorism Strategy**

This section does a detailed discussion of the five alternative conceptualizations proposed by CTS scholars as illustrated in the table above. The discussion is done in relation to the empirical research results presented in the previous chapter. It does basically an examination of columns two and four of the table above – an expansion of the relationship between the two. It progresses by examining the five CTS alternative arguments individually. More importantly, it synthesizes the research finding into the CTS arguments and explores the implication for counterterrorism strategy.

#### **6.3.1 Terrorism Defined by Nature and Purpose of the Act of Violence**

As stated above, while the dominant understanding of terrorism focuses on the legitimacy of the actor to use the kind of violence, CTS focuses on the nature and purpose of the violence. The nature of terrorism is not inherent in the violent act itself. The same act can be terrorist or not,

depending on intention and circumstance.<sup>42</sup> For instance, shooting or bombing civilians or non-combatant soldiers is not automatically a terrorist activity – whether the actor is legitimate or not. It may be the unintentional consequence of a military operation during war.<sup>43</sup> The nature and purpose of the violence is what makes an act of violence terrorist. For a particular incident to be considered terrorist, the nature of the violence must be political and the purpose must be political as well. The violence being political in nature means the selection of method (shooting, bombing, suicide, etc.) and the selection of target (church, mosque, civilians, soldiers, etc.) are all done strategically to send a particular message. Again, the purpose of the violence being political also means that the actor is sending a political message to a specified audience who are not necessarily the victims. Terrorism thus becomes a political communication between the actor and the audience using the victim as the instrument of communication. The victim is chosen mainly for symbolic reasons.<sup>44</sup>

For instance, by deploying a suicide bomber to a Church by a non-state actor could be a way of sending a message to the West about a particular act affecting the community of the actor. In the same way, using the military to assassinate a political opponent by the state could just be a political message to the opposition that the state means business. This point of view is in divergence with the dominant discourse which views terrorism more in terms of the nature of the actor and location of the incident. Viewed this way, any act of violence perpetrated by Jihadist group in Africa or the Middle East could be designated a terrorist act. However, it could just be a purely criminal activity with pure economic motive. For instance, the following separate incidents were observed during military operations by one of the key informants in Burkina Faso.

- i. *A Burkinabe Gendarmerie post in the Nord Region was attacked by jihadist militants. The Police and Gendarmes occupying the post were all killed with their weapons stolen. This incident was reported in the media as terrorist attack. However, later investigation by our men discovered that the attack was to clear the route for a drug trafficking operation. The traffickers were relying on the jihadist militants for security and safe passage to cart their goods across the Sahara into North Africa. With operation BARKHANE in Mali, drug traffickers now use the north of Burkina Faso as route. Terrorists provide security to drug cartels from South America to Europe. They also supply cannabis from Morocco to West Africa.<sup>45</sup>*
- ii. *There was this teacher in the Sahel Region who was dragged from the classroom and shot in the school compound. Investigations later revealed this teacher had over two million CFA in his bank account. Apparently, he was the financial controller of one of the local terrorist groups in the region. He was expected to dispense an amount of money to pay some of the group members which he failed to do. And so, he was killed by the aggrieved members.<sup>46</sup>*
- iii. *Sometimes farmers can use military or police to solve their personal problems with the Fulani herdsmen. They do this by reporting them to the police as terrorists.*

These are statements from one of the most Senior Army Officers in Burkina Faso. Viewed from the perspective of the dominant discourse which defines terrorism based on the actor involved, all the first two incidents would qualify as terrorist activities. However, when viewed from a critical perspective – looking at the nature and purpose of the violence, they will fall short of the terrorist operations. While the first incident could best be described as a drug and criminal banditry

operation, the second is a revenge mission. The actions are both motivated by financial rewards. The third example depicts how age-old intercommunal or ethnic violence can easily be confused with terrorism.

Indeed, ethnicity came out as one of the significant themes when the field data were coded for this study. Max Weber<sup>47</sup> defines ethnic groupings as aggregations of people who share a ‘subjective belief in their community of descent’.<sup>48</sup> According to Gabbert,<sup>49</sup> stressing on origin or descent as the most important attributes of identity helps to distinguish ethnicity from class and other forms of social groupings.<sup>50</sup> An ethnic group, therefore, is a social grouping in which members share a common descent. This often translates into other cultural elements, such as language, dressing and food. Respondents to this study had the tendency to point to particular ethnic violence in defining the identity of terrorists. While no Ghanaian ordinary resident mentioned ethnicity or saw it as an important defining feature of terrorist, respondents in Nigeria and Burkina Faso did. However, the term had very limited use in the case of Nigeria compared to Burkina Faso. Ethnicity appears to be more pronounced among Burkinabe respondents than Ghana and Nigeria. For instance, only one Nigerian ordinary resident used the term “tribe” when defining the identity of the terrorist, but in a broader sense.

*When there is no peace, it brings about terrorisms. For example, let me take it from the aspect of leadership. Let’s say some tribe, they will be expecting the leaders to come from their side. For example, in Nigeria, the President is from Fulani while maybe some part of the Ibo side they may like somebody from their tribe to be the leader. But after polls when the Fulani won, the Ibos were*

*not happy. And in the time of Goodluck the Hausa and Yoruba were not happy. So, they tried to fight him to remove him from his seat.*<sup>51</sup>

This Nigerian respondent sees terrorism as product of ethnically motivated political violence – not the direct cause. Her opening statement: *When there is no peace, it brings about terrorisms* suggest that the respondent has the opinion that terrorism only happens if there is an inability to manage electoral violence. A second Nigerian respondent, while answering the questions – Who do you think the people called terrorists are – gave this response as part of his answer:

*And the herdsmen, sometimes they kill people in the course of rearing their cows. An incident happened when I was coming from Lagos to East. On our way they blocked the road, from afar we thought it was just herdsmen not knowing they were having guns. So, the driver saw it from afar so he had to stop. Everybody took to his heels just for safety. We were all running back before the soldiers or army came to rescue us*<sup>52</sup>.

This respondent's reference to "herdsmen" reechoes the third example given by the Burkina Faso Army Officer. Confusing or merging intercommunal violence involving nomadic herdsmen who are mostly of the Fulani ethnic group is very common in West Africa, particularly in Burkina Faso and Nigeria. For instance, in the aftermath of communal clashes between members of the nomadic Fulani ethnic group and local communities in Yirgou in January 2019, the President of Burkina Faso, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, gave a televised address to the nation and among other things, said the following:

*The terrorist attack and the deadly violence resulting in the loss of many compatriots in Yirgou and the neighbouring villages in the Communes of Arbinda and Barsalگو, were sad and*

*disheartening. ... A few days ago, in my end-of-the-year message, I called for solidarity around our Defense and Security Forces to push out of our territory the forces of evil who decided to attack the foundations of our togetherness.*<sup>53</sup>

As noted in the previous chapter, the President of Burkina Faso used the term “evil forces” to refer to the terrorists who attacked Ouagadougou in January 2016. Three years later, January 2019, he uses the same expression in reference to terrorist attacks but in a different context. This is an intercommunal violence resulting in the death of forty-seven members of the conflicting communities. The incident was reported in the media and institutional reports as terrorist and communal attacks<sup>54</sup> and this was repeated by the President of the Republic in his address to the nation.<sup>55</sup> However, subjected to the CTS test (nature and purpose of attack), the incident may not be a terrorist attack. Though jihadist militant groups could be involved, the selection of targets and purpose of attacks drifted more toward intercommunal conflicts with each party determined to fight the other. However, according to the dominant discourse, the involvement of suspected jihadist groups in the conflicts automatically makes the violence terrorist. Critical questions about relationship and interest of the feuding parties are not asked because in the dominant discourse, certain groups have been constructed as terrorist and so their involvement in any act of violence makes that violence terrorist. This is a product of the traditional construction of the terrorist – prioritizing the actor rather than the nature and purpose of the act.

The implication of this to counterterrorism policy is that, there cannot be an effective law to deal with an offence when separating the act from other acts is difficult and confusing. The starting point for West Africa is to define for the subregion what exactly constitutes terrorism in West

Africa. CTS offers an appropriate basis for this determination to be done – to define terrorist acts not based on the actors involved but on the nature of the violence (selected targets, method) and the purpose of the violence. This CTS criterion could appropriately define these two incidents reported by the Africa Terrorism Bulletin:

April 2019 in Muna Dalti, Borno, Nigeria. Two female suicide bombers from Boko Haram blew themselves up in Muna Garage. 5 persons were killed, 46 injured.  
- 15 April 2019 in Bouhama, Lake Chad. Boko Haram attacked a military post. 7 soldiers were killed, and 1 wounded. 63 terrorists were also killed by security forces in a counter attack.

The nature of these two reported attacks (use of female suicide bombers, attack of a garage and a military post) on different occasions by the same group appear to have an objective of a political communication. It is like saying we are capable of attacking anyone we choose to attack and at any location – including your military. The message could be intended for the state government, federal government, the military or the general civilian population.

### **6.3.2 Terrorism as a Social Construct**

It is generally agreed among CTS scholars that the identity of the terrorist is socially constructed.<sup>56</sup> It means some acts are called terrorist acts and the actors are designated terrorist because it is generally agreed by social actors that those terms be used to describe the actions and perpetrators. The same social actors can agree to use different terms through the same social agreement. This social agreement is known as intersubjective social discourse. The idea that various subjective minds come together to create something that is near an objective fact (acceptable by all). This process is succinctly illustrated by Jackson:

The reality is that terrorism is a social fact rather than a brute fact. Although acts of violence are experienced as brute facts, the wider cultural-political meaning of those acts as “terrorism” for example, is decided through symbolic labelling, social agreement and a range of inter-subjective practices. That is, as a phenomenon, terrorism is constituted by and through the discursive practices which make it a concrete reality for politicians, law

enforcement officials, the media, the public, academics and so on. We can identify a number of processes by which certain acts and individuals are constructed as “terrorism” and “terrorists”, including:

- The labelling of certain acts and groups as such by authoritative actors, such as the annual State Department reports;
- The legal definitions contained within criminal and international law;
- The compiling of statistics on terrorism by the CIA, RAND, and various academics and think-tanks; and
- The ascriptions of different groups and acts as “terrorist” in the media. Actions and actors are constituted and reconstituted as terrorism in a continuous flow of social and political discourse. Moreover, analyses of these discourses reveal significant variation and instabilities between and within institutions, as well as shifts over time in the way terrorism is discursively constructed and delineated.<sup>57</sup>

Jackson appears to describe those processes at the global level, the mention of cultural and political processes suggests these processes begin at the local level up. The wider global politics and discourse has contributed significantly to a dominant understanding of terrorism globally, including West Africa. This is illustrated in the analysis in the previous chapter. However, every region or subregion or even state has its unique socio-cultural and political dynamics which make the processes leading to the construction of the identity of the terrorist markedly different from others. Particularly, viewed with a CTS perspective, the historical and political dynamics contribute to a more contextual understanding of the identity of the terrorist in a state or region. The identification is even more nuanced when the particular experience of terrorism by the society is considered. The process in West Africa, based on its unique, social, political, religious and cultural (ethnic) dynamics have been adequately discussed in this study.

