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The impact of Islamist terrorism on Africa's informal economy: Kenya, compared with Ghana and Senegal

Dirk Kohnert ¹

'Terrorists and COVID-19'

'We welcome suggestions ... and this is not suggesting a cure !!'



Source: Gado,² [The Elephant](#), Nairobi, 3 September 2020

Abstract: Sub-Saharan Africa emerged in the past years as a global epicentre of Islamist terrorism. The impact of terrorism on the economy has a negative bearing on the formal and a positive effect on the informal sector. Among other things, this is due to the poorly diversified development economies of African countries and the class-specific impact of terrorism on welfare. This concerns not only a drop in sales, income and employment and rising transaction costs in the affected sectors but also increasing poverty, hunger and hardship for the poor and needy. Transnational terrorism amplifies both the negative and the positive effects. African countries that have suffered severely from these attacks include Somalia, Kenya, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, South Sudan, Libya and Egypt. But even West African countries such as Ghana and Senegal which have been spared so far from terrorist attacks, the menace is growing, and economic effects are already tangible. Since the informal sector, i.e. the shadow economy with all its ambivalent facets, including cross-border crime, is still dominant in many African countries, especially in West Africa, this sector is of particular importance. It is still one of the largest in the world. The fight against Islamist terrorism is not just a military issue. In the economic sphere too it should be fought at its roots. Since most of the African poor live in and from the informal sector, which is also a breeding ground for criminal activities such as human trafficking of all kinds, money laundering and terrorists, they suffer the most from the negative consequences. Terrorists' sources of funding often derive from the proceeds of illegal trade. The close ties between criminal and terrorist groups can undermine the very foundations of the republican state and weaken democratic institutions.

Keywords: [Ghana](#), [Kenya](#), [Senegal](#), [Sub-Sahara Africa](#), [West Africa](#), [Islamist terrorism](#), [Islamism](#), [organized crime](#), [informal economy](#), [shadow economy](#), [fragile state](#), [poverty in Africa](#), [extremism](#), [ISIS](#), [arms deals](#), [arms industry](#), [trafficking](#), [Nigeria](#), [Benin](#), [Mali](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Somalia](#), [South Sudan](#), [Ivory Coast](#), [Postcolonialism](#), [African Studies](#)

JEL-Code: E26, F13, F35, F52, F54, H56, N17, N47, O17, P16, P26, Z13

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² [Gado cartoons](#) on [twitter](#), © (all rights reserved); 'Godfrey Mwampembwa, pen name Gado (1969) is a Tanzanian-born political cartoonist, animator and comics artist. He is the most syndicated political cartoonist in East and Central Africa', [Gado comics](#), Wikipedia.

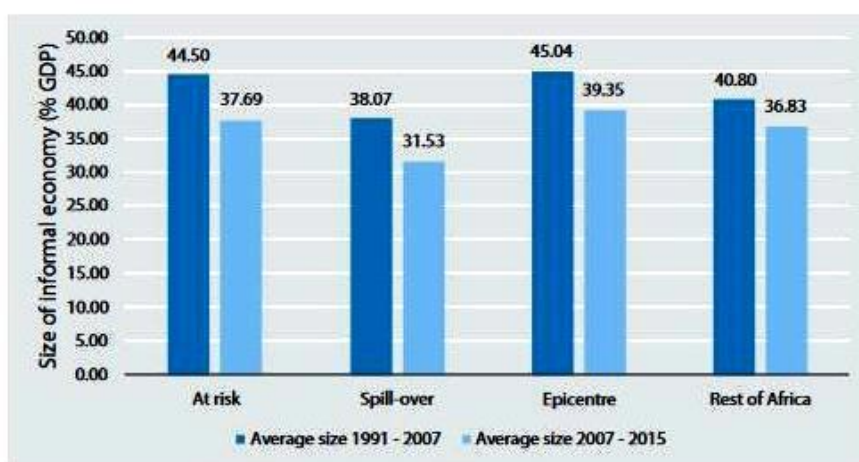
1. Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa emerged in the past years as a global epicentre of Islamist terrorism, whereas global deaths declined ([Global Terrorism Index \(GTI\), 2022](#)). Whereas terrorism in Western industrialized states declined substantially, with attacks falling by 68 %, Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 48 % of death caused by global terrorism. The West African Sahel zone harboured the world's fastest-growing and most-deadly terrorist groups. The Islamic State (IS) replaced the Taliban as the world's deadliest terror group in 2021, with 15 deaths per attack in Niger ([Global Terrorism Index, 2022](#)). The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic still increased the terrorist threat. Activities of violent extremist and terrorist groups in West Africa augmented. Since January 2021, high-profile attacks by groups affiliated with the Islamic State (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda have been recorded in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger (Aubyn, 2021).

Generally, the impact of Islamist terrorism on the economy of the African countries attacked has a negative bearing on the *formal* and a positive effect on the *informal* sector (Sekrafi & Abid & Assidi, 2020). Nevertheless, a comprehensive in-depth study of the UNDP, published in 2019, found that the decline of informal trade in the focus countries of terrorism since the surge in extremist activity was greater than the average decline in Africa. This may have a serious impact on taxes, security and other public goods, and the monitoring of the flow of goods and services (UNDP, 2019). The UNDP report estimated that 16 of the 18 focus countries lost on average US\$ 97 bn per year in informal economic activity since 2007. Although terrorism can increase informal economic activity by pushing formal sector activities into the informal sphere, e. g. because regulations become harder to enforce and markets become disrupted. Yet, although the informal sector is usually more resilient to disruptions and violence than the formal sector, it too suffers (UNDP, 2019).

Moreover, the UNDP study found that African countries suffering terrorism spill-over effects from neighboring states and those at risk of being attacked saw a substantial decline in the activities of the informal sector (UNDP, 2019).

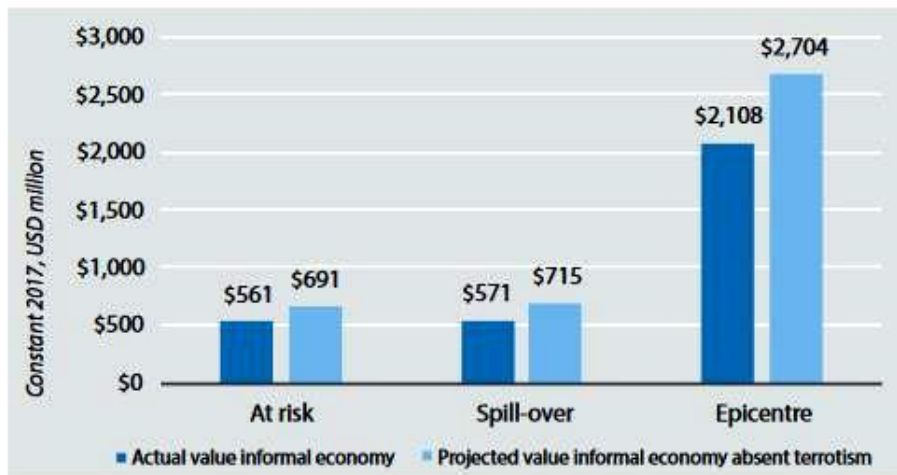
Graph 1: Average size of informal sector in African focus countries: pre-terrorism and post-terrorism upswing³



