

Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Africa: The Nigerian Experience

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Abstract: Terrorism has become a contemporary issue in Africa and in Nigeria particularly. This paper therefore examined terrorism and counter-terrorism measures in Africa with emphasis on Nigeria. Methodologically, data used for this study was sourced through the qualitative methods of data collection which relied mainly on secondary sources for data collection. This involved the use of literature materials such as textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, seminar papers (published and unpublished), etc., as well as the internet. Data gathered was sourced content and descriptive analysis. The study established that several counter-terrorism measures have been put in place at both national and continental levels to reduce if not eradicate in totality the spate of terrorism but these measures have not been able to achieve the desired results as terrorism has continued to thrive. The failure of these measures anchors on government insensitivity and/or lack of political will to address issues of unemployment, get rich quick syndrome, failed family values and other national questions like power sharing, uneven development and prebendal politics, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as well as porous borders. The study recommended that Africa must establish a Continental Terrorism Management Center (CTMC) at continental level, while governments at all levels in Nigeria must as a matter of urgency address socio-economic deprivation and the severe wealth inequality among its people that provides recruitment centers for these terrorist groups.

Keywords: Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism, Violence, Force

I. Introduction

Terrorism in Africa especially Nigeria, has become an increasingly pervasive problem where terrorist groups operate with alarming frequency. The shift in global terrorism from traditional conflict zones such as the Middle East to Africa has raised concerns regarding national security and regional stability. Terrorist activities in Africa are not only a direct threat to peace but also hamper the social and economic development of many nations, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. As Africa's most populous and economically influential nations, Nigeria has become a prime target for terrorist groups seeking to destabilize the region.

Significantly, the rise of terrorism in Africa is exacerbated by the interconnectedness of global communication networks and the ease with which terrorist ideologies can spread across borders. The proliferation of extremist ideas, particularly through social media platforms, has empowered terrorist groups to recruit followers and carry out deadly attacks. In Nigeria, the rapid growth of groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) exemplifies the transnational nature of modern terrorism. Additionally, local grievances and regional tensions, such as ethnic conflicts, poverty, and political instability, have been exploited by these groups to gain support and expand their operations.

In fact, while terrorism was initially more prevalent in North Africa and parts of the Horn of Africa, the scope of terrorist activities in sub-Saharan Africa has broadened significantly. Countries like Nigeria, Mali, Somalia, and Cameroon have experienced devastating terrorist attacks that have disrupted their socio-political fabric. Despite efforts by the Nigerian government and its allies to combat terrorism, the region continues to grapple with the devastating effects of terrorism on civilians, infrastructure, and governance. This paper explores the nature, causes, and impacts of terrorism in Africa with emphasis on Nigeria, and also examine the effectiveness of counter-terrorism strategies employed by Nigerian government towards eliminating the menace of terrorism in its territory.

In 2024, Africa experienced a significant escalation in terrorist activities, with militant Islamist groups intensifying their operations across various regions. The Sahel emerged as the epicenter of this violence, accounting for over half of all militant Islamist incidents on the continent (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2024). Fatalities in the Sahel nearly tripled since 2020, reaching approximately 11,000 in 2024 (Financial Times, 2024).

From 2020 to 2024, Nigeria experienced a notable escalation in terrorist activities and violent incidents. According to a report by Nextier, Nigeria recorded 5,291 violent incidents leading to 20,472 fatalities and injuries during this period (Guardian Nigeria, 2024). The Global Terrorism Index also reported a 34% increase in terrorism-related deaths in 2023, largely due to intensified conflicts between the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram (Business Day Nigeria, 2024).

While projections for 2025 indicate a commitment to enhanced security measures, National Security Adviser Nuhu Ribadu has emphasized proactive strategies to combat terrorism (Punch Nigeria, 2024). However, the emergence of new threats, including the Lakurawa terror group and ongoing instability in the Southeast and North Central regions, underscores the need for continuous vigilance and adaptive strategies (The Nation, 2024).

Problem Statement

Terrorism in Nigeria has had devastating effects on the country's security, economy, and social fabric. The activities of extremist groups like Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) have led to widespread violence, displacing millions of people, particularly in the northeastern region. The destruction of infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and markets, has hindered economic development and access to basic services. Additionally, frequent terrorist attacks have created an atmosphere of fear and instability, discouraging both local and foreign investment. The Nigerian government has had to allocate significant resources to counterterrorism efforts, diverting funds from essential sectors like education and healthcare.

