

Terrorism: Cote d'Ivoire between insidious dissemination and militarization of the response.

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Geographically and demographically as well, Cote d'Ivoire is largely a continuum of the Sahel-Sahara space. That location induces a share of vulnerability, especially since the country has been hurt, more than once, with assaults by non-national attackers (Grand-Bassam March 2016 and Kafolo June 2020) thus revealing the nature and configuration that exogenous terrorist threat poses to the country. However, the statement of France Intelligence Director, on February 1, 2021, puts that assumption into perspective. He stated that many coastal states, including Côte d'Ivoire, are facing a major process of terrorist groups dissemination. Admittedly, the Cote d'Ivoire has not yet reached the degree or the intensity of violence omnipresence observed in the Sahel, though a number of actions and alerts lead to substantiate that fear. Based on both Antonio Gramsci thinking - the theory of cultural hegemony - and the literature on local Islam, as a theoretical framework, this paper analyzes and tries to identify the leanings of the sliding from the field of piety to that of social belligerence, in Côte d'Ivoire, especially in a context of political tensions which mask, or makes less sensitive, the propensity of sectarian friendliness of some social groups.

Progressive deconstruction of the traditional model towards violent extremism.

Until recently, the literature on Ivorian Islam, frozen in a benign 1 reading grid, struggled to take into account the evolution intolerance in acts and speeches. Since 2005, the country has been moving towards 'communitarization and ghettoization' of reinvented practices and uses, beneath the impact of a longing for re-islamization. Admittedly, for the time being, no concrete act of 'sacred' violence has been committed by fanatic ivoirians, but the observation should not obscure the increase in the activism of hatred, expressed without too much modesty, in the national sphere of proselytism 2. It appears useful, from now on, to assess its short and long term effects, in relation to the process of extremist networks emergence, from the Sahara towards the Gulf of Guinea.

In the cities, the social pact initiated on a pedestal as a pledge of respect for the habits and customs of the inhabitants, is melting due, among other factors, to a surge of Salafism ideologies. Its ideology of submission confronts and weakens the traditional notability, in their culture and values that ensure their reproduction. In the town of Ouangolodougou, in the north, on the border with Burkina, the refutation of "misguidance" betrays the simultaneity of the appearance, in 2019, of a small group of armed motorcyclists. In front of witnesses, their emissaries announced an attack on the city if the traditional chiefs did not prohibit or abolish the celebration of the festival called Kroubi,3. The accounts of several of our interlocutors during a study on the factors of violent extremism in San-Pedro, 2017, revealed the reality of a cleavage that punctuates the lives of residents from one neighborhood to another. The difference is expressed through new peculiar terminology between 'Dar-al-kufr4 and Dar-al-Islam'5. In the same city, in 2017, an imam, in front of his congregation, explained and approved terrorist acts in the region and elsewhere, before being called to order by his co-religionists. In Man in 2017, on behalf of rival Islamist groups, fanaticized youth robbed mosques or took control of them. The caning to blood and the molestation of the imams judged apostates, suddenly revealed, to an incredulous opinion, how much the Salafism of Labé and Kankan towns, in neighboring Guinea, was spilling over into Côte d'Ivoire, thanks to a minority activism.

In fact, almost no Muslim dignitary called for violence; others, under the guise of worship, develop discourses in contradiction with the values of a secular republic and of the call for living together. Under the excuse of freedom of expression and conscience, they claim to defend and practice the right to religious intolerance. The recourse to notions of theology - such as the limit of human intelligence in the face of divine order, the superiority of Sharia law, eschatology, the last judgment - leads to the reformulation of standards, "God injunction" are becoming superior to the laws of the modern state. Then, actors work to irrigate the social body with insurrectional resentment, when they use the structural deficiencies of the government, to appeal for the justice of God. In this case, the objective is to prepare the conscience before laying the groundwork for a future challenge. Here, it appears important to recall the case of Imam Aguibou Touré arrested in Abidjan in 2018 to apologizing for terrorism and released without trial following mediation by the Supreme Council of Imams (Cosim)⁶.

Stakes in the fight against violent extremism and the state's response.