Firstly, as found in the previous chapter, patron-client relations have been a dominant feature of the social structures and processes in West Africa. This has manifested in the understanding of terrorism. Terrorist activities in the subregion have taken the form of patron-client relations where patrons in the form of sponsors recruit, train and arm clients to fight for interests that are very

different. This is reminiscent of the patron-client relations observed in the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This is the basis for the identification of “terrorist sponsors” and “terrorist clients” in the previous chapter. These are social creations resulting from the dominant social structures – which is mainly a cause of sharp economic differences in society. Terrorism and terrorist in West Africa could, therefore, be said to be social creations in three ways. Firstly, they are a product of a complex interaction between economic, social, political, religious and cultural (ethnic), set within and influenced by a particular historical and societal discourse. Secondly, the identity of terrorists emanates from an intersubjective social discourse shaped by religious, political, social, and global level actors. As a socially constructed identity, it could be reconstructed by the same society that constructed it. Thirdly, as significantly observed in the analysis in the previous chapter, actors involved in a single terrorist activity have equally diverse interests and goals. For instance, while the politician will fund a terrorist operation to gain political advantage over an opponent, an ethnic leader’s interest in the same operation will be to avenge his ethnic group. At the same time, the combatant (who may be a suicide bomber or shooter) may be interested in financial reward, avenging his community for an injustice or even gaining eternal happiness in heaven.

This separation between terrorist combatants and terrorist sponsors has been written about by scholars of jihadist terrorism. For instance, the statement below was observed by Fierke<sup>58</sup>

A distinction can be made between the strategic, ideological and territorial goals of suicide bombings, noted by Pape, and the more personal concerns of individual agents, ranging from revenge, redemption, desperation, or eternal reward (Allison, 2007: 2). What binds the two together is the language of martyrdom, which has both a strategic and an emotional resonance and value. On the one hand, the strategic entrepreneurs who organize violence may be instrumental in packaging and mobilizing a particular understanding of ‘martyrdom’. On the other hand, as the logic ‘seeps’ into the everyday discourse of a population, it may become a part of the taken for granted assumptions that underpin the decision of individuals to become human bombs.<sup>59</sup>

The implication of these separations for counterterrorism strategy is that strategies could be designed to target the different actors and interests involved in terrorist acts. What this means is that, rather than targeting and killing combatants with success measured by the number of combatants killed, more attention should rather be given to the terrorist sponsors. The terrorist sponsors are a network of religious, political, ethnic and economic actors who work together for mutual interests. The terrorist combatants are employees of terrorist sponsors. Therefore, terrorist combatants will be significantly subdued if terrorist sponsors are dealt with. However, since the relationship is not a symmetrical one, subduing terrorist combatants does not undermine the strength of terrorist sponsors. Subduing terrorist combatants rather gives terrorist sponsors an upper hand to recruit more victimized members in the community of the terrorist combatants. An effective counterterrorist, according to this argument, is one that targets politicians, religious and ethnic leaders who sponsor and fuel terrorist activities for their various interests. This measure tackles terrorism at the structural level. Since it is caused and perpetrated within a particular structure and social processes, it just makes sense that the same structure and social process is used to resolve the conflict the structure inflicts.

### **6.3.3 Terrorism Not a Preserve for Illegitimate Non-State Actors**

Perhaps the loudest critique of the dominant understanding of terrorism by CTS scholars is the absence of the state in the category of terrorism perpetrators. This is perhaps the result of the overreliance on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the actor in the definition of the terrorist in the dominant discourse. In the dominant discourse, terrorism is caused by illegitimate non-state actors. In the West African context, these actors could best be defined as the jihadist groups (such as Boko Haram, AQIM, JNIM, among others). As discussed earlier, in dominant discourse, the involvement of these groups in acts of violence, no matter the nature and purpose, is treated as

terrorist acts. However, in CTS discourse, an act is defined terrorist when the target and method of attack are purposely selected to send a political message to an audience. By this definition, any violent act of a state which targets a politically selected portion of a population with the intent of sending a political message to an audience qualifies as a terrorist act. Jackson, thus, defines a terrorist act as a “kinds of violence directed against civilians and which instrumentalises human suffering for the purposes of influencing an audience.”<sup>60</sup>

The implication of this argument is that most counterterrorism operations carried out by states and multinational taskforces in West Africa will qualify as terrorist acts. What does it mean to say states are capable of carrying out terrorist acts? If states are held responsible for their terrorist acts, (a) states will be cautious about their counterterrorism operations. (b) States will explore more peaceful ways to resolve conflicts of terrorism in their territory, (c) society will not view terrorism as special kinds of violence carried out by permanent evil non-state actors. More importantly, perhaps, states and international organisations in West Africa will begin to rethink counterterrorism – a counterterrorism that will break the cycle of victimization of communities.

Furthermore, from the analysis on martyrdom (under the subscribed identity of terrorist) in the previous chapter, it was observed that terrorist communities see their community more victimized and unjustly targeted with any counterterrorism operation. It, therefore becomes more significant when the identity of the terrorist is viewed from the terrorist’s point of view (their subscribed identity). A counterterrorism policy that seeks to view things from the point of view of terrorists will be less confrontational and more rational. Rational because the strategy to counter terrorism will recognize the unintended consequences of a military operation (cementing the perception of

injustice and victimization against terrorist communities). This view is corroborated by Ronald Kraybill<sup>61</sup> when he referred to the global war on terror against Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda jihadist network.

So, we see al-Qaeda, which is seeking to stir up angry retaliation by the United States in order to bring backlash at the level of the Muslim masses. Al-Qaeda cannot succeed at that strategy without our help. Until recently, terrorist groups lived at the margins of their communities, but we have played into their hands at every step of the way by giving them exactly what they want, namely an overwhelming, invasive, military response. The thousands and probably millions (of people) that we've driven into their arms is the real danger for our long-term security. Shibley Telhami (2002: 2) reinforces the idea that violent retaliation is unlikely to end these acts of voluntary death, stating that they 'may even increase it by adding to the humiliation that hardens the heart of even decent people'.

Fierke adds another side of to this argument:

One theme unifies much of the Islamist discourse supporting militant activity and especially martyrdom: the global Muslim narrative of Western oppression and humiliation, a sense of persecution that has been fuelled by symbols such as Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, and the Iraq War.<sup>62</sup>

The basis of this argument is that, both terrorist and the current counterterrorist acts operate with a belief that violence is the best way to accomplish their goals. While this may be true to a certain extent, both acts also cement the circumstances that recycle the problem of terrorism. The seeming success chalked by these forms of violence may calm tensions in the society for the time being, while leaving the structural problems untouched.<sup>63</sup>

In addition, structural processes that cause violence, according to Fierke, maintains and supports specific relations of power and interest. Belief in violence by both have become institutionalized acquiring a life of their own. This has led to a form of distribution of values from this system making war entrepreneurs benefiting from the perpetuation of violence. Therefore, an important step in rethinking counterterrorism is to interrogate the norms that drive the current lucidity of counterterrorism. Another step is to view things from the point of view of terrorist. Doing this is

to recognize how the Western-style response to terrorism (the global war on terror) has nourished the prevalent sense of injustice and humiliation among Muslim populations. The military response to terrorism has largely made martyrdom appealing to potential terrorist recruits.<sup>64</sup>

### **6.3.4 Terrorism as a Strategy Not a Creed**

Just as acts of counterterrorism emanate from a strategy, so is an act of terrorism in itself a strategy. The act of traumatizing a population by bombing or randomly shooting at a section of a population by members of a jihadist group is a pure strategy. The purpose is to communicate to the audience of the incident. Following from the rationality in martyrdom, even the act of a suicide attack is a strategy. In the same way do states also use terrorism as a strategy in some of their counterterrorism operations. This element of CTS discourse views terrorism as a purely rational activity in which actors deliberately choose their methods and objects of attack carefully in order to achieve maximum impact and benefit.

When terrorism is viewed from this perspective, together with the idea that terrorists also have valid reasons to embark on their missions (mainly strung together by the benefits in martyrdom), we will appreciate how rational a terrorist act is. This rationality of terrorists in CTS perspectives is opposite to the idea that terrorists are irrational evil actors in the dominant discourse. The idea of irrationality in the dominant discourse has largely motivated the adoption of the overly militarized form of counterterrorism at the global level (global war on terror) which has trickled down to West African states.

Unlike the irrationality encapsulating the global discourse and the subsequent seeming irrational military counterterrorism strategy in the global war on terror, a CTS motivated counterterrorism

strategy in West Africa will take a rational step to address the various actors differently. A CTS conceptualized counterterrorism will seek to identify terrorist sponsors from the social structure and adopt a policy toward them. It will also seek the terrorist combatant and adopt a suitable policy toward them. The difference between a CTS motivated counterterrorism in West Africa from the present counterterrorism is that terrorists will be viewed as rational actors who are using terrorism as a strategy. After a CTS counterterrorism strategy has recognized and separated terrorist combatants from terrorist sponsors, it will be historical and learn from history.<sup>65</sup> In other words, CTS-inspired counterterrorism will learn the truth that ‘Once a terrorist, is not always a terrorist.’<sup>66</sup>

### **6.3.5 Emancipation**

The heartbeat of CTS theory as regards terrorism and counterterrorism is the recognition that the end product of any counterterrorism strategy is for the empowerment and protection of the human individual. The individual should be the focus of counterterrorism strategy not the state. Emancipation is the strand of critical security studies that has its origins in the Frankfurt School theory of Critical Theory.<sup>67</sup> Ken Booth,<sup>68</sup> an outspoken mouthpiece of emancipation and security sums up the meaning of emancipation as the necessary end product of security. Booth who proposed the idea of emancipation in security studies in 1991 argues that emancipation is a higher form of security yet two sides of the same coin:

'Security' means the absence of threats. Emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, political oppression and so on. Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security. Implicit in the preceding argument is the Kantian idea that we should treat people as ends and not means.<sup>69</sup>

CTS scholars have adopted this view of security and employed it as a critique of the global war on terror. The global war on terror which sees the security of the state as the end treats people as the means. What this means is that collateral damage in the counterterrorism operation is viewed as a normal necessary factor to defeating the enemy. Jackson argues in favour of delegitimizing any act of state or non-state actor that uses humans as instruments for political purposes. In justifying why the terrorism label should be maintained by critical theorists despite its abuse in dominant discourse, Jackson among other things, argues as follows:

In addition to its analytical advantages, the terrorism label could be employed as means to advancing a progressive political project aimed at protecting marginalised and vulnerable populations from indiscriminate and oppressive forms of violence. That is, at the most basic level, employing the above criteria can have the effect of de-legitimising any and all forms of violence that seek to instrumentalise human suffering for the sole purpose of sending a message to an audience. Related to this, it also de-legitimises all forms of civilian-directed violence, including the direct targeting of civilians during war.

On his part, Jarvis advocates replacement of the dominant discourse with marginalized stories. In arguing for his five-point strategies to replace the dominant discourse with the critical discourse, Jarvis argues for a focus on marginalized stories or helping to create such stories. This could be done through engagement with “real people” in “real communities” about their concerns or fears.<sup>70</sup> By this argument, Jarvis and for that matter CTS scholars advocate a progression from “freeing people from physical and human constraints” to putting the knowledge and experiences of ordinary people in the center of counterterrorism policy. Such a strategy, according to Jarvis, “facilitates a diversifying – and therefore broadening – of knowledge around (counter-)terrorism: telling dominant truths differently and engaging with the vernacular, the mundane, the everyday and the local.”<sup>71</sup> Jarvis is, however, wary of the fact that such knowledge and interpretations thereof can be dismissed as merely anecdotal.<sup>72</sup>

There is a significant implication of this line of CTS argument for counterterrorism strategy in West Africa. Engaging the locals and treating their views with the respect they deserve offers an important step toward development of effective policies. This is true because, firstly, the local people are the most affected by both terrorist and counterterror operations. They are the victims in both instances. Secondly, it is the locals who live with suspected militants or terrorists and have superior intelligence than any outsider enforcement entity. So, empowering them to be important part of the fight against terror is a very significant move.

