

**TERRORISM IN AFRICA: A HISTORICAL AND
CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE 20TH CENTURY
EXPERIENCE, A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIA AND
SOMALIA**

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Abstract:

This paper presents a comprehensive examination of the intricate relationships between state weakness, terrorism, and human rights violations in Africa, both historically and contemporarily. Through a critical analysis of the complex interplay of political, economic, and social factors, this study explores the diverse manifestations, causes, and consequences of terrorism on the continent during the 20th century. Focusing on Nigeria and Somalia as case studies, this research identifies state weakness as a primary factor contributing to terrorism and examines how this vulnerability has been exploited by terrorists and external actors. The study argues that state weakness is not only a consequence of terrorism but also a contributing factor, perpetuating a vicious cycle of violence and instability. By highlighting the brutal nature of terrorism and its egregious human rights violations, this paper underscores the importance of recognizing the dignity of human life, even in death. Situated within the context of conflict and conflict resolution in Africa, this study aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of terrorism, one that acknowledges the intricate interplay of historical, political, economic, and social factors that shape this complex phenomenon. The findings of this research have significant implications for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars seeking to address the complex

challenges of terrorism, state weakness, and human rights violations in Africa.

Key Words: *Terrorism, Africa, History, The 20th century , Nigeria And Somalia*

Introduction

The genesis of terrorism in Africa was shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including the legacy of colonialism, post-colonial instability, Cold War dynamics, and economic and social marginalization. This legacy continues to reverberate across African societies, underscoring the imperative of understanding the historical context and trajectory of terrorism on the continent. This paper undertakes a comprehensive examination of the history of terrorism in Africa during the 20th century, probing the multifaceted manifestations, causes, and consequences of this phenomenon. By interrogating the political, economic, and social factors that contributed to terrorism in Africa, we aim to distill a nuanced understanding of this intricate issue. Focusing on Nigeria and Somalia as case studies, this paper identifies a range of factors that precipitate terrorism, including state weakness. It further explores the underlying causes of state weakness and how these vulnerabilities have been exploited by terrorists and external actors. A distinctive strength of this paper lies in its emphasis on the brutal nature of terrorism, which distinguishes it from other academic treatments of the subject. By highlighting the egregious human rights violations perpetrated by terrorists, including beheadings, rape, and fetal extractions, this paper underscores the imperative of recognizing the dignity of human life, even in death. This perspective is consonant with the United Nations' affirmation of the inherent dignity of human life. Moreover, this paper situates the analysis of terrorism within the context of conflict and conflict resolution in Africa

during the 20th century. By examining the intersection of terrorism with broader conflict dynamics, we hope to gain a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of this phenomenon.¹

In contrast to prevailing academic approaches that often relegate terrorism to an abstract, theoretical realm, this paper insists on acknowledging the visceral, human cost of terrorism. By doing so, it seeks to reclaim the narrative around terrorism, situating it within the context of human experience and dignity. Ultimately, this paper aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of terrorism in Africa, one that recognizes the intricate interplay of historical, political, economic, and social factors that shape this complex phenomenon.

Theoretical Framework

Structuralism Theory

Structuralism is a social science framework that examines underlying structures and systems that shape society. Claude Levi-Strauss, a French anthropologist, is widely regarded as one of the founders of structuralism. In his seminal work, "The Elementary Structures of Kinship," Levi-Strauss (1949) argued that social structures, such as kinship systems, are composed of underlying patterns and relationships that can be analyzed and understood through a structural approach. This perspective revolutionized the field of anthropology and had a profound impact on the development of structuralism.

Louis Althusser, a French philosopher, built upon Levi-Strauss's work and developed the concept of structural Marxism. Althusser (1969) posited that social structures, such as economic and political systems, are shaped by underlying power relationships and ideologies. He argued that these

structures are not fixed or deterministic but are instead subject to change and contestation.

Michel Foucault, another French philosopher, critiqued structuralism for its overemphasis on structure and its neglect of agency and human action. Foucault (1969) developed the concept of post-structuralism, which posits that social phenomena are shaped by a complex array of factors, including power relationships, discourse, and individual agency. He argued that structuralism's focus on underlying structures neglects the ways in which individuals and groups actively shape and contest these structures.²

Applying structuralism to explain terrorism in Africa, specifically in Somalia and Nigeria, highlights the role of deep-rooted structural factors. Structuralism posits that social phenomena, such as terrorism, can be understood by analyzing the underlying structures and relationships that shape them. In the context of terrorism in Africa in the 20th century, this paper use structuralism to explain the root causes of terrorism in Nigeria and Somalia.³ While structuralism provides a useful framework for understanding the roots of terrorism in Africa, it has been criticized for its overemphasis on structure and its neglect of agency and human action. Critics argue that individuals and groups have the power to shape their own destinies and that structural factors are not the sole determinants of social phenomena. In other words Structuralism, a social science framework, offers a unique lens through which to examine the complex phenomenon of terrorism in Africa. By focusing on the underlying structures and systems that shape society, structuralism provides a nuanced understanding of the root causes of terrorism in regions such as Somalia and Nigeria. This essay will apply structuralism to explain the persistence of

terrorism in these countries, highlighting the role of deep-rooted structural factors.

It's important to note that the term "terrorism" is often politicized and can be subjective, with different organizations and governments having varying definitions and classifications. Terrorism "an anxiety-inspired method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi) clandestine individuals, groups, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby – in contrast to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperiled) victims, and the main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought" (Schmid and Jongman, 1988:28).

In other words the above definition of terrorism, depicts that Terrorism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has been studied and debated by scholars and experts for decades. One of the most comprehensive definitions of terrorism was provided by Schmid and Jongman in 1988, which offers a nuanced understanding of this concept. According to Schmid and Jongman, terrorism is "an anxiety-inspired method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi) clandestine individuals, groups, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons." This definition highlights the strategic use of violence to create fear and anxiety, which is a hallmark of terrorist activities.

One of the key aspects of this definition is that terrorism involves "repeated violent action." This distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence, such as assassination, which is typically a single act. The use of repeated violence is a deliberate tactic to create a sense of ongoing fear and uncertainty.

The definition also notes that terrorists can be "(semi) clandestine individuals, groups, or state actors." This emphasizes that terrorism can be perpetrated by a range of actors, from individuals to state-sponsored groups. The motivations behind terrorism can also vary, including "idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons."

A critical aspect of terrorism is that the "direct targets of violence are not the main targets." This means that the immediate victims of terrorist attacks are not the primary objective. Instead, they are often chosen randomly or selectively as "targets of opportunity" or "representative or symbolic targets." The true targets of terrorism are the broader audience, which can be intimidated, coerced, or propagandized through the use of violence and threats.

The definition also highlights the importance of "threat- and violence-based communication processes" in terrorism. Terrorists use violence and threats to convey messages to their main targets, which can include governments, populations, or other groups. This communication process is a key aspect of terrorism, as it allows terrorists to manipulate their audience and achieve their goals.

This definition of terrorism provided by Schmid and Jongman offers a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of this

complex phenomenon. It highlights the strategic use of violence, the range of actors involved, and the importance of communication processes in achieving terrorist goals. By understanding terrorism in this way, we can better address the challenges it poses and work towards creating a safer and more secure world.

