SGI-JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES
VOLUME. 7
ISSUE. 3
SEPT., 2026

INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM IN AFRICA: DYNAMISM AND SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

[1]Michael Godspower Sanikpege & [2]Tangwa Emmanuel Nnfor
[1&2]Department of Political Science, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.
michael.sanikpege@uniport.edu.ng
tangwa4emma@gmail.com

Abstract
The poverty stricken situation of African states amidst its natural endowments has remained a puzzle which political analysts and the academia have struggled to unknot. This development corroborates the resource-curse theory. Though, African leaders insist that they have done enough to change this narrative, Africans wallow in poverty; a development that birthed protracted insecurity within the region. The study international terrorism in African: dynamics and security implications are therefore an attempt to x-ray its causes and trends. The study employed historical research method, relying on secondary sources of data with State Fragility Theory as its analytical framework. The theory is anchored on the assumption that when the character of a state is featured by gross inability to protect and provide the basic amenities of its citizens and respect the sanctity of the law, it tends to risk its continual recognition and existence. Findings revealed that terrorism poses enormous threat to political stability, economic development and human security in Africa. Sadly, the region is not only a hub of insurgency but fertile ground in breeding terrorist gangs through trans-national criminal network. The study concluded that complex and dynamic nature of terrorism have made the concept to emerge as the most enduring threat to global security in the 21st century and recommended among others for representative governance to as a matter of urgency prioritize delivery of democratic dividends, to improve Africans standard of living.
Keywords: International, Terrorism, Security, Dynamism, Africa.

I. Introduction

Background to the Study

The protection of lives and property remain very cardinal in governance. In fact, national security concern is very critical as it is a pre-condition for sustainable development; as the survival of any society is dependent on its laws which are imbibed on national security. Ayika (2025) contend that terrorism has emerged as one of the defining global security challenges of the 21st century. Over the last two decades, terrorist attacks have surged in frequency, scale, and geographic scope. From the attacks of September 11, 2001, to the rise of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2010 which continued a decade after with localized insurgencies in Africa and South Asia, the world has witnessed a transformation in the nature of violent conflict. As of 2023, terrorism remains a persistent threat across multiple continents.

Global Terrorism Index (GTI, 2024) revealed that there were over 8,000 terrorist incidents worldwide in 2023 which resulted in more than 23,000 deaths. The report notes a geographic shift in terrorist activities from Middle East to sub-Sahara Africa, which now accounts for 43% of global terrorism deaths. Countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, and Nigeria are at the epicenter of these developments. In the Sahel region, for example, groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and ISIS has exploited political instability, poverty, and weak governance to expand their influence (ACLED, 2024). These groups are not only targeting military and government facilities but increasingly attacking civilians, schools, religious institutions and humanitarian workers.

Beyond Africa, the global implications of terrorism are evident. Attacks in Western countries including mass shootings, vehicle ramming, and bombings which are perpetrated

by "lone wolf" actors are inspired by online propaganda and highlights the transnational and evolving nature of violent crimes. More so, technological advancements with the aid of encrypted communication, drones and Social Media have created new operational tools for terrorist, thereby creating new forms of challenges for states which are trying to contain them (Europol, 2023). Thus, global security architecture faces significant strains. Although, since traditional military responses have proven insufficient when not paired with socio-economic and political reforms, states and International Organizations are increasingly recognizing that containing terrorism must involve addressing social injustice, identity-based discriminations and ideological indoctrinations.

Contemporary, terrorism, gained prominence in the 20th century through various ideological movements from anarchism in Europe to anti-colonial struggles in Africa and Asia. During the Cold War, state-sponsored terrorism proliferated as U.S. and Soviet Union supported proxy insurgencies. In Post-Cold War, terrorism shifted from leftist revolutionary movements toward religiously motivated extremism, notably after Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the rise of Salafi-jihadism (Laqueur, 2001). In addition, 9/11 attacks in 2001 by Al-Qaeda marked a turning point. The attacks catalyzed a global counter-terrorism campaign led by United States, resulting in military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. These events, however, had unintended consequences. The vacuum created by Iraq War, coupled with repression and sectarian politics, contributed to the rise of ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria), which was declared as a caliphate in 2014 (Byman, 2016). Since then, terrorism has become more fragmented and decentralized. Thus, while core Al-Qaeda and ISIS networks have weakened, their ideologies and affiliates continue to birth direct violence especially in fragile states where governance is weak.

More so, the emergence of insurgency has introduced a new dimension into the criminal space in Nigeria. Series of bombings have been carried out by terrorists, as well as taking hostage of innocent citizens; even as United Nations Building in Abuja was not spared in the bombing spree. It is arguable that the economic impact of terrorism would be felt in unsophisticated mono-cultural low-income economies than in highly advanced, diversified industrial economies (Adebayo, 2014). Therefore, continual rise in insecurity if not checked, may lead to greater investor apathy for any country; which will lead to low inflow of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) (Awojobi, 2014). Hence, crime remain a threat to economic, political and social security of a nation and a viewed as a trigger to underdevelopment; as it discourages both local and foreign investments, reduces quality of life, destroys human and social capital, damages relationship between citizens and governance thereby undermining democracy, rule of law and national development.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, right to life is a fundamental right while protection of lives and property remain a sacrosanct obligation of responsive governance. States are therefore charged with the responsibility to protect their citizens and other national's resident within their geographical space by imploring appropriate measures against terrorist acts. The attacks on World Trade Centre and Pentagon on September 11, 2001 by Al-Qaeda re-awakened the world to the UN mandate of ensuring international peace and security. It also renewed the interests of world leaders to the war against terrorism. However, fighting terrorism is no tea party because it entails a lot of financial commitments. Though it appears that it is only the great powers that are confronted with terrorist attacks and have sufficient resources to fight it, the spate of attacks in Kenya, Tanzania and Somalia; coupled with growing activities of pirates in African high sea illustrates the threat posed by terrorism to African countries. This situation has been compounded by Africa's litany of bad governance and economic disarticulation, leading to conflicts, wars and proliferation of criminal groups in several parts of the continent (Bolaji, 2010).