For instance, in the field research for this study, interview respondents were asked the question: What do you think is the best way to resolve the challenge of terrorism in West Africa? A significant majority (70%) of the respondents in different ways agreed that the public has the potential to contribute significantly, in terms of knowledge and human resource, to counterterrorism strategy. Interestingly, the views expressed by these respondents stand in contrast to the current military dominated strategies. The following depict some of the ideas shared by ordinary residents who responded to the question requesting their views about the best way to tackle the challenge of terrorism.

A senior Islamic cleric interviewed in Accra emphasized tackling the challenge from the core – the need to tackle radical ideology. He, however, advocates a more strategic approach – an approach that will be championed and handled by Muslim leaders. He begins his submission by identifying the problem:

*I think it is because we have allowed Muslims of the extremist brand to take the centre stage and they became louder than those who practice the enlightened Islam. Enlightened Islam because you*

*can know something but you will not be enlightened. Enlightened interpretation of Islam can help so much of the world. But misguided interpretation of Islam can lead to some of these things. That is why those people they believe what they are doing finds its root in Islam. Jihad is an Islamic concept. For example, the concept of the martyr. In Islam we also have the concept of the martyr. Somebody has indicated to him that in the process of jihad and he dies you die the death of a martyr and so he goes straight to heaven. So, he declared that this is what he is doing so in spiritual terms that is what he is thinking about. But they forget that suicide is one of the major sins in Islam. ... not the one that you intended to put the bomb on yourself and detonate that is a wrong interpretation of Islamic martyrdom.*

The respondent goes ahead to state his first thought about dealing with extremism:

*We need to restate in real terms what is the mission of Islam – you ask any Muslim – you this your religion what is its mission and what does it bring to the world, including Sheikhs – you will be terribly amazed at what they tell you. We need to change the narrative. Because Islam comes to the world with a mission of peace that is rooted in sound faith in God and rooted also in certain germane virtues that are necessary for human development and also for a more positive human experience of faith.*

In practical terms what can be done is illustrated below:

*Peaceful and enlightened Muslims should take the center stage. So that we dim the voices of the extremists. The curriculum of Islamic schools needs to be looked at again and look at the content. Because, most of the textbooks that are used have the content of jihad. Sometimes they want to teach you. They teach you to be committed to your faith and to teach you to be committed to your faith you are taught to defend it. And if they use the wrong approach by teaching the wrong*

*understanding of jihad so the boy or the girl grows and all the time looking for the opportunity to practice it. So, I think that at the school level something needs to be done. Then our traditional Makarata system also needs to be looked at to see what is the content of the curriculum because for them there is no control. It is individually and privately based – an individual imam who wants to provide service by teaching children the doctrines of faith. Because it is the center of our socialization. And so that is what we must be interested – what is the content of their curriculum, how are they being taught what is the level of their training and so forth. That I think we have not reached there but at least we have the curriculum of the formal Islamic schools whose curriculum is being controlled by Ghana Education Service.*

The proposal for civic education to be championed by credible Islamic leaders is a very fundamental proposal. Firstly, there is a call for a counter-narrative against extremist ideology. This is a fundamental preventive strategy – to first tackle the root of the problem. This is especially true for countries that have not experienced any major terrorist incident – such as Ghana. Secondly, the call to regulate the curricula or both traditional Makarata and formal Islamic education is a part of an innovative way to deal with the challenge of extremism. This is a religious solution to a religious problem. While these are crucial ways to tackle the challenge from the root, the current counterterrorism strategies – national, multinational and regional – emphasise military approach than this soft approach. This is despite the fact that the existing strategies themselves acknowledge the need for these soft approaches to overcoming terrorism. For instance, the first of the three pillars of the 2013 ECOWAS Strategy and Action Plan points to addressing the fundamental root causes of terrorism. Despite this provision, counterterrorism in West Africa is still heavily focused on military operations.

Another security expert emphasized the need to empower the local people to be actively involved in counterterrorism:

*You need the civilian population to own the process of identifying and disrupting terrorist cells and sentiments favoring extremist agenda. And for the public to own the process they need education and trust in the security agencies to report terrorist cells as terror groups are sometimes extremely powerful in the communities that they stage their violent events from.*

In addition to views by the experts among the public, some ordinary residents also offered recommendations on the best way to deal with terrorism in the sub-region. A female Executive Assistant interviewed in Accra had this to say:

*Probably if the group is new the government can try and meet with their leader and discuss what they want so that it doesn't escalate to do their violence and cause harm to the country and what have you. And they should also try to seek out to groups with all their grievances. Especially the people who like to do the demonstrations and stuffs.<sup>73</sup>*

Another Ghanaian respondent, a male Muslim Market Intelligence Officer, also emphasized the need for public education:

*People need to be given enough information to know that if you want your voice known you don't need to use violent methods. You don't have to attack anybody to get your ideas known. There are many methods to do that. So, terrorism is not the way out. And we need to let people know about this. Very very important. By using the media, training the people, by making it accessible to the people. And we can use religious leaders. Because most of the attacks that I have read about are*

*on religious lines so if we could use the religious leaders to propagate the message to let their members know that this is not the way. You can't prove yourself by killing others.*<sup>74</sup>

A female Nigerian Student resident in Kaduna State had the following to share:

*As for Nigeria I don't know. Because. I don't know maybe everybody has to come to terms with the fact that everybody has their own God. It shouldn't affect the way we live with each other. Everybody should worship their own God and live with each other in a peaceful manner and behave like we are one. Another thing is, if they can take turns. Maybe this particular a Muslim will lead and next particular regime Christian will lead. So that everybody will wait for their own turn.*<sup>75</sup>

Another Nigerian respondent agreed with the colleague Nigerian about the importance of pursuing political, religious, economic and ethnic solution to the problem.

*When there is peace everything will be resolved. Right now, everybody wants to be the head. Nobody wants to be the subordinate. From my one perspective I think peace should be the main thing. But this will really happen when everybody has sat down to agree that that this person should be the leader. But if it doesn't happen the terrorists will continue. I think it should be central about the youth. Because the majority of us are not employed but if he makes everything possible to get the youth employed, everybody will get busy working and all that and I think the thing will be resolved.*<sup>76</sup>

A Burkinabe respondent also agrees with the use of political means to tackle the challenge of terrorism:

*Since they are all citizens of this country, what I recommend is unity in our political leadership. The challenges we face now cannot be resolved with fights. We need unity and oneness in order to overcome the challenges. Both those who are in the country and those who are outside the country should make peace. There is a dire need for reconciliation for our country to see peace.*<sup>77</sup>

A colleague Burkinabe respondent also wants a political solution, and like the former, advocates talks among the feuding parties: *I also urge unity and reconciliation in the government and among politicians. The president and all politicians should become one and this will end the killings.*<sup>78</sup>

Meanwhile, respondents do not outrightly reject military methods. Some recommend strengthening and resourcing national armies. The following is the view of a Burkinabe respondent interviewed in Ouagadougou:

*As far as the government is concerned, it is necessary to reinforce by recruiting more security, by putting at their disposal good material for the fight against terrorism, and to reinforce intelligence.*<sup>79</sup>

Very importantly, some respondents advocate state presence in neglected communities.

*At the very level of the state, it would be necessary for the state to work to spread its presence in the neglected communities. So that citizens will feel that they are true citizens in the country. This also means cultivating social presence between the state and the citizen so there will not be too much imbalance in loyalty to state versus loyalty to ethnicity.*<sup>80</sup>

The voices of these respondents here are important for various reasons. It tells the diversity and ingenuity with which the public would approach a problem involving terrorism. A careful look at the responses would suggest three key themes. Firstly, majority of the responses quoted here are advocating peaceful means to resolving the conflict. More significantly, there are calls for talks and dialogue among various leaders in the society. This does not only include politicians but very importantly, religious and ethnic leaders as well. This point is very crucial for an important reason. It was discovered in the previous chapter that it is possible to identify the terrorist sponsor from the terrorist combatant and that the ability to deal with the terrorist sponsor automatically translates largely into dealing with the terrorist combatant. But the reverse is not possible. That means dealing with the terrorist combatant does not automatically amount to dealing with the terrorist sponsor. This is because the two are different and have different lifelines. While the terrorist combatant has his lifeline in the hands of the terrorist sponsor, the terrorist sponsor also has his lifeline in a complex network of political, religious, ethnic and business leaders. It therefore makes a lot of sense if respondents want talks in the higher echelons of society. In other words, the respondents are saying if terrorism is institutionalised by a network of vested interests, it should take the same network to revolve it.

The second theme derived from the comments of respondents is public education. A significant number of the comments above stressed the need to educate the public on the need for unity in diversity. Most importantly, however, the respondents appear to advocate an active involvement of the general public in preventive and counterterrorism policies. It is not enough to take terrorism decisions and impose on the public. Emancipation starts with mental emancipation. Showing respect to the ideas of the public. Indeed, this is perhaps one of the highest forms of participation.

The third theme derived from respondents' views of the best way to deal with terrorism is the stress on military power and intelligence. Though on the minority side, it is still significant to realise that a section of the public wish for a stronger military well equipped to deal with short term restoration of peace. Another emphasis is on intelligence – the need to boost the intelligence capacity of the national militaries. This is significant to prevent operations that will destroy lives of innocent civilians mistaken for terrorists.

Finally, some of the respondents above are advocating a state presence in seeming neglected territories. Indeed, it is generally agreed in the literature that one of the main challenges with tackling the problem of terrorism is the absence of state authority in large territories, especially countries with large land territory – such as Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad. This point moves in tandem with catering for marginalized communities. Communities that are marginalized from government and do not have basic amenities are prone to accepting offers that may come from terrorist organisations.

These four themes derived from the respondents of this present study are significant in many ways. The suggestions cut across social groupings. For instance, Muslim and Christian respondents end up giving the same recommendation. The young and the aged all seek the same unity among political and religious leaders. Secondly, the respondents seem to adopt an approach that does not further victimise and entrench sense of injustice in suspect communities. From the earlier discussion resulting from analysis in the previous chapter, it was observed that, when viewed from the subscribed entity perspective of terrorist groups, there is a real sense of humiliation,

victimization and injustice. These are perpetrated by state agents against a portion of society. The implication is that more terrorist activity and more counterterrorist operations result in a cycle of unending stream of violence. Ultimately, this entrenches the idea of humiliation and injustice among the suspect community. This makes martyrdom a very rational choice where an individual in a suspect community would choose to die in fighting state injustice against their community, family. The motivation of being regarded a hero in his community after his death and the reward that awaits him in “heaven,” more and more people will opt to join terrorist groups. To avoid this cyclical situation, dialogue with terrorist sponsors becomes a necessity. The examples quoted above demonstrate that the local everyday people, unlike popular views, are endowed with brilliant ideas and information which when tapped could provide important resource to deal with terrorism in West Africa. This is, however, in contrast with the current discourse where terrorism is seen as very specialized security issue that need top state and government agencies to prescribe a solution. However, with the current strategies not working, it is high time alternative views, especially from local chiefs, opinion leaders and everyday people are prioritized.