In Somalia, the collapse of the state in 1991 created a power vacuum and marked the beginning of a protracted period that allowed terrorist groups like Al-Shabaab to flourish. Structuralism reveals that this collapse was not merely a result of political instability, but rather a symptom of deeper structural issues. The country's history of colonialism, clan-based politics, warlordism, and external interventions. This power vacuum allowed extremist groups like Al-Shabaab to flourish, exploiting the country's fragility to establish a foothold. Also economic inequality created an environment conducive to extremist ideologies. Al-Shabaab's ability to exploit these structural weaknesses has allowed the group to maintain a stronghold in the region. The group's ability to provide basic services and governance in areas under their control has earned them a degree of legitimacy among some segments of the population, further entrenching their presence.

Similarly, in Nigeria, the terrorist group Boko Haram has capitalized on structural factors such as poverty, corruption, weakness of the state and religious tensions. The country's oil-rich economy has failed to translate into economic development for the majority of the population, creating widespread disillusionment. Boko Haram's anti-Western and anti-government narrative resonates with those who feel marginalized by the system. Structuralism highlights how these underlying conditions have enabled the group's growth and persistence.

Nigeria has struggled with political corruption, patronage, and ethno-religious tensions, which have contributed to the rise of Boko Haram. The group's initial focus on opposing Western-style education and seeking to establish an Islamic state has evolved into a more complex insurgency, fueled by economic inequality, resource competition, and regional divisions. The Nigerian government's heavy-handed response to the insurgency has also driven support for the group among some marginalized communities.

In both cases, structuralism underscores the need to address the root causes of terrorism, rather than solely focusing on military solutions. By examining the complex interplay of historical, political, and economic factors, policymakers can develop more effective strategies to prevent the spread of extremist ideologies. Ultimately, structuralism offers a critical framework for understanding terrorism in Africa, emphasizing the importance of addressing the deep-rooted structural factors that enable its persistence.

A critical examination of both cases reveals that terrorism is not solely the result of ideological extremism but rather a symptom of deeper structural issues. Political instability, economic deprivation, and social inequality have created an environment in which extremist ideologies can take root. The legacy of colonialism, Cold War rivalries, and external interventions has further complicated the situation, often exacerbating existing tensions and creating new ones.

Additionally, structuralism has been criticized for its lack of attention to context and its failure to consider the specific historical and cultural circumstances of different societies. This has led some critics to argue that structuralism is too rigid and

inflexible, and that it fails to account for the complexity and diversity of human experience.⁴

Finally, structuralism has been criticized for its determinism, which suggests that social phenomena are predetermined by structural factors and that individuals and groups have little room for maneuver. This has led some critics to argue that structuralism is too pessimistic and that it fails to account for the potential for human agency and social change.

In response to these criticisms, some scholars have developed alternative approaches to understanding terrorism in Africa. These approaches emphasize the importance of agency and human action, and they seek to understand the complex and diverse contexts in which terrorism emerges.

One such approach is post-structuralism, which critiques structuralism for its overemphasis on structure and its neglect of agency and human action. Post-structuralism argues that social phenomena are shaped by a complex array of factors, including structure, agency, and context. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the specific historical and cultural circumstances of different societies, and it seeks to account for the complexity and diversity of human experience.⁵

Another approach is critical terrorism studies, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the social and political contexts in which terrorism emerges. This approach critiques traditional approaches to terrorism studies for their failure to consider the root causes of terrorism, and it seeks to develop a more nuanced and complex understanding of this phenomenon.⁶

In conclusion, understanding the roots of terrorism in Africa is a complex task that requires a nuanced and multifaceted approach. While structuralism provides a useful framework for understanding the underlying factors that contribute to terrorism, it is important to consider alternative approaches that emphasize agency and human action. By addressing the root causes of terrorism and promoting peace and stability in Africa, we can work towards a more secure and prosperous future for all.

Terrorism in Africa

Terrorism has become a pervasive threat to global peace and security, with Africa being one of the most affected regions. Somalia and Nigeria, in particular, have been plagued by terrorist activities, resulting in immense human suffering and socio-economic devastation. To comprehend the complexities of terrorism in these countries, it is essential to delve into the underlying structural factors that have created an environment conducive to extremism.

In Somalia, the collapse of the state in 1991 marked the beginning of a protracted period of political instability, characterized by clan-based rivalries, warlordism, and external interventions. This power vacuum allowed extremist groups like Al-Shabaab to flourish, exploiting the country's fragility to establish a foothold. The group's ability to provide basic services and governance in areas under their control has earned them a degree of legitimacy among some segments of the population, further entrenching their presence.⁷

Nigeria, on the other hand, has struggled with political corruption, patronage, and ethno-religious tensions, which have contributed to the rise of Boko Haram. The group's initial focus on opposing Western-style education and seeking to establish

an Islamic state has evolved into a more complex insurgency, fueled by economic inequality, resource competition, and regional divisions. The Nigerian government's heavy-handed response to the insurgency has also driven support for the group among some marginalized communities.

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Definitions of Terrorism

Terrorism is a complex and controversial term with various definitions. The most widely accepted definition is from the United Nations, which defines terrorism as: "acts intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act."⁸

Contextually, terrorism can be:

- Domestic: Perpetrated by individuals or groups within a country, targeting fellow citizens or government interests.
- International: Involving cross-border attacks or global networks.
- Ideological: Motivated by political, religious, or social beliefs.
- State-sponsored: Supported or directed by governments.

It's important to note that the term "terrorism" is often politicized and can be subjective, with different organizations and governments having varying definitions and classifications.

Terrorism is “an anxiety-inspired method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi) clandestine individuals, groups, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby – in contrast to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperiled) victims, and the main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought” (Schmid and Jongman, 1988:28).⁹

In other words, the above definition of terrorism, depicts that Terrorism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has been studied and debated by scholars and experts for decades. One of the most comprehensive definitions of terrorism was provided by Schmid and Jongman in 1988, which offers a nuanced understanding of this concept. According to Schmid and Jongman, terrorism is "an anxiety-inspired method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi) clandestine individuals, groups, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons." This definition highlights the strategic use of violence to create fear and anxiety, which is a hallmark of terrorist activities.

One of the key aspects of this definition is that terrorism involves "repeated violent action." This distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence, such as assassination, which is typically a single act. The use of repeated violence is a

deliberate tactic to create a sense of ongoing fear and uncertainty among the targeted casualties.

The definition also notes that terrorists can be "(semi) clandestine individuals, groups, or state actors." This emphasizes that terrorism can be perpetrated by a range of actors, from individuals to state-sponsored groups. The motivations behind terrorism can also vary, including "idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons."

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This definition of terrorism provided by Schmid and Jongman offers a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of this complex phenomenon. It highlights the strategic use of violence, the range of actors involved, their targets, and the importance of communication processes in achieving terrorist goals. By understanding terrorism in this way, we can better

address the challenges it poses and work towards creating a safer and more secure world.