Source: UNDP, 2019

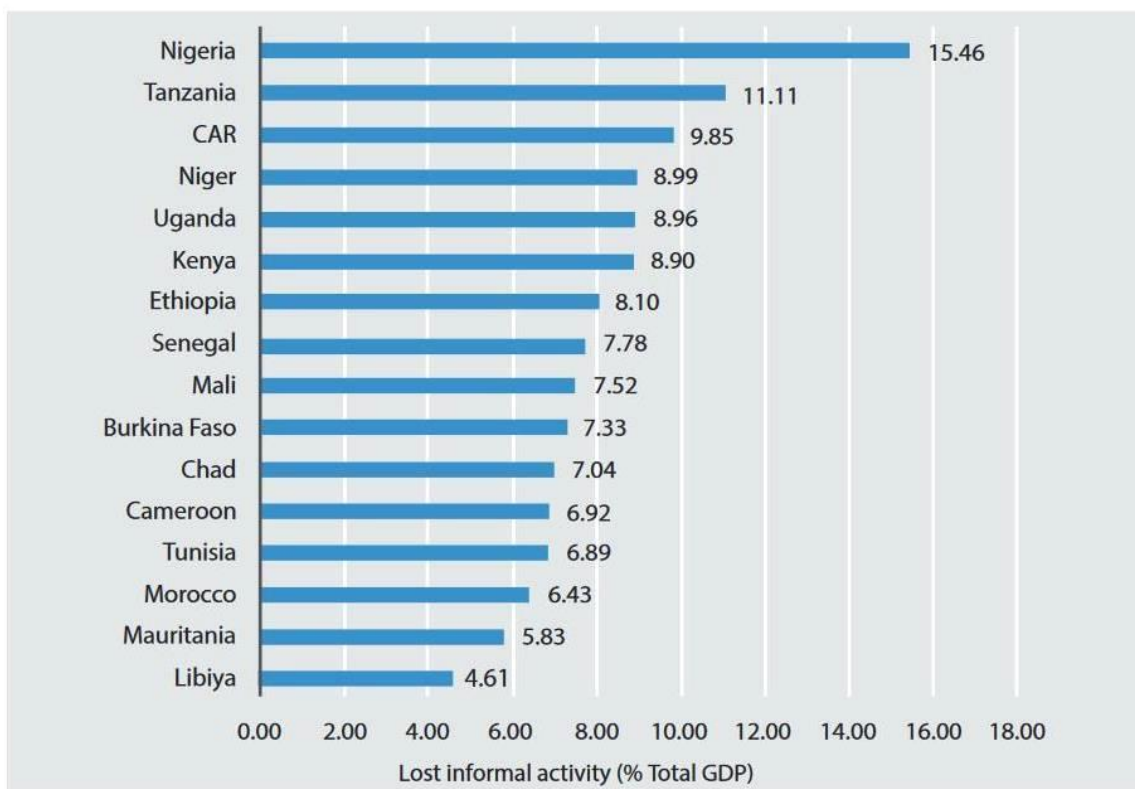
³ Countries making up the spill-over and at-risk group, have seen the largest declines in average size of informal economic activity (UNDP, 2019).

Graph 2: Actual and predicted value of the informal economy in African focus countries of terrorism, 2007-2015 ⁴



Source: UNDP, 2019

Graph 3: Lost value-added of informal economic activity as % of GDP, 2007-2015 ⁵



Source: UNDP, 2019

⁴ Epicentre countries, which have been worst affected by terrorism, suffered the largest lost potential value-added from the informal economy (UNDP, 2019):

⁵ The lost value of economic activity between 2007 and 2015 in the African focus countries ranged from 4.6 % of GDP in Libiya to 15 % in Nigeria. In Kenya it accounted for 8.9 % and in Senegal, yet not directly attacked, 7.8 %.

Trade, including transnational and informal cross-border trading, may be pushed underground, either as the direct effect of terrorist attacks or because of the government's tightened regulations and security in response to terrorism. According to [UNDP](#) estimates, informal cross-border trade constitutes up to 43 % of African countries' [GDP](#). In many cases, it equalled almost 90 % of official trade flows (UNDP, 2019).

Among others, this may be due to little diversified developing economies in the countries affected and the class-specific impact of terrorism on welfare with persisting effects. The latter may include a decline in sales, revenue and employment, mounting transaction costs in the sectors concerned as well as increased poverty, hunger and distress for the African poor. Transnational terrorism is said to reinforce both the negative and positive effects even more (Sekrafi & Abid & Assidi, 2020).

For a better understanding of Islamist terrorism, it is important to consider its roots, its inherent logic and lines of action. In addition to [Al-Qaeda](#), the [IS](#), the 'Islamic State's West Africa Province' ([ISWAP](#)) and [Boko Haram](#), several other extremist Islamist organizations executed terrorist attacks in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). For example, an [Al-Qaeda](#) branch in Mali escalated attacks in the Sahel, including a series of explosive attacks aimed at French and UN security personnel (Bayrakdar & Kocan & Estelle, 2021). Central questions in this context are, why, and since when, did these groups claim Islam to legitimate their cruel actions? How do they act exactly, what are their strategies and methods and how are they financed? (Guidère, 2017; Namaïwa, 2017). Since the terrorist [attacks on American embassies in Dar es Salaam, \(Tanzania\) and Nairobi \(Kenya\)](#) in 1998, Islamist terrorism spread in SSA. Among the countries that suffered severely from these attacks were [Somalia](#), [Kenya](#), [Nigeria](#), [Mali](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [South Sudan](#), [Libya](#) and [Egypt](#) (Gyamfi, 2018).

In the latest attacks in [Burkina Faso](#) on 11 June 2022 at least 79 people were killed during the assault of Islamist terrorists in [Seytenga](#), a town 15 km from the border with Niger, with some media reporting the death toll at up to 200. It was the deadliest single incident in Burkina Faso since more than 130 people had been killed in a massacre close to Solhan in June 2021 (Saltmarsh, 2022). Islamist terrorist attacks in the country started in 2015 when militants launched cross-border raids from [Mali](#) (ZamWild, 2022). Since 12 June, almost 16,000 Burkinabe, mostly women and children, fled after the attack to [Dori](#), the capital of the [Séno province](#) in eastern Burkina Faso. Consecutive waves of displacement, made the population of Dori grow fivefold with almost 76,000 displaced Burkinabe, as well as some 20,000 refugees from Mali. Moreover, armed groups attacked water supplies and infrastructure in the region, including a recent attack on the main water supply to Dori (Saltmarsh, 2022). Villagers who had fled Seytenga accused the army of abandoning the town as the terrorists attacked. The latter allegedly moved unhampered through the village shooting, burning, and looting (ZamWild, 2022). Paradoxically, rebel leader, [Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba](#), a Burkinabé military officer who had overthrown President [Kaboré](#) in a coup d'état only on 24 January 2022, had justified the coup with the incompetence of the country's political elite to protect the population and to confront Islamist insurgents (ZamWild, 2022).

But even in [West African](#) states that so far have been spared by terrorist attacks, like [Ghana](#) and [Senegal](#), the menace is growing, and economic effects, for example on security expenditure, are already noticeable (Aubyn, 2021; Bamba, 2014; Meservey, 2021).

The close historical, cultural, trading, and political ties between the [Sahel](#) states, where terrorists are already active, and the coastal West African countries largely spared up to now, expose also the latter to violent aggression beyond the terrorist's save heaven in the Sahel

desert. The regular employment of seasonal migrant laborers from Sahel countries like Burkina Faso and Niger, notably to Nigeria, the Ivory Coast and Ghana, and the related age-old conflicts between local settlers and migrants aggravate the problem. Thus, the presence of migrant laborers from Burkina Faso in the Ivory Coast and Ghana aggravated local violence concerning land tenure and chieftaincy conflicts (Aubyn, 2021). The same holds for the supposed terrorist participation in the mostly illegal artisanal gold mining in Ghana and Togo (Akoda, 2018) that tends to exacerbate local grievances over the government's offensive operations against illegal miners, known locally as *galamsevers* or *orpailleurs* in neighboring Francophone states. The terrorist attack by [Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb](#) (AQIM) gunmen on an [Ivorian beach resort in Grand-Bassam](#) in 2016 was an example. Moreover, terrorist presence has already been reported in the northern regions of bordering coastal states Benin, Togo, and Ghana (Aubyn, 2021). Thus, terrorist assaults in northern Benin between late November 2021 and January 2022 led to several deaths. Also, neighboring [Togo](#) suffered its first-ever jihadist attack on Togolese soil when assailants attacked a security post in the northern border village of Sanloaga in the [Tône Prefecture, Région des Savanes](#), Togo, on 9 November 2021 (Kwarkye, 2022). Shortly afterwards, in February and April, 2022 about a dozen people were killed and several injured in two different attacks by terrorists in the [Pendjari National Park](#), in Northern Benin ([2022 in Benin](#), Wikipedia).

The response of the government of coastal states focused mainly on military operations. They created a joint combat group assisted by the French within the framework of the [Accra Initiative](#), launched in September 2017 (Kwarkye & Abatan & Matongbada, 2019). This defence force that comprised troops of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo hit back in Operation Koudanlgou 4 Zone 2, conducted in November 2021. About 6 000 soldiers were reportedly deployed and 300 suspected extremists were arrested. French [Barkhane](#) and [Takuba](#) forces, withdrawn from Mali on demand of the military government in Bamako, were redeployed to Niger and the [Gulf of Guinea](#) in February 2022 as announced by French President [Emmanuel Macron](#) on 17 February (Kwarkye, 2022).

In the following, the comparison of [Kenya](#), a severely attacked East African country, with hitherto not yet directly attacked West African countries, Ghana and Senegal, serves to analyze the relative impact of Islamist terrorism on the [informal sector](#) which still constitutes the livelihood of most Africans.

