

INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

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Abstract

The paper examines Global Terrorism from an International Context. Terrorism is the major threat to global peace and security as no states in the global system today is immune from terrorist attack. Terrorism has grave implication for peace, security and socio-economic development. Terrorist related attacks have led to the death of many, destructions of properties and social displacement of people. Common terrorist groups in the global system are; Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram Bandit, Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP), Taliban and Al-Shabaab etc. The rational choice theory was adopted as the theoretical framework. Secondary source of data was deployed; it involves the collection of data from textbooks, journals and seminar papers etc. The study observed that there is a strong links among global terrorist groups such as ISIL, Boko Haram, Bandit, Al-Qaeda, and Al-Shabaab among others. This has made it difficult for terrorism to be totally eradicated from the global system. The study recommends that there is need for global synergy among governments to sever link that exist among global terrorist groups such as ISIL, Al-Qaeda, and Al-Shabaab among others. This will help prevent the transfer of weapons and training given to the group.

Keywords: Terrorism, Global, Terrorist, Attack, Al-Qaeda

Introduction

Terrorism has become a key policy issue among countries at both the national and international fronts. One of the dominant threats to the global system today is the issue of terrorism. Even the developed western countries are not immune to terrorist attack. The attack on United States World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001 popularly known as (9/11) by terrorist group is still fresh in the minds of global policy makers and students of international politics. Apart from the attack on the U.S and other Western developed countries have experience terrorist attacks. France in 2019 was a victim of terrorist attack following the detonation of bomb by a terrorist in a club that left many dead including security agents. The United States Department of Defense (2011: p.56), refer to terrorism as “the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear: intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious or ideological”. Onuoha (2012, p. 45) had stated that “terrorists target civilians deliberately and indiscriminately. It uses extreme brutality yet, remains faceless and shadowy in its irregular tactics of pursuing political, social and economic objectives”. Terrorism involves the use or threat of violence and seeks to create fear, not just within the direct victims but among a wide audience. Terrorism proper is thus the calculated use of violence to generate fear, and thereby to achieve political, social and economic goals, when direct military victory is not possible.

It is against this background that this paper intends to examine terrorism within the global context.

Statement of the Problem

The safety of people and their properties cannot be guaranteed in an atmosphere of terrorist related attacks. These security challenges pose a serious threat to the peace, progress and economic prosperity of the people. According to Onuoha (2011, p. 46) “the loss of human lives and the injuries sustained as a result of terrorism cause significant economic disruption. The adverse economic consequences of terrorism affect individuals and societies alike”. He went further to posit that “the immediate economic costs of terrorism can be measured in terms of the value of lives lost, the disability that results from the injuries, and the destruction of private and public properties, among others” (Onouha, 2011 p.47). Terrorism continues to pose a major threat to international peace and security and undermines the core values of the United Nations. There were 63 countries in 2019 that recorded at least one death from a terrorist attack and seventeen countries that recorded over 100 deaths from terrorism. However, only Afghanistan and Nigeria recorded over 1,000 deaths and both countries had significant reductions in the number of people killed in 2019. By contrast, in 2015 there were six countries that recorded over a thousand deaths from terrorism (Conte, 2010).

Terrorist groups in the global system includes; Alqaeda, Al-shabaab, Taliban, Boko Haram and Fulani militants etc. According to the Global Terrorism Index 2015, Fulani militants, the most violent actor in the Middle Belt’s farmer-herder conflict were adjudged the fourth-deadliest terror group in the world (Benjamin and Steven, 2012). In 2018, Fulani extremists were responsible for 1,158 fatalities in Nigeria a majority of terror-related deaths in the country that year. According to Amnesty International (2021; p.4), “between 2014-2021, over three thousand lives and properties worth over ten billion naira in the northeast region were lost as a

result of the deadly attacks by Boko Haram. The northeastern part of Nigeria such as Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, amongst others happens to be the greatest casualty (Amnesty International, 2021). The strategies utilized by terrorists include; kidnapping, targeted killing, assassination, suicide bombing, bombing with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), ambush, shooting, etc.

States have the primary responsibility for protecting their populations from the threats posed by terrorism. At the same time, given the often cross-regional nature of the terrorist threat, mechanisms for effective cooperation are needed at the global and regional levels. To this end, the United Nations (UN), by virtue of its universality and legitimacy, has an important role to play. Yet, despite the longstanding presence of terrorism as an issue on the UN agenda, the collective response to global terrorism has been hindered by fundamental disagreements among UN member states, including divergent threat perceptions and priorities among the global North and South. In addition, tensions remain between the Security Council and the General Assembly as to the rightful arbiter of multilateral norms and the appropriate forum for discussing counterterrorism.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this paper is to analyze international terrorism from a global context: the specific objectives are:

1. Examine the nature of global terrorism.
2. Proffer measures on how to address the menace of global terrorism.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this paper is the Rational Choice Theory. Rational Choice

Theory refers to a set of guidelines that help understand economic and social behavior. The theory originated in the eighteenth century and can be traced back to the political economist and philosopher Adam Smith (Amartya, 2008). The theory postulates that an individual will perform a cost–benefit analysis to determine whether an option is right for them (Boudon, 2003). It also suggests that an individual's self-driven rational actions will help better the overall economy. Rational choice theory looks at three concepts: rational actors, self-interest and the invisible hand (Browning, et al, 2000).