Africa a center of Gravity for Terrorism

Africa has become a hotspot for terrorism in recent years, with various regions and countries being affected by this scourge. The continent's vulnerability to terrorism can be attributed to a combination of factors, including political instability, porous borders, and social and economic grievances. This essay will explore the current state of terrorism in Africa, its causes, and the efforts being made to combat it.

One of the most affected regions is the Sahel, which spans across several countries in West Africa. The Sahel region has become a breeding ground for Islamist extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). These groups have exploited the region's instability and lack of effective governance to establish themselves and carry out attacks on civilians and military personnels.¹⁰

Another country that has been severely affected by terrorism is Somalia. Al-Shabaab, an Al-Qaeda affiliate, has been active in Somalia for over a decade, carrying out attacks on government forces, civilians, and neighboring countries. The group's ability to adapt and evolve has made it a formidable force, despite efforts by the Somali government and international partners to defeat it.

Nigeria has also been plagued by terrorism, particularly in the northeastern part of the country. Boko Haram, a militant Islamist group, has been responsible for numerous attacks on civilians, schools, and military personnel. The group's ideology is rooted in a distorted interpretation of Islam, its detest for

modernity in all of its forms and its emphasis to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria.

In addition to these countries, Mozambique has also experienced a surge in terrorist attacks in recent years. Ansar al-Sunna, a local Islamist group, has been active in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, carrying out attacks on government forces and civilians. The group's emergence has been linked to social and economic grievances, including poverty and unemployment.¹¹

The Democratic Republic of Congo has also been affected by terrorism, particularly in the eastern part of the country. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a Ugandan-led militant group, has been responsible for attacks on civilians and government forces. The group's ideology is rooted in a mix of Islamist and nationalist beliefs.

The causes of terrorism in Africa are complex and multifaceted. Political instability, corruption, and poor governance have created an environment that is conducive to the growth of extremist groups. Social and economic grievances, including poverty, unemployment, and inequality, have also contributed to the rise of terrorism. In addition, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has made it easier for extremist groups to acquire weapons and carry out attacks.

To combat terrorism in Africa, a comprehensive approach is needed. This includes military action, counter-terrorism strategies, and addressing underlying social and economic issues. Regional cooperation and international support are also essential in combating terrorism. The African Union and regional economic communities have established several

initiatives aimed at combating terrorism, including the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism.¹²

In conclusion, terrorism is a growing concern in Africa, with various regions and countries being affected. Addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive approach that includes military action, counter-terrorism strategies, and addressing underlying social and economic issues. Regional cooperation and international support are also essential in combating terrorism and promoting peace and stability across the continent.

A Brief History of the Emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria

The extremist group fondly known as Boko Haram did not emerge out of nothingness, its emergence has been contested by various scholarly sources. While some believe it was founded in the late 1990s, others tied its evolution to the early 2000s. A report released by the Joint Special Operations University (May 2012), traces the origin of Boko Haram to the Nigerian Taliban which emerged in the late 1970s, its founding father was an acclaimed young preacher named Marwa from Northern Cameroon. He preached immensely against Western influence and the preeminence of secular authorities in numerous Northern Muslim communities, his teachings subsequently gathered traction and he attracted significant following in the neighboring communities.¹³

Furthermore, his following continually increased and they constantly drew inspiration from the Islamists militants in Afghanistan. Their sole purpose was the transformation of Nigeria into an Islamic state; their efforts were tilted towards a total overhaul of the Nigerian entity into full-blown Islamic culture and they started with the incorporation of Sharia laws in their area of dominance at the time. They eventually extended

their tentacles and on the 24th of December, 2003, they initiated an attack on Kanama, a village in Yobe, situated in the Northeastern region of Nigeria. They abducted about 30 villagers who were forced to pray and build a defensive perimeter for them.

Consequently, they began to seek ways of protecting themselves which led to the invasion of police stations with the goal of carting away with their weapons and burning it after each operation. They eventually attacked a police patrol in September, 2004 near the Cameroonian border leading to the gruesome death of 28 individuals. While the police were able to capture some of them who eventually faced persecution in Nigeria, their leader in person of Marwa died in the course. It is ascertained by several scholars that the remnants who were able to escape eventually became the founding members of today's Boko Haram.¹⁴

Another widely referenced source of the emergence of Boko Haram was the account of the Muslim cleric, Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf who established an Islamic school in Maiduguri, Borno state which he named "Jama'atulAlhul Sunnah Lidda'watiwal Jihad" which is loosely translated as "people committed to the propagation of the prophet's teachings and jihad". This conservative institution housed many students particularly almajiri kids, dissatisfied youths and even unemployed graduates in the community.

Basically, his Islamic views focused on the active participation in jihad and the enforcement of Sharia law, little wonder why he was immensely pleased when the Sharia law was enforced in Maiduguri in the late 1990s, albeit the minimal enforcement did not entirely please the conservative Yusuf. The increase in his followers translated to increase in their stance against the

government and security personnels whom they claimed were anti-Islam, they were constantly at loggerheads with security personnels and the last event which led to their eventual infusion into the Borno society was the event which occurred on 11th June, 2009.¹⁵

This event which was triggered owing to the refusal of the sect to follow the new law of using an helmet while riding bikes was disobeyed during a funeral procession of one of their members who died owing to a car accident. This violent confrontation between them and the police led to the death of 17 of the Boko Haram members at the time. On the long run, this event led to the destruction of towns like Lamisulu and Gambou, destruction of several churches, primary schools, police barracks among others. A death toll of 50 civilians was recorded, some got burnt in the buildings they set ablaze while others were wounded with the various machetes, they mostly had on them.

Eventually, their leader in person of Ustaz Yusuf alongside his father-in-law were executed making Imam Shekau their spiritual leader and operations commander. His ascension as the new leader marked a turning point in the activities of Boko Haram in the Northern region of Nigeria and they have become immensely active in their operations since this period.¹⁶

Operational Activities of Boko Haram

The operational activities of Boko Haram since its inception have not only gathered national fear but global concern. Since its active operations, with its first recorded violence against the police owing to their refusal to obey traffic laws and their eventual rampage which went on for a few days, they have not only targeted security personnels, they have extended their activities to civilians, high profile individuals, children and women alike and even institutions particularly in the Northern

region of Nigeria. It's initial link with Al-Qaeda, an Afghanistan based terrorist organization provided it with the necessary ammunitions and money which boosted its operations. An instance was the funds which was disbursed to Mohammed Yusuf in the late 1990s to early 2000s; this fund was channeled through Mohammed Ali who was a fervent disciple of Mohammed Yusuf at the time after his meeting with Osama bin Laden around 1992 to 1996. Its atrocities since inception will be discussed in the subsequent discourse.¹⁷

An event that was intended to soil the inauguration of President Goodluck Jonathan occurred on the 28th and 29th of May, 2011 in Borno, Bauchi and the federal capital territory (Abuja) respectively. The first bombing was the mammy market of Shandawanka Barracks situated in Bauchi, the mammy market is a place where the soldiers and their families buy items used for daily running of their homes in the barracks. This shook the barracks leaving 13 people killed and 40 people severely injured beyond recognition. The attack was followed closely by other two attacks in other areas in Borno and Bauch state, the Boko Haram extremists also targeted army barracks in both states translating to the gruesome death of fifteen people, leaving those who sustained massive injuries unattended to for a long while.¹⁷ On the same day, they proceeded to Zuba international market located in Kubwa, Abuja killing two people and injuring eight people who lost their complete mobility to walk.