The social impact of terrorism in Nigeria is equally severe, as it has deepened ethnic and religious tensions, particularly in conflict-prone areas. Many communities have been torn apart, with families losing loved ones and children being abducted or forced into insurgency groups. The psychological trauma experienced by survivors and displaced persons has long-term consequences, affecting their mental health and ability to rebuild their lives. Terrorism has also weakened trust between citizens and the government, as many feel that authorities have failed to provide adequate security. This erosion of trust has fueled local grievances and, in some cases, led to increased radicalization, perpetuating the cycle of violence. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes military action, socioeconomic development, and community-driven reconciliation efforts.

Statistically, between 2020 and 2024, Nigeria faced significant challenges related to terrorism, resulting in substantial loss of life and widespread displacement. A report by Nextier indicates that Nigeria experienced over 20,000 deaths due to violent incidents from 2020 to 2024. (GistReel, 2024). Also, in 2023, The Global Terrorism Index reported a 34% increase in terrorism-related deaths, totaling 524 fatalities, primarily due to intensified conflicts between the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram (Business Day Nigeria, 2024). Also, The Open Doors International reported that 4,998 Christians were murdered in Nigeria, highlighting targeted attacks by Islamist groups (New York Post, 2024).

In 2020, Nigeria had approximately 2.7 million internally displaced persons, ranking third highest in Africa (Statista, 2024). In February 2023, The International Organization for Migration (IOM) identified 2,375,661 IDPs, noting a 3% decrease from July 2022 (DTM IOM, 2023). Also, Reports indicated that the number of IDPs had risen to 3.4 million, exacerbated by ongoing violence and targeted attacks (New York Post, 2024).

While specific data for 2025 is not yet available, the Nigerian government has pledged to intensify efforts to combat terrorism and address internal displacement (Punch Nigeria, 2024). However, the emergence of new threats and persistent instability suggest that challenges related to fatalities and displacement may continue (The Nation, 2024).

Objectives of the Study:

This study is designed to evaluate and/or appraise counter terrorism strategies applied by the Nigerian government to determine how effective these strategies have been in reducing if not eradicate totally the menace of terrorism in Nigeria.

Significance of the study

The significance of this study is multidimensional as it is crucial in understanding the underlying causes of terrorism, the motivations of extremist groups, and the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies implemented by the Nigerian government and international partners. By analyzing these factors, the study provides critical insights that can help policymakers, security agencies, and researchers develop more effective and sustainable approaches to combating terrorism.

Simply put, a study on terrorism and counterterrorism in Africa, with a focus on Nigeria, is of immense significance. It provides essential knowledge for formulating effective policies, enhancing regional cooperation, fostering economic resilience, and promoting human rights-compliant counterterrorism measures. Given the evolving nature of terrorism, continuous research and adaptation are necessary to develop holistic strategies that ensure sustainable peace and security in Nigeria and across Africa.

II. Literature Review**Defining Terrorism**

Terrorism, as a concept, has been a subject of numerous debates and varying interpretations over time. This might be attributed to what Ludwikowski (1987) referred to as the problem of "one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter." While there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism, it is generally understood as the use of violence or the threat of violence to achieve political, ideological, or religious objectives. The term "terrorism" evokes fear, anxiety, and panic, as it targets civilians and non-combatants to create widespread uncertainty and destabilization. Terrorists seek to create a state of terror and insecurity, ultimately undermining the trust that citizens place in their governments, societal institutions, and communities.

Terrorism, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), is the "unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives." This definition highlights the political and social motives behind terrorist actions, yet it does not fully account for the broader psychological and emotional toll terrorism inflicts on the population. Terrorism creates a pervasive atmosphere of fear,

not only due to the immediate loss of life and destruction but also due to the uncertainty about when and where the next attack may occur.

The United Nations (1992) defines terrorism as "an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-)clandestine individuals, groups, or state actors for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons—in contrast to assassination, where the direct targets of terrorism are not the main targets." This definition underscores the element of repeated and persistent violence and emphasizes that terrorism can be carried out not only by non-state actors but also by state actors in certain instances. Additionally, the European Union (2002) defines terrorism as "acts intended to seriously intimidate a population, unlawfully coerce or influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping." This definition underscores the broader social and political aims of terrorism, as well as the extreme methods used to achieve them.