The [informal sector](#), i.e. the shadow economy with all its ambivalent facets, including transnational crime, is still dominant in many African countries, notably in West Africa. Therefore, this sector is of special concern. It still counts among the largest in the world, although its share gradually declines. Its intra- and inter-country heterogeneity is remarkable, with informality ranging from a low of 20 % to 25 % of informal sector output (GDP) in [South Africa](#) and [Namibia](#) up to 65 % in [Benin](#), [Tanzania](#) and [Nigeria](#) (Medina & Jonelis & Cangul, 2017; Kohnert, 2000). Due to its strong articulation with the most diverse structures at all levels of business, politics and society, the informal sector is highly hierarchical and diversified according to social strata. Its individual walks of life can even stand in an antagonistic relationship with one another. Both productivity and the income earned in the sector vary strongly, depending on the socio-political framework and class (Kohnert, 2000).

Moreover, fighting Islamist terrorism is not just a military question. Its roots are to be tackled also within the economic realm, at least in the medium and long term. Because most African poor live in and from the informal economy, which is also said to be a breeding ground for [trafficking](#) of all sorts (including drugs, arms and children), [money-laundering](#) and terrorists

(Soto, 1989; De Koker, 2006), they suffer most of the negative consequences. Available evidence suggests that also low education and its socio-economic consequences promote domestic terrorism (Brockhoff & Krieger, 2015).

Yet, the boundary between legal and illegal actions is fluid, at least from the perspective of the local population. Often, the categorization is created and exploited by those in power who apply the law for their own benefit. Also, local state representatives and so-called traffickers are frequently in a more symbiotic than oppositional relationship. Informal and illegal activities thrive especially in certain niches, such as borderlands (Bennafla, 2014). Moreover, common systems of informal value transfer following Islamic traditions, such as *hawala*, based on the trust of a huge network of money brokers (known as *hawaladars*), originally meant for regions and populations without established formal banking structures, came under suspicion to finance terrorism (Cooper & Walker, 2016).

Finally, there is a close relationship between the informal economy, terrorism and an increase in public debt and the consequent destabilization of the formal economy as well as the political legitimization of the government. A large informal economy reduces potential income taxes and thereby often increases public debt. The increase in public spending tends also to reinforce the effects of terrorism on public debt by the necessity to prevent or counteract terrorism with considerable additional public spending e. g. on security and poverty alleviation (Abidin & Sekrafi, 2020). Therefore, the variances in illicit financial flows largely explain the differences in tax burden (Thiao & Ouonogo, 2021).

Graph 4: Terrorism and poverty as pull factors of macroeconomic performance



Source: Ilyas, S. & B. Mehmood & R Aslam, 2017

Fragile and [failed states](#) are especially prone to breed terrorists. Weak governance structures and poverty are said to be major drivers of terrorism in [Sub-Saharan Africa](#). The lack of rule of law, widespread corruption and nepotism are likely to lower investor confidence, increase the already high cost of doing business, and lead to more stringent cross-border security checks which could obstruct transnational trade (Omenma & Nwaogaidu & Okwueze, 2020). Both poverty and terrorism have a long-run negative impact the macroeconomic performance (Ilyas & Mehmood & Aslam, 2017). Therefore, political instability, a high unemployment rate and a large informal sector correspond positively and significantly with the growth of terrorism (Nurunnabi & Sghaier, 2018).

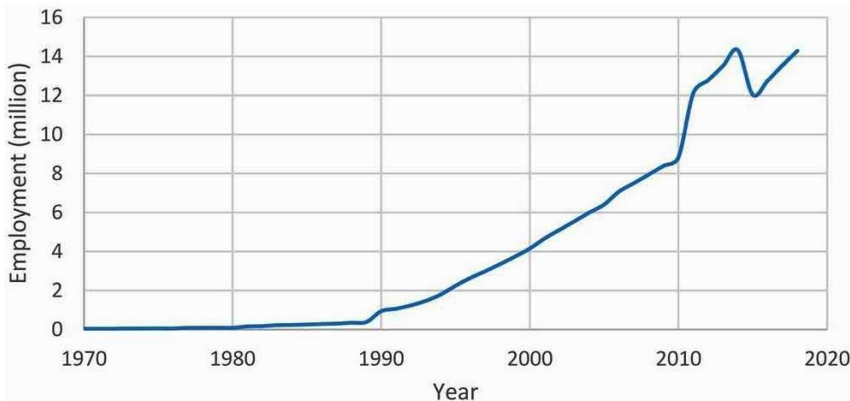
Under these conditions, power grabs by the military got significant popular support, because the electorate was tired of the failure of democratically-elected governments. Just West Africa faced six coup attempts over the past two years. Four of these attempted coups succeeded in ousting presidents in [Mali](#) (twice), [Guinea](#), and [Burkina Faso](#). The coup attempts in [Niger](#) in March 2021 and [Guinea-Bissau](#) in February 2022 were thwarted. Yet, Africa has experienced more than eighty successful coups since 1952, and given the doubtful rule of corrupt governments the military, for example in [Nigeria](#) (five military coup d'états since independence in 1960) and Guinea Bissau (four military coups and more than a dozen attempted military takeovers since its independence from Portugal in 1974), often played an outsized political role (Depagne, 2022). The international donor community, as well as the [African Union](#), or regional economic communities like [ECOWAS](#), had to choose between an insistence on internationally recognized principles and pragmatism in order not to foment further unrest (Depagne, 2022).

Yet, international sanctions against the corrupt state elite may be a double-edged sword. They may induce disturbances and hardships in the target economies and drive businesses as well as citizens to move to clandestine activities in the shadow zone (Early & Peksen, 2019). So far, international efforts to control ‘risk capital’ potentially meant to finance terrorism have been of little success (Levi, 2010).

2. The bearing of Islamist terrorism on Kenya’s informal economy

Islamist extremism in East Africa in recent decades was mostly associated with [Al Shabaab](#) and other militant groups from [Somalia](#), imported from the Arab world challenging the Western way of life and traditional religious tolerance prevailing in that region (Abdisaid, 2016). The growing radicalization of Islamist politics in [Kenya](#), and elsewhere, since the early 1990s was mainly due to local histories such as the growth of [Pentecostalism](#) and its aggressive hostility to Islam, but also to the global Muslim ‘victimization’ narrative (Ngala, 2019). Muslim activists increasingly felt victimized by the controversial Kenyan debate on counterterrorism and got the impression that their interests would no longer be advocated by the political process. Therefore, they took to digital media that supported extremist Islamist ideologies and violence (Ngala, 2019).

Graph 5 : Trends of size of informal sector in [Kenya](#), 1970–2018



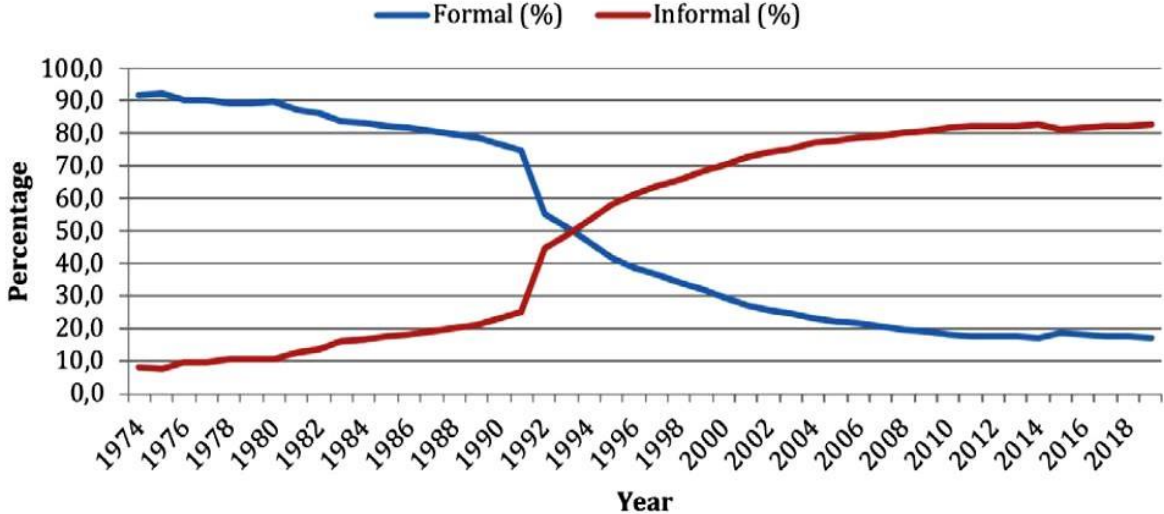
Source: Murunga, et al, 2021

Source of the data: Republic of Kenya; Various Issues of Economic Survey

Kenya was an SSA country especially hard hit by Islamist terrorists. Since the bombings of the [United States embassy in 1998](#), of the [Israeli-owned Paradise hotel in 2002 in Mombasa](#), and the attack at [Nairobi's Westgate Shopping Mall](#) in 2013, followed the attacks in and near [Mpeketoni, Lamu County](#) on June 2014. Again hardly one year later, on 2 April 2015, [Al-Shabaab](#) terrorists stormed the [Garissa University College](#) killing 148 people. The gunmen also took about 700 students as hostages. They freed Muslims and killed persons identified as Christians. This attack was the deadliest in Kenya since the [1998 United States embassy bombings](#) ([Garissa University College attack](#), Wikipedia).