Sadly, most African countries do not possess the resources and technology to individually fight terrorism. Africa's exposure to the menace is best illustrated by the recorded incidents of terrorism on the continent. In 1993, 18 American soldiers were killed

in Mogadishu, Somalia, during an attack carried out on US Peacekeeping team which some analysts attributed to Islamic terrorists. Also, in 1998, terrorists bombed the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania killing over 200 people while injuring more than 4,000. In October 2000, U.S.S. Cole ship was struck by terrorists in Yemen and 17 American sailors lost their lives. Furthermore, in November 2002, al Qaeda bombed a hotel and attempted to force down an Israeli airliner with a shoulder-held surface-to-air missile near Mombasa, Kenya (United States Institute of Peace, 2004). Between 1999 and 2006 alone, 6,177 casualties were recorded from 296 acts of terrorism in Africa (Goredema and Botha, 2005). In addition, pirates in the Gulf of Aden, off the Coast of Somalia carried out 73 attacks on ship, and were still holding on to 11 people as at October 2008 (The Guardian, 2008). Weak governance in several parts of Africa provided the fertile land for criminal networks to germinate which undermined security in Africa.

West African is noted as the most vulnerable as terrorist attack daily due to proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, bad governance, trans-border criminal networks capitalizing on free movement of people in the region and external interests among other factors. Simmering indicators of possible terrorist presence in the region included Islamic fundamentalists' activities in Northern Nigeria and militancy in Niger Delta region, Touareg insurgency in Mali, and violence in the Cassamance region of Senegal. The conflict in Mano River region in 1990s has demonstrated that they may, if not checked, have contagious effects and spread to other countries in the region. ECOWAS, the sub-regional body is aware of this fact and has put in place structures to enshrine good governance and conflict prevention, as well as safeguard the security of member state from all forms of hostilities, including terrorism. Unfortunately, the sub-region was beset with a number of violent conflicts which force member states to divert the scarce resources available for regional economic development and integration to security and peacekeeping arrangements.

Thus, in an effort to nib insecurity in the region to the bud, African elites restructured and renamed Organization for African Unity (OAU) to African Union (AU) in 2002 thereby shifting the continent's focus from mere political liberation to socio-economic integration, effective representation and collective security. The argument is that economic prosperity and cooperation can only be realized in a peaceful, stable and democratic environment. This underscores the need for peace and security of member states as a pre-requisite for achieving regional economic development and integration as envisaged by the founders (Adefuye, 2008). Regrettably, these initiatives have proved inefficient in curtaining security threats, especially terrorism in Africa. This study therefore is geared towards analyzing the impact of international terrorism on African unity and development.

Aim and Objectives

This study is aimed at investigating the dynamics of International Terrorism in Africa. However, its specific objectives include to:

Examine the changing nature of international terrorism and its effect on African peace, security and development.

Analyze how international terrorism has affected human security in Africa.

II. Theoretical Framework

State Fragility Theory was employed as an analytical framework for this study. The theory is anchored on assumption that failure of a government or when the character of a state is featured by gross inability to protect and provide for the basic services or amenities to its citizens as well as respect the sanctity of the law, it tends to risk its continual recognition and existence hence prone to collapse. Paul Collier, Robert Zoellick, Gerald Helman and Steven Ratner are major proponents of the theory. According to Carvalho (2007), a state will be stronger if its complexity is inherent to the formulation of public policies and the capacity of its apparatus to realize them. Thus, it is the completeness between an effective scope of activities and an efficient state capacity that can provide an analytical framework for evaluation of its performance.

In this context, statehood can be defined as a territorial parcel which manifest, with varying degrees over time (history), space (geography) and domain of activity (scope). Its main attributes are the administrative capacity to provide essential public services such as security, good governance, health, education, social assistance and basic infrastructures and to increase the revenues of these public goods (Baranyi, 2012). United States Agency for International Development (USAID, 2005) posits that instability associated with Fragile States is a product of ineffective and irresponsible governance. In addition, fragility of states is supported by four essential pillars: security, economic conditions, policies and social welfare. For the agency, fragility of state is a consequence of its failure to provide basic services, either completely or to a certain extent, and its inability to provide domestic security and maintain the integrity of its borders. For Malešević (2017), it is viewed as difficulty in measuring the fragility of the states and its reflection in the studies on statehood. The fragmented analysis of the theory can use a parsimonious model, based on the idea that a state must exhibit three fundamental features which includes: Authority, Legitimacy and Capacity (ALC), and that weakness in one or more of these dimensions will have an impact on the general fragility of a given country. In this respect, any state may be moderately strong in certain dimensions, despite being weak in others. The combination of the results of these categories (ALC) may indicate a functionally strong or structurally fragile state. High capacity, for example, is not enough for a strong state if legitimacy is low, and the same is considered for the three categories of ALC (Tikuisis et al., 2015). Carment et al., (2008) point out that the unprotected state omay not be able to control the full extent of its legal territory. In this context, these states are likely to have difficulties in responding effectively to internal or external threats (Weber, 2015). In this sense, it is argued that power is the ability to influence or even induce the behavior of other people, whereas domination or authority is presented as the acquired right to be obeyed, which allows its influence within a group. Weber (2015) argued that for a state or society to acclaim legitimacy over its territory and citizens, its authority will be measured by following indices which includes rational, legal, traditional and charismatic authourities.

