

Terrorism and Multidimensional Armed Conflicts in Africa and the Middle East: A Concluding Remark

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Abstract

Terrorism has become a pervasive global phenomenon. It is a threat to lives and property in many continents of the globe. Different countries receive their share of the deadly nation-building 'virus'. In Africa, the different terrorist organizations have capitalized on weak governance to penetrate different societies and build their own sovereign enclaves. The earlier trends of terrorism that happened as revolutionary attacks and other important causes were not only a challenge to the Middle East, where terrorism is endemic but also a global phenomenon. Religiously motivated violent extremism (RMVE)] is perhaps today's biggest threat to humanity. Insecurity brought on primarily by the Boko Haram insurgency has been one of the most urgent issues facing Nigerian governments and population since the turn of the twenty-first century, and more so since the country's restoration to democratic governance in 1999. Given that Nigeria, frequently referred to as the "Giant of Africa," has actively participated in peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and peace enforcement operations in numerous nations across the world for decades, the situation is especially paradoxical. The doctrinal research methodology was employed using primary, secondary and additional sources to support the analysis. It is against this backdrop that this paper examined the nexus between Boko Haram and its attendant effects on nation building in Nigeria, while considering other effects of Boko Haram activities. The study found that, even during the Buhari administration, Nigerian insurgency and terrorist operations have persisted despite government interventions for the past decade, leading to widespread loss of life and destruction of property. The study recommended that national and regional governments need to improve the economic situation, like providing jobs and human capital development as well as infrastructure that will cater for the teeming youths of the terror inflicted countries.

Keywords: Terrorism; Multidimensional; Armed Conflicts; Middle East.

Introduction

Nigeria has been confronted with different inhuman activities, nationalist movements, crises, political, social and religious grievances and agitations from different groups in different parts of the country, including the Boko Haram terrorist sect. This has hindered the manifestation and actualization of the nation building goals and undermined the nation's prospects, while undermining its national unity. The Boko Haram menace did not only emerge as a threat to Nigeria's sovereignty but its activities have also made Nigeria to be categorized as a terrorist nation by the international community. Since its emergence in the year 2000, Boko Haram has dominated the security discourse in Nigeria. The country has been plagued by the torrent and chaotic wave of

bombing, killing and kidnapping by its members, which regularly has endangered the national unity and development of Nigeria in the 21st century.

Nigeria has faced series of social and political challenges since her independence in 1960. These came in several shapes and forms; however, none perhaps has paralleled the terrorist insurgency posed by Boko Haram in the north-eastern region of the country. For years, the crisis has ravaged the entire landscape of the region and attempts to end it and curtail the wastage of resources it has subjected the country to, has proved unsuccessful.

The problems faced by the Nigerian, Chadian, Cameroonian, and Nigerien administrations in tackling the Boko Haram menace remain widespread. These governments have increased military operations against the insurgents; but the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency have not been fully addressed.

A survey of security reports on Boko Haram members held in some states in Nigeria revealed that in Bauchi State, where about two hundred alleged members of the sect were arrested and it became a major source of 2009 abductions. In different parts of Northern Nigeria, the police remain on the receiving end of Boko Haram insurgency.

The membership of the terror sect grew to the extent that they could form a strong national and international terror network. It was such large support base, which motivated sect members to attack the Danja Divisional Police Station in Katsina State. Again, it was equally the same large number of support base that left over seventy people dead in Bauchi State; when they went for what the then Governor Isa Yuguda termed "the mother of all mayhem in the state." Ten suspected members of the Boko Haram sect were arrested in 2008 based on intelligence inputs and turned over to the Force CID in Abuja for additional investigation because their activities were not limited to Katsina State, according to a former Police Commissioner Dan Azumi Doma.

Historical Perspectives of Terrorism in Africa

Terrorism can be historically, ideologically, geographically, culturally, economically or environmentally motivated, but not every terrorist attack in Africa was motivated by these factors. In Africa there had been several outbreaks of extremism from different outlets. For example, the desire for self-determination was motivated primarily by nationalist independence movements. In this situation, Western colonization and its culture were the root cause and the colonial masters worsened the situations by their politics of dominance and segregation. Nationalists wanted to escape the embarrassment they were exposed to by colonialism.¹ In other words, the need to mobilize Africa's people from a political, economic, social and cultural viewpoint sponsored the earliest phase of terrorism. The restitution by the African personality was identified by Kwame Nkrumah.²

A variety of reasons contributed to the initial preceding upsurge of extremism, which was related to multiple civil wars, such as an inability to fulfil the political and economic advances made in the fight for independence, discontent with colour-free boundaries and differing philosophies. The Civil War in Ethiopia, amongst groups as Tigrayans and Oromos was motivated by the will of Eritreans to self-determination, as well as political wars and ambitions to power. UNITA was largely motivated by political differences and personal aspirations in many countries such as

¹ William Rosenau, Al Qaida recruitment trends in Kenya and Tanzania, *Studies in conflict and Terrorism*, 28 pp 1-10

² Paul Wilkinson, (1977). *Terrorism and the liberal state*, Macmillan, London, pp 47-68.