In general, the impact of Islamist terrorism on the [informal sector](#) is dependent on the relative importance of both terrorism and the shadow economy and its history and articulation in a certain country or region in case of transnational terrorist attacks.

Graph 6 : Proportion of formal and informal employment in Kenya, 1974-2019



Source: ILO (2021): [The Informal Economy in Kenya](#), Federation of Kenya Employers. March 2021

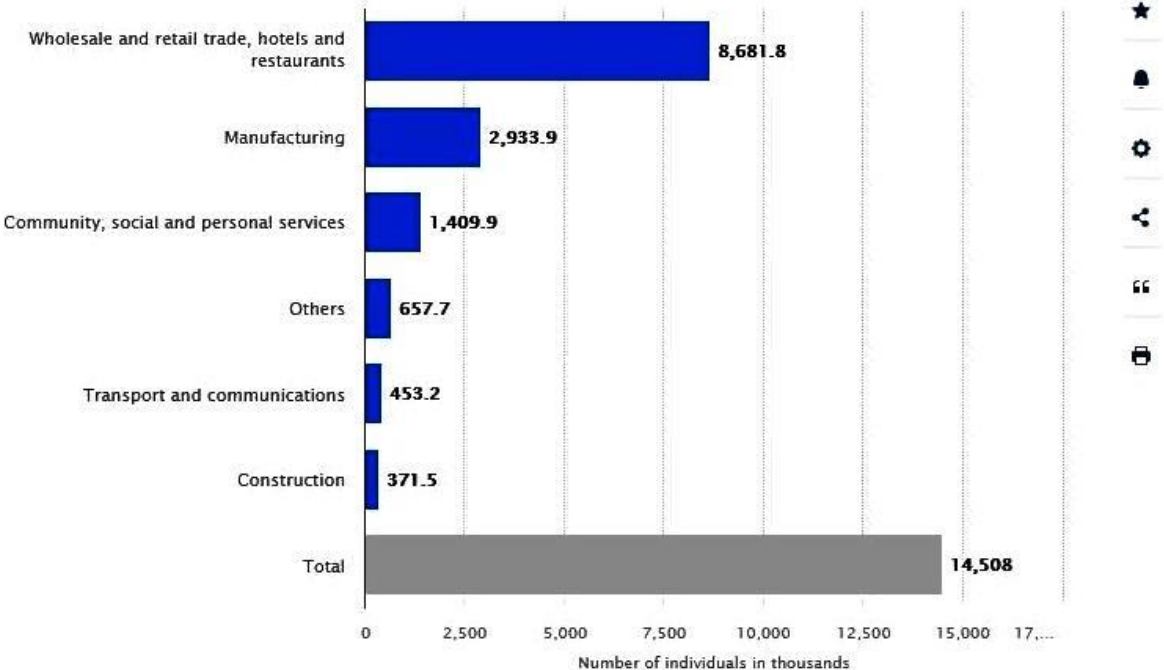
In Kenya, the informal economy has so far been little researched. Therefore, notably quantitative data are to be interpreted with caution. According to available evidence, the sector is quite large and has grown since the 1970s to about 32 % of the country’s GDP. It employs about 77 % of the total workforce, whereof 60 % are youth between the age of 18 and 35 years, equally distributed between men and women (Murunga, et al., 2021). The [shadow economy](#) started to flourish in the 1970s with the boom in coffee smuggling along the Kenya-Uganda border following the trade embargo on Ugandan coffee by the USA. Subsequently, the liberalization and privatization policies imposed by [IMF](#) and [World Bank’s structural adjustment programs](#) led to reduced job opportunities in the formal public sector. Additional factors, like poor governance, high levels of corruption and nepotism in the public sector, as well as rising taxes provoked producers and traders, mostly self-employed such as petty traders, second-hand clothes dealers, hawkers, dressmakers, housekeepers, security guards and carpenters, to escape into the informal sector (Murunga, et al., 2021).

One important axis of evil between terrorism and the informal sector in Kenya was related to the social, economic and political exclusion of young actors in the informal sector. Normally ignored by decision-making processes affecting them, they were easy prey to extremist groups. Their narratives followed topics like the mistreatment by law enforcement agencies, denial of services, exploitation by the formal sector and the government etc. (Ndirangu, 2020). Unemployed and underemployed youth, for example, were especially vulnerable to recruitment into criminal gangs used by corrupt politicians and business rivals in Kenya.

Thus, numerous violent extremists were members of criminal gangs before joining Al-Shabaab. For example, Al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda affiliates in Somalia carried out several deadly attacks outside of Somalia by seducing Somali-Kenyan fighters into their ranks (Speckhard & Shajkovci, 2019; Ndirangu, 2020).

One of the major sectors that suffered from Islamist terrorism in Kenya was tourism. It remained one of the largest contributors to foreign exchange earnings despite increased violence and the negative impact of the [COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya](#) (Muragu & Nyadera & Mbugua, 2021). The sector generated US\$ 500 m annually as foreign exchange, and about 500,000 jobs connected to the tourism industry both in the formal and informal sectors. Yet, terrorism impacted significantly tourist engagements because of the lack of safety (Akanyisi, 2016). For example, numerous hotel bookings were cancelled and international travel advisories cautioned visiting the country.

Graph 7: Individuals engaged in the informal sector in Kenya in 2020 by activity (in 1,000s)



Source: [statista.com](https://www.statista.com), 2022

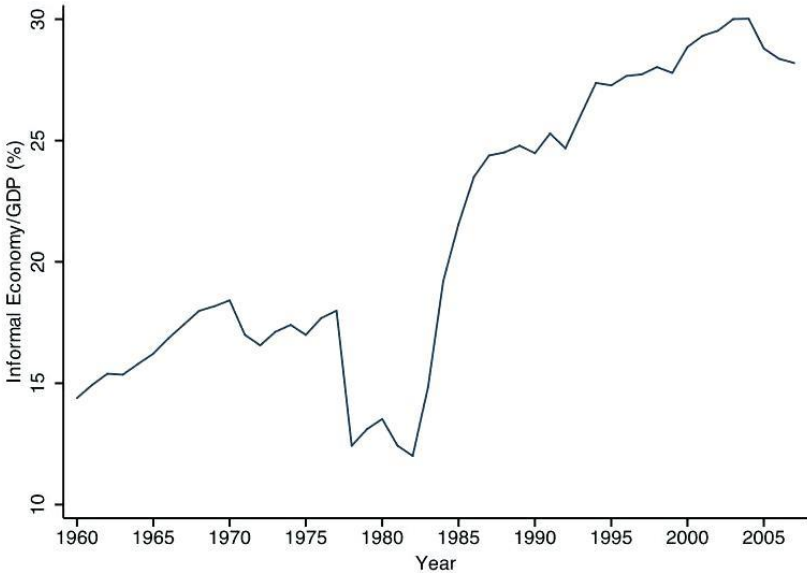
This had a negative trickle-down effect on the economy, including the informal sector. Also, development projects and trade suffered directly or indirectly from terrorism, e.g. by the loss of business confidence and intimidated potential investors. Moreover, agriculture faced serious losses, e.g. because of the growing insecurity of farmers and laborers working in the tea and coffee plantations. Hence export earnings from these cash crops dropped, and many peasants, as well as agricultural laborers, got displaced. Extremist organizations like the [Mungiki](#), an illegal sect, extorted money from the transport business, including small and medium enterprises, and from forcing drivers to take different routes. Those that did not comply were either killed or their enterprises devastated (Akanyisi, 2016). Therefore, many people in the most affected regions tried to escape to other safer destinations. Thus, several professionals from the education and health sector fled the areas, leaving some of the basic services almost deserted (Ahmed, 2017).

Terrorism also negatively affected [Foreign Direct Investment](#) (FDI) in Kenya. The latter decreased by 14 % (Kinyanjui, 2022). Moreover, the attacks created market uncertainty and growing [xenophobia](#) (Kirui & Kipkorir, 2019). Last, but not least, the government's response with counter-terrorism measures revealed fissures and splits within civil society. Notably, young Muslims of Somali-Kenyan descent felt targeted by counter-terrorism operations. Many believed that their legitimate interests were sacrificed for the sake of 'security' that accompanied the global war against terrorism (Lind & Howell, 2010).