Tikuisis et al., (2015) and Grävingholt et al., (2012) further argued that when the authority of a state is reduced, her ability to protect its citizens against intentional violence diminishes. By implication, authority is thus related to the degree to which the state can guarantee the physical integrity of its citizens and protect them from threats. Carment et al., (2008) corroborates that since authority is a precept of state's ability to project force, security becomes a basic premise for the realization of public affairs, private interests and civil society. It is worthy to note that capacity is linked to the precept of the state institution's inability to provide a minimum of public policies and services to the population. Paradoxically, capacity refers to both the scope and strength of a nation In terms of scope, most analysts tend to agree with a set of primordial state functions such as defense, public order, health, macro-economic management and disaster assistance (Fukuyama, 2005).

Call (2011) explained that the capacity of the state is measured as the extent to which its institutions are able to provide essential public goods like security, rule of law, education and primary health care. For the author, however, the capacity of the state does not exclude non-state actors from providing services, under state regulation. Moreover, it does not include the degree that the state contemplates good governance, holds democratic policies or economic prescriptions (Call, 2011).

Carment et al., (2008) posit that states with satisfactory level of capacity demonstrate competence in political and economic management. Thus, active states are able to regulate internal services and carry out international transactions. These states must also possess the capacity to support the basic infrastructures necessary for a modern state, including functional transport. Therefore, states without capacity tend to be subject to civil society and the international community with regard to the provision of vital public good and services that may prove incapable of effectively addressing unexpected shocks, such as epidemics, disasters, food shortages or refugee flows. In addressing the weaknesses of the state,

Fukuyama (2005) seeks to break the conceptual confusion about the characteristics that describe political unity as conceived as statehood. He further argue that statehood is divided into two dimensions: scope of state activities and state power. The latter disregards the government's lack of clear understanding of the difference between these two functions. It should be emphasized that this line of thinking does not rule out the fact that a strong state can also function with great strength or capacity; a development considered 'intermediary. However, the fulfillment of these functions is only a complement to the basic functions, whose good performances primarily characterizes a strong state.

State Fragility is considered as an important issue that impacts the agenda of international bodies. Avery (1988) argued that legitimate authority should be distinguished from power, since a political era may not only lack access to power, but lack proper authority. State is often recognized as the owner of the monopoly of the means of force in society (Avery, 1988). However, since political legitimacy is a structural characteristic of states, the competencies and legitimacy of government and state are directly related to the capacity to act, which is evidenced by the success achieved with consequent legitimation, so that the acceptance of a political system is not only granted by rights and guarantees or participation, but by a successful policy (Pfetsch, 1998).

It is worthy to note that when the character of a state or government is featured by gross inability to protect and provide the basic services or amenities to its citizens as well as respect the sanctity of the law, it tends to risk its continual recognition and existence hence prone to collapse. Thus, state fragility creates a vacuum which non-state actors explores. Thus, when states fails to provide the basic necessities of her citizens as well as cannot take control over her territorial expanse, violent non-state actors fill the gap. This is a major trigger for international terrorism in Africa. This theory is apt and justifies its adoption for the study.

III. Methodology

Secondary methods of data collection was employed by this study. Secondary sources such as newspapers, news magazines, textbooks, internet sources and academic journals were employed. The qualitative method was employed for analysis as the study is historical in outlook.

Conceptual Framework

International Terrorism in Africa

Terrorism is not a set of belief or a political association but viewed as a weapon or a process, which has been used throughout history by both state and sub-state institutions for a range of political causes or purposes. This notion is supported by Wilkinson (2001) when he describes terrorism as a special form of political violence. The concept of terrorism occurred in various frameworks such as crime, politics, war, propaganda and religion. Understanding and defining terrorism will clearly depend on the framework from which it originates. Each framework focuses on specifics as well as different aspects of terrorism. Hence, definition of terrorism by a religious fanatic will vary radically from that of a law enforcement agent (Schmid, 2004).

Ayodeji (2018) views terrorism as the continuous use of violence by a small group of people against predetermined targets with the sole aim of realizing a political agenda like instilling fear in the people and government and drawing attention to a political grievance. It is perceived as a politically motivated tactic involving the use of threat, force and violence, and widespread propaganda to achieve set goals (Weinberg et al., 2010). United Nations Security Council Report (2004) (cited in Akpotor, 2013) depicted terrorism as any act embarked upon and intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants to intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act. Convention for Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism (1937) defines terrorism as all criminal acts directed against a state and intended to create state of terror in the minds of particular persons or a group of persons or

the general public (Duffy, 2006). Terrorism is often employed to achieve political ends even when it also evinces other motives such as religious, economic, ethnic or social. But while all terrorist acts has a political purpose, there are technical and moral dissimilarities, civil dissidence and other forms of civil violence or revolution, which are also political phenomena in themselves (Harmon, 2000).

