



VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN WEST AFRICA THE REALITY OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE

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This article aims to provide warnings of the threats facing the CÔTE D'IVOIRE region, support public policy development processes from the point of view of prevention and security response, and draw inspiration from the theory of cultural hegemony, based on the local reality literature, alongside a set of interviews with several security agencies. The CÔTE D'IVOIRE region represents a chain of territories connected to the Sahel and Sahara region. This makes up weakness, especially since the country has more than once suffered attacks from other regions.

THE SAHEL AND INSECURITY

For about 25 years, the Sahel has sustained insecurity spearheaded by parties from outside the region who disguised in religion, seeking hegemony. They have their own interpretations, leading up to terrorism. This has been entrenched through this phenomenon regionally and mentally. The trajectory of extremism gradually shifted towards the Gulf of Guinea after being deeply ingrained in the north of the continent. Since CÔTE D'IVOIRE is geographically a country bordered by Ghana to the east, Guinea and Liberia to the west, and Mali and Burkina Faso to the north, and it overlooks the Gulf of Guinea from the south, one may ask Is CÔTE D'IVOIRE facing violent extremism? What are the challenges and the state's response to terrorism?

CÔTE D'IVOIRE has not yet reached the intensity of violence in the Sahel region. The attacks that took place on March 11, 2016, on the Grand Bassam resort in CÔTE D'IVOIRE, and on the army's advanced observation point in the town of KAVOLO on June 11 of 2020 reveal the nature of the terrorist threat in the country and its external structure. Tensions over the presidential elections of the same year overlook the tendency of some imams and young men and women to display sectarian sympathy alongside many signs of conflict with the secular state.

Until recently, the literature on Islam in CÔTE D'IVOIRE with a tolerant outlook hardly considered the development of religious intolerance and discourse because of the escalation of terrorism around the world. Since about 2005, the country has been slowly moving towards a manifestation of fragmentation, societal isolation, and heretical religious practices, influenced by the ambition to re-calibrate the country. Although the fanatics in CÔTE D'IVOIRE do not currently commit any kind of violence, it should not obscure the marked increase in hate activity expressed in the broad and hardline proselytizing. From now on it seems useful to assess the effects of this situation in the short and long term, regarding the emergence of many extremist networks, from the Sahara to the Gulf of Guinea.

In the cities of CÔTE D'IVOIRE, the spirit of coexistence and hospitality inherited from Houphouët in relation to former President Felix Houphouët-Boigny fades because of several factors, including the excommunication rhetoric, against the background of accusations of heresy of other religious sects, which not only attack the minority with a deviant tendency but also on the traditional sheikhdom, culture, and values.

In the town of Wangolodougou, north of CÔTE D'IVOIRE, and on the border with Burkina, the process of refuting the delusion coincided with the appearance of a small group of armed motorcyclists in 2019; their envoys threatened to attack the city if the customary leaders did not cancel the celebration known as the KARUBI festival, organized on the night of 27 Ramadan, with young girls dancing in the streets. The accounts of many of the people we interviewed to find out the causes of violent extremism in San Pedro in 2017 showed the reality of the division experienced by the population from one neighborhood to another, and the ideological and methodological difference is expressed in the new terms that distinguish between infidelity and Islam.

In the Man region in 2017, on behalf of rival terrorist groups, fanatical youth stole or took over mosques. The caning, bloodshed, and harassment of imams accused of apostasy revealed to the shocked public opinion the extent of the terrorists' incursion in Labe, in neighboring Guinea, into CÔTE D'IVOIRE due to the activity of a small minority.

There is no Muslim figure who calls for violence under the guise of worshipping, while others develop discourses that contradict the values of the state that call for coexistence, and demand the right to religious fanaticism, defend and practice it, on the pretext of freedom of expression and conscience. Accordingly, the exploitation of some metaphysical concepts leads to a call for a reformulation of norms, and then some

actors inject the social body with feelings of resentment and rebellion, when they use the structural shortcomings of the government. In this case, the goal is psychological preparation, laying the groundwork for the upcoming rebellion.

REALITY CHALLENGES AND RESPONSE

In fact, there is nothing that distinguishes CÔTE D'IVOIRE from the Sahel countries in the register of social ills, and the overlapping between politics, religion, and sectarian fanaticism; all of which are indicators of the upcoming movement. The bankruptcy of politics reveals the weakness of the environment, fragmentation, and dissolution, as the social contract now only survives through repeated negotiation or confrontation processes. Despite the political, security and economic efforts since 2011, the country suffers from conflicts that it is striving to overcome. The failure to build a Max Weber state on the principles of force, law, and rationality in some components of society led to the birth of an aspiration to renew identity based on excluding the other by elimination.

The AMANKAMAN group in the BOUAKÉ region in central CÔTE D'IVOIRE represents an ideal recruitment opportunity for international terrorists because it is an association whose members resort to compulsive and showy ritual; many of them use weapons of war skillfully given their past as former rebels. It is a group that is the product of unemployment, injustice, and disillusionment; these destitute individuals represent an informal association.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE deals with the doctrine of terrorism from the point of view of crime, and it is dominated by the approach towards military escalation, except for a few methods of prevention, including the educational portfolio. Significant investments in war equipment and training, intelligence resources, and the establishment of areas of operations in the north see a better ability to respond to any aggression. Action to influence the source and the original cause is still missing.

CONCLUSION

Terrorism in West Africa is snowballing. Ballooning with camouflaging tactics, diversity of modes of operation, and the hybridization of factors and actors, terrorism poses challenges to traditional security. Beyond a shadow of doubt, CÔTE D'IVOIRE does not yet suffer confronting terrorist movements as a threat to its territorial integrity, but there are weaknesses and strengths that give cause for fear. Terrorist actors rely on time to test their opponent with repeated provocations, network building, and

proliferation in environments of low education, poverty, and cultural extirpation. It becomes clear here that the commitment of advocates of violent extremism, far from material interests, is the result of conviction and a strong and unshakable faith, which has lost all connection and hope in life.

The nature of the current threat in the country requires multidisciplinary expertise, not just the security system; rather, it must consider the geopolitical aspects, the relationship to economics and geography, the high birth rate and population friction, and effective ideological indoctrination strategies.