Furthermore, a season that was considered a season of festivities filled with glamour and quality time with family was shattered on the 24th of December, 2011 when people who were making last minute purchases for the Christmas celebrations were disrupted with two bombs going off near a large market in Jos, the capital of Plateau while the third bomb was detonated in a Christian dominated area in the state's capital killing people in

their numbers without remorse. This extended to a Baptist church in Maiduguri where the pastor and two choir members who were preparing for the Christmas Carol service were left to ruins owing to the bombs thrown into the church premises at the time. This killed at least six people while other bodies were unaccounted for due to the immense destruction of the property and their bodies. The extremist Islamic sect subsequently published a statement accompanied by a video of its leader Abubakar Shekau mentioned that the widespread bombing was to avenge the death of the violence against their Muslim brothers.¹⁸

Additionally, the high security apparatus of the Nigerian Police headquarters based in Abuja did not exempt them from the gruesome attack of the extremist Islamic sect's name Boko Haram. The first recorded suicide bombing in Africa's most populous country occurred on the 16th of June, 2011 with the suicide bomber accused of trailing the Inspector General of Police at the time; Hafiz Ringim who might have been the intended target of the attack. In no time, the suicide bomber who a traffic warden unfortunately entered his car to give him directions to the parking lot met his doom after the bomb was detonated at the parking lot of the Police Headquarters popularly known as the Louis Edet House. The blast which shook the headquarters did not only destroy at least 33 vehicles but also destroyed at least 5 people and also left bodies dismembered beyond recognition.¹⁹

Subsequently, another attack was spearheaded on the 26th of August of the same year and this attack was the first of its kind by Boko Haram with Westerners being its target. The attack was not only nerve-racking to the first-hand witnesses of the incident but also claimed a lot of lives, translating to the destruction of properties extending to various blocks away. In

the words of the eyewitnesses, a car driven by the suicide bomber rammed through two separate exit gates in the United Nations House based in the federal capital territory of Nigeria (Abuja); he stopped at the main reception of the building with his full suicide bomb regalia and proceeded to blow up himself, he must have probably shouted Allahu Akbar loosely translated to “Allah is the greatest” before blowing himself in the building to justify his claim of fighting for Jihad and Allah because of the inherent belief that his death would have been an addition to Al-Jannah as taught to them by their leaders.²⁰

An account by Michael Ofilaje, a United Nations Children’s Fund officer as explained to the press goes thus “I saw scattered bodies”; these bodies were splashed over the floor laying lifeless like pieces of meat that has just been butchered in the abattoir. It did not stop at the lifeless bodies, some individuals were trapped under the building rubbles with little hope of getting rescued as at the time of the incident, the hopes of returning home to their loved ones have been dashed and they were probably saying their last prayers at the time. According to a report by United Nations News (UN News, 2011), the United Nations Regional Coordinator Mr. Daouda Toure mentioned that 23 staff were killed with one being a foreign officer from Norway and 116 people sustained injuries. Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, the Deputy Secretary General at the time of the incident described it as “really heartbreaking”, this does not only depict the heart wrenching impact of the occurrence on lives, properties and the environment but also the unforgettable scars it has left on people for decades to come.

An excruciating event that brought about global concern occurred on the 14th of April, 2014 when 276 girls who were preparing for their final year examination were abducted at gunpoint by the men of Boko Haram from their secondary

school in Chibok, Borno state. The girls who were between the ages of 11-18 were forcefully taken to the Sambisa Forest (Wariboko, 2016) in a violent rampage by the members of Boko Haram in Chibok which is situated in Borno; a state in the Northeastern part of Nigeria. After three weeks in the den of these terrorists, their leader, Abubakar Shekau released a video on the 5th of May, 2014 proudly claiming the responsibility for the abduction of the young female students whose hopes of becoming educated have been dashed to pieces. He promised to sell them into slavery and marry them off to men so they can be free from the “shackles of Western education”, he believed he was doing it for the sake of Allah and they were definitely standing up to the direct translation of their name “Western education or Book is forbidden”.²¹

This heart-wrenching, demeaning and tragic event that recorded gender-based violence against girls on a large scale was described by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2014) as a “heinous crime” and this phrase is buttressed by the demeaning experience the girls encountered in the hands of these men ranging sexual molestation, gang rape, forced marriage among other inhumane treatments as testified by the 57 girls who were lucky to escape from their den. According to the testimony by an escapee from the Sambisa Forest (Wariboko, 2014), she described how she was gruesomely raped 15 times by 15 men daily which must have caused her several tears in her private parts and tragic memories that will keep relieving in her head for years to come. If an escapee could describe this horrifying experience, what more would those in the den of Boko Haram still be subjected to? Some of them would have been forcefully married to the sect members, some would have become teenage mothers, others would have been forced to become suicide bombers brainwashed to fight for the sake of Allah and the Jihad.

After the abduction of the 276 school girls in April, 2014, series of female abductions were carried out by the Boko Haram sect which did not only instill fear in other women in the Northern part of Nigeria but grew a constant worry by parents and guardians alike. As narrated to the Australian negotiator Dr. Stephen David (Wariboko, 2016), a 15-year-old described how one of the terrorists followed her to the bathroom after she left the tree they were camped at, he pulled her cloth and raped her multiple times while experiencing excruciating pains because she was a virgin at the time. Another 19-year-old married woman that was abducted mentioned how she was forcefully raped and while she resisted at first, she was threatened with a knife by one of the sect members.²²

Four years after the tragic event in Chibok, Borno state, a similar occurrence happened in Dapchi, Yobe state. On the 19th of February, 2018, the Boko Haram sect abducted 110 students from Government Girls' and Technical College in Dapchi Yobe state. According to one of the survivors' names withheld (Premium Times, 2023), the terrorists arrived in their school premises at dawn on a Thursday, a day they decided to do the voluntary Muslim fast and while she was at the well trying to fetch water for ablution, she heard gunshots and she immediately witnessed how the school's serene environment transformed into chaos. In her bid to escape, she and other students ran towards the gate, although cautioned by the gatekeepers to return to the school premises, their legs failed them and they were taken into a convoy of trucks with men in military regalia and a turban covering their faces, she recounted how she thought that would be her last day on earth. They were firstly driven to a hideout in Lake Chad where they discovered that five of their colleagues had given up the ghost due to the suffocation and stampede, they proceeded to Niger Republic

and the dead students were buried in a shallow grave in that location. Subsequently, they were taken to a river bank and they crossed by foots to a deserted island where they proceeded in their journey to a thick forest island which was the base of the insurgents.