Angola. Civil wars have also been wreaked in many areas of Africa due to corruption, the state alliance to one or two ethnic groups, the abuse of professional resources, including intelligence, and the lack of open, responsive and responsible governance. Such challenges have led to frustration and, in some situations, to people taking up arms to fight for justice and equality.

Indeed, Africa has been one of the sources of civil war and chaos in the political misadministration and marginalization of other ethnic groups. More so, at the socio-economic stage, flawed macro-economic strategies, the shortage of jobs, policy tenders, corruption and other economic gains could be observed, the situation is worsened by degenerating poverty and economic marginalization of certain classes³.

The continuous surge in violence across Africa, coupled with the issue of Israel-Palestine, was motivated by alleged injustices in Palestine. The inability to enact numerous UN security council resolutions, including Resolution 242 of the Security Council of 1967, led to a number of African countries (like South Africa) supporting the Palestinian cause in the 1970s, leading to the lack of self-determination and social rights in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Several factors pointing to weak defense and government structures are mostly the main causes of the fourth wave of terrorism in Africa, especially in relation to those terror sects affiliated with Al-Qaeda operations.

Indeed, in many African nations, border protection is so insufficient that governments, cannot keep aliens out. No nation in Africa, be it within the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea or the Red Sea, has the power to monitor its coastlines. African states rely on undertrained and under-resourced intelligence services in addition to the lack of sufficient border protection. Africa's states can't rise above terrorism as al-Qaeda components are impossible to overcome without significant capacity building in the areas of research, monitoring and prevention. In fact, the extent of corruption in certain countries' public services have made many African states vulnerable to illicit activities of extremist sects. Therefore, without a stable, effective, responsive and responsible governance in African nations, non-State actors, including the terrorists, would always open up themselves to exploitation.

Terrorism in other African States

Many of the African states had received a heavy share in the negative wind of terrorism. When the Boko Haram started in Nigeria, many analysts thought that their activities will grow and collapse in Nigeria but the years that followed revealed otherwise. The sect gradually penetrated into Cameroon, Chad and Niger Republics where they constituted enormous headache to individuals, groups, lives and property within the Central African Republic and Lake Chad states.

Again, when the Tuareg insurgency started in Mali, very few people imagined that they could undermined the state and the institutions of Government with their newly acquired arms from Libya warlords. It took the intervention of American and French forces to regularly rescue the Malian State from the negative grips of terrorists.

The activities of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which later graduated into a political party and collapsed back into a terrorist group remains major source of headache and concern for peace advocates, democratic analysts and security personnel in the African continent. This is because

³ F Bayart, S Ellis and B Hibou, (1999). The criminalization of the state in Africa, James Currey, Oxford press.

Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt like Hamas in Palestine grew from a terror group to a fully registered political party and won elections due to widespread legitimacy from the masses. Unfortunately, the subsequent degeneration of these groups in their operational dynamics created more problems for nation building processes.

The activities of Al Shabab have also turned life into a nightmare in Somalia. They have successfully ensured that the Somali State will not have a sustainable government. They call most of the viable institution of the state and also ensure that they influence public opinion negatively against any form of constituted authority in the country. Gradually, they have extended their destructive influence into Kenya. The West Gate Shopping Mall and the University of Garissa Kenya, where they unleashed heavy loss of lives will not be easily forgotten because of the international effects and implications of those attacks.

The Cabo Delgado Province in northern Mozambique has witnessed series of violent attacks since October, 2017 from the Islamist insurgent group, Ahlus Sunnah Wa Jamo (ASWJ) that is locally known as Ansar al-Sunna and Al-Shabaab. This work looked at the history, ideology and funding of Ahlus Sunnah Wa Jamo. It examined the response of the government towards the insurgency and how it has alienated the local populace, while driving them to give active and subtle support to the insurgents. It also analyzed the terror progression and identified the trajectories which if applied by the Mozambican government and her foreign partners will drastically mitigate and roll back the gains made by the insurgents while isolating them from the local populace.

