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"Collaboration in a Polarized World: Hope for the Future?"

A Research Report

COMMITTEE: Security Council

QUESTION OF: The Question of Tackling Terrorist Organizations in West Africa

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Introduction & Background

West African nations have been submerged in increasing violence and conflict since the 1980s,

threatening regional security and peace. Physical conflict has occurred primarily in Liberia,

Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire. Clashes within these regions stem from ethnic

differences and divisions, military and political advancements, and (illegal) exploitation of

natural resources. Furthermore, socioeconomic constraints, weak governments, and illegal arms

trafficking have intensified disputes. However, West African nations are currently attempting to

take steps towards peacemaking despite continual frial security problems; The UN Peacebuilding

Commission (PBC) has Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau on their agenda. There are

three major security threats created by terrorism in the West African subregion that have been

identified: drug trafficking and organised crime, piracy, and challenges to democratic

governance.

Drug Trafficking, and Piracy

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has stated that West Africa has emerged as a primary transition point for illicit drugs, in particular cocaine and heroin, from Latin American countries to Europe. This illegal trade can cause large economic fluxes; A 2008 UNODC estimate placed the value of cocaine transportation in Guinea-Bissau at more than the full national income. Because drug money is used not only to support drug-trafficking networks but also to fund insurrections and religious militancy, drug traders possess the ability to harm the weak governments of West African nations and reignite closed conflicts. A new layer of problems have emerged concerning the drug trade. The consumption of cocaine and addictive behavior have been on the rise in transit countries such as Guinea-Bissau. The Security council, while recognizing the importance of the drug trade in West Africa have lost momentum in finding solutions, partly due to the fact that no country has taken the lead on the subject. In addition to drug issues, the 2009 International Maritime Organisation (IMO) annual report listed the West African coast as one of its top seven piracy hotspots in the world. Piracy in this region occurs because of both political and economic factors. Often transpiring on seas with lack of law enforcement or excessive poverty, the West African coastline, contains the most volatile and dangerous African seas, is a perfect hotspot for piracy. It contains high rates of arms proliferation and large numbers of unemployed youths who often join piracy groups to survive. Nigeria especially runs rampant with piracy, estimated by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) as containing about 54 percent of piracy incidents in West Africa between the years of 2001 and 2008. Piracy in west african countries have to deal with both drug trade and oil. Because of the

increasing number of discoveries of new offshore oil resources along the coastline of West Africa, piracy attacks in these poorly policed areas may lead to further, larger-scale conflict. Maritime travelers are cautioned when going into these areas for rears of their security. Piracy arms rebel groups, threatening the stability of West African nations, disrupts domestic economies, and sailing routes, all negatively impacting foreign trade and relations. Furthermore, pirates create difficult passages for international economic activity, harming it and hindering the development and globalization of associated countries.

What Terrorist Organizations Are Most Prominent in West Africa?

Terrorist organizations in West Africa not only exploit drug trafficking and arms smuggling rings but state governments as well. They target boarders where socioeconomic discontent is rampant. With widespread corruption in governments and a history of ransom hostage situations, the entrance of widespread terrorist groups have blurred the lines between government-ratified militancy and organized crime. The most well-known terrorist body in the West African Region is Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). It originated in Algeria (in North Africa) but has spread to affect primarily Mali, Mauritania and Niger. AQIM seem to use approaches learned from Iraq and Afghanistan as they gain foothold in lawless areas of the Sahara region. They form loyalties with nomadic tribes in the region, where such loyalties usurp other allegiances. Numerous cases of attacks outside of West Africa have been linked to this terrorist organization dealing with countries such as France, Israel, Italy, Spain, and the US. Another widespread terrorist group is the Hezbollah, formed for opportunistic money laundering purposes. Because

of the size of the informal economy (the equivalent of between 60 and 70 percent of formal

GDP), the commonality of tax evasion, and widespread corruption, the threat of financial

terrorism is large in West Africa. A third notorious terrorist group in this region is the Taliban,

accused of arms laundering, drug trafficking, and mass murder. The Taliban raise concerns for

the way West African vulnerabilities can be exposed and used to launch attacks both

sub-regionally and globally.

Past Efforts To Solve This Problem

Addressing the root causes of terroristic violence, socially, economically, and politically, is

imperative. Cooperation between individual nations, the Council in West Africa, and other

organs in the UN body is of utmost importance. Already, there have been four country-specific

peacebuilding missions authorized by the Council in West Africa: the UN Mission in Liberia

(UNMIL), the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office

in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), and the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

(UNIOGBIS). Additionally, the UN chartered a special Office in West Africa (UNOWA) in

2001 to address important peace and security issues within the region that were not on the

Council's agenda. Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Algeria also established a joint command to deal

with the threat of terrorism (AQIM). Furthermore, the Council has held a series of debates

discussing security, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and a comprehensive approach to all three.

The debates resulted in the adoption of six presidential statements: (S/PRST/2010/2) called

attention to basic and long-term services needed to achieve a successful transition between forms

of UN involvement; (S/PRST/2010/7) recognized that peacebuilding and maintenance requires the integration of political, security, development, human rights and rule of law activities; (S/PRST/2010/18) highlighted the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict while keeping in mind mutually-enforcing development, peace, security, and human rights aspects; (S/PRST/2010/20) called to mind the prominence of provisions of basic services, management of natural resources, restoration of the rule of law, respect for human rights and revitalisation of the economy in peacebuilding operations; (S/PRST/2011/2) recognized the usefulness of long-term economic and social institution-building in post-conflict stabilization; (S/PRST/2011/4) stressed the social, economic, and political facets of maintaining peace and security. Concerning drug trafficking, the Security Council has acknowledged the significant threats it poses on international peace and security numerous times through, but not limited to: S/RES/1817, S/RES/1890, S/PRST/2009/29, S/RES/1892, S/PRST/2009/32, S/RES/1373 and S/PRST/2010/4). The S/PRST/2009/20) considerably reaffirmed the priority of addressing these issues through shared responsibility and welcoming the UNOWA's continued role and leadership. The UNOWA has also implemented the West African Coast Initiative (WACI) that brings together the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to assist West African countries in preventing organized crime and terrorism. Relating

to terrorism, the Security Council's attention on its issues are divided through its three counterterrorism sub-committees: the 1267 Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee, the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC/the 1373 Committee), and the 1540 Committee on weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and terrorism.

Possible Solutions

The Security Council needs to address the underlying factors of terrorism as well as the overlying ones. Regular updates on drug trafficking and transnational crime could begin to bring about talks of peace in the West African area. Specific partnerships and cooperation with national and regional organizations to combat these things and terrorism as a whole is strongly recommended, especially when considering renewal and creation of mandates and missions. Discovery of economic alternatives to piracy and terrorism/crime ring activities and encouraging and educating citizens on these negative parallel economics could reduce the economic takeover in West Africa by these agencies. The expansion of sanctions dealing with banned items and their facilitators in addition to those that support terrorist associations to affected countries would provide incentive to not partake in such activities. Sending UN representatives or staff members on short-term assignments to assist in the development of such projects may allow for quicker positive results. The Council may also consider providing training for border-management and officials who work for counter-terrorism agencies. Overall, it is recommended that: a proactive, supportive, and cooperative partnership be taken up with regional groups in West Africa; systematic briefings are held to update the Security Council on new and old data concerning

terrorism and subject matters it touches; considering involving the International Criminal Court (ICC) where terroristic-influenced governments have caused crimes against civilians; the integrity and transparency of elections is promoted and held within such countries.

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