Furthermore, the U.S. Department of State (2004) defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets, usually intended to influence an audience." This definition emphasizes the deliberate nature of terrorism and the primary aim to influence a broader public, government policy, or international relations through the spectacle of violence. Also, the U.K. Home Office (2000) sees terrorism as "the use or threat of action to influence the government or to intimidate the public in pursuit of political, religious, or ideological objectives." The Home Office definition highlights the role of intimidation and the broader social objectives pursued through terrorizing civilians and governments alike.

In his view, Laqueur (1977) a renowned scholar in the study of terrorism, defines terrorism as "the use of violence and threats to intimidate or coerce, especially for political purposes." Laqueur's definition highlights the intentionality of terrorism, focusing on the strategic purpose behind violence: to intimidate, coerce, or influence political decisions, often through creating fear within the broader society. To Rapoport (1984) a key theorist in terrorism studies, defines terrorism as "the deliberate use of violence to instill fear for political, religious, or ideological purposes." Rapoport's work emphasizes the deliberate, fear-inducing aspect of terrorism and links it to the need to achieve political or ideological goals, often challenging the political status quo.

In addition to the above, Wilkinson's (1993) defined terrorism as "coercive intimidation, premeditated acts, or threats of violence systematically aimed at instilling fear in a target to alter its behavior." Wilkinson emphasizes the systematic nature of terrorism, focusing on its objective of altering the behavior of governments or societies through the instillation of fear. This definition highlights the strategic and methodical approach terrorists use to achieve their goals.

Herdman (1937) expands the definition by stating that terrorism involves "systematic violence by an organized group or party to achieve its aims," with the distinction that even governments might engage in terrorism to achieve state objectives. This definition acknowledges state-sponsored terrorism and the organizational structure behind terrorist actions. Schmid & Jongman (1988) in their analysis, argue that terrorism involves four essential elements: "Premeditation – planned in advance, not impulsive; Political motives – aimed at changing political orders rather than criminal pursuits; Civilian targets – focuses on non-military populations; Non-state actors – typically carried out by sub-national groups." This definition provides a comprehensive framework for understanding terrorism, emphasizing the political motives behind attacks and the typical targeting of non-combatants.

Each of the forgoing definitions provides a unique perspective on what constitutes terrorism, yet they all agree on the centrality of violence or the threat of violence used to achieve political, ideological, or religious goals. Understanding the diverse interpretations of terrorism is essential for formulating counter-terrorism strategies, as it enables policymakers to consider both the immediate and long-term consequences of terrorism on societies.

Types of Terrorism

Terrorism can be classified into different categories based on its objectives, methods, and the groups or individuals involved. One common classification is by the objectives sought:

i. Revolutionary Terrorism: This seeks to overthrow or replace existing political regimes. Groups that engage in revolutionary terrorism often do so because they believe the current system is oppressive and that violent action is the only means to enact change. The goal is typically to replace the ruling government with a more favorable system, which may include a different political, economic, or social order. Famous examples of revolutionary terrorism include the actions of groups like the Weather Underground in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, as well as more radical movements like the Red Brigades in Italy. These groups often aim for systemic change through violent means, seeing their actions as necessary to dismantle entrenched political structures.

ii. Nationalist Terrorism: This is motivated by the desire for independence or self-determination. It occurs when a group within a nation feels oppressed or marginalized by the central government, and the group seeks autonomy, sovereignty, or the establishment of its own state. One of the most notable examples of nationalist terrorism is the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland, which used violent tactics to push for Irish independence from Britain. Similarly, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and groups like ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna) in Spain have used terrorism to pursue nationalist and separatist goals. These groups often operate in regions where political, ethnic, or religious identity is a point of contention.

iii. Religious Terrorism: This terrorism is driven by the belief that a particular religious ideology justifies the use of violence to achieve political or social goals. Groups involved in religious terrorism often view their actions as divinely sanctioned or

necessary to further a religious cause. These groups may target both civilians and non-believers, seeing their violence as a form of holy war or jihad. In recent decades, religious terrorism has gained significant international attention, particularly with the rise of radical Islamic groups like Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Boko Haram. These groups interpret religious doctrines to justify violence against non-believers or those they deem as enemies of their faith. Religious terrorism can also intersect with other forms of terrorism, such as nationalist or revolutionary terrorism, where religious beliefs are used as a framework to pursue broader socio-political goals.