#### **6.4 Integrating the Sources in the Social Discourse: Toward an Outside-the-Box Conceptualization of Terrorism**

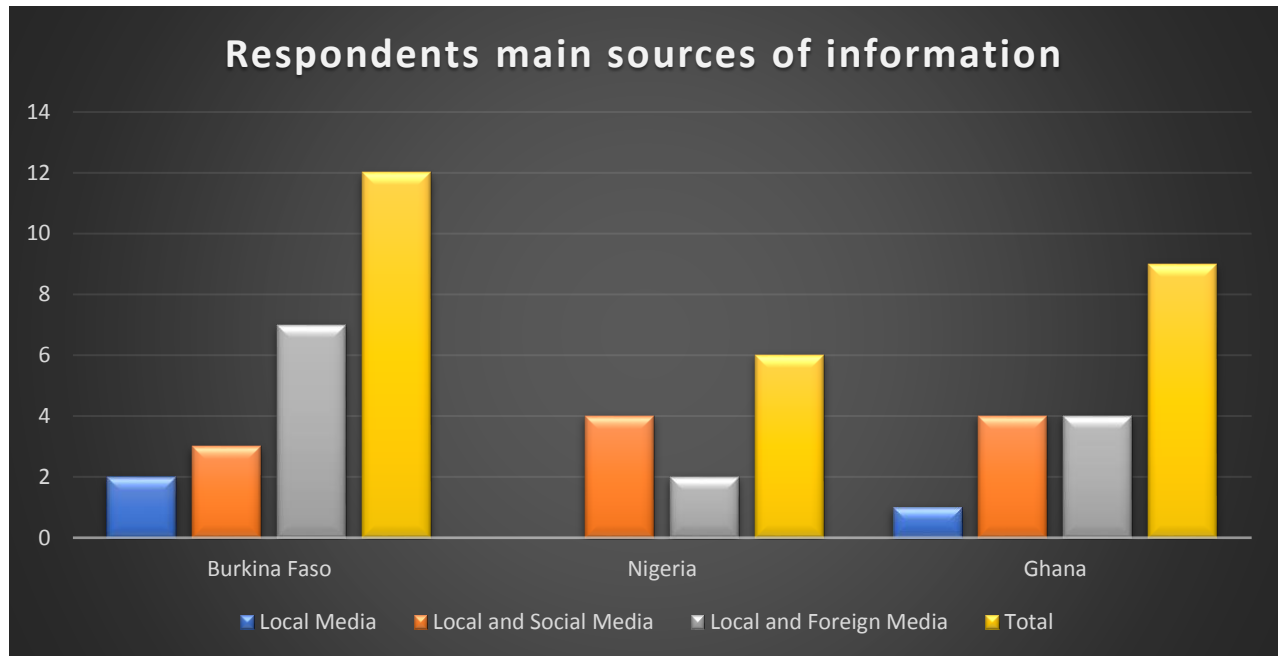
So far, this chapter has built on the findings from the previous chapter and has examined the difference between the dominant conception of terrorism and a CTS conception of terrorism. This chapter again has taken the five key elements in a CTS conceptualized terrorism and examined the implication of each for counterterrorism for West Africa. This section does a synthesis of the discussion from the previous chapter and this chapter in the complex social discourse involving the various actors, processes and interaction that define the identity of the terrorist. The previous

sections have successfully examined all the three CTS sources in Jarvis' three-source approach to understanding the social discourse around the identity of terrorists. In addition, another two important sources, observed during the coding of the field data have been discussed. The first addition was the discourse from the global politics with the second addition being the viewpoint of terrorists. However, it is important to view all these sources as interacting in a complex social discourse to construct the identity of the terrorist. As explained above, the ascribed identity of the terrorists is the identity constructed by the non-group members while the subscribed identity refers to terrorist groups' construction of their own identity.

To understand how all these sources interact in society, interview respondents for this study were asked about their sources of information on daily basis and how often they contribute to the social discourse around them. Respondents, excluding experts in all the three countries shared their daily source of information and level of contribution in social discourse. Their responses are summarized in the charts below.

The first figure represents respondents' source of information. Local media represents the traditional media produced and distributed locally in respondents' respective countries. Majority of respondents who said they get information from local media often mention television, radio and newspaper reports. Foreign media represents traditional and online non-African media platforms that are accessible to the respondents. These may include BBC Radio, TV and online, CNN, Radio France International (RFI) and Al-Jazeera. Social media refers to news sourced from social media channels. The main social media platforms cited by respondents were YouTube and Facebook.

**Figure 6. 3 Respondents’ main source of information**



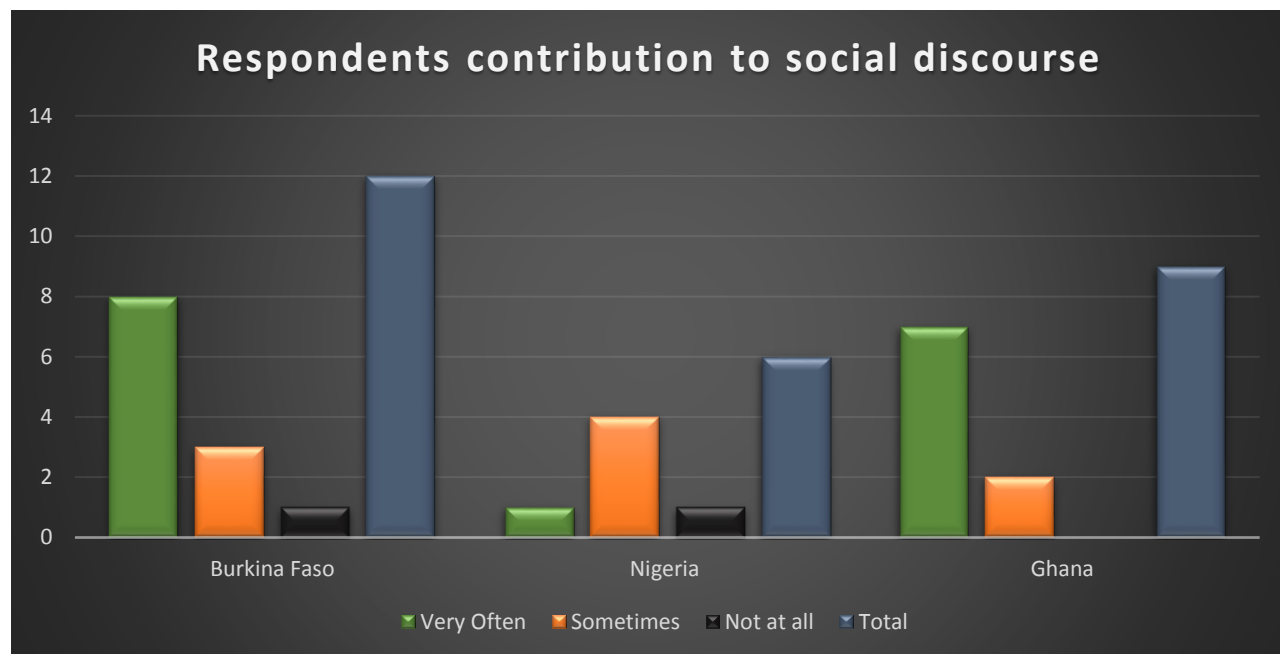
Source: Author’s own construct from field data

The figure shows that a majority of respondents consume both foreign and local media. While all respondents indicated they source much of their daily information from local media in the form of newspapers, television, radio and online news, they still relied on foreign media. Respondents indicated they relied on the foreign media to confirm news they received locally, especially, if the news is international. In Ghana and Nigeria, respondents relied more on BBC and CNN for their foreign media news while most Burkinabe respondents accessed foreign news from RFI. Again, while Ghanaian respondents preferred foreign and social media equally, Nigerian respondents preferred social media to foreign traditional media.

Meanwhile, respondents do not only consume information, they also share information and contribute to the social discourse around them. When asked how often they contribute to issues

and discourse around them, a large majority of respondents either sometimes contribute or they do so often. The responses are summarized in the chart below:

**Figure 6. 4 Respondents’ Contribution to Social Discourse**



Source: Author’s own construct from field data

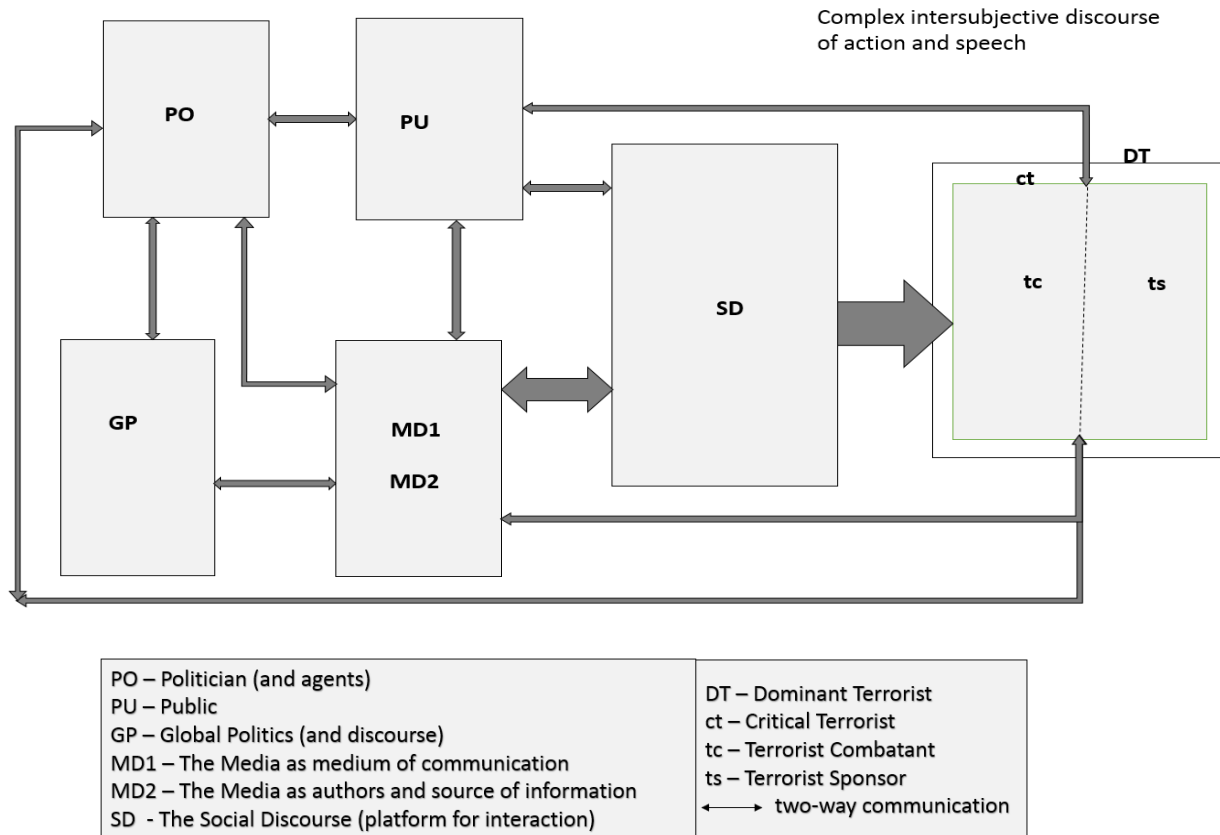
The responses in the two charts show that respondents are not mere passive information consumers in their society or community. They are active receivers and contributors to the discourse around them. This is a justification of Jarvis’ argument that one significant way to understand the construction of the identity of the terrorist is to seek the opinions of everyday people in society.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, combined with the other sources (speeches, media reports, academic literature) and still situated within CTS framework, we can understand the intersubjective discourse that creates the ascribed identity of the terrorist. The chart below states clearly the main finding of this research – the identification of two forms of terrorists (terrorist combatant and terrorist sponsor). This two-

in-one terrorist is designated “CT” meaning “Critical Terrorist.” Thus, viewed from a critical perspective with a West African context, the terrorist could be identified as “CT” constituting the terrorist combatant and the terrorist sponsor. This is in contrast to “DT” meaning “Dominant Terrorist” representing the dominant perception about the terrorist in West Africa. In other words, all the different actors found in “CT” are not clearly and conspicuously spelt out in dominant discourse on terrorism. The same processes, structures and actors interacting in the same society may produce different entities depending on how the actions are interpreted. If interpreted with the lens and methods of the dominant global discourse on terrorism driving the global war on terror, the product will be “DT.”