3. The bearing of Islamist terrorism on Ghana’s informal economy

Nearly 90 % of employment nationally and 83 % in urban areas of [Ghana](#) is in the informal sector. Most employed in this sector on the national level are female, i.e. 92 %, compared to 86 % men. In the [Greater Accra region](#), 87 % of women work in the informal economy against 79 % of men (Baah-Boateng & Vanek, 2020). The big slump in formal sector employment came with the IMF's [structural adjustment programs](#) in the 1980s. The informal sector is characterized by underemployment, bad working conditions, uncertain work relationships and low wages. The majority of people are living with high income insecurity. The growing informality is due at least partially by low educational attainment (Osei-Boateng & Ampratwum, 2011). Ironically, the economic survival of most employed in Ghana during the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) depended on the seemingly neglected informal sector (Akuoko & Aggrey & Amoako-Arhen, 2021).

Graph 8: Trends in the size of the informal economy in Ghana, 1960-2007



Source: Ocran, 2018

[Ghana](#) has been regarded for a long time as a stable country in the midst of increasing extremist violence and political instability in [West Africa](#). Arguably, the globalized concept of the ‘black experience’, as propagated by the Ghanaian leader [Kwame Nkrumah](#), his opposition to tribalism and his [Pan-Africanism](#) may have had a positive impact on resilience against Islamist terrorism and counter-terrorism in Ghana (Mazrui, 2004).

Graph 9: Sites of recent attacks in West Africa's coastal states



Source: Kwarkye, 2022

But Islamist terrorism is increasingly moving from the [Sahel](#) toward the coastal countries. More than 53 % of all [ECOWAS](#) member states suffered already more or less from terrorist insurgencies (Muqthar, 2022). Although apparently terrorist cells have not yet been established in the country it is exposed to terrorist threats because of its general socio-economic conditions, i.e. growing poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and other forms of marginalization (Bamba, 2014). Also, the periodic immigration of associates of known terrorists, the increasing presence of Islamic aid agencies said to be affiliated with terrorists, the existence of companies in Ghana that front for terrorists and the long-standing established uncontrolled easy entry and movement of foreigners from other West African countries further increased vulnerability to terrorism (Bamba, 2014).

Ghana has been exposed to several long-standing [chieftaincy and ethnic conflicts](#) in its recent history, notably in the [Northern region](#). Over 352 chieftaincy conflicts are still unresolved. Moreover, the transhumance and its accompanying problems, which often result in violent conflicts between peasants and pastoralists. Leaders of the *Nusrat al-Islam (JNIM)* ([Iyad Ag Ghaly](#), [Djamel Okacha](#), and [Amadou Koufa](#)) called on militants and [Fulani people](#) in West Africa to join [Jihadism](#) in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria, and Cameroon. Following this program, many Salafi-Jihadist groups infiltrated the border regions of Northern Benin, Togo, and Ghana (Aubyn, 2021).

The degradation of soils, the depletion of vegetative cover, and other negative effects of climate change impact the local population. Soaring food prices as a side-effect of Russia's aggression in Ukraine increase the threat. All this might instigate unrest and constitutes a gateway for extremist to be easily exploited.

Moreover, already more than 13 Ghanaians have allegedly taken sides to fight with Islamist terrorists since 2015. A report of the parliament in Accra revealed that at least 100 other Ghanaian migrants may have joined the Islamic State in [Libya](#) (Muqthar, 2022). The Ghanaian converts were ranked as 'frontline fighters' for [ISIS](#), by the Libyan government in the same category as combatants from Senegal, Gambia, Somalia, Chad, Niger, Eritrea and

Mali. Furthermore, they were found to be specialized in the kidnapping of expatriates from Ghana, Turkey and Tunisia (starrfmonline, 2017).

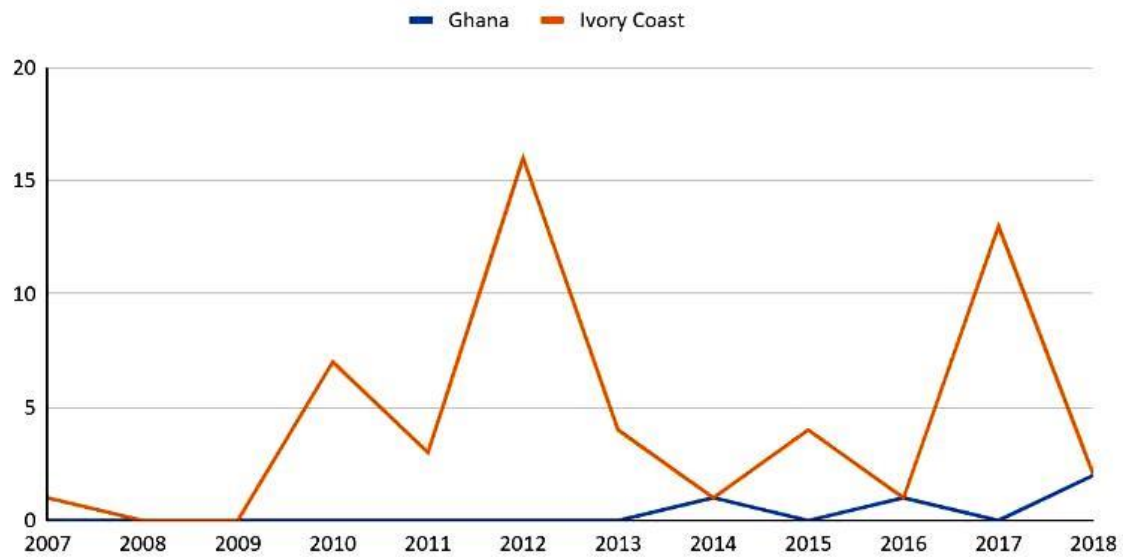
In June 2021, a Ghanaian suicide bomber attacked a [French Reconnaissance camp in Gossi](#), Central Mali, an action supposedly commanded by the [Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin](#) (JNIM). In September 2021, thirty-three suspected terrorists in the [Savelugu](#) area in Northern Ghana had been arrested. According to the Ghanaian security services, at least some of them might have had direct links to Islamic terrorists in [Mali](#) and [Burkina Faso](#) (Muqthar, 2022). Suicide terrorism of Muslims in Northern Ghana was not just an individual psychopathologic phenomenon but entangled with the socio-economic setting, including lacking economic development and cultural integration (Frimpong, 2016).

At the same time, [Ghana-Russian relations](#) grew steadily closer. In 2020, [Russia](#) exported US\$ 119 m to Ghana, mainly wheat (US\$ 48.6 m), nitrogenous fertilizers (US\$ 23 m), and chemical fertilizers (US\$ 13.6 m). Russian exports to Ghana increased during the past 24 years at an annualized rate of 14 %, from US\$ 5.1 m in 1996 to US\$ 119 m in 2020 (OEC, 2022). Military and technical cooperation between the two countries was agreed upon in 2016, however, the cooperation is apparently not yet in force (Reuters 2018). Whether counter-insurgency is included is not known. In the current [Russian war in Ukraine](#), [Accra](#) sides with [Ukraine](#) against the Russian invasion (BBC-news, 2022). Alongside Ghana, only three African states explicitly came out against the actions of Putin, namely [Gabon](#), [Kenya](#) and [Nigeria](#). [Cameroon's](#) autocratic president [Paul Biya](#), however, who reigns the country since 1982, signed a security deal with Putin amid war in Ukraine and conflict at home (Gbadamosi, 2022).

The linkage between terrorism and the [informal economy](#) in Ghana has been greatly encouraged by trafficking. Large-scale drug trafficking emerged already in the 1960s, driven by illegal dealing with homegrown [cannabis](#) from Nigeria and Ghana. In early 1980 this was aggravated by a shift towards hard drugs, notably [cocaine](#) and [heroin](#), often traded by Nigerians and their Ghanaian counterparts (Awudu, 2016). [Child trafficking](#), e.g. of Ghanaian children working in the fish industry, complemented the illegal trade (Johansen, 2006; Koomson & Abdulai, 2021). Child labor is often used in mining, domestic work and sex work. Girls mostly are forced to work as domestic servants, while boys perform forced labour in cocoa production and harvesting where they are exploited and abused. Terrorists' sources of funding are often derived from the rents of these crimes. The close links between criminal and terrorist groups may attack the bases of the republican state and weaken democratic institutions (Diariso, 2019). Tentative evidence suggested that terrorist incursion might reduce agricultural inputs and outputs such as land, production and income thereby negatively impacting agricultural productivity and agricultural employment (Noubissi & Njangang, 2020).