Each category of terrorism operates under different dynamics, requiring unique strategies for prevention, response, and counter-terrorism efforts. Understanding the motives behind terrorism is crucial for developing effective counter-terrorism policies and strategies. It is not enough to simply target the groups responsible for attacks; governments and international organizations must also address the root causes of terrorism, such as political oppression, social inequality, and ideological extremism, in order to reduce the appeal of terrorism as a method of achieving political or religious objectives.

Moreover, as terrorism continues to evolve, it is important to recognize the ways in which new technologies and communication platforms have amplified its reach and impact. In the 21st century, the internet and social media have become powerful tools for terrorist organizations to spread their messages, recruit new members, and coordinate attacks.

This global interconnectedness occasioned by globalization propelled by ICT revolution has made it more difficult for traditional security and intelligence agencies to prevent terrorist activities and to track the financing and movements of terrorist groups. Consequently, counter-terrorism efforts must adapt to the digital age, emphasizing cybersecurity, international cooperation, and the regulation of online platforms that may be exploited by terrorist organizations.

On the whole, terrorism is a multi-faceted and complex issue that requires a nuanced approach to understand its various motivations and methods. Its impacts extend beyond the immediate loss of life and destruction of infrastructure, affecting entire societies in both direct and indirect ways. By understanding the different types of terrorism and their underlying causes, governments and international organizations can better develop strategies to prevent violence, protect civilians, and ultimately work towards creating a more secure and stable world.

Typologies of Terrorism

Terrorism can be classified into various typologies based on its goals, targets, and actors involved. Wilkinson (as cited in Shultz, 1978) identifies three main categories of terrorism: revolutionary terrorism, sub-revolutionary terrorism, and repressive terrorism. Revolutionary terrorism seeks to overthrow an existing political order and replace it with a new system. This form of terrorism is often associated with groups that want to replace a government or regime, as seen in the case of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka.

Sub-revolutionary terrorism, on the other hand, pursues political goals that do not involve the complete overthrow of the government but seek to influence policies or bring attention to specific issues. This type of terrorism is often carried out by smaller, less organized groups that aim to disrupt the status quo and draw attention to perceived injustices. The actions of groups like the Ogoni Youths in Nigeria and the Niger Delta militancy exemplify sub-revolutionary terrorism.

Repressive terrorism involves the use of force by governments to suppress or eliminate opposition groups or ideologies. State-sponsored terrorism, where governments directly or indirectly support terrorist organizations, is another form of terrorism. Governments may use terrorism as a tool to suppress dissent or maintain control over their populations, as seen in various authoritarian regimes.

Other typologies of terrorism according to Martin (2006) are:

i. **State-Sponsored Terrorism:** This refers to acts of terrorism supported or executed by governments to further their political, military, or ideological agendas. Historically, this type of terrorism was exemplified during World War I, Germany deployed over 110,000 chemical shells filled with phosgene gas in its 1916 offensive against French forces in Verdun. This use of chemical warfare marked one of the early examples of state-directed terror. Historians estimate that chemical weapons employed during World War I resulted in fatalities ranging from 300,000 to 900,000 individuals (Fitzgerald, 2008). State-sponsored terrorism highlights how terrorism can serve not only as a method of resistance against states but also as a deliberate policy tool used by governments.

ii. **Left-Wing Terrorism:** This is a form of terrorism driven by opposition to capitalist systems, often seeking to replace them with socialist or communist governance. Examples of groups are:

The Red Army Faction (formerly Baader-Meinhof Group) in Germany
The Japanese Red Army

The Weather Underground (also known as The Weathermen) in the United States during the 1970s
The Red Brigades in Italy.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, left-wing terrorism significantly decreased in prevalence (Martin, 2013).

iii. **Right-Wing Terrorism:** This involves movements that aim to overthrow liberal democracies and establish authoritarian or fascist regimes. It is characterized by frequently targeting immigrants, refugees, and minorities,

reflecting xenophobic, racist, and anti-Semitic ideologies. Examples includes Neo-fascist organizations across Europe and the United States have been involved in violent attacks against marginalized communities, driven by supremacist beliefs (Hoffman, 2017).