Later in the day, the terrorists gave them a condition for their release which was to renounce Western education and they all agreed to this. They eventually returned the surviving students leaving one student behind in person of Leah Sharibu who was not ready to renounce her Christian faith. This experience which was narrated by a firsthand survivor still has a lasting negative effect on her, spending days in the thick forest while being subjected to inhumane treatment left a trauma on her that might not heal, while others were married off after their release and being unable to return to school they must have dealt with so much stigma with being abducted at such young age with traumatic experiences deep in the forest that they might have to deal with for the rest of their lives.²³

Subsequently, a record of Boko Haram's atrocities occurred during the invasion of Internally Displaced Camps in Gamboru Ngala, a local government situated in Borno state. The abduction took place in BabbanSansani, Zulum, and Arabic IDP camps with over 400 people living in the camp getting abducted and forced out of the only place they could lay their heads after they have been forcefully made to leave their initial homes owing to the insecurity prevalent in the North-Eastern region of Nigeria. According to a resident in the camp, over 200 displaced people went to get firewood in the bush but unfortunately Boko Haram kidnapped them, allowing only the very young and very old to return with women and girls being the highest victims of the attack. A United Nations report as cited by (Agbanero, 2024) reveals that more than 2.2 million

people in Nigeria have been internally displaced as a result of the conflict by Boko Haram with 1.4 million of them being inhabitants of Borno state. Some of these Internally Displaced persons have sought refuge in neighboring towns like Cameroon, Chad, and Niger Republic overtime.²⁴

A recent statistic revealed by Statista (Statista,2023) highlighted the top states that have been affected by the attacks from Boko Haram members between 2011 and 2023 making Nigeria the country with the most affected victims from the menace of Boko Haram.²⁵ The states are as followed:

Borno-36,255
Zamfara-6,803
Kaduna-6,195
Benue-4,391
Adamawa-4,127
Plateau-3,768
Yobe-3,229

With the above experiences and more, are the extremist group against Western education and civilization really fighting for Allah or they are defending their selfish interests and using the Islamic religion as a cover for their heinous acts which have been perpetrated on thousands of lives and other thousands who might never recover fully from these tragic events.

Tactics Employed by the Extremist Islamic Group

Since their inception, the extremist and terrorist group has employed various and diverse tactics to carry out its activities in various locations, one tactic varying from the other but these common tactics have been used across board by Boko Haram to instill fear and cause chaos and insecurity among various states

in and outside Nigeria.

1. Drive by Shootings/Bombings: a common tactic employed by the group has been drive-by shootings and bombings. From their various outrageous activities as seen in the attack on the 16th of June, 2011 where two men of the Islamic extremist sect drove to three beer gardens in Maiduguri, Borno state on motorbikes throwing explosives into them and killing approximately 25 individuals who were having a great time because they believed their activities were against the Shariah law and it won't please Allah. This event led to massive injury of 12 victims and total destruction of properties of the various owners. Another event that demonstrated this tactic employed by the extremist group was the bombing of the Lucy Edet House and the UN compound in 2011 respectively. The suicide bombers in these two scenarios drove into the two buildings in cars and decided to bomb themselves alongside other individuals in the building fighting for the assumed sake of the Jihad.

2. Rape and Gender Based Violence: a destructive tactic the Boko Haram has used to suppress its victims particularly girls and women is through rape and gender-based violence. An instance was a video where Abubakar Shekau stated that all the girls that were kidnapped in Chibok will be given out into early marriages because it pleases Allah. Also, one of the captives of the extremist sect mentioned how she was raped fifteen times by fifteen men daily in their den and how she was subjected to so much pains and unexplainable trauma that she might not heal from for the rest of her life, she might forever live in fear from this heart wrenching experience. In some cases, the abducted girls and women are used for sexual slavery and domestic servitude by the insurgents.

3. Kidnapping/Abductions: since it started active operations, the Islamic extremist sect have used kidnappings and abductions in various instances. From kidnapping various expats to students in various secondary schools particularly in the Northern part of Nigeria to kidnapping Internally Displaced People. From the mass abduction of the Chibok school girls to the kidnap of the school boys in Kankara school situated in the Northeastern part of Nigeria, recording over 300 school boys' abduction in 2020 (Premium Times, 2024). They have used this tactic to cause public uproar and fear while using it as a means to secure funding for their activities through the various ransoms that have been paid by families of victims in their den. Also, the invasion of Kuchi village leading to the mass kidnap of 160 villagers (BBC News, 2024) on the 24th of May, 2024 did not only leave the families of the victims traumatized but also financially handicapped as they were told to pay huge sum of ransoms to secure the release of these hostages from their den while their properties are set ablaze, stolen, forcefully converted to use by these insurgents. Sometimes, they hold some security personnels hostage in a bid to secure the release of their members who were arrested while they use them for bargaining, humiliating and subjecting them to degrading treatments which might even lead to total executions of these security personnels²⁶

4. Illegal Arms Acquisition: the extremist sect has also employed the use of illegal arms to undertake its heinous activities. As seen in some cases where they stormed military bases and hijacked weapons from security personnels in the North Eastern part of Nigeria. The army military base in Metele, Bornostate was immensely shattered on November 18, 2018 with varying accounts on the number of soldiers killed but the military materials in the base were not spared as they were looted by Boko Haram. A major factor that has contributed to

their unending access to these illegal arms and weapons is the presence of porous borders which gives them the liberty to import illegal arms from neighboring Sahel states like Chad and Mali into the country.

5. Use of Women and Children: the extremist sect has continuously perpetuated its heinous activities by using a predominant tactic which is women and children. These two are mostly their victims so they use them to their advantage by making them do things that would solely affect their mental state in the long run. For instance, they have constantly used small boys for suicide bombings by manipulating and brainwashing them that they are helping to fight for the Jihad and the sole purpose of returning to Allah in Al-Jannah. After convincing and eventually forcing them to join the group, they help them undertake their catastrophic activities and even help them get information because people mostly don't see children as threats of any kind, this gives them leverage to do these activities without suspicion of any kind. As narrated to Luigi Achili (May, 2023), a former female associate described how children as young as three years old, both boys and girls, would often be taken in the evenings to an open space they referred to as the "gallery" during the evenings to witness executions. She explained that the purpose was to desensitize them and make them feel as part of the group, to make them feel like they are part of something beyond themselves, like they were fighting for a good cause and this justified their displeasure against the Nigerian government.²⁷

In essence, the menace created by the Islamic extremist sect that has constantly terrorized people within and beyond the borders of Nigeria has not only become a reason for concern but it has also raised suspicions due to its longevity that has lasted for over 12 years with minimal efforts being made at completely

eradicating them in the Nigerian society. While some sources ascertain that they are largely funded by some politicians to drive their ideological movement, other sources are of the opinion that they are funded by international terrorist organizations like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Usman Abubakar&Umar Mohammed, 2024). The relationship between ISIS and Boko Haram can be viewed from the lens of protégé and guardian. Overall, this extremist group does not seem to be taking a step back in its catastrophic activities anytime soon and the government are not handling it as the people hope they would; with the previous administration's initiative to reintegrate Boko Haram repentant into the Nigerian society have not been welcomed with open arms by the Nigerian citizens. Will Nigerians, particularly those in the Northern region of Nigeria continually endure this unending pain, torture, and trauma melted on them by Boko Haram or is there hope for a future without them in the mix? Time will tell.