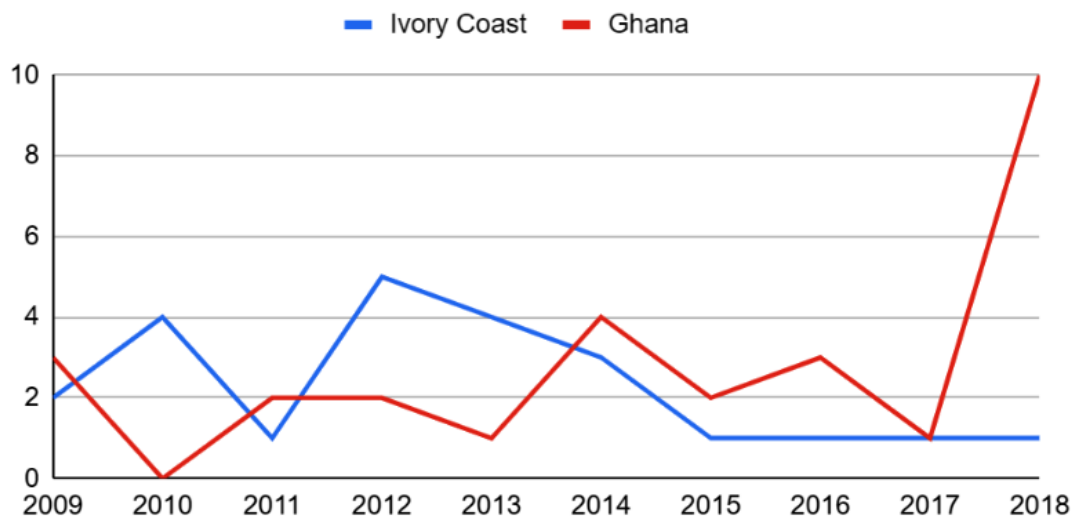
In Ghana, the [Bureau of National Investigations](#) (BNI), created in 1996, and the more recently developed national framework for the prevention and countering of violent extremism and terrorism were meant to stem the influx of terrorism. However, the different security services jealously guarded their independence, issues also became politicized which obstructed collaboration and information sharing (Christensen & Edu-Afful, 2019). In the Western border areas also information asymmetry and transnational migration made Ghana susceptible to terrorist attacks (Azumah & Apau & Krampah, 2020). Nevertheless, Ghana still ranked 96th in the [\(Global Terrorism Index, 2022\)](#), i.e. as a country where terrorism has “no influence”.

Graph 10: Actual and attempted terrorist attacks in Ghana and Ivory Coast, 2007-2018



Source: Mahajan, 2021

Graph 11: Piracy attacks, attempted and actual, in Ivory Coast and Ghana, 2009-2018



Source: Mahajan, R. (2021):

4. The bearing of Islamist terrorism on Senegal's informal economy

The predominant religion in Senegal is Islam. Over 90 % of the inhabitants are Muslims, mostly affiliated with [Sufism](#). The highly structured hierarchy of the leaders of the four great Muslim brotherhoods ([Qadiriya](#), [Tidjaniya](#), [Mouridiya](#), [Layèniya](#)) provided for generations a tolerant religious and socio-political stability and left little room for religious radicalism (CHEDS, 2018).

Cartoon 2: The Burkinabè episcopate wonders about "the interest of the presence of so many foreign forces"
6



Source : La Croix Africa, [L'œil de Ric](#), 16 juin 2021

Also in Senegal, the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the IMF and World Bank and other neo-liberal reforms caused a substantial reduction of employment in the formal sector and a subsequent increase in the informal sector where the redundant laborers resorted to odd jobs and other resourceful solutions to make ends meet. The social costs of these programs gave birth to works of fiction and art that imparted the severity of the hardship. This was picked out as a central theme by the cartoonist who created the fictional character of a serialized comic strip, [Goorgoorlou](#), the neoliberal *homo senegalensis* that became quite popular as a synonym of the social cost of the SAPs (Robert, 2002; Seck, 2018).

Cartoon 3: [Goorgoorlou](#) challenges World Bank president:
Cartoon on the fatal effects of SAP on the Senegalese population



Source: Mendy, 2001; Seck, 2018 ⁷

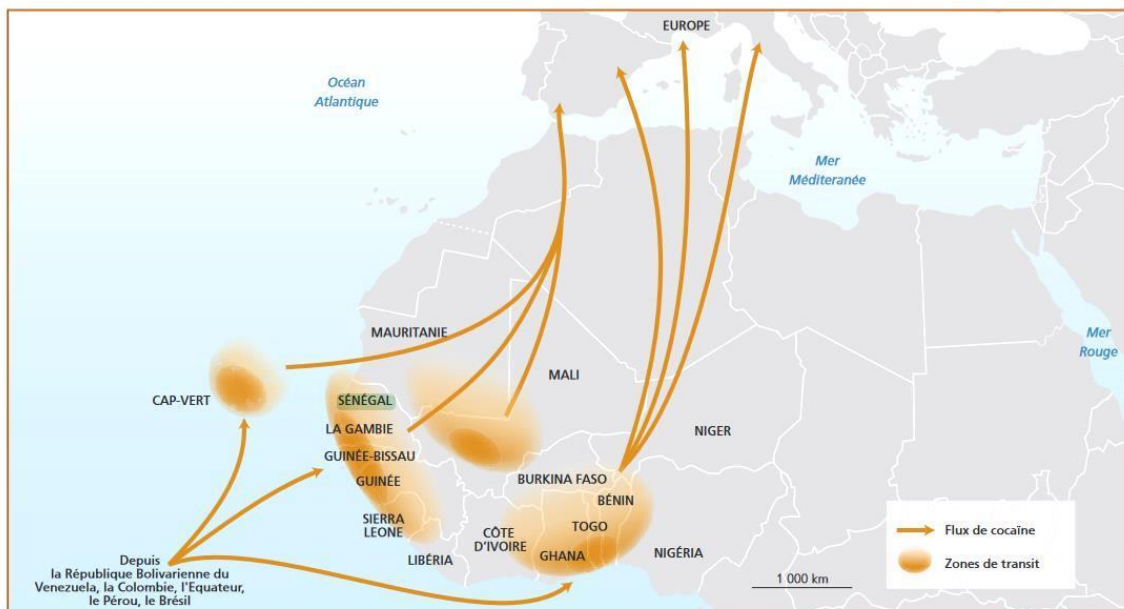
⁶ Landry Banga, pen name, RIC, *La Croix Africa* (LCA), [L'œil de Ric](#), 16 June 2021- Reference to the ordinary plenary session of the bishops of Burkina Faso and Niger from 7 to 12 June 7 2021 in Ouagadougou and their joint press release published on June 11. © (all rights reserved). - Translation of text: "People are going to massacre civilians, and you do nothing!!" ... "Sorry, but we have to deal with terrorists, not with massacres!"

⁷ "This is the reality, we die! – 'Who is it? - Me! – 'What does mean 'me'. Do you take me an idiot!' – 'Indeed, it's me!' - Figure: 'Goorgoorlou' brandishing a skeleton from underground and explaining to [James Wolfensohn](#), president of the World Bank Group (1995–2005), how devaluation turned him into a living-dead. Source: Mendy, 2001 © Alphonse Mendy; Seck, 2018.

However, the [2019 presidential elections](#) changed this perception. Former President [Abdoulaye Wade](#) directly linked his government to the [Muridiyya Sufi](#) order (Hamid & Lebovich, 2017): 'Political transhumance', which had been elevated to the rank of religion at the expense of morality, threatened this stability. Social Islamic networks, dominated by young militants engaged in civil society, developed a plea to the local electorate centred on good governance and democracy. They proposed a break with a political system that they referred to as neo-colonial, including a judiciary accused of being biased and a constitutional council committed to the government. Their new paradigm represented a globalized and connected generation which reactivated the liberation theories of [Frantz Fanon](#) and [Thomas Sankara](#) (Kohnert & Marfaing, 2019).

The Senegalese reformist movement Jama'at Ibad al-Rahman which proliferated in the mid-1990s advocating the purification of Islamic practice through strict adherence to the 'Sunna', eventually reached out to other Muslim organizations, even participating in Sufi celebrations. In Senegal, a single Salafi organization financed by Arabian Middle Eastern donors built hundreds of mosques all over the country (Meservey, 2021). Moreover, the recent intrusion of other [reformist' Islam](#) of [Salafist](#) or [Wahhabi](#) sects endangered the established order. One of them has been represented by Imam Alioune Badara Ndao in his stronghold [Kaolack](#), located about 200 kilometres southeast of [Dakar](#). Allegedly, he had recruited fighters for the Nigerian [Boko Haram](#) and attempted to establish a terrorist cell in Senegal. Yet, he got acquitted by the Senegalese courts in July 2018 of having led a [jihadist](#) network (Laplace, 2018; Châtelot, 2021). It was also suspected that young Senegalese migrants travelled to Maghreb countries to be trained in terrorist training camps and to return inconspicuously without anyone suspecting them, after having been purposely 'prepared' while waiting for a favourable moment to strike CHEDS (2018).