Nature of Terrorists

Terrorists, contrary to popular stereotypes, are not always disorganized or illiterate individuals. Many are highly educated, well-trained, and often come from socio-political backgrounds that fuel their radicalization. Nwolise (1999) emphasize that terrorists tend to be young, dedicated, and driven by ideological convictions. The idea that terrorists are solely motivated by poverty or lack of education has been debunked in recent years, as terrorist organizations have recruited individuals from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. Terrorists are often motivated by a sense of injustice or the belief that violence is the only means of achieving their political or religious goals. For example, in Nigeria, Boko Haram's rise to prominence was partly fueled by a sense of marginalization, frustration with government corruption, and a desire to establish an Islamic state. Similarly, groups like ISWAP exploit socio-economic disparities and religious divisions to recruit individuals and gain support.

The recruitment strategies of terrorist organizations are increasingly sophisticated, with an emphasis on psychological manipulation and propaganda. Terrorist groups use social media and other digital platforms to reach a global audience, promote their ideologies, and recruit new members. This evolution in recruitment methods has made it more difficult for governments to track and prevent radicalization. Terrorists often operate in cells or decentralized networks, making it challenging for authorities to infiltrate or dismantle these groups. The rise of lone-wolf terrorism, where individuals carry out attacks independently, further complicates efforts to combat terrorism. These individuals may not have direct connections to organized terrorist groups but are often inspired by extremist ideologies.

Causes of Terrorism

The causes of terrorism are complex and multifaceted, involving a combination of socio-political, economic, and psychological factors. Opafola (2008) categorizes the causes of terrorism into long-term and short-term factors. Long-term causes typically include deep-seated issues such as poverty, political disenfranchisement, inequality, and social alienation. In many African countries, including Nigeria, poverty remains a significant driver of terrorism, as individuals who feel excluded from the economic and political mainstream may be more susceptible to extremist ideologies. Short-term factors, such as sudden ethnic or religious tensions, government repression, and violence, can also trigger terrorist activities. For instance, the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria was accelerated by the political repression faced by the group's leader, Mohammed Yusuf, and the perceived neglect of northern Nigeria by the central government.

The environmental context in which terrorism occurs is equally important. Terrorism can be both an internal and external phenomenon, with groups targeting their own governments or foreign interests. For example, Al-Qaeda's attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were motivated by the group's opposition to U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, while groups like Boko Haram primarily focus on domestic issues related to governance and religion. Terrorist groups also exploit regional instability and conflicts to further their agenda. In regions where weak governance and security structures prevail, terrorist organizations can thrive. The porous borders in the Sahel region, for example, have allowed groups like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) to operate with relative impunity.

Gaps in the Literature

Though the literature review is thorough, that does not mean that there are no gaps in the review. Some gaps in the literature includes but not limited to the follow:

- i. Most of the definitions provided come from Western institutions (FBI, UN, EU, U.S. Department of State, UK Home Office).
- ii. There is a lack of perspectives from non-Western countries or scholars, particularly from regions that have experienced prolonged terrorism (e.g., the Middle East, Africa, South Asia).
- iii. While multiple definitions of terrorism are provided, the discussion does not fully explore why a universally accepted definition has remained elusive.
- iv. The political interests of states and international organizations in defining terrorism to suit their agendas are not critically examined.
- v. The literature does not address how terrorism has evolved with technological advancements, particularly cyberterrorism.
- vi. Modern forms of terrorism, such as online radicalization and digital propaganda, are missing from the analysis.

Theoretical Framework

Conflict theory provides a robust framework for understanding the dynamics of terrorism and counter-terrorism in Africa, especially in Nigeria. By emphasizing the unequal distribution of resources and power, the theory helps explain the root causes, persistence, and varying forms of terrorism in the region. Unlike functionalist theories that emphasize societal cohesion, conflict theory focuses on the structural inequalities that lead to systemic tensions. Conflict theory emphasizes that societal dynamics are

driven by struggles over scarce resources and power, with Weber's systems of stratification—class, status, and power playing a pivotal role. This perspective contrasts with functionalism, which views society as a cohesive system maintained by shared values.

The central tenet of conflict theory lies in the unequal distribution of resources class, status, and power as identified by Weber (1946). In Nigeria, resource control, particularly of oil wealth in the Niger Delta, has been a source of conflict. Perceptions of exploitation and marginalization among communities in resource-rich regions fuel grievances that terrorist groups, such as the Niger Delta Avengers, exploit to gain support and legitimacy. In the northern region of Nigeria, Boko Haram capitalizes on widespread poverty, low levels of education, and political exclusion to recruit members. The stark inequalities between Nigeria's north and south exemplify the kind of systemic stratification conflict theorists like Coser (1987) and Marx (1977) argue lead to unrest.

