



MORE THAN TO THE WEST, ISLAMIC TERRORISM AND ISLAMISM IS OF IMMENSE THREAT TO AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

There are already many academic papers on terrorism in Africa, the dynamics of terror and how this has affected the political and socioeconomic structure of African societies. The aim of this review, therefore, is to see the terror threats from Islamism and Islamic extremism from the lens of their anti-western and anti-American ideologies and activities. Since Africa is heavily influenced by western cultures, values and lifestyle, it will always be a target locus for international terror groups to settle and operate. The west African region and the Sahel geographic area of Africa have particularly been of interests to these terror groups of late and their increasing activities in these regions is worrisome. If not checked and urgently addressed, it will grow to be a difficult monster to stop. Therefore, the researcher will go through the dynamics of their operations from ideology to attack tactics from Al-Qaeda ideological and political legacies to radicalization, relating each of these to the practicality of Islamic terrorism to African societies. After which recommendations will be given which include data mining in counterterrorism to detect unusual patterns, fraudulent behaviours and typical radical characteristics as highlighted in this study. Also whistle blowing and integration strategies are essential to establish and strengthen diverse but thriving heterogenous African communities to avoid divisions, sectionalism and the dangers of extremism that usually lead to terrorism.

Keywords: Al-Qaeda, Anti-Americanism, Anti-Western Ideology, Clash of Civilization, Islamic terrorism, Islamism, radicalization

INTRODUCTION

African societies suffer gross crimes against humanity till this day. Amid the genocides, ethnic cleansings, mass rapes and other crimes ravaging African communities and states, organized and committed by state and non-state actors, international terrorism with the Agenda of Islamism has also spread to and across the continent (Denisova and Kostelyanets, 2022). Saudi Arabia's funding of the building of Islamic worship centres in African countries such as Niger, Nigeria, Mali etc

(Adebayo, 2015; Ani & Uwizeyimana, 2022), breeds opportunities for the theological spread of the Salafi kind of Islam—a minute fraction of the entire body of Islam as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: The Salafi Component of the Sunni Faction of Islam

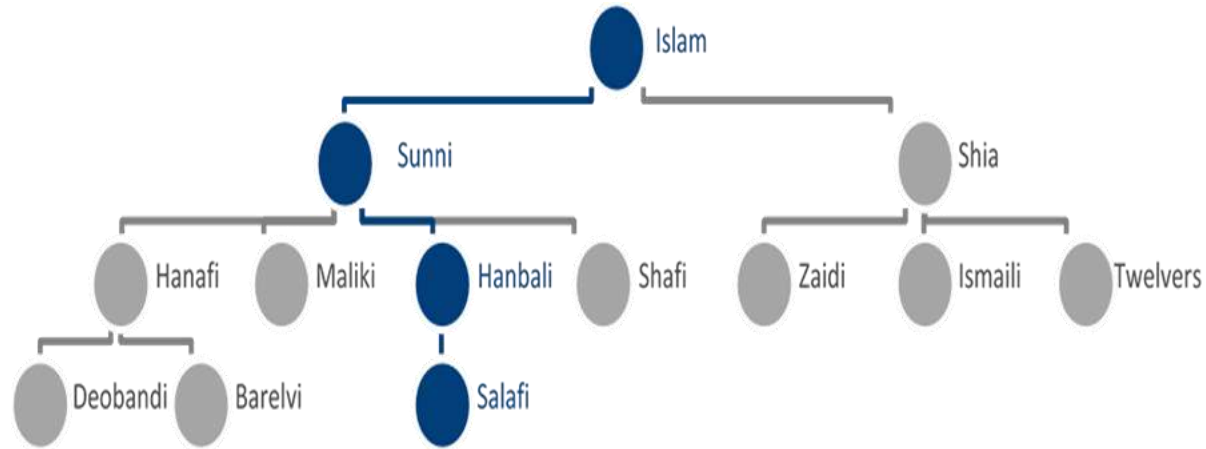


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And over the years, this act has been directly associated with radicalization and conflicts due to the massive unemployment among the youth of the African societies and failed governance. These two factors have created a huge gap for Salafist organizations to step in and provide social services, hence, gaining the support and love from disaffected groups. By using Salafist interpretations to describe who an enemy of Islam is and justifying the need to use violence on such enemies, anti-civilian violence becomes holy and legitimate. It is for this reason that for example, in Nigeria, Boko Haram have killed about 50,000 people and displaced more than 2.5 million people since its establishment in 2002 to 2022 (Adesote & Ajayi, 2021).