Graph 12 : transnational flows of cocaine through West Africa



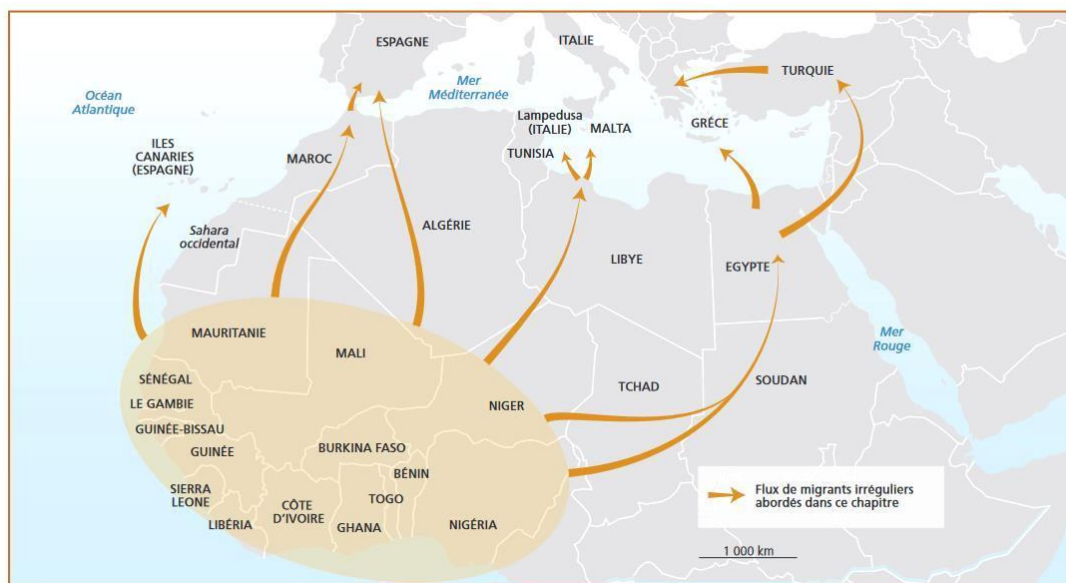
Source : ONUDC, 2013

The sources of funding for terrorists often come from the rents of crime (Diariso, 2019), notably from trafficking drugs, but also from income from human traffickers who smuggle migrants to Europe by sea (Canary Islands) or through the Sahara. Senegal and neighboring

[Guinea-Bissau](#) are drug trafficking hubs. In public opinion, a strong correlation between specific Muslim persuasions and violent extremism is often assumed. For example, [Salafism](#) is often equalled with intolerance and violence and [Sufism](#) with tolerance. Yet, scholarly analysis of the history and actual forms of Islamist terrorism in [Southeast Asia](#) and [West Africa](#) showed no significant correlation between theological orientation and violent tendencies (Seck, 2018). Also, the rate at which known Senegalese traffickers are getting rich as well as their sophisticated camouflage techniques gave rise to suspicions that the financial proceeds from this trafficking are being laundered in the informal sector from which they have been derived (GIABA, 2017).

According to an ILO-diagnosis of the informal economy in Senegal published in 2020, nine out of ten workers are in informal employment, and 97 % of enterprises are active in the informal sector. Employment within these companies represents nearly 70 % of non-agricultural informal, and 45 % of total informal employment in Senegal (Guerin & Bonnet, 2020).

Graph 13 : traffic routes of West African migrants to Europe

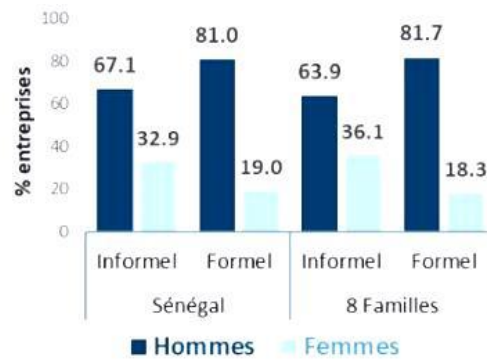


Source : ONUDC, 2013

Trade represents more than half of the informal economic units (51.8 %). Sewing and tailoring activities account for 11.6 % of all units in the informal sector among the activities covered by the census. The carpentry/wood, catering and food processing families represent between 3.6 % and 5.0 % each. Other employments are in the trade with hides and skins, automotive mechanics and fishing (post-harvest) (Guerin & Bonnet, 2020).

More than two thirds of employers in Senegal’s informal sector are male and one third female, against 81 % male and 19 % female in the formal sector. Almost three quarters had no employment contract in the informal sector whereas only one quarter had been employed in the formal sector without contract. About 65 % were only temporarily employed in the informal against 19 % in the formal sector (Guerin & Bonnet, 2020).

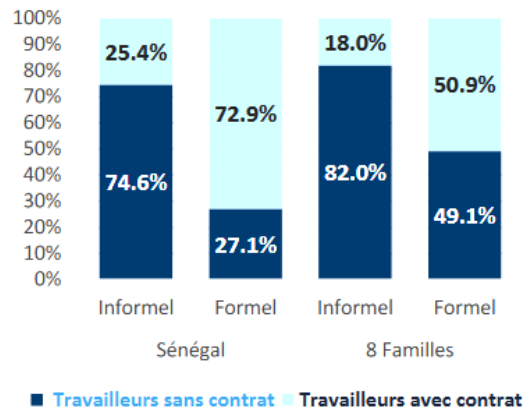
Graph 14: Informal and formal economic units according to sex of entrepreneur, Senegal, 2016



Source : RGE 2016

Source : Guerin & Bonnet, 2020

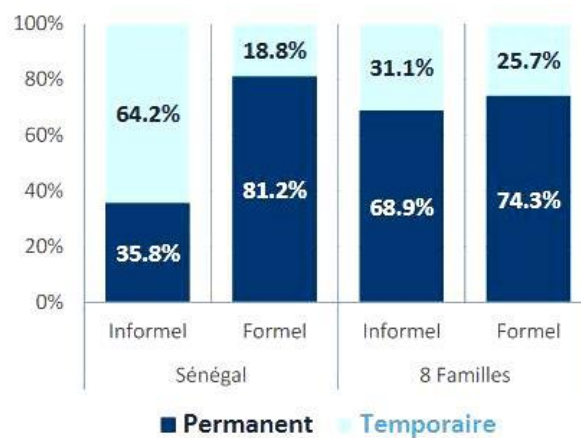
Graph 15: Existence of an employment contract, Senegalese informal & formal sector, 2016



Source : RGE 2016

Source : Guerin & Bonnet, 2020

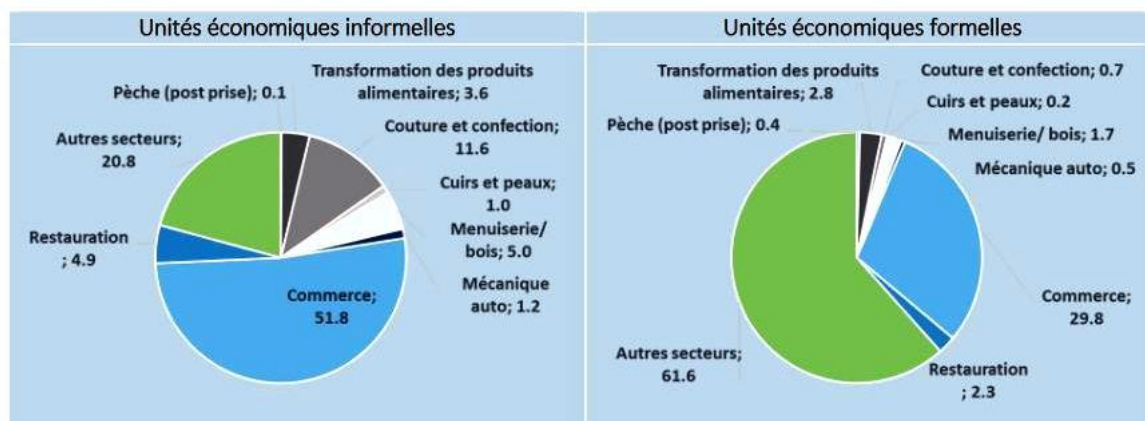
Graph 16: Permanent or temporary character of labour, Senegal 2016



Source : RGE 2016

Source : Guerin & Bonnet, 2020

Graph 17 : Distribution of Senegal’s informal and formal economic units covered by the 2016 census



Source : RGE 2016 dans (BIT, 2017d)

Source : Guerin & Bonnet, 2020

Senegal’s informal economy is mostly composed of small businesses and self-employed workers often acting themselves again as employers. Principal motives for investing in the informal sector are the low cost of entry, the possibility to escape taxation as well as administrative hassles (Simen, 2018). It is crucial to differentiate between different groups of actors in the informal economy. Those, who invest out of strategic motives, including rather shadowy reasons, and those who are rooted in the informal because they have no other options to survive (Marfaing & Sow, 1999).