Marx's concept of deprivation provides further insights into the motivations behind terrorism. Absolute deprivation refers to a state of destitution that leaves individuals unable to engage in conflict. In contrast, relative deprivation, as modernized by Gurr (1970), is the perception of being disadvantaged compared to others. This perception is particularly significant in Nigeria, where rising expectations among youth are unmet due to systemic unemployment and corruption. For instance, Boko Haram's rise is partly attributed to feelings of relative deprivation among northern Muslims, who perceive themselves as socially and economically disadvantaged relative to their southern counterparts. This gap fosters a sense of injustice, creating fertile ground for radical ideologies. Power dynamics are central to conflict theory. In Nigeria, elites' monopolization of political and economic power exacerbates societal divides. According to elite theory, the dominance of a small group over the majority perpetuates inequalities, making society more prone to conflict. This dynamic is evident in Nigeria's patronage system, where political elites use resources to maintain their influence, sidelining marginalized groups.

Coser (1987) argues that conflict is both instinctual and functional. In Nigeria, internal conflicts within terrorist groups often lead to splinter factions, as seen with Boko Haram and its offshoot, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). These internal struggles can either weaken terrorist movements by dividing their leadership or escalate violence as factions compete for dominance. Conversely, external conflicts, such as those between terrorist groups and the Nigerian state, tend to solidify group boundaries and enhance cohesion among members. Boko Haram, for example, has utilized external conflict with the state to reinforce its ideological narrative and attract recruits.

Conflict can have both integrative and disintegrative effects, as highlighted by Coser which he referred to as integrative and disintegrative. According to him, integrative effects occur when internal conflicts that are less violent can clarify group norms and strengthen organizational structure. This is evident in the development of Boko Haram's internal governance systems. On the other hand, disintegrative effects results to violent external conflicts which often destabilize communities, leading to displacements and long-term socio-economic challenges. Nigeria's counter-terrorism efforts, while necessary, have sometimes exacerbated grievances by causing collateral damage, further alienating affected populations.

Counter-terrorism strategies must address the structural causes of conflict to be effective. Focusing solely on military interventions without tackling systemic inequalities perpetuates the cycle of violence. Initiatives such as improving access to education, creating economic opportunities, and ensuring equitable resource distribution are critical for long-term stability.

Conflict theory offers a lens to understand the socio-economic and political underpinnings of terrorism in Nigeria. By highlighting the unequal distribution of resources, relative deprivation, and power struggles, the theory underscores the need for holistic approaches to counter-terrorism that go beyond military responses to address the root causes of conflict.

Origin of Terrorism in Africa

Terrorism in Africa has deep historical roots, with early instances of violent resistance emerging in the early 20th century. According to Igbinovia (1993), terrorism in Africa can be traced back to 1904, when groups such as the Mau Mau in Kenya used violent tactics to resist British colonial rule. Over the decades, terrorism in Africa has evolved, with various groups employing different strategies to achieve their goals. In the post-colonial period, terrorism in Africa began to take on new forms, particularly with the involvement of external actors. In the 1970s, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and other Middle Eastern groups began hijacking aircraft and carrying out attacks in African countries such as Libya and Uganda. These acts of terrorism were aimed at drawing attention to the Palestinian cause and further destabilizing the political landscape in Africa.

By the 1980s, terrorism in Africa began to take on a more localized form, with groups in countries like Algeria, Uganda, and Angola carrying out bombings and assassinations. In the 1990s, terrorism spread to new regions, with the rise of groups like Al-Qaeda and local militias engaging in violence across Africa. The rise of Islamic extremist groups, particularly in the Sahel and Horn of Africa, has further complicated the security situation. Groups like Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria have carried out deadly attacks on civilians, government forces, and international targets. These groups have gained international attention for their brutal tactics, including suicide bombings, kidnappings, and massacres.

Terrorism in Nigeria

Nigeria has experienced significant challenges related to terrorism, both before and after its independence in 1960. Early forms of terrorism in Nigeria included political violence, ethnic clashes, and militant resistance movements. Following independence, the

country faced several instances of post-election violence, as well as political unrest and civil war. The Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) was one of the most significant periods of violent conflict in the country, with both sides using terrorist tactics to achieve their goals (Adejoh, & Adisa, 2017).