In Somalia, Al-Shabaab has killed at least 4,000 civilians from 2010 to 2019 (Reeder & Smith, 2019) and in Northern Mozambique, at least 2,600 people have died in the hands of Islamist insurgents from 2018 to 2021 (Morier-Genoud, 2024). Tens of thousands other deaths in Africa have been attributed or claimed by various affiliates and franchises of Al-Qaeda and the Islamic state (Gvilia, 2021; Warner, O’Farrell, Nsaibia & Cummings, 2020). And there is considerable evidence to show that terrorism is significantly adding to the national mental health burden of countries like Nigeria (Mustapha, Makama & Ologun, 2024). Unfortunately, these Islamist groups continue to grow, expand, enjoy ascendancy and increased freedom of operational activities in the continent. For instance, there have been a sharp increase in the Islamist-terror attacks on African civilians from 17% in 2017 to about 47% in June 2020 (Mroszczyk and Abrahms, 2021). It is therefore, high time the proliferation of jihadist terror groups across the continent and the identification of their activities and possible anti-terror operations be developed across the continent, or else this monster will group to be unstoppable and irreversible (DNI, 2022).

The essence of this review is not to condemn Islam, but to show that Islamic extremism and in extension, terrorism still pose a serious threat not just to the west but even more to Africa as

well (Esposito, 1999). Factors such as the ideological factor, the political factor, the Al-Qaeda legacy adopted by springing terror groups around the world, the easy recruitment of terrorists and the radicalization of citizens in western states will be elaborated on how these factors, which are still in play, either maintain the potential for terror or sustain the survival of terrorism and hence, nurture the threat towards western societies and influences which includes will be discussed. And recommendations of Data mining, whistle blowing and integration strategies will be given to reduce the tendency of segregation, sectionalisation and division that may instigate extreme views and eventually, terror activities.

METHODS AND DATA

The three keywords, 'Islamic terror threat', 'Islamic terrorism', and 'radicalization' were searched across eight academic databases that have a significant number of articles with the same research topic and two grey literatures. These sources are: Elsevier, Grey Literature: Google and Google Scholar, Oxford University Press, Proquest, Researchgate, SAGE Publications, Springer, Taylor and Francis and Wiley Online library. A total of 299 articles were searched based on related titles. 88 of these 299 articles were duplicates and another 103 were unrelated to the theme of study, based on a quick look through on the abstract, introduction and conclusion of these articles. From the remaining 112, 17 were not published in English, leaving a total of 91 articles finally included in this study.

DISCUSSION

Origin of Islamic Terror in Africa

Islamic terrorism started in Africa arguably after the 1979-1989 Soviet-Afghan war. In this war, Arab mercenaries which included North African countries like Algeria, Egypt and Sudan fought with the Afghan Mujahideen against the USSR forces. When they returned to their countries after the war, they returned with them, ideas of radical fundamentalism. Two of the immediate devastating outcomes of this were, firstly, the 1980 bombing of the Jewish-owned Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya by Pro-Palestine Liberation Organization and the second is the Islamists versus government instigated civil war in Algeria from 1991 to 2002 (Denisova and Kostelyanets, 2022). Islamic terrorism continued to infiltrate Africa but the impact was not felt until the twenty first century when notorious global terror groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS have shown great interest in the continent even shifting the loci of their activities from the middle east, south central Asia and even the North Caucasus of Africa to the Sahelian and Lake Chad Basin regions (Aluede, 2018; Babalola, 2022).