However, understood and interpreted with CTS perspectives and methods, the results will be “ct.” This process involves a complex interaction of action (mainly terrorist and counterterrorist operations) and words used by the actors on various levels. The interaction is also largely a two-way communication where actors both give information to and take information out of the social discourse, either directly or indirectly (through the media). This is illustrated in the figure below:

**Figure 6. 5 Understanding the Identity of the Terrorist: A New Conceptual Framework**



Source: Author’s own construct

PO: Politicians are perhaps Jarvis’ most favourite source of information in understanding the nature of the identity of the terrorist. In his work,<sup>82</sup> Jarvis uses speeches and comments made by UK Parliamentarians and top US politicians such as Former President and Vice President George Bush and Dick Cheney as illustrations on how politicians play an important role in the construction of the identity of the terrorist. In this study, comments and speeches from the sitting Presidents of all the three states (Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nigeria) were examined. Other top politicians such as Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and other senior ministers of state in the respective countries were studied. Their views provided an important “peep” into the politicians’ mind to know what they think the terrorist is. This source from the politicians is very significant as they decide ultimately what strategies and measures should be adopted to counter terrorism.

Since Counterterrorism operations are undertaken on the authority of the politician, acts and effects of counterterrorism are attributable to him. So, in the chart the acts of the politician (counterterrorism operation) communicate directly to the terrorist and to the social discourse through the media. The same counterterrorism operation also serves as a form of communication between the politician and the section of the public that experiences or witnesses it. The Politician (PO) thus contributes to the discourse by what he says (speeches and comments) and what he does (through policies enacted and implemented under his authority).

PU: Public. The public is made up of residents in the state who are neither politician (terrorism decision makers) nor authors of media reports. The public consists of both ordinary residents and experts. The view of the public, according to Jarvis, is a fundamental way of understanding construction of terrorism knowledge. The public contributes to the discourse in two main ways: doing so through the media or contributing directly through sharing of information and discussions on social issues with their immediate environment. Indeed, as illustrated earlier, a very significant majority of respondents interviewed for this study said they contribute to social discourse often or sometimes. By contributing to the social discourse about terrorism, the public plays an active role in defining the identity of the terrorist. The public, like the other sources, do not only contribute but also feed on information from the discourse. It, therefore, becomes a give and take matter. The public take from the discourse and contribute to it at the same time.

MD1: Media as a platform to contribute to the discourse. The media, as discussed already, play a dual role regarding the construction of the identity of the terrorist. The first is to serve as a medium or platform to drive the social discourse among the various sources. This level sees the media as a

passive instrument through which communication takes place among other sources. For instance, in press conferences and national celebrations, the President (PO) communicates directly to the public (PU) through the media (radio, TV or newspaper).

MD2: Media as an active and independent source of information. Aside being used as a channel of communication among other sources, the media play an active role in the discourse around the identity of the terrorist. Through news reporting, talk shows, use of pictures and videos, the media embarks on massive dissemination of information to all sources. All the other four sources receive information from the media. However, rather than being a passive channel for communication, the media actively gets involved in constructing the identity of the terrorist. This role played by the media has been discussed extensively using both print and electronic media as examples. The media is the most conspicuous contributor to the social discourse.

SD: The Social Discourse serves as the platform for interaction among all the five sources examined. As a critical perspective of study, the social discourse is also influenced by history and context. The political, religious, economic, ethnic and social context and history of the society also play an important role in understanding the identity of the terrorists. This means the intersubjective discourse that results in the shared understanding of the terrorist is not only determined by the five sources indicated in the framework. There are historical and contextual factors that serve as intervening variables in the social discourse. For instance, all the three countries have different levels of religious distribution. While Christianity is a dominant religion in Ghana, majority of Burkinabes and Nigerians are Muslim. Politically, while all three countries have had democracies interspersed with coup d'états, the current political climate in all three countries are fundamentally

different. Burkina Faso has former President in exile (Blaise Compaore) with sections of the population suspecting that the recent wave of terrorist activities in the country are being sponsored by him or his faction.<sup>83</sup> In Nigeria, political power takes more of ethnic and religious dimensions. The country, since independence in 1960, has largely been ruled by leaders from the Muslim Hausa/Fulani North. As observed from the responses from the Nigerian respondents, it is much easier to mix politics with religion in Nigeria than it is in Ghana or Burkina Faso. All these factors come from the peculiar historical background of these countries and it becomes difficult to understand the dynamics with the current challenge of terrorism without the histories and context.

CT: This is the terrorist (group) whose identity is being constructed. While their identity is being constructed by outsiders or non-group members (non-terrorists), terrorists themselves also contribute to the ascribed construction of their own identity. This is done in two ways: by words and by deeds. By words, what terrorists say about themselves – their preferred name, who they are as well as what they seek to achieve throws light on their subscribed identity. By deed, through their activities and the social discourse that ensues after their activities, terrorists will be contributing to the construction of their own identity. An important way terrorist groups communicate to the rest of the world around them is the act of terrorism they carry out. It is discussed earlier that acts of terrorism are meant to communicate a message. Therefore, terrorist groups communicate directly to the Public (PU) and the Politician (PO) through their operations. Those sections of the public who do not observe the act of terrorism directly, get the communication through the media. While the terrorist (t) sends out message to the social discourse, they also receive information from the same discourse.

TC: This is the “terrorist combatants.” Terrorists combatants are not easily identified in the dominant discourse. In this CTS study, however, we have distinguished between two types of persons in the terrorists’ camp. The terrorist combatants are those often referred in the normal discourse as terrorists. They are often the poor, desperate youth who are recruited, conditioned, armed and commissioned to go and carry out acts of terrorism. Here, the act of terrorism is separated from the person who commits the act. It is generally agreed in the various sources discussed that the persons who usually engage in terrorist activity in West Africa are the poor and desperate young men and women who are recruited for either financial rewards or forcefully conscripted into the group. It, therefore, makes a lot of sense and analytical value to separate these poor radicalized combatants from their rich recruiters and sponsors.

TS: These are the “terrorist sponsors.” The terrorist sponsors, as discussed elaborately above, represent all those who support, sponsor, promote and most especially, recruit, condition, train, arm and pay others (TC) to go and carry out acts of terrorism. Here again, the act of terrorism committed is separated from the terrorist sponsor. The terrorist sponsor uses acts of terrorism as a strategy to achieve an interest. He takes a rational decision and calculates how the use of terrorist acts as a strategy will help achieve the results. As discussed earlier, terrorist sponsors could be religious leaders, politicians, businessmen, ethnic leaders and most often all these different people work together to ensure mutual satisfaction or realization of goals. Most of the time, the terrorist combatant (TC) who engages in the actual fight does not know the actual goal of the fight. He has been conditioned (brainwashed) to believe that what he is doing is justified (often in religious doctrines).

DT: “Dominant Terrorist” is the definition of the terrorist in the dominant (global) discourse. It stands in contrast with “Critical Terrorist” (CT) and it represents the identity of the terrorist in the dominant understanding mostly driven by the global discourse. This understanding informed the global war on terror and is currently the philosophy driving the dominant counterterrorism strategy in West Africa. In this understanding, the terrorist is crammed into three separable elements (a) The terrorist as an ideologue. This view makes terrorism an ideology. This means the individual committing a terrorist act is inseparable from the act of terrorism – the terrorist is the same as his ideology – terrorism. (b) there is no separation between combatants and sponsors. Often, however, what actually is termed terrorist in the dominant discourse is the combatant, leaving the sponsor who is the major stakeholder loose. (c) inferring from (b) above, the idea of a terrorist sponsor is seen as a mystery. This is because, though analysts, scholars and even presidents of nations know that terrorism has sponsors, the actual nature of the sponsor is missing when defining the terrorist and when drawing counterterrorism strategy. In the chart, DT and CT both refer to the same terrorists but each is identified based on the philosophy with which the terrorist is viewed. When viewed with the philosophy of the dominant discourse, the viewer will find the DT (dominant understanding of terrorists). On the other hand, when viewed with CTS philosophy and limited to the particular West African context, the viewer finds CT (critically conceptualized terrorist).

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined in detail the differences between the dominant understanding of terrorism in West Africa against the CTS conceptualization. After assessing the current counterterrorism policy at the national and regional levels, the chapter explored the five main elements defining the conceptualization of terrorism in CTS theory. The five elements were examined spelling out the implication of each for counterterrorism strategy in West Africa. Using

the CTS conceptualization to understand terrorism in West Africa gives a broader approach to understanding the phenomenon of terrorism.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>6</sup> Ibid
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- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
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- <sup>57</sup> Jackson, Richard., 2008. op. cit. p. 28.
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- <sup>61</sup> Fierke, Karine M., 2009. op. cit. p. 174.
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- <sup>72</sup> Ibid
- <sup>73</sup> Personal Interview, Accra, 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.
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- <sup>75</sup> Personal Interview, Accra, 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.
- <sup>76</sup> Personal Interview, Accra, 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.
- <sup>77</sup> Personal Interviews in Ouagadougou, 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.
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- <sup>83</sup> Personal Interviews in Ouagadougou and Koudougou, April 2019. Many of the respondents have the view that terrorism in Burkina Faso is nothing more than a political struggle between the current administration and sources of influence linked to Former President Blaise Compaore.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **7.0 Introduction**

This study was undertaken to understand the nature of the identity of the terrorist in West Africa viewed through the lens of Critical Terrorism Studies and the implication for counterterrorism strategy in the sub-region. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the key findings, discuss the implication for counterterrorism strategy and make some recommendations aimed at future research and improving counterterrorism policy in West Africa.

#### **7.1 Summary of Key Findings**

The research was driven by the following questions: What are the key assumptions and driving principles of Critical Terrorism Studies? What specific methods and sources of information can be employed to critically understand the nature of the identity of the terrorist in West Africa using CTS. How do key actors in society and social structures work intersubjectively to construct the identity of the terrorist in West Africa? How does the dominant perception and knowledge around the identity of terrorists strengthen the structures, and processes responsible for the rise of terrorist activities in the sub-region? How does a CTS driven conceptualization of the identity of the terrorist offer a plausible insight into rethinking counterterrorism in West Africa? The summary of the key findings of this research is discussed in line with the research questions.

### **7.1.1 Key Driving Principles of Critical Terrorism Studies**

Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) as a strand of Critical Security Studies offers an alternative approach to understanding the phenomenon of terrorism within the West African context. Based on the works of two leading CTS scholars – Richard Jackson<sup>1</sup> and Lee Jarvis<sup>2</sup> – a CTS definition of terrorism was adopted. Five key elements were further identified from the basic assumptions of CTS about the phenomenon of terrorism. Terrorism in CTS perspective is defined as a socially constructed concept denoting acts of political violence by state and non-state actors that targets portions of a population in order to send a message to a specified audience. Inferring from this definition, five fundamental elements of CTS were identified: (a) a terrorist act is mainly determined by the nature and purpose of the act of violence; (b) terrorism is understood to be a social construct; (c) states are also capable of carrying out terrorist acts; (d) the act of terrorism is separated from the persons who commit it such that they can abandon it for other methods or strategies and (e) the focus of terrorism knowledge and practice should be aimed at emancipation of the human individual first rather than the state. These five CTS arguments were used to test the data drawn from Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Ghana.