In the post-colonial period, terrorism in Nigeria evolved into more organized forms, with ethnic militias and separatist groups gaining prominence. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is one example of an ethnic-based group that used terrorism to demand greater political and economic autonomy for the Niger Delta region (Aworawo, 2017). The rise of Boko Haram in the 2000s marked a new phase of terrorism in Nigeria, with the group adopting extremist ideologies and using violence to destabilize the government. Boko Haram's insurgency has led to thousands of deaths, displacement of millions, and widespread destruction of infrastructure. The group has carried out numerous high-profile attacks, including the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls in 2014, which garnered international attention.

In addition to Boko Haram, Nigeria has faced other forms of terrorism, including attacks by ethnic militias and the rise of herders-farmers conflicts, which have resulted in deadly clashes between ethnic groups and agricultural communities. In his assessment of terrorism in Nigeria, Abdullahi (2018) highlights the Nigerian government's insufficient use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to combat terrorism. He argues that the activities of terrorist groups like Boko Haram could be more effectively monitored through data collection and analysis, including the use of modern ICT tools such as Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). These tools could help security agencies gather primary and secondary data, process it, and analyze it to mobilize resources effectively. (Alita, et.al (2022)

As Alimi (2018) notes, ICT applications in security include electronic surveillance, which is crucial for monitoring terrorist activities in real-time. Technologies like Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras can be deployed in strategic locations to track human operations and identify suspects and their accomplices, as discussed by Hodson (2016). Furthermore, Odeniyi & Abdullahi (2022) suggest that in regions like Northern Nigeria, the installation of CCTV cameras in key areas could provide valuable insights into terrorist operations, making it easier for security forces to carry out arrests and respond to threats.

Despite efforts from the Nigerian military, with assistance from a joint military force including Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, to push Boko Haram out of several regions in northeastern Nigeria, the group still controls certain areas and continues to carry out deadly suicide attacks and abductions, particularly targeting women and children (Global Conflict Tracker, 2022).

Causes of terrorism in Nigeria

- a. **Political Grievances:** Nigeria's governance challenges, including corruption, weak institutions, and the exclusion of specific groups, particularly in the northern regions, have fueled grievances. The perceived neglect and marginalization of northern communities by the central government have created resentment, which terrorist groups like Boko Haram exploit (Thurston, 2020).
- b. **Economic Inequalities:** Northern Nigeria is characterized by widespread poverty and unemployment, making it a fertile ground for extremist recruitment. According to Agbiboa (2017), economic disparities between northern and southern Nigeria exacerbate tensions, with the youth being particularly vulnerable to radicalization.
- c. **Religious and Ideological Factors:** Boko Haram's rise is deeply rooted in religious extremism. The group's founder, Mohammed Yusuf, advocated for a radical interpretation of Islam, rejecting Western education and governance. These ideologies resonate with disaffected individuals in a region where formal education and state presence are limited (Botha, 2020).
- d. **Weak Security Infrastructure:** Nigeria's inability to effectively counter terrorism stems from inadequate security infrastructure, poor intelligence coordination, and limited resources. This weakness allows terrorist groups to operate with relative impunity, particularly in remote areas (Zenn, 2021).
- e. **Cross-Border Challenges:** Nigeria's porous borders with Chad, Niger, and Cameroon facilitate the movement of arms, fighters, and resources, sustaining terrorist activities in the region (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023).

Impacts of Terrorism in Nigeria

The consequences of terrorism in Nigeria are profound, affecting multiple dimensions:

- a. **Humanitarian Crisis:** Boko Haram's insurgency has displaced over 2.5 million people, creating one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises. Refugee camps in northeastern Nigeria are overcrowded, and access to basic services like healthcare and education remains limited (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023).
- b. **Economic Disruption:** The economic impact of terrorism in Nigeria is immense, particularly in the northeast. Agricultural activities, the main livelihood of many in the region, have been disrupted, leading to food insecurity. The World Bank (2022) estimates that the Nigerian economy loses billions annually due to terrorism-related disruptions.
- c. **Educational Setbacks:** Boko Haram's opposition to Western education has resulted in targeted attacks on schools, such as the abduction of Chibok schoolgirls in 2014. These incidents have caused widespread fear, leading to the closure of schools and depriving children of education (Agbiboa, 2017).