A brief history of the emergence of Al-Shabaab in Somalia

The origin of terrorism in Somalia can be traced back to the early 2000s, when the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) emerged as a powerful force in the country. The ICU was a coalition of Islamic courts and militias that sought to establish a Sharia-based government in Somalia. The ICU was established in 2004 by a group of Islamic scholars and businessmen who sought to establish a Sharia-based government in Somalia. The ICU was seen as a stabilizing force in Somalia, which had been ravaged by civil war and lawlessness since the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in 1991. In 2006, the ICU took control of Mogadishu, the capital city of Somalia, and began to implement harsh Islamic law. However, their rule was short-lived, as they were ousted by Ethiopian forces in 2007. From the ashes of the ICU, Al-Shabaab emerged as a prominent terrorist group in Somalia. Al-Shabaab, which means "The Youth" in Arabic, was founded

in 2006 as the youth wing of the ICU. However, after the ICU's defeat, Al-Shabaab broke away and became a distinct entity.²⁸

It is important to note that the main terrorist group in Somalia is Al-Shabaab (also known as Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen), apart from Al-Shabaab (also known as Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen), there are other terrorist groups, namely

- Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)
- Islamic State in Somalia (ISS)
- Jabha East Africa (JEAA)
- Ansar al-Sunna (AS)
- Muslim Youth Center (MYC)
- Al-Itihaad al-Islamiya (AIAI)
- Al-Turabi Brigade
- Ras Kamboni Brigade
- Anole Brigade

Al-Shabaab is an Al-Qaeda affiliate that has been responsible for numerous terrorist attacks in Somalia and neighboring countries, including Kenya and Uganda. Al-Shabaab, which means "The Youth" in Arabic, emerged in 2006 as the youth wing of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), a coalition of Islamic courts and militias that controlled much of southern Somalia. Al-Shabaab's ideology is rooted in Wahhabism, a radical form of Islam that emphasizes the importance of jihad (holy war) and the establishment of a global Islamic caliphate. The group's leaders have also been influenced by the ideas of Al-Qaeda, and have sought to establish ties with other terrorist groups in the region.²⁹

In 2010, Al-Shabaab announced its allegiance to Al-Qaeda, and has since become one of the most powerful and feared terrorist groups in Africa. The group has carried out numerous attacks in

Somalia and neighboring countries, including Kenya and Uganda.

Despite efforts by the Somali government and international forces to defeat Al-Shabaab, the group remains a potent force in Somalia. Its ability to adapt and evolve has allowed it to survive and even thrive in the face of adversity. Overall, the rise of Al-Shabaab in Somalia is a complex phenomenon that cannot be attributed to a single factor. Addressing the root causes of terrorism in Somalia will require a comprehensive approach that takes into account political, economic, and social factors.

Operational activities of Al- shabaab

Al-Shabaab, an Al-Qaeda affiliate, has been engaged in various operational activities in Somalia and neighboring countries. These activities have been characterized by guerrilla warfare, suicide bombings, IED attacks, assassinations, kidnappings, extortion, intimidation, propaganda, and recruitment.

Guerrilla warfare has been a hallmark of Al-Shabaab's operational strategy. The group has employed ambushes, raids, and hit-and-run attacks against Somali government forces and international peacekeepers. For instance, in 2013, Al-Shabaab carried out a series of guerrilla attacks against African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces in the Gedo region, killing several soldiers. These attacks demonstrate Al-Shabaab's ability to adapt to conventional military operations and exploit the vulnerabilities of its enemies.

Suicide bombings have been another tactic employed by Al-Shabaab. The group has conducted numerous suicide bombings in Somalia, targeting government officials, security forces, and civilians. In 2017, Al-Shabaab carried out a suicide bombing attack on a restaurant in Mogadishu, killing 19 people. This

attack highlights the group's willingness to use extreme violence to achieve its objectives.³⁰

IED attacks have also been extensively used by Al-Shabaab. The group has targeted security forces and civilians with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), often with devastating consequences. In 2019, Al-Shabaab carried out an IED attack on a Somali government convoy in the Bay region, killing several soldiers. These attacks demonstrate the group's ability to use asymmetric tactics to counter conventional military operations.

Assassinations have been another tool used by Al-Shabaab to achieve its objectives. The group has targeted government officials, security personnel, and civilians for assassination. In 2018, Al-Shabaab assassinated a Somali lawmaker, Mohamed Ahmed, in Mogadishu. This attack highlights the group's ability to target high-profile individuals and create a sense of fear among the population.

Kidnappings have also been used by Al-Shabaab to achieve its objectives. The group has kidnapped foreigners and locals, often demanding ransom or using them as bargaining chips. In 2011, Al-Shabaab kidnapped two Kenyan aid workers, who were later released after a ransom was paid. These kidnappings demonstrate the group's ability to exploit vulnerabilities in the security situation and use them for financial gain.

Extortion and intimidation have also been used by Al-Shabaab to achieve its objectives. The group has extorted money and resources from local businesses and communities, using intimidation and violence to get what they want. For example, in 2019, Al-Shabaab extorted money from traders in the Bakara market in Mogadishu. This behavior demonstrates the group's

ability to exploit the vulnerabilities of the local population and use fear to control them.³¹

Propaganda and recruitment have also been important aspects of Al-Shabaab's operational activities. The group has used propaganda to promote its ideology and recruit new members. For example, in 2017, Al-Shabaab released a propaganda video showcasing its military training and operations. This video was designed to attract new recruits and demonstrate the group's military capabilities.

In conclusion, Al-Shabaab's operational activities in Somalia and neighboring countries have been characterized by guerrilla warfare, suicide bombings, IED attacks, assassinations, kidnappings, extortion, intimidation, propaganda, and recruitment. These activities demonstrate the group's ability to adapt to changing circumstances and exploit the vulnerabilities of its enemies. They also highlight the group's willingness to use extreme violence to achieve its objectives and its ability to promote its ideology and recruit new members.

To combat Al-Shabaab's operational activities, it is important for the international community to support the Somali government and its security forces. This can be done through training, equipment, and logistical support. Additionally, efforts should be made to address the underlying grievances that have contributed to Al-Shabaab's rise, such as poverty, inequality, and political instability. Finally, the international community should work to disrupt Al-Shabaab's financial networks and prevent the group from exploiting the vulnerabilities of the local population.

In addition to these measures, it is also important to address the root causes of extremism in Somalia. This can be done by

promoting economic development, improving governance, and addressing the grievances of marginalized communities. By addressing these underlying issues, it may be possible to reduce the appeal of extremist groups like Al-Shabaab and promote a more stable and peaceful Somalia.

What are the root causes of terrorism in Africa?

The following are the root causes of terrorism in Africa:

- Geography (porous borders)
- Poverty and economic marginalization
- Political instability and weak governance
- Social and cultural grievances
- Historical injustices and colonial legacy
- Religious extremism
- Youth unemployment and disillusionment
- Corruption and poor leadership
- External influences and foreign intervention
- Climate change and environmental degradation
- Lack of education and critical thinking
- Ethnic and tribal tensions
- Injustice and human rights abuses
- State repression and violence
- Ideological and political radicalization
- Globalization and cultural alienation

It is pertinent to note that these root causes are interconnected and can vary in significance depending on the specific context and region within Africa.