### **7.1.2 Methods and Sources of Information to Critically Understand the Nature of the Identity of the Terrorist in West Africa**

The study used a framework from Lee Jarvis to set a research design but contextualized to fit the particular West African situation. Jarvis proposed that three key sources of information could be employed to explore terrorism and counterterrorism knowledge in a given society. In a framework he used to explore the dominance of critique of counterterrorism knowledge in the UK, Jarvis proposed (a) speeches and comments from politicians, (b) everyday life and vernacular constructions and (c) popular culture, as sources CTS scholars could use to explore terrorism or

counterterrorism knowledge in society. This framework was adapted to fit the peculiar circumstance of West Africa. Firstly, while Jarvis used the framework to critique the dominant construction of terrorism and counterterrorism knowledge in UK societies, this study used it to understand the dynamics of terrorism knowledge in three West African countries. Secondly, in place of the third source – popular culture – this study used media reports. Two additional sources were added based on the themes derived from the data coding.

Methodologically, Jarvis' framework heavily influenced the selection of sources of data. Total of thirty-eight (38) respondents were interviewed from the three countries with semi-structured interview guides. Together with media reports and speeches from very top politicians from the three countries, interview data were coded and analysis was done based on data-driven themes. Grounded on the themes derived from data coding, two other significant sources were identified and analysed together with the original three. The two additional sources were the dynamics of global politics and the subscribed identity of terrorists.

The study found that the five key sources of information to understand the identity of terrorists in West Africa provide deep understanding of the identity of the phenomenon of terrorism. As stated earlier, the five sources used were, the public, politicians, the media, global politics and terrorists. Taking a skeptical attitude toward the dominant understanding of terrorism in West African societies but analyzing the interaction between the five sources based on their own information, the study discovered a complex intersubjective social discourse among them. This social discourse when analysed using the lens of the dominant discourse produce the dominant understanding of

terrorism but when analysed with a CTS view, it produces an identity different from the dominant identity given to terrorists.

### **7.1.3 Key Actors and Social Structures that Work to Entrench Terrorism in West Africa**

The analysis from the five sources of information identified a social structure with varied actors that work together to perpetrate terrorism in West Africa. It was found that the predominant clientelist structure of West African society and politics has found its way into terrorism in the sub-region. This has seen a powerful network of political, ethnic, religious and economic actors constituting what this study terms as “terrorist sponsors.” This powerful network, with varied interests ranging from politics, ethnicity, religion to economics, recruit the poor and marginalized in society, indoctrinate them with misinterpreted Islamic doctrine, arm them and commission them for terrorist operations. The study, therefore, identified three elements relating to the identity of terrorists in West Africa which have far reaching implications for counterterrorism strategy. There is a recognition that there is no monolithic terrorist group that has a common interest. However, there is (a) group of poor marginalized “terrorist combatants” employed by (b) a network of powerful “terrorist sponsors” who have (c) varied interests in a single terrorist act. Secondly, the relationship between all these actors hinges on a sophisticated clientelist social structure promoting a form of patron-client relations between “terrorist sponsors” and “terrorist combatants”.

#### **7.1.4 How the Dominant Discourse Entrenches Terrorism in West Africa**

The study found that the dominant understanding of terrorism in West Africa mirrors the dominant global understanding where terrorism is viewed more in terms of the illegitimacy of the actors to use violence rather than the nature and purpose of the violent act. The implication of this understanding is the overlooking of state terrorism which is very prevalent in counterterrorism operations. Acceptance of this notion of terrorism has entrenched an assumption where effectiveness of counterterrorism operations is measured by the number of suspected terrorists killed. National and multinational forces have public support for execution of suspected terrorists in counterterrorism operations. Acts of state terrorism is concealed in counterterrorism operations.

This idea is evident in the very wording of the ECOWAS Counterterrorism strategy and action plan where states are tasked to execute the three-pillar strategy. Philosophically, the ECOWAS strategy appears to assume that member states cannot perpetrate terrorism themselves hence requiring member states to oversee implementation of the three pillars. The result of killing suspected terrorists in counterterrorism operations is the perpetuation of a sense of state injustice and persecution in terrorist communities. This sense of injustice and humiliation suffered by terrorist communities makes martyrdom an attractive venture for potential terrorists who want to join radical groups to avenge a state act against a family member, fulfill a religious duty or have a fulfilment in the idea of dying a martyr for the sake of his community.

The basis of this finding is that, both terrorist and the current counterterrorist acts operate with a belief that violence is the best way to accomplish their goals. The result of this belief is entrenchment of a cycle of terrorist and counterterrorist operations resulting in more deaths. More deaths also result in more victimization and sense of persecutions and injustice from ethnics and

religions who feel persecuted by the state. On the other hand, this cycle plays into the hands of the network of terrorist sponsors who take advantage of grievances against state acts to recruit more fighters.

Meanwhile, the use of military force does not have any correlation in significant political, social and legal adjustments to tackle the challenge of terrorism. There is a seeming assumption that a simplistic way of pursuing terrorists and terrorist leaders and getting them prosecuted will defeat terrorism. This is simplistic because, terrorism in West Africa is not like any criminal incident known by our legal instruments. Terrorism is not like armed robbery or piracy operation involving about ten or fifteen criminals who would be pursued, arrested, prosecuted and imprisoned and the problem ends. Terrorism has assumed a structural dynamic and the best way to tackle it is to use the same structure.

Finally, the nature and means by which counterterrorism strategies are drawn in West Africa contribute to entrenchment of terrorist acts in the sub-region. Counterterrorism strategies could best be described as reactionary policies, adopted in times of attacks. This problem has resulted in mostly thinking counterterrorism rather than thinking preventive terrorism. This reinforces the reactive nature of West African counterterrorism policies. Comprehensive strategies are drawn only in panicky moments and in such cases, it is always easier to think counterterrorism than to think preventive terrorism. This counterterrorism mantra is evident in the wording of the titles of most of the strategies. Ultimately, the existing discourse is unable to allow for an accurate identification of terrorist acts. This makes it difficult to create appropriate counter measures to deal with terrorism.

### **7.1.5 How CTS Offers Plausible Insight into Rethinking Counterterrorism in West Africa**

Identifying the terrorist based on the five-element CTS conceptualization has implication for counterterrorism. A CTS conceptualized terrorism in West Africa begs a rethink of counterterrorism in various ways.

Firstly, as indicated above, the existing conceptualization is unable to allow for clearer and more definite definition of terrorism and so identifying a terrorist act from non-terrorist act becomes difficult. This results in often designating what is not terrorist as terrorist and vice versa. Thus, basing the definition of terrorism on some predetermined actors perceived to have a certain nature (irrational jihadist extremists) risks labeling any form of violence that involves these actors as terrorists. On the contrary, defining terrorism based on CTS conceptualization in which a terrorist incident is defined by the nature of the act of violence provides more certainty in identifying the act as terrorist. CTS conceptualization states that in a terrorist incident, the method of attack and the selection of target or victims are chosen strategically and symbolically, and the purpose of the act is to intimidate a population and send a political message to the audience of the violence. In CTS defined terrorism, the target of the attack is not the victim but the audience to whom the actor is sending a message. This form of violence is clearly differentiated from other forms of violence such as intercommunal violence, banditry and drug trafficking operations all of which have different methods, targets and purposes different from terrorism. This clarity in differentiating terrorist violence from other forms of violence presented by CTS conceptualisation has implication for counterterrorism strategy and policy. Identifying exactly a particular form of violence allows for an appropriate and more targeted legal and political measures to deal with them accordingly.

Secondly, CTS conceptualization has found that terrorism in West Africa has assumed a structural status involving a complex social interaction of different actors and interests in a typical patron-client relationship. The actors and interests range from politics, religion, ethnicity and economics. An effective counterterrorism strategy will trace these same actors and interests. This is based on the common sense that political, religious and ethnic problems cannot be solved by military power or simple legal processes. Political problems must be resolved politically, religious problems must be resolved religiously, ethnic problems must be resolved ethnically. In effect, a problem caused by a particular social structure must be resolved using the same structure.

Thirdly, if state terrorism is recognized and put on the same scale as terrorist acts carried out by non-state actors, states will be forced to be creative with their counterterrorism strategies. Most counterterrorism operations carried out by states and multinational taskforces in West Africa qualify as terrorist acts. What does it imply to say states are capable of carrying out terrorist acts? (a) States will be cautious about their counterterrorism operations. (b) States will explore more creative and peaceful ways to resolve conflicts of terrorism in their territory, (c) more importantly, perhaps, states and international organisations in West Africa will begin to rethink counterterrorism – a counterterrorism that will break the cycle of violence and counter violence.

Again, a CTS counterterrorism that believes in emancipation of the human and puts human security ahead of national security will not measure success with how many humans are killed. A CTS counterterrorism will rather seek to empower the subjugated knowledge of its citizens and make them active part of the counterterrorism framework. It will acknowledge that the locals are the most affected by both terrorist and counterterror operations. Secondly, it is the locals who live with

suspected militants or terrorists and have superior intelligence than any outsider enforcement entity.

Finally, unlike the seeming irrationality encapsulating the global discourse and the seeming irrational military counterterrorism strategy in the global war on terror, a CTS motivated counterterrorism strategy in West Africa will take a rational step to address the various actors differently. A CTS conceptualized counterterrorism will seek to identify “terrorist sponsors” from the social structure and adopt a policy toward them. It will also seek the “terrorist combatants” and adopt a suitable policy toward them. The difference between a CTS motivated counterterrorism in West Africa from the present counterterrorism is that terrorists will be viewed as rational actors who are using terrorism as a strategy and can change for peaceful means. After a CTS counterterrorism strategy has recognized and separated “terrorist combatants” from “terrorist sponsors,” it will be historical and learn from history. It will learn how structurally induced violence in West Africa like the Sierra Leone and Liberian civil wars, were resolved.

## **7.2 Contribution to Knowledge**

The ability of this study to reconceptualise terrorism in West Africa differently from the dominant discourse and identify a meaningful approach to reconsidering counterterrorism is a major contribution to the academic discourse on terrorism. It has offered a practical contribution to the understanding of the processes, structures and actors whose intricate relationship provide the anchorage for terrorism to grow in West Africa. This is possibly the first study to comprehensively examine terrorism in relation to the clientelist social structure of West African societies and by that able to empirically separate terrorist combatants (clients) from terrorist sponsors. This provides a unique and refreshing way to understand the phenomenon of terrorism in West Africa.