In the social pathologies register, the imbroglio of politics, religion and confessional intolerance, all precursors of the road to action, nothing distinguishes Côte d'Ivoire from the Sahel states. For nearly two decades, political leaders have recomposed, or even resuscitated, around themselves, references that in laborious construction and consumerist globalization, the Republic targeted for extinction: tribe, ethnicity, religiosity and patronage. All have dragged the country into an unprecedented cycle of brutality. Political deficits reveal the whole vulnerability of an atomization and anomy environment, where the social contract now holds only through the alternation of negotiation and confrontation. Despite the political, security and economic efforts since 2011, the country endures antagonisms that it is struggling to overcome. The failure to build Max Weber's legal-rational state, has given rise to a desire for a renewal of identity among some components of the common destiny, based on the exclusion of the others, even their annihilation. The "Amanakamain"⁷ group, the product of unemployment, injustice and disenchantment - represents an ideal recruiting prospect for the benefit of the Jihadist International.

In general, Côte d'Ivoire doctrine approaches terrorism through the prism of crime. With the exception of a few preventive avenues, in this case the acclimatization of the "teaching kit"⁸, the dominant approach is being militarized. Significant investments in war equipment, training, intelligence and the establishment of operational zones in the Northern provinces, testify to a better capacity to react to an aggression. Acting on the source of violence and its roots causes always remains lacking. It tells enough to note that the Ministry of National Education has barely one or two Arab speaking agents, to help scrutinize and, if necessary, to control and censor the programs of dozens of Islamic schools whose teaching staff is not subject to any code of ethics or good citizenship.

Conclusion.

In general, pre-jihadist islamism is on the rise in West Africa. The phenomenon, through its misleading tactics - multiplicity of the operating mode, hybridization of factors and actors - challenges conventional security. It is true, Côte d'Ivoire does not yet dispute the integrity of its space with islamist movements, still, weak and at the same time strong signs continue to validate fear. The jihads' agents register their actions in a dormant temporality, punctuated by provocations to test the adversary, the construction of networks and the deployment in environments of low education, poverty and cultural uprooting. It is in this context that the commitment of

volunteers for the “Holy war”, beyond material interests, results from a conviction, a proven faith, often tested through the loss of any reference pointing to hope in life, down here, on the earth.

The nature of the country present risks requires multidisciplinary expertise and not just in the field of operational security. It should take into account the geopolitical aspects, the relationship to the economy and the space, the high birth rate and promiscuity as well as the efficient indoctrination mechanism. The local substratum of misery bestows the seal of sacrifice on the promise of an eternity of post-mortem happiness; the arabization of the life style, the enhancement of the model of the city of original Islam and the rejection of universalism, all help to underpin and consolidate inclinations to martyrdom. So far, that social tendency is accentuated while the discourse and personal attitudes stiffen; to this development, the country moderate and quietist fringes do not object significantly.

At present in the Sahel, the initiatives of the international community, including France, seem to be less visible to public opinion, as they are based, in theory and in practice, on a political dynamic (predatory security and endemic corruption) and on abusers that, sometimes, fuel and exacerbate hostilities. That weak upstream diagnosis in the Sahel should be corrected in countries not yet fully affected. Especially, if there is a desire to preserve peace and security in the sub-region, international initiatives should work to build a model of a legal-rational State.

1. Marie Miran, *Islam, histoire et modernité en Côte d'Ivoire*, Paris, Karthala, 2006, 548 pages.
2. Lassina Diarra, *Le courant wahhabo-salafiste à San Pedro : du prosélytisme à la revendication de la chari aa*, Centre stratégique de sécurité au Sahel-Sahara, septembre 2017.
3. Traditional holiday held each 27th Ramadan and during which lightly dressed young women run in the villages streets. The ceremony is supervised by the villages' chiefs.
4. That word means “the city of non-believers”, a site of vice. To Islamists such a space is the incarnation of impurity and inhabited by “Islam enemies”.
5. That word, Bardo, means self-moralization and devotion to piety and call for a social order devoted to God will.
6. Discussion with O. D, an Imam, on 23 July 2020, Abidjan.
7. In Bambara language, that word means « we are not down here on Earth to last”. That Group is based in Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire, the seat of 2002 rebellion. These “lost” individuals, are organized in informal associations. A number of them are devoting their time to deep and demonstrative meditation. A number of them, due to their rebellion past are familiar with arms manipulations.
8. It aims at allowing security forces to address early all signs or radicalization. It is a compilation of basic instructions on Islam and terrorism and distributed to security officers, government representatives within the country and religious leaders.