The basic premise of rational choice theory is that the decisions made by individual actors will collectively produce aggregate social behavior. The theory also assumes that individuals have preferences out of available choice alternatives. These preferences are assumed to be complete and transitive. Completeness refers to the individual being able to say which of the options they prefer (i.e. individual prefers A over B, B over A or are indifferent to both). The rational agent will then perform their own cost–benefit analysis using a variety of criterion to perform their self-determined best choice of action. Some of the major proponents of the Rational Choice Theory (RCT) are George Homans and Peter Blau. However, a major theoretical work on Rational Choice Theory (RCT) was published by James Coleman (1926 -1995).

This theory is appropriate for this study because terrorists are rational actors, they are not irrational. The terrorists act may appear irrational but they (the terrorists) are not irrational because they have goals and objectives they covert to achieve. It is however ironic that terrorists use irrational acts to seek to achieve rational objectives.

Methodology

The historical research design would be adopted for the study; it involved looking at past events

so as to understand present events in order to be able to predict future events. The secondary source of data was utilized for the study.

It involves the collection of data from sources such as textbooks, seminar papers and magazines etc. Content analysis would be deployed in analyzing the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Nature of Global Terrorism

Terrorism comes from the French word “terrorisme”, and originally referred specifically to state terrorism as practiced by the French government during the Reign of Terror. The French word *terrorisme* in turn derives from the Latin verb *terreo* meaning “frighten”. The *terror cimbricus* was a panic and state of emergency in Rome in response to the approach of warriors of the Cimbri tribe in 105 BC (Hansen, 2004). According to Gurr (2000), the word terrorism was first used in France to describe a new system of government adopted during the French Revolution of 1789-1799. The Jacobins cited this precedent when imposing a Reign of Terror during the Revolution. The *regime de la terreur* (Reign of Terror) was intended to promote democracy and popular rule by ridding the revolution of its enemies and thereby purifying it. However, the oppression and violent excesses of the *terreur* transformed it into a feared instrument of the state. From that time on, terrorism has had a decidedly negative connotation (Gurr, 2000). Saliu (2010), noted that the word however, did not gain wider popularity until the late 19th century when it was

adopted by a group of Russian revolutionaries to describe their violent struggle against tsarist rule. Sergey Nechayev who founded the Russian terrorist group - 'People's Retribution' in 1869, described himself as a "terrorist". Since then, terrorism assumed the more familiar anti-government associations it has today.

The term global/international terrorism means terrorism involving citizens or territories of more than one country. Drawing on information in the U.S. Department of State report, *Patterns of Global Terrorism* (2001), six identifiable terrorist groups fall into the category of international or global terrorism: Abu Nidal Organization (ANO), Al-Gama's al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group), Hizbollah (Party of God), Al- Jihad (Egyptian Islamic Jihad), Mujahedin-e Kalq Organization (MEK), and Al- Qaeda (Conte, 2010). The UN Security Council report of 2020 has included other armed groups as international terrorist organizations. This includes Boko Haram, Islamic state for West Africa Province (ISWAP), and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal muslimin etc. Most of these armed groups have radical disposition. Example of such is Al-Qaeda which is a radical, Islamic-based organization that supports the creation of an Islamist Palestinian State in place of Israel and the elimination of U.S. influence in all of the Middle East (Conte, 2010). Mamdani (2004; p. 118) averred that "some of these groups advocate establishing a new world order under extremist Muslim views. These groups operate in a truly global fashion, with support networks spanning the world". He concluded by asserting that collectively, they have the ability to strike targets in virtually any country, and their ideological goals threaten security interests beyond their region (Mamdani, 2004). Krueger and Maleckova, (2003) submitted that with modern communication technology, such as the Internet, and the ability to move freely in open societies, theirs is a 'virtual nation', which possesses many of the instruments of power,

including informational, military, and economic means. Radical Islamic beliefs and a common abhorrence of Western culture tie these organizations together.

Table one: List of terrorist organizations in the world

S/No.	Names of groups	Year listed as international terrorist organization
1	Abu Sayyaf Group (AGG)	Listed 14 November, 2002
2	Al- Qai'da in (AQ)	Listed 21 October 2002
3	Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula	Listed 26 November, 2002
4	Islamic State in Libya (Is-lybia)	Listed 29 November, 2010
5	Islamic State Khoransan Province	Listed 3 November, 2016
6	Islamic State Sinai Province (IS Sinai)	Listed Nov. 2016
7	Islamic State Somalia	Listed 1 July 2020
8	Jubhat fatal al-sham	Listed 29 June 2013
9	Palestinian Islamic Jihad	Listed 3 may 2004
10	Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)	Listed 27 October, 2002
11	Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal muslimin	Listed 30 Nov. 2020

12	Islamic state west Africa Province	Listed 1 July 2020
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Source: Global Terrorism Index (2015)

Terrorism has been the concern of the international community since 1937, when the League of Nations elaborated the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorist. The international community since 1963 has however elaborated universal legal instruments related to prevention and suppression of international terrorism, which constitute the universal legal regime against terrorism.