As said before, the undifferentiated consideration of the informal sector, with implicit assumptions about its amorphous structure or homogeneity, is risky. It may lead to inappropriate solutions. If the promotion of informal activities and their gradual integration into the formal sector is propagated, for example, as a measure to combat poverty, then, as case studies from West Africa show, this can easily have the opposite effect. In this case, regional and personal imbalances in income distribution with all the other negative side effects may increase. Also, it might promote the rural exodus, undermine village solidarity, and overstrain the urban and ethnic networks of migrants with the consequence of increasing ethnic, and religious conflicts, xenophobia and violent extremism (Kohnert, 2000). There are three ideal-typical types of the informal economy in SSA: survival of the poor, preservation of vested interests of the middle class, and profit maximization and risk diversification, including illegal investments, by the affluent class. Depending on which class one belongs to, concerns and impact are extremely different and often even diametrically opposed (Kohnert, 2000). This holds also for the Senegalese informal economy.

Meanwhile, the sector is increasingly getting organized. Although actors involved in the sector have quite diverse interests as business owners, employers and dependent employees, they created the Confédération Générale des Travailleurs de l’Économie Informelle au Sénégal (CGTIS; Senegalese Confederation of Informal Economy Workers) to ensure social protection (Greven, 2017).

The administration, both at the country and local level, often shows reservations vis-à-vis the informal sector. Thus, some may try to tax its actors while others request to ban informal traders from the city centres. Yet, the inherent logic of informal actors working in a market

economy, and the poverty implications of the resulting evictions have rarely been understood (Brown & Msoka & Dankoco, 2015). For example, formal and informal traders are closely interconnected by trade, outsourcing and competition (Mbaye & Benjamin & Gueye, 2017). Also, collective public property rights, including land, have often been contested and the urban poor criminalized. In the capital Dakar, for example, collective action with political support enabled a dialogue that allowed for a balance between public and private gain and to create a hybrid space of the 'street' as a 'collective pool resource' (Brown, 2015).

5. Conclusion

The spread of Islamist terrorism in Africa was heated up by a combination of localized grievances and transnational [jihadism](#). The tactical and strategic flexibility of terrorist groups increased their resilience (Faleg & Mustasilta, 2021). In the past decade, terrorism in Africa spread beyond its traditional hotspots in the [Sahel](#), [Lake Chad Basin](#) and the [Horn of Africa](#) to [West Africa](#)'s coastal states like [Nigeria](#) and [Ivory Coast](#). But also hitherto 'safe havens' like [Ghana](#) and [Senegal](#) have been increasingly threatened and they have to bear already now heavy social and economic spill-over cost. [Sub-Saharan Africa](#) was the second most affected region in the world marked by deadly terrorism in 2019 according to the [Global Terrorism Index](#) (Faleg & Mustasilta, 2021).

The global economic impact of terrorism increased by two-thirds from 2008 to 2017 to US\$ 52 bn. Africa's share of the global economic cost of terrorism mounted from 4.2 % in 2007 to 20.3 % in 2016. In the same year, the economic cost of terrorism in Africa was estimated at US\$ 15.5 billion. This represents a more than ten-fold increase since 2007. However, there is a huge variation in the cost among the focus countries attacked (UNDP, 2019).

The impact of terrorism on the economy has a negative bearing on the formal and a positive effect on the informal sector (Sekrafi & Abid & Assidi, 2020). The shadow economy with all its ambivalent facets, including transnational crime, is still dominant in many African countries, notably in West Africa. Therefore, this sector is of special concern.

The widely held belief that poverty produces terrorists and that the elimination of poverty would eliminate terrorism is an oversimplification. Poverty does not correlate with a higher incidence of terrorist attacks. Also, anti-poverty programs are not the most effective use of limited resources to combat terrorism (Shinn, 2016). However, scholarly international literature confirms that poor, weak and [failed states](#) are more vulnerable to violent extremism. This is not the least because political leaders have a vested interest in linking poverty and terrorism. After all, it serves to attract more aid from the international donor community (Shinn, 2016). Many factors may trigger terrorism alongside poverty, notably poor governance, corruption, nepotism, insecurity, local conflicts, socioeconomic inequality, environmental degradation, and political marginalization (Shinn, 2016).

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Résumé : [*L'impact du terrorisme islamiste sur l'économie informelle africaine : le Kenya comparé au Ghana et au Sénégal*] -- L'Afrique subsaharienne est devenue ces dernières années l'épicentre mondial du terrorisme islamiste. L'impact du terrorisme sur l'économie a une incidence négative sur le secteur formel et un effet positif sur le secteur informel. Cela est dû, entre autres, aux économies de développement peu diversifiées des pays africains et à l'impact spécifique de classe du terrorisme sur le bien-être. Cela concerne non seulement une baisse des ventes, des revenus et de l'emploi et une augmentation des coûts de transaction dans les secteurs touchés, mais aussi une augmentation de la pauvreté, de la faim et des misères pour les pauvres et les nécessiteux. Le terrorisme transnational amplifie à la fois les effets négatifs et positifs. Les pays africains qui ont gravement souffert de ces attaques sont la Somalie, le Kenya, le Nigeria, le Mali, le Burkina Faso, le Soudan du Sud, la Libye et l'Égypte. Mais même les pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest, comme le Ghana et le Sénégal, qui ont jusqu'ici été épargnés par les attentats terroristes, la menace grandit et les effets économiques sont déjà tangibles. Étant donné que le secteur informel, c'est-à-dire l'économie souterraine avec toutes ses facettes ambivalentes, y compris la criminalité transfrontalière, est encore dominant dans de nombreux pays africains, en particulier en Afrique de l'Ouest, ce secteur revêt une importance particulière. C'est encore l'un des plus grands au monde. La lutte contre le terrorisme n'est pas seulement une question militaire. Dans le domaine économique, aussi, il faut le combattre à la racine. Étant donné que la plupart des pauvres africains vivent dans et à partir du secteur informel, qui est également un terrain fertile pour les activités criminelles telles que la traite des êtres humains de toute sorte, le blanchiment d'argent et les terroristes, ils souffrent le plus des conséquences négatives. Les sources de financement des terroristes proviennent souvent du produit du commerce illégal. Les liens étroits entre groupes criminels et terroristes peuvent saper les fondements mêmes de l'État républicain et affaiblir les institutions démocratiques.

Zusammenfassung: [*Die Auswirkungen des islamistischen Terrorismus auf die informelle Wirtschaft Afrikas: Kenia im Vergleich zu Ghana und Senegal*] -- Afrika südlich der Sahara hat sich in den vergangenen Jahren zum globalen Epizentrum des islamistischen Terrorismus entwickelt. In den Volkswirtschaften Afrikas wirkt sich Terrorismus in der Regel negativ auf den formellen und positiv auf den informellen Sektor aus. Dies ist unter anderem auf die wenig diversifizierte Entwicklungsökonomien afrikanischer Länder und die klassenspezifischen Auswirkungen des Terrorismus auf die Wohlfahrt zurückzuführen. Dieses betrifft nicht nur Umsatz-, Einkommens- und Beschäftigungsrückgang, steigende Transaktionskosten in den betroffenen Sektoren sondern auch zunehmende Armut, Hunger und Not für die Armen und Bedürftigen. Der transnationale Terrorismus verstärkt sowohl die negativen als auch die positiven Effekte. Zu den Ländern, die schwer unter diesen Angriffen litten, gehören Somalia, Kenia, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Südsudan, Libyen und Ägypten. Aber auch in bisher von Terroranschlägen verschonten westafrikanischen Staaten, wie Ghana und Senegal, wächst die Bedrohung und die wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen sind bereits spürbar. Da der informelle Sektor, d.h. die Schattenwirtschaft mit all ihren ambivalenten Facetten, einschließlich grenzüberschreitender Kriminalität, in vielen afrikanischen Ländern, insbesondere in Westafrika, immer noch dominant ist, ist dieser Sektor von besonderer Bedeutung. Er zählt nach wie vor zu den größten der Welt. Der Kampf gegen den Terrorismus ist nicht nur eine militärische Frage. Auch im wirtschaftlichen Bereich muss er an seinen Wurzeln bekämpft werden. Da die meisten afrikanischen Armen in und vom informellen Sektor leben, der auch ein Nährboden für kriminelle Aktivitäten wie Menschenhandel aller Art, für Geldwäsche und für Terroristen ist, leiden sie am meisten unter den negativen Folgen. Die Finanzierungsquellen der Terroristen leiten sich oft aus den Erträgen des illegalen Handels ab. Die engen Verbindungen zwischen kriminellen und terroristischen Gruppen können die Grundlagen des republikanischen Staates angreifen und demokratische Institutionen schwächen.