The Role of Geography in Aiding Terrorism in Africa

First and foremost, the peculiarity of Africa's geography has played a significant role in aiding terrorism in Africa, providing an environment that fosters the growth and spread of extremist groups. The continent's diverse geography, ranging from vast

deserts to dense forests and rugged mountains, has created an array of challenges for counter-terrorism efforts.

One of the primary ways the geographical landscape of Africa has aided terrorism is through the porosity of its borders. The continent's vast and often unmonitored borders make it easy for terrorists to move undetected across countries, penetrating into their vast borders while establishing networks and operating freely. This has enabled groups like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) to spread their influence across the Sahel region. The Libyan-Chadian border has been a significant entry point for extremist groups like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State (IS).

In West Africa, the Djebel Uweinat border region between Libya, Chad, and Niger has been a hotspot for extremist activity. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State (IS) have operated in this area, using it as a launchpad for attacks and a hub for smuggling weapons and fighters. Similarly, the Kavar region on the Niger-Chad border has been used by Boko Haram to launch attacks and establish networks. Following the Libyan civil war, these groups exploited the porous border to establish a presence in Chad, using it as a transit point for weapons, fighters, and ideologies. From Chad, extremist groups like Boko Haram spread to Nigeria, using the shared border to launch attacks and establish networks. The Nigerien-Malian border has also been a key crossing point for extremist groups.³²

The Liptako-Gourma region on the Mali-Burkina Faso-Niger border has also been a hub for extremist groups like AQIM and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). These groups have exploited the porous borders to move freely and establish

connections with other networks. The Agadez-Dirkou border region between Niger and Libya has been used by extremist groups to smuggle weapons and fighters, further destabilizing the region

In East Africa, the Mandera-Garissa border region between Kenya and Somalia has been used by Al-Shabaab to launch attacks and establish networks. The Djibouti-Ethiopia border region has also been used by extremist groups to smuggle weapons and fighters, posing a threat to regional stability. The Somali-Ethiopian border region has been a hotspot for extremist activity, with groups like Al-Shabaab and IS operating in the area.

In North Africa, the Ras Ajdir border crossing between Tunisia and Libya has been used by extremist groups to smuggle weapons and fighters. The Dehiba-Wazin border region between Tunisia and Libya has also been a hotspot for extremist activity, with groups like AQIM and IS operating in the area.

The spread of extremism continued through this border, where groups like AQIM and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) operate. The instability in Mali spilled over into Burkina Faso, where extremist groups like AQIM and ISGS have established a presence. The Burkinabe-Ivorian border has allowed extremist groups to move freely, posing a threat to regional stability.

Further West, the Ivorian-Liberian border has facilitated the movement of extremist groups, including those linked to AQIM and IS. The connection between Liberia and Sierra Leone has allowed extremist groups to spread their influence, further destabilizing the region. The Sierra Leonean-Guinean border has also been exploited by extremist groups, allowing them to

move freely and establish connections with other networks, the Guinean-Malian border completes the circle, demonstrating how extremist groups have exploited Africa's porous borders to spread terrorism across the continent. This network of connections highlights the need for regional cooperation and border security to prevent the further spread of extremism.³³

Africa's remote and inaccessible terrain has also provided hiding grounds and safe havens for terrorists. The Sahara Desert, for example, has become a hub for extremist groups, who use its vast expanse to hide and train. Similarly, the dense forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo have sheltered groups like the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), allowing them to launch attacks on civilians and government forces.

The continent's proximity to global trade routes has also facilitated the movement of people, goods, and ideas, including extremist ideologies. The Mediterranean and Red Sea, which border Africa to the north and east, respectively, have become key routes for the spread of terrorism. This has enabled groups like Al-Shabaab in Somalia to establish connections with global extremist networks.

Natural resource abundance has also fueled conflicts and insurgencies in Africa, creating an environment conducive to terrorism. The Niger Delta, for example, has seen numerous attacks on oil infrastructure by groups like the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Similarly, the Democratic Republic of Congo's rich mineral resources have fueled conflicts in the eastern part of the country, creating an environment in which groups like the ADF can thrive.

Climate change and environmental degradation have also contributed to the growth of terrorism in Africa. Droughts,

famines, and displacement have created social unrest, making marginalized communities vulnerable to radicalization. In Somalia, for example, droughts have forced many to flee their homes, creating an environment in which Al-Shabaab can recruit new members.

Urbanization and sprawl have also created breeding grounds for extremism in African cities. Rapid growth and poor governance have led to the creation of marginalized communities, which are vulnerable to radicalization. In Nigeria, for example, the city of Maiduguri has seen numerous attacks by Boko Haram, who have exploited the city's poverty and social unrest.³⁴

In conclusion, geography has played a significant role in aiding terrorism in Africa. The continent's diverse geography, ranging from vast deserts to dense forests and rugged mountains, has created an array of challenges for counter-terrorism efforts. Addressing these challenges will require a comprehensive approach that takes into account the complex interplay between geography, politics, and economics.

● Poverty and economic marginalization

Poverty and economic marginalization have been identified as significant contributing factors to the rise of terrorism in Africa, particularly in Nigeria and Somalia.

Poverty and economic marginalization have long been recognized as drivers of extremism and terrorism. In Africa, where many countries face significant development challenges, these factors have contributed to the growth of terrorist groups. Nigeria and Somalia, two countries with significant terrorist activity, illustrate the link between poverty, economic marginalization, and terrorism.

Many young Somalis have been drawn to Al-Shabaab's ranks due to a lack of economic opportunities, hunger, marginalization and a sense of desperation

In Nigeria, the terrorist group Boko Haram has exploited poverty and economic marginalization to recruit members. The country's northeast region, where Boko Haram is most active, is one of the poorest in Nigeria. According to the World Bank, the region's poverty rate stands at 76.8%, compared to the national average of 46.4% (World Bank, 2020). Boko Haram preys on disaffected youth, offering them financial incentives and a sense of purpose.

Similarly, in Somalia, the terrorist group Al-Shabaab has capitalized on poverty and economic marginalization. Somalia is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a GDP per capita of just \$434 (World Bank, 2020). Al-Shabaab has exploited the country's weak economy, offering financial support and employment opportunities to attract recruits.

Data supports the link between poverty and terrorism in both countries:

- In Nigeria, a 2019 survey found that 70% of Boko Haram recruits cited economic reasons for joining the group (Mercy Corps, 2019).
- In Somalia, a 2018 study revealed that 60% of Al-Shabaab recruits were motivated by financial incentives (Combating Terrorism Center, 2018).

Addressing poverty and economic marginalization is crucial to mitigating the root causes of terrorism in Nigeria and Somalia.

This can be achieved through sustainable development initiatives, education, and job creation programs.

Political instability and weak governance

Terrorism often flourishes in environments where the state is weak or failing. This phenomenon is evident in Nigeria and Somalia, two countries struggling with terrorism. A weak state creates a power vacuum, allowing terrorist groups to fill the gap and exert control over territory and populations.