The Middle East

Despite not being directly causative, Evans and Newnham characterize the Middle East as having four major characteristics that have greatly fueled war and terrorism. They contend that the area has historically been greatly impacted by imperialist interests and power politics, is a significant importer of weapons, a large exporter of oil, and has a strong propensity towards authoritarian political regimes. Oil politics is a vital determinant of international politics in the Middle East region. Religious fundamentalism and international terrorism is perceived as the key issue in Middle East by most Western thinkers. However, a fundamental historical foundation to Middle East conflicts is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

It is the political might and 'indestructibility' of the Israeli State that promoted the arms race in the region within the Cold War era. It also gave birth to the construction of both the known and the unknown nuclear plants in the Middle East region. Many of the inter-state conflicts in the Middle East have been influenced by nationalism, especially militant nationalism in the form of suicide bombing by terrorists.

The complex nature of conflicts in the region has also intensified religious chauvinism amongst the world major religions, especially in the face of their historic origin in the Middle East region. It is this conflict that gave birth to the rise of militant Islamist movements, Christian religious radicalism, extremism and the full-blown terrorism in different parts of the world stage.

It may also be argued that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has internal and external implications when properly analyzed. This is due to the fact that first, it is a conflict over territory as "Jews and Arab-Palestinians lay claims to the same land. It is equally an ethnic and religious-cum-ideological

conflict as it involves adherents of Judaism (Jews) on one hand and those of Islam (Palestinians) on the other hand. It is ideological in the sense that it is being perceived from several quarters as Zionism versus Arabism, what Kreisberg would call an 'identity-based' conflict. Kreisberg maintains that "a conflict exists when two or more persons or groups manifest the belief that they have incompatible goals.

According to Kreisberg, conflict arises when opposing groups have at least four things in common: a sense of shared identity, a grievance, the conviction that the other side is to blame for the grievance, and the belief that they have the ability to influence the other side to lessen their grievance. The many groups that have traditionally been involved in hostilities throughout the Middle East share these four characteristics.

However, one of the biggest threats to peace initiatives in the last few years in the region is the crisis that has ran down the Palestinian leadership. The first factor that laid the foundation for the crisis was that Hamas, which was initially perceived as a Palestinian 'terrorist' organization by both Israel and the West suddenly -emerged as a formidable socio-political force in the Palestinian nation.

The new socio-democratic victory and legitimacy of Hamas created a form of socio-political schism in the nation that led to Hamas-Fatah conflict. They began to kill and hold members of each other's party hostage. Thousands of lives were lost in that intra-national party motivated crisis. Property were destroyed in their numbers and each group controlled a part of the Palestinian nation. While Hamas controlled Gaza Strip, Fatah controlled West Bank. Recently, the Syrian Civil War, the battle for hegemony in the region, the Khashoggi disappearance crisis, Saudi-Qatar dispute etc. have continued to abort the quest for sustainable peace in the region.

Recommendations

Several terrorist organizations have recently found a home and a stage in the Middle East and Africa. These areas are focal points of international terror activity since many of the most infamous terrorist groups in the world either have their roots there or have close relations to them.

Terrorism in the Middle East has been greatly exacerbated by the creation of Israel in 1948, the hostile responses and crises it sparked in the area, the desire for an Islamic state, and the ongoing exclusion of minorities. Numerous terrorist acts have caused significant material and human losses in nations like Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Terrorism has become the most common form of conflict in the Middle East and Africa due to the unchecked rise of violent groups such as Gama'a al-Islamiyya (IG), Hamas, Harakatul-Mujahidin (HUM), Hizbollah, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM), Jemaah Islamiya (JI), Al-Qa'ida, the Real IRA (RIRA), the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Taliban, Al Shabab, and Boko Haram.

In order to fulfil the demands of the burgeoning youth population, this study advises both national and regional governments to give priority to enhancing economic conditions through job creation, investments in the development of human capital, and infrastructure expansion. Such actions would deter susceptible groups from joining extremist sects.

The study concludes by highlighting the value of public relations as a long-term tactic for dealing with crises, wars, and terrorism. Public relations can progressively change animosity into empathy, prejudice into acceptance, apathy into interest, and ignorance into awareness by putting communication ideas, methods, and procedures into practice. This strategy can promote peace and stability throughout the Middle East and Africa by undermining popular support for terrorists and violent criminals.