By extension, it is capable of prescribing more effective counterterrorism strategies. The study has contributed significantly to the literary debate in terrorism discourse in West Africa and stands to stimulate a frantic discourse. A new definition for terrorism is thus stated below:

*“Terrorism is a concept denoting acts of violence by state and non-state actors strategically planned to target portions of a population with the purpose of intimidating and exerting political influence over a specified audience.”*

Theoretically, since Waever<sup>3</sup> expressed skepticism about the applicability of the principles of a largely Eurocentric critical security studies outside of Europe about a decade and half ago, not such comprehensive attempt has been made to apply these principles in the terrorist situation in West Africa. The closest attempt, to the best of my knowledge, is the work of Solomon Hussein<sup>4</sup> which sought to apply CTS in Mali, Nigeria and Somalia. However, his work lacked primary data and also viewed critical security studies narrowly in terms of the Welsh School’s Emancipatory Security Studies. This work, therefore adds worth of knowledge to the corpus of work done under the umbrella of CSS and for that matter CTS. Firstly, it serves as a direct answer to Waever’s skepticism. This study has shown that the principles of Critical Security Studies (on which CTS) hinges are flexible and could be adapted to the peculiar circumstances of the society. CSS is thus applicable to societies of developed countries like those in Europe and equally applicable to societies of developing countries such as those in West Africa. Secondly, the five-source framework used by this study is a novelty in CTS scholarship. While different scholars have evoked parts of the five sources, especially Jarvis’ three sources in separate studies, the use of all the five (especially the inclusion of the subscribed identity of the terrorist) has given way to a more

comprehensive view of the identity dynamics of terrorists in the study of terrorism. Again, the framework derived from this study is a major contribution to knowledge in the study of terrorism. Specifically, it adds a significant element to CTS theory where the same social context, actors, practices and process could result in different identification of the terrorists depending on the philosophy with which one views the social process.

### **7.3 Conclusions**

As indicated in the introduction to this work, terrorism has been a politically contested subject of study from its historical evolution. It has been used by both state and nonstate actors for attainment of one interest or another. Therefore, it becomes very easy for states or international organisations to construct the identity of the terrorist in a way that will create legitimacy for the use of force against the actors. The conceptualization of the identity of the terrorist in West Africa as illegitimate non-state actors, as derived from the broader global discourse, has created a situation where measurement of the success of counterterrorism operations depends on the number of terrorists destroyed. As found in this study, this creates a cycle of killings where extrajudicial killings by state actors rather than reducing terrorism incidents, motivate potential members to join terrorist groups.

This study has found that the existing conceptualization of terrorism is based on an understanding that terrorists are irrational religious extremists. This conceptualization has resulted in the adoption of counterterrorism policies that are over reliant on military force to destroy suspected terrorists. The study has again demonstrated how such a militarized approach rather motivates potential recruits to get recruited into terrorist organisations. Again, basing the definition of terrorism on some predetermined actors perceived to have a certain nature (irrational jihadist extremists) risks

labeling any form of violence that involves these actors as terrorists. Meanwhile, the acts may not be terrorist acts, but for instance, pure intercommunal violence or acts of banditry. The current conceptualization, therefore, poses a difficulty in defining what incident is truly terrorist and what is not.

On the contrary, defining terrorism based on CTS conceptualization in which a terrorist incident is defined by the nature of the act of violence provides more certainty in identifying the act as terrorist. By nature of the violence, CTS conceptualization states that the method of attack (such as bombing, suicide or shooting), the selection of target or victims (such as church, mosque, hotel) are chosen strategically and symbolically, and the purpose of the act is to intimidate a population and send a political message to the audience of the violence. In effect, in terrorism defined by CTS, the target of the attack is the audience, not necessarily the victims. With this conceptualization, communal violence, acts of banditry or armed robbery that involves jihadist militants but do not seek to convey any political message nor seek to intimidate a particular population cannot be identified as terrorist. They could just be acts for financial gains or the effects of enmity between adjoining communities.

The implication for defining terrorism using the CTS conceptualization in West Africa is that, firstly, it expands terrorism actors to cover jihadist militants and any other actors who adopt similar nature of violence for strategic reasons. Consequently, the study identifies varied actors (a network of political, religious, ethnic, economic leaders) as “terrorist sponsors.” They are terrorists because they adopt acts of violence typifying the CTS conceptualization of terrorism and are sponsors

because they sponsor the violence through several means but do not directly fight. These terrorist sponsors work with “terrorist combatants” who are involved in the actual combat.

Secondly, conceptualizing terrorism as a strategy means acknowledging the rationality of the actors and the possibility of those actors abandoning terrorism as a strategy for other means. It is found in this study that politicians, religious leaders, ethnic leaders and entrepreneurs in Burkina Faso, Nigeria and other parts of West Africa support terrorist acts strategically for particular gains and can abandon these strategies for peaceful means. The thread that joins these networks of elites with actual combatants is a combination of religious doctrine and mutual benefits derived from a patron-client relationship. This has implication for counterterrorism.

Finally, CTS understands terrorism as a social construct resulting from a complex intersubjective social discourse. What this means is that two similar incidents involving similar actors and similar circumstances could be labelled differently. One could be a terrorist incident and the other will not, depending on how the dominant discourse decides to label the incidents. On the other hand, due to the existing conceptualization which defines terrorism based on the actors involved, it is easy to attribute the terrorism label to an incident which is not terrorist. It is demonstrated in this study that many incidents described as terrorist in Burkina Faso, passed through the CTS conceptualization, will not qualify as terrorist incidents. They could rather be described as banditry, drug trafficking operations or intercommunal violence. This confusion in defining terrorism is an impediment to counterterrorism efforts as no appropriate solution could be proffered for a menace which is difficult to identify. Using CTS conceptualization to define terrorism in West Africa, therefore, provides more clarity and has greater implication for

counterterrorism. Viewing terrorism as social construct also provides hope for states in West Africa as the same society can reconstruct the definition and features of terrorist acts to aid building better counterterrorism strategies and peaceful societies.

## **7.4 Recommendations**

Based on the foregone findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made.

### **7.4.1 Redefining Terrorism in West Africa**

Firstly, there is a need to redefine terrorism away from the existing conceptualization to a CTS conceptualization. Terrorism should be redefined based on the nature and form of the violence instead of the existing definition which largely views terrorism based on the actors involved in the incident. This is to address the challenge of narrow actor-based conceptualization of the subject. The best way forward is to redefine the criteria for determining a terrorist incident. Thus, instead of defining terrorist activity conclusively and instantly based on the involvement of jihadists in a particular act of violence, states, through law enforcement agencies should focus on identifying the nature and motivation for the violence and based on that decide whether it is terrorist incident or not. This CTS approach also allows states to take charge of defining and ascribing meaning to forms of violence based on its national legal system or ECOWAS framework.

Since Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Ghana have different experiences of terrorism, this redefinition process should be a deliberate effort at the national level and should involve academics, the media, politicians and the public. There should be organized symposiums and public dialogues in the various tertiary educational institutions through a coordinated effort with the academic, media, religious, ethnic and political actors to have frantic discussions on redefining and contextualizing

terrorism in West Africa. In Ghana, institutions such as LECIAD, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, The Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College, in coordination with various security practitioners and thinktanks could be used for these symposiums and conferences. Burkina Faso could use the University of Ouagadougou as coordinating point and link up with all relevant civil society organisations, religious institutions and thinktanks for this process. Likewise, Nigeria could use its centres of excellence in Abuja and Lagos to hold stakeholder conferences, dialogues and symposiums to share ideas on setting a framework of criteria which Nigeria will be using to identify acts of violence in the country. At the national level, this should be a special project initiated from the Presidency and should have multi-ministerial membership. The Presidents should as a matter of urgency constitute a committee that includes the ministries in charge of Defense and Interior, Religions and National Orientation, Information and Education Ministries as well as active participation of civil society.

At the Regional level, the ECOWAS Secretariat led by the President of the Secretariat, should arrange similar symposiums and ideas and technical group meetings at least quarterly to deliberate on ways to champion a community-wide effort to redefine terrorism in West Africa. At the local community level of the various states, traditional chiefs, local religious leaders, community and assembly members, as well as opinion leaders and influential persons and in fact all local leaders should be progressively involved in the process. This effort at the local level should be championed by the ministries responsible for local government in collaboration with information and national security ministries. These processes are needed as soon as possible and should be budgeted for in the next budgeting windows. At the national level this budget should be part of the Defence

Ministry annual budget while at the regional level, the budget could be drawn from member states' contributions toward defence.

#### **7.4.2 The Crucial Role of Academics**

This work had as its objective to provide a framework for redefining terrorism in West Africa and stimulate a rethink of counterterrorism. This has been done successfully. There is a need for more and further academic work to investigate and study the more nuanced pros and cons of critically defining terrorism in West Africa. At both ECOWAS and national levels, educational institutions and research centers such as the University of Ghana, University of Ouagadougou and the University of Ibadan should be tasked to conduct specific research and engage in community knowledge development. At the national level, the Presidents should commission government scholarship schemes dedicated to research into terrorism. The publications arising out of these schemes should be made public depending on relevance to the project of redefining terrorism. There should also be symposiums at the local level, community engagements of local chiefs, opinion leaders and community members as a whole. These academic studies should also focus on research into countries that have adopted counterterrorism policies based on CTS conceptualization.

Similarly, the ECOWAS Secretariat should launch funding for research and programmes to both academics and security practitioners. The focus of the funding should be dedicated to investigating the nuances and more delicate aspects of the definition and causes of a West African contextualized understanding of terrorism. Again, the EU and UK existing policies could provide some resource into further queries in this area.

### **7.4.3 Setting the Agenda for West Africa**

It is imperative for West African actors to set their own agenda and take leadership of this redefinition process. It is important that violent acts in West Africa should be defined, identified and labeled by West African institutions and stakeholders. At the national level, politicians, the media, academics, civil society and the entire local populations should be galvanized progressively toward an agenda that is aimed at safeguarding peace and security based on localized conceptions.

At the regional level, the ECOWAS Commission should roll out a multilateral programme to engage the various national security and civil society stakeholders to brainstorm on how to set realistic agenda that will eventually result in the Community-wide leadership to shape terrorism discourse in West Africa. Since the ECOWAS Commission has already existent relationship with Chiefs of Defence Staff, Defense Ministers and other stake holders from all member states, it becomes easier to organize a team that involves similar membership. However, this team should as a matter of necessity include religious and ethnic leaders. Particularly, it must include the mainstream Muslim Community, the Fulani Communities and rival farming and hunter communities in Burkina Faso and other parts of the Sahel. Involvement of all relevant stakeholders importantly assures of an acceptance of the framework that will result from such a gathering.

### **7.4.4 Rethinking Counterterrorism: Broadening the Scope of Counterterrorism Policy and Implementation**

Again, terrorism is a multinational problem where terrorists have no regard for national boundaries. An effective counterterrorism strategy, therefore, should be one that is planned and executed at the regional level, national level and local level. While ECOWAS should play a more active role than it is doing currently, there is a need for a deliberate effort to draw bottom-up

policies. This means counterterrorism strategies will emerge and hinge on the ideas and participation of traditional rulers and the locals of communities in the various states. This is important because local authorities and community members have superior intelligence regarding their own security. This strategy will also result in more community acceptance of anti-terrorism policies. Again, it provides a more comprehensive implementation plan. This strategy is needed as soon as possible. Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Ghana should start this effort locally while ECOWAS brings together a technical team for communitywide strategy hinged on CTS conceptualization of terrorism.

Broadening the scope of counterterrorism policy promulgation and implementation also involves the approaches. Since it has been found in this study that terrorism is perpetuated by actors from different sectors of society, it is just logical that a strategy to tackle such a complex multi-sectorial problem be targeted at the various identified sectors. For instance, politically, the national institutions responsible for national unity and reconciliation could adopt deliberate strategies to bring political opponents to the table for dialogue. In Burkina Faso, for instance, the current government should commission a national reconciliation body to attempt to mend the relationships involved with the current administration and the loyalists of the former administration headed by the deposed President Blaise Compaore. Again, it is imperative for preventive terrorism efforts in Burkina Faso to engage in strategic dialogue to bring all opposing political factions to the table for political talks. In Nigeria, the political dialogue could be extended to all politicians at the federal and state level. Since the political support for terrorist activities are planned clandestinely, more studies and research are needed to understand in detail the nature of the interaction between politicians and terrorist groups. Economic actors, both local and foreign also have vested interest

in the protracted violence caused by terrorism. There should, therefore, be economic, religious, ethnic and political approaches, initiated from the presidency, to ensure preventive terrorism strategies are adopted.