The origin of terrorism could be located within the context of modern history as studies have shown that the menace has undergone a process or metamorphosis otherwise called waves, which could not be ignored. Rapaport (2013), asserts that the historical background of terrorism is provided in four waves of the analytical framework, which explains the origin of terrorism in the modern sense. They are Anarchists' wave which culminated in the Russian populist group "Narodnaya Volya" (People's Will) that became prevalent in the 1880s. This, in succession was followed by the anti-colonial wave, which intersected between the 1920s and the 1960s and was clandestinely designed to seek freedom and liberation for the colonies of the imperial powers. The third wave, referred to as New Left Wave, started in the 1960s and lasted till the end of the 20th century, and lastly, a radical religious wave, which could be traced from 1979 till date (Kwame, 2010).

Parker and Sitter (2016) averred that the 19th-century origins of modern terrorism could be located within the context of a series of technological advancements, which grew amidst the communication revolution and arms technology at the end of the 19th century. The indiscreet nature of these developments, which characterized the last wave of 19thcentury terrorism, made destructive military formations into the hands of a few reckless non-state actors, as evident in the trends of current terrorist attacks worldwide.

Netanyahu (2001) defined international terrorism as the use of violence by a state against an independent state to fight an alternative war as a substitute for conventional war. This is seen as a reason why international terrorism is so persistent and so difficult to uproot. The support of a modern state can provide an international terrorist movement with everything that domestic terrorist movements usually lack in the way of cultural and logistical assistance. Wilkinson (1989) supports Netanyahu's definition when he referred to state-sponsored international terrorism. In the past, international terrorism was used as both domestic and foreign policy tools. State sponsors have used their own resources directly, recruited and controlled terror squads and have chosen to work through client movements. Libya, Syria, Sudan, Cuba and Iran have all been sponsors of international terrorist activities. US National Counter-terrorism Centre's (NCTC) (2004) defines the term as terrorism involving citizens, or the territory of, more than one country. It further describes the term as any group practicing international terrorism or any group or subgroups that practice international terrorism. The US's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (1976) on the other hand view the concept as any action carried out by basically autonomous non-state actors, whether or not they enjoy some degree of support from sympathetic states. The differences between the 1976 and 2004 definitions are a clear indication of how international terrorism has evolved in the past thirty years.

No wonder the United Nations (2018) argued that contemporary insurgents adopt an array of strategies to unleash terror on targets, ranging from military installations to other soft spots. These insurgents are often saddled with the task of liberating their people or striving for good governance. In contrast, ISIS and other terrorist groups justify their actions on religious grounds as freedom fighters seeking the protection of their rights and privileges. Meanwhile, all these radical groups have a shared behavior of hand-twisting their national governments to concede to their requests. To Morozov (1880), terrorists adopt assassination of prominent figures, attacks on major national installations and disruption of national events as calculated strategies of sending strong warning signals to those within the corridors of power. These attacks are strategically coordinated toward the attainment of a set of demands, notwithstanding the obvious reality of diversity and religious mix. However, Africa is not immune to the trends within the global community of nations, as it has to do with the threat of terrorism and the devastating effects of such actions unleashed daily by insurgents.

Terrorism in Africa may be traced to the expansionist wars fought many years ago, during colonial rule, slave trade and its attendant dehumanizing characteristics. United Nations (2016) posit that North African nations of Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, and Mauritania have come under one form of terrorist attacks in the recent past or are even going through one in the present.

In West African sub-region which includes states like Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo, could be described as a deadly theatre of war, due to the series of incessant attacks by a number of terrorist groups. Chiefly among these groups is Boko Haram which of recent have taken responsibility for a number of damages in Northern Nigeria and now symbolize terror within that sub-region. Central African states like Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of the Congo, and Sao Tome, shares similar experiences. In fact, Chad and Cameroon have remained in the news in the past two years, arising from deadly attacks from Boko Haram. The story within the East African sub-region has not been different from that of other regions. Countries like Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, and Tanzania have suffered in the hands of Al-Shabaab, which has killed both military personnel and civilians in large numbers (Maiangwa, 2014). In Southern-Africa, the story is different as the sub-region has been able to maintain a good level of counter-terrorist protocols compared to other African nations (Bester, 2015). Rapaport (2004) observed that the fourth wave of religious-based terrorism is a powerful and destructive wave that has ravaged the global village. Recounting the woes of the fourth wave, Nigeria has suffered different incidences of devastating losses of both human and critical material components of the society since the first attack launched by Boko Haram in 2009 Rapaport (2004). According to Uzochukwu (2014), Boko Haram insurgence is striving towards Islamizing Nigeria because of the shared belief that western education is forbidden.

Terrorism is often viewed as an end product of failed states wherein poverty, economic deprivation and stagnation are its dominant features (Adedire, et al., 2016). This prevailing poverty stricken condition fosters the incubation and flourishing of terrorist activities. It is contended that the endemic corruption prevalent in Africa has discouraged equitable distribution of wealth and resources, thus giving the privileged few the opportunity to plunder state resources for their selfish advantage. This situation has deepened the poverty crisis, invariably widening the gap between the rich and the poor. Suffice to say that the poverty level in Africa is disquietingly high and estimated to be between 50 and 60 percent in comparison to 30-45 percent in other developing nations (World Bank, 2006). This is why the former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan while speaking before General Assembly, asserted that no one in the world can be comfortable or safe when so many people are suffering and deprived (United Nations News Service, 2001).