The concept of a weak state refers to a nation's inability to provide basic services, maintain law and order, and exercise control over its territory. Nigeria and Somalia are two examples of weak states in Africa, plagued by various historical, political, economic, and social factors.

Somalia's prolonged political instability and recurrent conflicts have created a conducive environment for the proliferation of extremist groups, notably Al-Shabaab. The country's fragile political landscape, marked by weak governance, clan rivalries, and power vacuums, has allowed these groups to exploit the chaos and establish a foothold. Additionally, the lack of economic opportunities, pervasive poverty, and limited access to education and social services have further fueled the appeal of extremist ideologies among disillusioned youth, enabling Al-Shabaab to recruit and maintain a loyal following.

Nigeria, represents a weak state. Despite being Africa's largest economy, Nigeria's government faces significant challenges in providing security, justice, and essential services to its citizens. Corruption, mismanagement, and ethnic divisions have eroded trust in institutions. In the northeast, Boko Haram has exploited this weakness, launching a decade-long insurgency that has claimed thousands of lives and displaced millions.³⁵

One major factor contributing to Nigeria's weakness is its colonial legacy. The country's artificial borders, created by British colonizers, disregarded ethnic and regional divisions, leading to ongoing tensions. For instance, the Biafran War (1967-1970) was fought over ethnic and regional differences, resulting in the deaths of over a million people. Similarly, Somalia's colonial past has also contributed to its weakness. The country's borders were drawn by European powers, ignoring clan divisions, leading to ongoing conflicts.

Corruption and mismanagement have also significantly contributed to Nigeria's weakness. Decades of corrupt leadership, embezzlement, and misallocation of resources have weakened institutions and hindered development. For example, the \$2.1 billion arms deal scandal in 2015 highlighted the country's endemic corruption. In Somalia, corruption and mismanagement have also ravaged the economy, with the UN estimating that 70% of state revenue is lost to corruption.³⁶

Ethnic and religious divisions have further weakened both states. Nigeria's diverse population is split among over 250 ethnic groups and two dominant religions, often leading to conflicts. The Boko Haram insurgency, which began in 2009, has exploited these divisions, killing thousands and displacing millions. Somalia's clan divisions have also hindered state-building efforts, with the country's civil war (1991-2006) fought largely along clan lines.

Economic dependence on oil has also contributed to Nigeria's weakness. The country's reliance on oil exports has led to economic instability, neglect of other sectors, and environmental degradation. The 2014 oil price crash highlighted Nigeria's vulnerability, with the economy contracting by 1.5%.

Somalia's economy has also been ravaged by war, corruption, and lack of investment, leading to widespread poverty³⁷

Ineffective institutions have further weakened both states. Nigeria's weak judicial, legislative, and executive branches have failed to provide effective governance. The country's anti-corruption agency, Economic Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), has been criticized for its ineffectiveness. Somalia's institutions, including the military, police, and judiciary, are underdeveloped and often ineffective, allowing terrorist groups like Al-Shabaab to flourish.

Poor leadership has also contributed to the weakness of both states. Nigeria's leaders have prioritized personal interests over national development, while Somalia's leaders have struggled to establish a stable government.

Somalia on the other hand too embodies a failed state, with a government struggling to assert authority beyond the capital city, Mogadishu. Decades of civil war, clan rivalries, and external interventions have crippled the state's ability to provide basic services, security, and governance. This void has enabled Al-Shabaab, an Al-Qaeda affiliate, to establish a stronghold in southern Somalia. The group controls large swaths of territory, imposing its own brand of Islamic law and taxation systems.

Foreign intervention has been a contentious issue in Somalia, with the presence of foreign troops from countries like Ethiopia and Kenya being perceived as an occupation by many Somalis. This has led to widespread resentment and anger, creating a fertile ground for Al-Shabaab to exploit. The group has effectively tapped into these sentiments, framing their insurgency as a resistance movement against foreign occupation and thereby garnering support from disaffected Somali

nationals. Furthermore, the foreign military interventions have often been criticized for their heavy-handed approach, resulting in civilian casualties and property damage, which has only served to further galvanize support for Al-Shabaab's cause.

Ideological appeal: Al-Shabaab's radical Islamist ideology has struck a chord with some Somalis who are disenchanted with the government's failure to provide basic services, security, and justice. The group's promise to establish a strict Islamic state based on Sharia law, free from corruption and foreign influence, has resonated with those seeking a more extreme and pure form of Islam. Additionally, Al-Shabaab's anti-Western and anti-Christian rhetoric has appealed to some Somalis who feel marginalized and oppressed by the international community. The group's ideology has also been perpetuated through sophisticated social media campaigns, targeting disillusioned youth and exploiting their frustration with the status quo.³⁸

Characteristics of weak and failing states that enable terrorism include:

1. Insecurity and lawlessness: Inability to maintain law and order creates an environment conducive to terrorist activity.
2. Poor governance: Corruption, nepotism, and abuse of power undermine trust in government and create grievances.
3. Economic mismanagement: Poverty, unemployment, and inequality fuel discontent and make individuals susceptible to extremist ideologies.
4. Lack of social services: Inadequate access to education, healthcare, and other essential services creates a sense of abandonment.

In both Nigeria and Somalia, these factors have contributed to the growth of terrorism. Addressing the root causes of state

weakness is crucial to mitigating the terrorist threat. This requires:

1. Strengthening institutions: Building capable, accountable, and inclusive governance structures.
2. Improving security: Enhancing military capacity, intelligence gathering, and community policing.
3. Economic development: Investing in education, job creation, and social services to address poverty and inequality.
4. Promoting social cohesion: Fostering national unity, dialogue, and reconciliation to address grievances and divisions.

By acknowledging and addressing the weaknesses of the state, Nigeria and Somalia can create an environment inhospitable to terrorism and more conducive to peace, stability, and development.

The complex relationships between state weakness, terrorism, and human rights violations in Africa have been the focus of this comprehensive examination. Through a critical analysis of the political, economic, and social factors at play, this study has explored the various manifestations, causes, and consequences of terrorism on the continent. Nigeria and Somalia have served as case studies, illustrating the ways in which state weakness has contributed to the emergence and perpetuation of terrorist groups.

The research has demonstrated that state weakness is not only a consequence of terrorism but also a contributing factor, creating a vicious cycle of violence and instability. This cycle can only be broken through a nuanced understanding of the historical, political, economic, and social factors that shape terrorism in Africa.

To address the complex challenges posed by terrorism, state weakness, and human rights violations, it is essential to prioritize strengthening state institutions and governance. This can be achieved by addressing the root causes of terrorism, including poverty, inequality, and political marginalization. Additionally, protecting human rights and promoting the rule of law are crucial steps in preventing further radicalization.

Regional and international cooperation is also vital in combating terrorism and promoting peace and stability in Africa. Furthermore, recognizing the dignity of human life, even in death, and prioritizing the protection of civilians in conflict zones are essential principles that must guide our efforts.

In conclusion, this research has highlighted the intricate interplay of factors that shape terrorism in Africa. By acknowledging these complexities, we can work towards a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon and inform effective strategies to address the challenges it poses. Ultimately, this study emphasizes the need for a sustained and collaborative effort to promote peace, stability, and human rights in Africa.

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