The Ideological Factor

According to Huntington (1998), "specifically, the clash between Islam and the west due to a global "Islamic Resurgence" or fundamental reform of Islam in a more militant, sectarian and anti-western direction is the greatest threat to world peace." This clash of civilization has been fuelled by contemporary Imams who instigate a stiff resistance against any form of American or western

influence, be it social, political or moral (McNeill, 1995). The notion that these fundamentalists express, as the experience of anxiety, chaos and in extension, the loss of Muslim identity associated with westernization has been an effective tool that a vast majority of Muslim worshippers are exposed to (McNeill, 1995).

Figure 2: The Salafi Run Jihadi Groups as Extremist Islamic groups

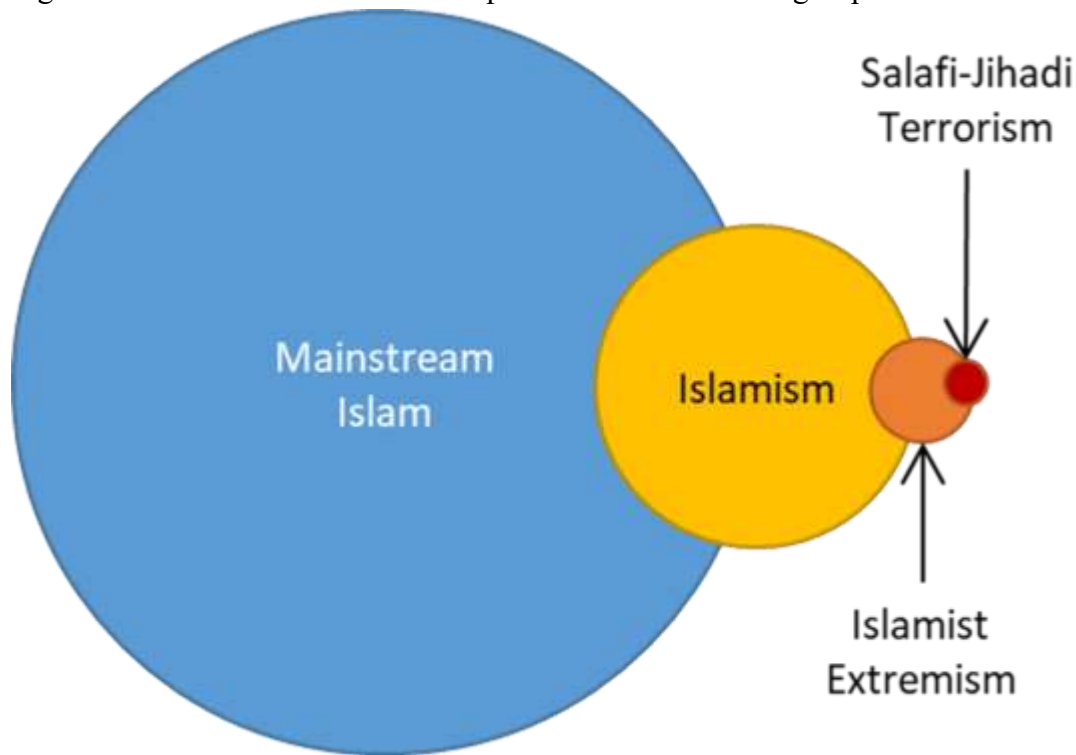


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Islam is not a 'one homogenous entity' as shown in Figure 1 earlier and in Figure 2 above. There is no independent political or religious body that represents the Muslim world as one entity. But since a huge following of Islam see Western Culture as immoral, materialistic, decadent and seductive, irrespective of whether they are radical or moderate, militant Islamic fundamentalists become aggressively opportunistic to bank on this impression to create resentment and anger against the west as it is portrayed as anti-Islam, thereby kicking against human rights and democracy which they champion as not compatible with the interpretations of the Qur'an (Halliday, 1999; Marmion, 2003).