- d. **Social Fragmentation:** Terrorism exacerbates ethnic and religious divisions in Nigeria, further polarizing communities. This fragmentation undermines national unity and complicates efforts to foster reconciliation (International Crisis Group, 2022).
- e. **Security Sector Strain:** The Nigerian military and police forces are overstretched, battling multiple security challenges beyond terrorism, including banditry and communal conflicts. This overstretch limits their effectiveness in counter-terrorism operations (Williams, 2021).

Counter-Terrorism strategies in Nigeria

The Nigerian government, with support from international partners, has implemented various counter-terrorism strategies to address the issue. Below is a detailed analysis of these strategies, supported by references to relevant actions and policies:

a. Military and Security Operations

The Nigerian government has relied heavily on military force to combat terrorism. Key aspects include:

- **Operation Lafiya Dole:** Launched in 2015, this military operation aimed to dismantle Boko Haram's strongholds in the northeastern states. The operation involved coordinated efforts by the Nigerian Army, Air Force, and Navy.
- **Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF):** Nigeria collaborates with neighboring countries such as Chad, Niger, and Cameroon to form the MNJTF, a regional force aimed at combating terrorism and insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin area. This joint effort has been crucial in reducing cross-border movements and operations of terrorist groups.
- **Special Forces and Intelligence Units:** Nigeria has invested in training specialized forces and intelligence units, such as the Department of State Services (DSS) and military intelligence, to enhance counter-terrorism capabilities. Drones and surveillance technologies have also been introduced to track and neutralize terrorist activities.

b. Community Policing and Vigilante Groups

Recognizing the limitations of conventional military approaches, the government has encouraged community-based security initiatives:

- **Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF):** The CJTF, composed of local volunteers, works alongside the military to provide intelligence, monitor suspicious activities, and guard communities. This grassroots approach has improved local trust and increased the flow of actionable intelligence.
- **Traditional Leaders and Religious Institutions:** Engaging community leaders in counter-terrorism strategies has fostered collaboration in identifying and addressing radicalization at the local level.

c. Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Programs

Beyond military efforts, Nigeria has implemented CVE programs to address the root causes of terrorism:

- **De-Radicalization and Rehabilitation Programs:** Initiatives like the Safe Corridor Program provide former Boko Haram fighters with vocational training, psychological support, and reintegration into society. This approach aims to reduce recidivism and foster societal acceptance of ex-combatants.
- **Educational Reforms:** Programs targeting vulnerable youth, especially in northern Nigeria, focus on improving access to quality education and reducing unemployment, which are factors that drive radicalization.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Media campaigns and community outreach programs promote peace building, tolerance, and anti-extremism narratives.

d. Economic Development and Poverty Alleviation

Economic hardships and unemployment are significant drivers of terrorism in Nigeria. Addressing these issues is central to counter-terrorism:

- **Northeast Development Commission (NEDC):** Established in 2017, the NEDC focuses on rebuilding infrastructure, supporting displaced populations, and revitalizing the economy in the region most affected by terrorism.
- **Social Intervention Programs:** Government initiatives like the National Social Investment.

III. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study is of the view that contemporary terrorism is presenting itself as a different kind of conventional warfare and must be resisted. Terrorists' activities are second nature to Africa, especially Nigeria. It is carried out by individuals, groups in both private and public places and offices including the government you least expect. It is government terrorism that has given birth to other forms of terrorism conducted by individuals and groups. The study also established that indeed there are counter-terrorism measures in African and specifically in Nigeria, but these strategies have not been able to reduce the menace of terrorism in Nigeria as well as Africa. Hence, all hands must be on deck to ensure that terrorism is nipped to the bud by ensuring zero

tolerance to it. Hence, international non-governmental organizations must partner with multinational bodies to condemn governments that pursue policies and actions that create terrorist, and use terrorist tactics including policies and impose their will on others in the name of power politics and scramble for cheap and secure oil.

Despite ongoing counter-terrorism efforts, terrorism remains a major challenge in Africa. To effectively combat terrorism, governments must adopt more comprehensive and multifaceted approaches. At the national level, governments should focus on promoting good governance, strengthening security infrastructure, and addressing the root causes of terrorism, such as poverty, inequality, and political exclusion.

At the continental level, the African Union should continue to strengthen its counter-terrorism initiatives and enhance cooperation between member states. Establishing a Continental Terrorism Management Center (CTMC) could serve as a hub for research, intelligence sharing, and training, providing critical support to African governments in their fight against terrorism

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