Furthermore, Piazza (2007) averred that impoverished nations populated by poorly educated and unemployed masses, displaying a widening gap between the rich and the poor, and characterized by low literacy rates are fomentation tanks for dangerous and violent militants. What this suggests is that low economic standard of living and weak socio-economic potentials, make people prone to political extremism, which encourages violence in developing nations, particularly in Africa, where poverty has often led to identity conflicts along ethnic and regional lines. Thus, in Africa, terrorism is often triggered by political alienation, exclusion, injustice and denial of rights. Wilkinson (2007) defined politically motivated terrorism as the systematic use of murder and destruction and the threat of murder and destruction to terrorize individuals, groups, communities, or governments into conceding to the terrorists' political demands. It is pertinent to point out that most of the insurgent groups in Africa emerged as a result of resistance to government inefficiency, maladministration, and highhandedness. They could also be regarded as the product or response to the specific political context of a milieu. For example, the emergence of Joseph

Kony as Head of State was a product of perceived mal-administration of Milton Obote's era in Uganda (Maiangwa, 2014), while the killing of Yusuf Muhammed, the leader of Boko Haram, made the group to assume a violent posture in Nigeria during the regime of President Goodluck Jonathan (Olapeju, et al., 2022).

Also, border porosity and arms proliferation is a variable that justifies terrorism in Africa. Though, there are rules regulating the movement of persons across African borders, the unguarded and vast nature of these borders facilitated illegal and unrestrained migration of people who formed the core of the insurgents. The readily available pool of men from which recruitments are made advanced the cause of insurgents, while the arms at their disposal gave them the effrontery to dastardly attack people and communities. This development has invariably turned insurgency into a lucrative business for a lot of cartels especially those involved in the illegal sale of guns. More importantly, there has been a paradigm shift in contemporary warfare within the last three decades. Internal crisis between the state and non-state actors in the form of insurgency against established governments of various nations, such as the Boko Haram insurgence against Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon has accelerated terrorism in Africa. Thus, terrorist activities are fast escalating partly due to the need to create markets for the sale of arms and ammunitions manufactured by the developed arms-producing nations and their accredited trading cartels/conflict entrepreneurs and somewhat the need to strengthen the bond of military dependency of the developing nations of the world (Otinche, 2018).

Perhaps the fascinating factor in the emergence of terrorism is the issue of religious prejudice. Fundamentally, religion and culture are critical in explaining terrorism in Africa. These issues have generated fractious conflicts in culturally segmented societies of African nations where social affiliations are built along identity-based considerations. Due to the sentiments and emotions attached to religious and cultural issues, many African individuals tend to be more fanatical about devotion to their faith and cultural heritage than their nation. This situation brings about the tendency to create animosity among people with ethnic diversity, invariably raising religious dogma to the level of radicalization of every aspect of life, with people getting disconnected from government calculations and seeing nothing good in government's policies, and programs. This is usually the situation with every terrorist group, which repulses every government action and displays anger and hatred towards government agents, institutions and western civilization. For instance, the Al-Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden, on the strength of Islamic religion and culture, accused Saudi Arabia of allowing US, a Kafar (infidel) nation, to occupy and establish a military base in Saudi Arabia (Maiangwa, 2014).

Within the last two decades, the nature and dimensions of attacks of these terrorist groups are similar. In strategy, they adopt the guerrilla warfare approach of incessant and sporadic attacks on their targets, which range from bombing of government institutions to the kidnapping of government officials, suicide-bombing of public utilities, massive attacks on unarmed civilian population, and the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The killing splee became more heightened with the pervasive proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), which has become prevalent in Africa. In countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, and Libya in North Africa and Algeria, Mauritania, Niger, Mali, Sudan, and Chad in the Sahel region, where Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) holds sway, numerous violent attacks have been carried out at intervals on the population of these nations. ISIS terrorist group, which is entrenched in the Middle-east, has extended its tentacles, activities, and operations into West Africa under the banner of ISIS-WA, with a stronghold in Sudan where it has been extending its operations into Nigeria in collaboration with a splinter faction of Boko Haram led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi (USDOS, 2018).

As observed, within the last decades of incessant attacks, African nations has been adversely affected leaving thousands of people dead and many more physically injured. The continued insurgents' attacks have become worrisome to all and sundry within and outside African nations. For instance, Gillespie (2014) and Hanna (2015) argued that violent deaths

from Boko Haram insurgency alone were estimated to be about 12,000 over time. However, the number had soared significantly since 2009, when the group began to acquire more deadly military equipment. Olugbode (2016) posit that the affected region has, in terms of infrastructure and socio-economic facilities, suffered massive destruction worth N1.782 trillion ($9 billion) while the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) has escalated to over 2.8 million people. Since the commencement of ISIS-WA joint operations in Nigeria, Boko Haram is said to have overtaken Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) to become the most deadly terrorist group in the world with 317 percent to 6,644 of death in 2014 death being attributed to the group (IEP, 2015).

US Department of State (2019) posited that since the September 11, 2001 attack, United States had been constrained to devise and nurture a new state's response to terrorism internationally, while on the other hand, Boko Haram, in collaboration with ISIS-WA in Nigeria has continued to sustain acts of terror against government and civilians. The strategies adopted by the latter included kidnapping, suicide-bombing, inflicting injuries of varying degrees on the victims, and sometimes the execution of the captured victims. One of the large-scale terror acts carried out by Boko Haram and ISIS-WA, is the abduction of 276 school girls from Chibok, Borno State, in 2014 (Amnesty International, 2015). Furthermore, these terrorist groups have not relented in inflicting deadly harm on the general public, as evident in US Department of States report (2019). In another instance, suspected Boko Haram terrorists killed about 30 people, left about 42 injured on June 12, 2019, when three Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) were detonated at a market in Konduga, Borno State (Rahim, 2019). Also, suspected ISIS-WA terrorists were reported to have attacked a convoy of Action against Hunger (AAH) and Health Ministry employees in Borno State on July 18, 2019. In the said attack, a driver was killed while one AAH staff, two drivers, and three health ministry workers were declared missing or reportedly taken as hostages (Haruna, 2019).