#### **7.4.5 Strategic Talks**

Jonathan Powell, astute British diplomat, Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Tony Blair from 1995 to 2007 and Chief Negotiator on Northern Ireland from 1997 to 2007 emphatically stated that “I have now studied most of the negotiations between armed groups and governments in the last 30 years – what these experiences demonstrate is that there isn’t really an alternative to talking to the terrorists if you want the conflict to end.”<sup>5</sup> The fact that West African Armed Forces are struggling to be well equipped and resourced means that West African states have no option but to look for the “terrorist sponsors” and engage in “strategic talks.” Strategic talks with terrorist sponsors are a necessity sooner or later if West African leaders really want to deal with terrorism effectively.

Combination of talks and military force worked to resolve the Liberian and Sierra Leonian civil wars which have similar features as the current insurgency. Governments will have to explore ways to open political, religious and ethnic communication channels with colleagues on the side of the terrorists, bring them to the table and engage in “strategic talks.” Again, talking does not mean conceding to terrorists demands. It will, however, be shocking to realise on the table that terrorists are willing accept alternative settlements. While talking does not guarantee and may never be able to end terrorism completely in West Africa, it still stands as the most plausible approach to reducing it to the barest minimum considering the current circumstances.

## 7.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, various unexplored areas could be examined by researchers, especially those interested in CTS scholarship. This study set to stimulate the search for appropriate framework for redefining terrorism in West Africa. There is a need for future research into the various identified areas.

- While this study has been able to identify the relationship between the political, economic, religious and ethnic factors that drive terrorism in West Africa, more research can be done by way of exploring the nuanced details of each of the factors and the mode of operation of the actors. Such a study can be state specific, exploring issues at the very local level as well as at the national level.
- It will be interesting to explore in detail how a CTS driven counterterrorism strategy will look like in Africa. A study of this sort could do an historical review of different violent conflicts in West Africa, how they were resolved eventually and how that can inform an effective counterterrorism in West Africa.
- Secondly, the complex relationship between politics, religion, ethnicity and economics could be further explored. Such a study could be two-fold. The first is to examine the positive side of this four-sided relationship for development and conflict resolution. The second is an examination of the role of the relationship in the perpetuation of violence.
- Again, a detailed study into the dynamics of the role of clientelism in terrorism in Africa as a whole could be interesting. While many studies have been carried out into the dynamic of politics or religion, very little has been done in terrorism studies.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson, Richard., 2007/2008, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Jarvis, Lee., 2019, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Waever, Ole., “Aberystwyth, Paris, Copenhagen: New Schools in Security Theory and their Origins between Core and Periphery,” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Montreal, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Hussein, Solomon., “Critical Terrorism Studies and its Implications for Africa, *Politikon*, Vol. 42(2), 2015, 219-234.

<sup>5</sup> Powell, Jonathan., “How to Talk to Terrorists,” *The Guardian*, October 2014. Accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/07/-sp-how-to-talk-to-terrorists-isis-al-qaida> on July 11, 2019. Powell also details a step-by-step way of talking to terrorists drawing lessons from his 30-year career in talking and negotiating with armed groups, in his 408-page book: Powell, Jonathan., *Talking to Terrorists: How to End Armed Conflicts*, (London: The Bodley Head. 2014).

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I

#### List of interviewees

##### *Security and religious experts*

Place of Interview	Date of Interview	Name	Position/institution
Accra	29 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Dr. Chukuemeka Eze	Executive Director, WANEP.
Accra	14 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Sheikh Aremeyaw Shaibu	Spokesperson, National Chief Imam, Ghana
Accra	22 <sup>nd</sup> May, 2019.	Sulley Ibrahim	Head of Programmes, Africa Centre for Security and Counterterrorism
Accra	25 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Colonel Kwesi Mends	Senior Officer, Ghana Armed Forces
Accra	29 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Edward Jombla	Regional Conflict Analyst, WANEP
Accra	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2013.	Ofuafor Meshach	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife, Nigeria.
Accra	18 <sup>th</sup> July 2013.	Dr. Ken Ahorsu	Legon Center for International Affairs and Diplomacy, University of Ghana
Ouagadougou	10 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.	Anonymous	Senior Officer, Burkina Faso Armed Forces

Ouagadougou	11 <sup>th</sup> 2019.	April,	Anonymous	Senior Officer, Burkina Faso Armed Forces/ A Focal Point Leader at G5 Sahel Group
Ouagadougou	11 <sup>th</sup> 2019.	April,	Anonymous	Non-Commissioned Officer, Burkina Faso Armed Forces
Ouagadougou	15 <sup>th</sup> 2019.	April,	Anonymous	Catholic Priest in the Catholic Archdiocese of Ouagadougou

***Section of Public: Burkina Faso Residents – Anonymous***

Place of Interview	Date of Interview	Gender	Religion
Ouagadougou	9 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.	Male	Christian
Ouagadougou	9 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.	Female	Christian
Ouagadougou	10 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.	Male	Muslim
Ouagadougou	10 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.	Male	Muslim
Ouagadougou	12 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.	Male	Christian
Ouagadougou	12 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.	Male	Muslim
Ouagadougou	12 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.	Male	Christian
Ouagadougou	11 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.	Female	Christian
Ouagadougou	11 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.	Male	Christian
Koudougou	13 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.	Male	Christian
Koudougou	13 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.	Male	Muslim
Koudougou	13 <sup>th</sup> April, 2019.	Female	Christian

***Section of Public: Nigerian Residents – Anonymous***

Place of Interview	Date of Interview	Gender	Religion
Accra	22 <sup>nd</sup> May, 2019.	Male	Muslim
Accra	7 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Female	Christian
Accra	4 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Female	Christian
Accra	5 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Male	Christian
Accra	23 <sup>rd</sup> May, 2019.	Male	Christian
Accra	22 <sup>nd</sup> May, 2019.	Male	Christian

***Section of Public: Ghanaian Residents – Anonymous***

Place of Interview	Date of Interview	Gender	Religion
Accra	8 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Male	Christian
Accra	7 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Male	Christian
Accra	9 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Male	Muslim
Accra	11 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Male	Christian
Accra	12 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Female	Christian
Accra	8 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Male	Christian
Accra	10 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Male	Buddhist
Accra	11 <sup>th</sup> May, 2019.	Female	Hindu
Accra	8 <sup>th</sup> May 2019.	Female	Muslim

**APPENDIX II**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SECTIONS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC IN  
BURKINA FASO, NIGERIA AND GHANA**

I am a Doctor of Philosophy student from the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD), University of Ghana. I am undertaking a research project as part of my PhD programme; exploring the topic: “Constructing to Destroy: A Critical Examination of the Role of Identity Construction in the Study of Terrorism.” I will need your support and assistance in responding to questions to enable me successfully complete this PhD thesis.

I am aware of the ethical considerations of studies of this nature and would want to assure that you will be anonymous and that every information you provide in support of this study will be kept confidential. You are also assured that you will have the privilege to verify the authenticity of information you provided during the interview session after we have transcribed the data, should you desire so.

Thank you

Name of Candidate: Francis Kwabena Atta

Email: [francisak2@gmail.com](mailto:francisak2@gmail.com)

Telephone: 0207424883

1. What is your trusted source of information on daily basis?
2. How often do you contribute to discussions on social issues that happen around you?
3. When you hear an incident such as a terrorist attack in any country where do you turn to for confirmation?
4. Which source of information do you trust most in case you want to learn more about such an incident?
5. How often do you hear your president or political leaders talk about issues like terrorism?
6. Which source of information do you often trust more – from your political leaders or the media?
7. In your own understanding, who do you think the people called terrorists are?
8. What do you think are the causes of terrorism?
9. When or from which country did you hear about terrorism for the first time?
10. What is the closest you have come to an incident blamed on terrorists or claimed by them?
11. What do you think is the best way to deal with the challenge of terrorism in your country or West Africa?

Thank you.

**APPENDIX III**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SECURITY EXPERTS/SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS**

I am a Doctor of Philosophy student from the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD), University of Ghana. I am undertaking a research project as part of my PhD programme; exploring the topic: “Constructing to Destroy: A Critical Examination of the Role of Identity Construction in the Study of Terrorism.” I will need your support and assistance in responding to questions to enable me successfully complete this PhD thesis.

I am aware of the ethical considerations of studies of this nature and would want to assure that every information you provide in support of this study will be kept confidential and that your anonymity will be assured should you wish to be anonymous. You are also assured that you will have the privilege to verify the authenticity of information you provided during the interview session after we have transcribed the data, should you desire so.

Thank you

Name of Candidate: Francis Kwabena Atta

Email: [francisak2@gmail.com](mailto:francisak2@gmail.com)

Telephone: 0207424883

1. Who do you think is a terrorist?
2. What are the causes of terrorism in West Africa?
3. What do you think are the key challenges to the fight against terrorism in West Africa?
4. The role of ECOWAS in the fight against terrorism in the sub-region appears to be a passive one despite the adoption of a counterterrorism strategy in 2013. What do you think ECOWAS is doing right and what can be improved?
5. Acquisition and use of sophisticated weapons by the national armies in West Africa is very crucial to the fight against terrorism – in the face of the militarized counterterrorism method dominantly employed globally; what do you think are the key challenges to timely acquisition of such sophisticated weapons by West African countries?
6. Do you think your country is prepared to prevent a terrorist activity from taking place or taking prompt steps to minimize damage in case it happens?
7. What do you think are the best ways to deal with the challenge of terrorism in West Africa?
8. Unfortunately, most of the people I have interviewed in Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Ghana try to link terrorism with Islam, which is not the case, what can the leadership of Islam do to change the narrative?

Thank you.

**APPENDIX IV**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR RELIGIOUS CLERICS**

I am a Doctor of Philosophy student from the Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD), University of Ghana. I am undertaking a research project as part of my PhD programme; exploring the topic: “Constructing to Destroy: A Critical Examination of the Role of Identity Construction in the Study of Terrorism.” I will need your support and assistance in responding to questions to enable me successfully complete this PhD thesis.

I am aware of the ethical considerations of studies of this nature and would want to assure that every information you provide in support of this study will be kept confidential and that your anonymity will be assured should you wish to be anonymous. You are also assured that you will have the privilege to verify the authenticity of information you provided during the interview session after we have transcribed the data, should you desire so.

Thank you

Name of Candidate: Francis Kwabena Atta

Email: [francisak2@gmail.com](mailto:francisak2@gmail.com)

Telephone: 0207424883

1. Who do you think is a terrorist?
2. What do you think are the causes of terrorism?
3. What do you think are the key challenges to the fight against terrorism in West Africa?
4. What do you think is the best way to deal with the challenge of terrorism in West Africa?
5. What action is the Catholic Church and indeed all Christians in Burkina Faso taking in to protect members in the event of an attack? (*For Catholic Priest*)
6. What role is the Christian community playing to help tackle the challenge of terrorism? (*For Catholic Priest*)
7. Unfortunately, most of the people I have interviewed in Burkina Faso and Ghana try to link the bad guys with Islam, which is not the case, what is the leadership of Islam doing to change the narrative? (*For Islamic Cleric*)
8. In your opinion what is the right form of Jihad in Islam and how different is it from the one practiced by extremists? (*For Islamic Cleric*)

Thank you.