The events of September 11, 2001, were unprecedented in the history of global terrorism. Ganor (2005) noted that “about 19 terrorists belonging to the Al-Qaeda, a terrorist group led by Osama Bin Laden hijacked four passenger aircrafts shortly after they departed from airports in Boston, Massachusetts; Newark, New Jersey; and Washington, D.C”. He went further to contend that the first plane crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Centre in New York City, the second aircraft struck the south tower, and the third plane crashed into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. The fourth aircraft crashed into a field in rural Pennsylvania (Ganor, 2005). The events of September 11, 2001, brought into sharper focus the extent to which terrorist groups could go to achieve their goals.

Even though Al-Qaeda as a group had existed, and had attacked civilian and military targets before then, it was the September 11, 2001 attacks that led the USA, and the International community as a whole to redefine the war on global terrorism. Ganor (2005; p. 123) posits that “the attacks, which were linked to the emergence of the high-profile leadership of the Al-Qaeda, under Osama bin Laden, led popular reaction to be directed towards seeking justice through the capture or

killing of Al- Qaeda leaders, primarily Osama bin Laden”. Before September 11, terrorists had killed not less than 1,000 Americans, in the United States and abroad, during the modern era of international terrorism. Approximately three times that number perished on September 11, 2001 (Ganor, 2005). Other terrorist related attacks had been carried out by different terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, bandits, ISWAP, and Fulani militants etc.

Measures to Address the Menace of Global Terrorism

Measures to eliminate terrorism have been on the agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations for quite some time now (UN, General Assembly Resolution, 2020). During the 56th Session of the UNGA on ‘Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism’, the lack of a working definition of terrorism was again an issue. In the course of the debate on the issue, it was noted that ‘the absence of a definition seriously undermine international efforts to tackle a great threat to humanity.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288) is a unique global instrument to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism. Through its adoption by consensus in 2006, all United Nations member States agreed to a common strategic and operational approach to fighting terrorism. The Strategy reaffirms that member States have the primary responsibility to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. It sends a clear message that terrorism is unacceptable in all its forms and manifestations, and that member States have resolved to take practical steps, individually and collectively, to prevent and combat terrorism. Those practical steps include a wide array of measures ranging from strengthening member States’ capacity to counter terrorist threats to better coordinating the United Nations

system's counter-terrorism architecture and activities. The United Nations system's counter-terrorism architecture is anchored on four pillars:

1. Measures to address the condition conducive to the spread of terrorism.
2. Measures to prevent and combat terrorism.
3. Measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in the regard.
4. Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism.

The implementation of these measures at the international level is expected to curtail the menace of global terrorism. Also national governments that are bedeviled with the challenges of terrorism have come up with different measures to tackle the problem. For instance, the activities of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region have led to the establishment of Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)—a loose coalition of troops from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria—seized back most part of the territory previously held by Boko Haram (Ukah, 2019). This arrangement has helped in the fight against terrorism in Nigeria.

Findings

The following observations were made from the study:

1. The study observed that there is a strong link among global terrorist groups such as ISIL, Boko Haram, Bandit, Al-Qaeda, and Al-Shabaab among others. This has made it difficult for terrorism to be totally eradicated from the global system.
2. It was also observed in the course of the study that terrorist groups in the global system

share information, arms, and ammunitions etc. This has made it difficult for terrorism to be totally eradicated from the global system.

3. The work observed that hundreds of lives and millions of people had lost their lives as a result of terrorist related attacks in the global system. Hundreds of thousands have been evicted from their homes creating grave humanitarian crisis in the global system.

Conclusion

Terrorism is a global phenomenon, thus, no nation of the world today technically speaking is immune from terrorist attacks. While nations are not immune from terrorist attacks, the capacity of dealing or coping with terrorism varies from nation to nation. While the industrialized western nations have capacity to deal with terrorism, developing nations lack such capacity, this is evidenced in Nigeria's experience with Boko Haram for over a decade. It is therefore paramount for nations to work in synergy in order to collectively defeat the scourge of terrorism that has threatened human existence.

Recommendations

1. There is need for global synergy among governments to sever links that exist among global terrorist groups such as ISIL, Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, among others. This will help prevent the transfer of weapons and training given to groups. This can be achieved by intelligence gathering and working with other security agencies for vital information.
2. In order to curb the menace of global terrorism, the various sources of funding for the terrorist groups must be cut. This was the position of American ambassador to Nigeria. This

can be achieved, like the foregoing recommendation, by intelligence gathering and collaboration between security agencies.

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