The trend of operations by Boko Haram and ISIS-WA coalition indicates that they adopt hit-and-run tactics otherwise called guerrilla strategy. As observed, both groups usually lay ambush to catch their unsuspecting victims. These operations are unarguably aimed at frustrating the government's actions through terror attacks. The insurgents prefer these trends because they know that a face-to-face confrontation with government forces may lead to large casualties for their men because the government will have an advantage over them in terms of a higher number of military personnel and equipment. Thus, about four prominent Islamic groups in Somalia, Al-Shabaab, Hizbul Islam, Ahlu-Sunna-Wal-Jama'a and al-Ittihad al-Islamiyya, are engaged in sectarian and clan wars and are invariably opposed to Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Of all these, the most perceptible and lethal is Al-Shabaab. The group was originally known as Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen and is based in East Africa. Its operations cover Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania. Apart from benefitting from foreign fighters to strengthening its terror machinery, the organization received equipment and training from countries like Iran, Syria and Libya (Solomon, 2015). Also, Somalian communities in diaspora equally provided logistics and financial support to the group. Such support came from East Leigh in Nairobi and Dubai (Ploch, 2010).

It is note-worthy to mention that since Somalia has not enjoyed stable governance for almost twenty years; a development that has enabled non-state actors to move in and out of the country without detection, interception, or neutralization (Burgess, 2015). Though there were collaborative efforts between and among the Somalian government, African Union forces led by the Kenyan and Ethiopian military and US to crush Al-Shabaab offensively, Al-Shabaab's allegiance to Al-qaeda strengthened the group to withstand the coalition. Al-Shabaab attacks, therefore, indicate how terror groups use ungoverned spaces like porous borders, non-existent or ineffective immigration control and lack of central authority in Somalia to recruit and network in East Africa. Thus, it became a terror and dealt many devastating blows to the Somalian nation, inflicting serious damage on its economy and a threat to its security. The effects of terrorists are too numerous to enumerate.

Notwithstanding the complexities associated with it, an attempt is made to discuss a few. Terrorists attacks often results in the destruction of infrastructure. These inimical acts culminate in infrastructural deficits, which may linger for years as a result of the dwindling economic resources available to the government at a time or the lack of interest or political will by an incumbent political leadership to pursue such programs. Just as the destruction of the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon during the 9/11 attacks has impacted negatively on US, African states have recently lost a lot of their public infrastructures to terrorist attacks (Maiangwa, 2014; Otinche, 2018).

There is no doubt that terrorists attacks brings about a reduction in government revenue. This fact is inevitable in terror-prone societies of African nations as in other continents. Presently, terrorist activities hinder movements and thus reduce tourist activities, which is one revenue-spinning industry in every African nation. In contemporary times, local and international tourists naturally stay away from nations or regions blacklisted to be unsecured or volatile as advised by their national governments or security agencies. The consequence of the foregoing leads naturally to the loss of revenue and foreign exchange earnings until the security situation improves and tourists can be guaranteed their safety.

Suffice to say that the destruction of human capital constitute a product of terrorism. The terrorist activities in their different colorations negatively impact the psyche of the citizens of terror-prone regions of Africa, thereby instigating an exodus of the energetic workforce out of their local communities or national borders to other conducive environments where their aspirations could be realized in tranquility. While some relocate to neighboring communities, others prefer to seek greener pastures in Europe, leaving a deficit in the human capital needs of their homelands. Thus, Africans readily migrate to Europe and other parts of the developed economies, thus changing their environment as a result of the increasing hardship. Since no economy flourishes in an environment of insecurity, terror prone nations are usually characterized by stunted economy. In reality, the activity of terrorists with the carnage that follows naturally repels investors and discourages foreign direct investment (FDI). In such a situation, every segment of the economy of African nations suffers, thus reducing their economic viability.

Empirical Review

Ayika (2025) critically examines the rise in violent extremism and terrorism, its structural drivers, and implications for development, with focus on African continent. Beginning with an exploration of global trends, the study analyzes evolution of terrorism from ideologically driven and hierarchical networks to more decentralized, transnational, and technologically sophisticated formations. It identifies core drivers such as radicalization, political repression, socio-economic marginalization, and the use of digital platforms for recruitment and propaganda. The paper contextualizes these dynamics within Africa, highlighting regional vulnerabilities, weak governance, porous borders, environmental stressors and fragile institutions. Particular attention is given to terrorist hotspots such as the Sahel, Horn of Africa, and Lake Chad Basin. Nigeria is examined in depth, exploring the rise of Boko Haram and ISWAP, the state's military and non-military responses and the broader socio-political and humanitarian consequences of protracted insurgency. Through an evidence-based policy framework, the paper presents actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing regional cooperation, socio-economic resilience, counter-radicalization, community engagement, justice sector reform and gender-inclusiveness. The study concludes that a sustainable response to violent extremism must move beyond military containment toward a holistic strategy that addresses root causes, rebuilds trust in public institutions, and empowers affected communities.

Bolaji (2010) argued that terrorism poses enormous threats to security, political stability, economic development and human security of West African. It submits that the region is not presently a hub of terrorism but a fertile ground for breeding terrorist networks through trans-national criminal networks, small arms proliferation, illegal natural resource transfer and human and drugs trafficking. It traces the root of precarious security in the

region to poverty, underdevelopment, youth unemployment, bad governance and categorizes the types of terrorist groups which are presently operating in the region. The paper examines the theoretical and practical justification and also the limit of good governance and collective security in the fight against terrorism. It posits that West Africa has robust governance mechanism for preventing security threat but a relatively underdeveloped security architecture for effectively tackling the menace. It submits that neither of these two approaches can work alone, in isolation of the other and articulates a framework for integrating good governance and collective security strategies in the region's effort to prevent terrorism.

Kwame, (2010) argued that violence is terror and terror is violence. Liberators, freedom fighters, revolutionaries and terrorists have all become labels of convenience. Historically, terrorism has been institutionalized by some governments to their advantage. Academicians and politicians fail to agree on the issues surrounding terrorism hence defining terrorism has become an academic puzzle. The ambiguity in its definition has also contributed to lack of any universal comprehensive acceptable theory. The literature on terrorism by and large accused weaker nations of supporting terrorism. This paper argues otherwise by using the African experience, slavery and colonization, to question the literature on terrorism. Nations throughout history have used terrorism as a pretext to expand their military atrocities when they cannot achieve their political goals diplomatically. This article concludes that the developed countries use terrorism as a tool for economic development as they occupy and control the resources of the less developed countries. In short, when it comes to terrorism, all nations are guilty and the need for global solution must be paramount.

IV. Discussion of Findings

The following findings were made from the study. Firstly, Africa has been labeled a theatre of war due to incessant attacks which plagued its landscape. It is a known fact that international terrorism features in most African states. A development that has led to daily loss of lives, with insecurity at its peak. Although no African state is ruled by terrorist organizations, however, heavily armed extremist and insurgent groups hold large swathes of de facto territorial controlling thus functioning as quasi states in several regions. For instance, in Mali, Al-Qaeda linked coalition Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen controls extensive rural areas in the North and center and imposed strict Islamic law on the resident of the area. This developments among others, explains why the continent's development has been slow or stagnated in all spheres.

Secondly, the study found out that the rise of terrorism and its structural drivers has profound implications for development within the African continent. It is no longer news that terrorism now resides in African region, with its enlarged scope and dynamism; which has negatively impacted on the economy of African states.

Thirdly, the study revealed that terrorism poses enormous threats to security, political stability, economic development and human security in African. Sadly, although the region is not presently a hub of terrorism but a fertile ground for breeding terrorist networks through trans-national criminal networks, small arms proliferation, illegal natural resource transfer and human and drugs trafficking. It traces the root of precarious security in the region to poverty, underdevelopment, youth unemployment and bad governance.

Finally, the study revealed that sporadic conflicts between bordering states are explored by terrorist groups to advance religious and political agenda which threaten regional security in Africa. For example, the unconventional activities of ruthless insurgent groups such as the Islamic State of the Maghrib, Boko Haram, and Al Shabaab thrives on conflicts and instability between bordering states; driven by religious, political or economic motives to acquire power, territory and control over innocent populations.

V. Conclusion

Terrorism is complex and dynamic in nature. This has made the concept to emerge as

one of the most enduring threats to global security in the 21st century. Its manifestations and adaptive nature includes its ability to perform coordinated attacks by transnational jihadist networks as localized insurgencies demonstrate its adaptability and persistence. From a global standpoint, evolution of terrorism reflects a transformation from structured ideologically motivated movements to hybrid networks that blend political, religious, economic and criminal motives. More so, the decentralization of terrorist organizations, along with the use of emerging technologies and online platforms, continue to challenge conventional counter-terrorism strategies. This global transformation has had a devastating impact on Africa. Thus, terrorism have evolved from fringe actors to formidable forces capable of occupying territories, administering alternative governance, and perpetrating large-scale violence against civilians and state institutions.

VI. Recommendations

The following suggestions are made by the study.

Democratic or representative governance must as a matter of necessity prioritize delivery of democratic dividends and improve the standard of living of Africans. To achieve this objective, government should plug all the holes through which scarce resources are being siphoned so as to have enough resources for national development.

The complexities of insecurity in African demands more than military might. Sustainable peace and resilience require governance reforms, community participation, and inclusive development. The global community, regional partners, and national stakeholders must collaborate to ensure that efforts are not only reactive but pre-active and people-centered. These policy recommendations provide a blueprint for action toward lasting stability.

References

ACLED (2024). Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project – Africa Overview.

Adebayo, A.A., (2014). Implication of Boko Haram terrorism on national development in Nigeria: A critical review. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 5(16), 480-489. https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n16p480

Adedire, S. A., Ake, M., & Olowojolu, O., (2016). Combating terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria: An international collaboration against Boko Haram. Fountain University Journal of Management and Social Sciences. 5(1), 67-74.

Adefuye, A., (2008). Good Governance and Accountability in a Democracy. Lecture delivered to participants of National Defence College, Nigeria on 7th October 2008, Abuja.

Akpotor, S., (2013). Terrorism and insecurity in the Nigeria state: The challenges. Retrieved from https:search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx

Awojobi, O.N., (2014). The socio-economic implications of Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East of Nigeria. International Journal of Innovation and Scientific Research, 11(1), 144-150.

Ayika, P. M. E., (2025). Violent Extremism, Terrorism and Security: Global Trends, African Realities and the Nigerian Experience. Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development, 8 (2), 90-107.

Baranyi, S., (2012). Contested statehood and state-building in Haiti. Revista de Ciencia Política, 32(3).

Bester, P. C. (2015). The economic consequences of terrorism: A South African perspective. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Public Management, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, South Africa.

Bolaji, K. A., (2010). Preventing Terrorism in West Africa: Good Governance or Collective Security? Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa, 12 (1), 207-220.

Byman, D., (2016). Understanding the Islamic State. A Review. Brookings.

Call, C. T., (2011). Beyond the failed state: Toward conceptual alternatives. European Journal of International Relations, 17(2), 303–326. Cambridge University Press.

Carment, D., Samy, Y., & Prest, S., (2008). State Fragility and implications for aid allocation: An empirical analysis. Conflict Management and Peace Science, 25(4), 349–373.

Eme, O.I., & Ibietan, J., (2012). The cost of Boko Haram activities in Nigeria. Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review, 2(2), 10-32.

Europol (2023). EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT). https://www.europol.europa.eu

Foyou, V. E., Ngwafu, P., Santoyo, M., & Ortiz, A., (2018). The Boko Haram Insurgency and its Implications on Border Security, Trade and Economic Collaboration between Nigeria and Cameroon: An Exploratory Study. 9(1).

Fukuyama, F., (2005). State-building: governance and world order in the 21st century. Cornell University Press.

Global Terrorism Index (2024). Measuring the Impact of Terrorism. Institute for Economics & Peace. https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index

Goredema, Charles & Botha, Anneli (2005). African Commitment to Combating Organised Crime and Terrorism: A Review of Eight NEPAD Countries, Pretoria, Institute of Security Studies, p. 51.

IEP (2024). Global Terrorism Index 2024: Understanding the Threat Landscape.

Independent News. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.independent.co.UK/news/world/Africa/Nigeria-terror-attack-Boko-haram-suicide-bomb-konduga-deathtoll-a8961856.html%3famp

Kiras, J. D., (2007). Irregular warfare: Terrorism and insurgency in understanding modern warfare 224. Retrieved from: http/www.indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/baylis3ech09.pdf.

Kwame, B., (2010). Defining International Terrorism. Historical Reality and the African Experience. Journal of Comparative Politics. 104-123.

Laqueur, W., (2001). The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction. Oxford University Press.

Maiangwa, J. S., (2014). The concept of terrorism in Africa. Kaduna: Pyla-mak Publishers.

Maleševic´, S., (2017). The foundations of statehood: Empires and Nation-States in the longue duree. Thesis Eleven, 139(1), 145–161.

Morozov, N., (1880). The Terrorist Struggle. Violence in politics, terror and political assassination in Eastern Europe and Russia, F. Gross (Ed.). The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1972.

Netanyahu, B., (2001). Fighting Terrorism, FSG, New York.

Olugbode, M., (2016). Boko Haram destruction in North-east estimated at N1.8tn. Retrieved from: http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/04/07/boko-haramdestruction-in-north-east-estimated-at-ni.8tn/

Otinche, S. I., (2018). Globalization and insurgency operations in Nigeria: An overview. In Ibrahim, S., Saliu, H., and Okolie, A., (Eds.) Elections, security challenges and African development pp. 294-313.A publication of the Nigerian Political Science Association.

Parker, T., & Sitter, N., (2016). The Four horsemen of terrorism: it's not waves, its strains.

Terrorism and Political Violence, 28(2), 197-216.

Ploch, L., (2010). Countering terrorism in East Africa: The US response (CRS Report No.R41473). Washington DC: Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from: http://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/R41473.pdf.

Rahim, Z., (2019). Nigeria attack: At least 30 killed in triple suicide bombing.

Rapaport, D., (2004). The four-modern terrorism in attacking terrorism: Elements of a grand strategy, Audrey Kurth Cronin, James M. Ludes, (eds.) Washington DC: Georgetown Press. Retrieved from: https://issafrica.org/iss-today/has-counter-terrorism-become-aprofitable-business-in-nigeria. On the September 18, 2020.

The Guardian, (2008). Pirates seize another ship off Somalia's Coast in The Guardian, October 16, 2008, p. 11

United Nations News Service (2001, November). Press Release GA=9971: Terrorism must be addressed in parallel with poverty, underdevelopment and inequality, General Assembly is told.

United Nations, (2016). Letter dated January 18 2016 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism addressed to the President of the Security Council.

United State Department of State (2018).Country report on terrorism 2017. Chapter 5, Boko Haram, September 19. Retrieved from https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1445026.html

United State Department of State, (2018). Country report on terrorism 2017. Chapter 5, Boko Haram, September 19. Retrieved from https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1445026.html.

United States Institute of Peace (2004). Terrorism in the Horn of Africa, Special Report 113, Washington D.C, USIP, p. 1-2.

Uzochukwu, M., (2014). Challenges in Nigeria and solutions on how to resolve them. Politics and Social Issues, 22(4), 112-135.

Weber, M., (2015). Economia e sociedade: fundamentos da sociologia compreensiva. Tradução de Regis Barbosa e Karen Elsabe Barbosa. Brasilia: Editora da UnBen, (1921)/1991.

Weinberg, L., Pedahzur, A., & Hirsch-Hoefler, S. (2010). The challenges of conceptualizing terrorism. Terrorism and Political Violence, 16(4), 777-794.

Weinberg, L., Pedahzur, A., & Hirsch-Hoefler, S., (2010). The challenges of conceptualizing terrorism. Terrorism and Political Violence, 16(4), 777-794.

Wilkinson, P., (1977). Terrorism and the liberal state. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

World Bank, (2006). Key development data and statistics. Retrieved from: web.worldbank.org/wbsite/external/datastatistics/0,contentmdk:20535285menupk: 1192694-pagepk: 64133150-pipk: 64133175-thesitepk:239419,00.html.