Extremists portray Islam as divinely revealed and not legislated and hence can never be democratic, pluralistic, egalitarian or pro-western. Islam must be in clear contrast to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or any policy/agreement that allows for the freedom of individuals to choose one's way of life. Making Islam any of the above only means making it elastic, reformed, altered or abrogated. Hence, liberal democracy must be strongly rejected. Therefore, in principle, the Islamic state is one ruled by God himself, unlike, for instance, in Christianity where a religious state is controlled by the church and a clergy. Anything contrary to the autocratic and theocratic nature of Islam absolutely defies it and defying Islam means defying God. Defying God comes with dire consequences (Schulze, 2002).

All these combined are moulded into a devastating ideology that is easily preached and disseminated even by liberal Imams, which then waters the ground for the solidarity and acceptance of Islamic militancy and extremism even by regular Muslims. The result of this is the incredible degree of difficulty for the mainstream Muslim majority to effectively carry out the task of confronting extremists on their own cultural, religious and as well, intellectual territory, deepening the association between religion, politics and the Muslim state instead of addressing it. And over time, a longstanding 'reluctance' to tackle extremism then develops. Coupled with genuine fear, isolating terrorists or extremists to either closely monitor them or bring them to justice becomes difficult to achieve (Schulze, 2002).

This was echoed by Sir Mark Rowley, a one-time Metropolitan Police Commissioner in the United Kingdom who emphasized on the finding "a needle in a haystack" predicament of identifying Islamic terrorist, despite the highly developed anti-terrorism system and network of the United Kingdom that is already in place. He revealed that thousands are under lower priority investigations, whilst tens of thousands are not under any form of investigations but have shown some form of ideological support for terrorism (Corfe, 2003). With the increasing tendency of having more sympathizers to radical Islam, the difficulty of finding who is extreme will only get worse and this should be a huge concern to the west.

The Sahel region of Africa is the preferred location for conflicts between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic state. The unprecedented battles are armed combats between these two terror groups and have led to a five-fold increase in casualties just between 2016 and 2020 alone in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Most of these conflicts are between the Al-Qaeda affiliated Jamaat Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimi (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), competing for the resources, recruitment of locals and control over areas of operation. The open hostilities against each other had led to civilian deaths, yet locals still support one group or the other in varying degrees. This competitive support only means more dire consequences in the future (Baldaro & Diall, 2020; Kamara, 2020; Mroszczyk and Abrahms, 2021).

Political Factor

Islamic terrorists have the political motivation of grievance that drives them to shouldering the responsibility of vengeance. This political drive that has made terrorists from the middle East to hate America is a threat to be taken seriously (Stern, 2003) and it has spread to African societies. Anti-Americanism stems from arguably the unjust consequences of the foreign policies of the United States and the quest by Islamists to create a global Islamic political power. Some of the policies such as the support for Israel, the support of authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the opposing of Islamic regimes in Afghanistan, Sudan, Iran and Algeria, sanctions and war against Iraq are all seen as proofs that America desires to destroy Islam and Muslims (Khan, 2003; Miller, 1993). This political angle, together with the extreme religious ideology ignites that sense of grievance and revenge to not only see America and the west as ungodly, evil and immoral but must be eliminated for the morally and godly Islamic civilization to thrive (Khan, 2016). Islam is used by a significant number of preachers as a tool for political manipulation. It has to be

combative, confrontational and it must breed intolerance in various environments thereby bringing about the clash of civilizations. This non-compromising nature of some of these Islamic adherents means, one either bends to their will or maintain conflicts with them, even if it is in their domain that these adherents dwell in. They portray Islam as a language of opposition which is needed to attract the young, so, making it fierce and militant in nature (Miller, 1993). Therefore, radical leaders continue to disseminate the propaganda of grievance to make it seem real, calamitous and in dire need of repatriation that a regular person is willing to kill innocents for (Stern, 2003,) and this, indeed, is a threat.

A good example is Osama Bin Laden's August 1996 Fatwa, which is a seminar titled 'The Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places' (Bernard, 1998), which argues that the 'Crusader Military forces' of the US and UK systematically aim at imposing a new wave of imperialism in the Middle East with an intention to gain control over the region's oil wealth (FAS, 1998). When passive sympathizers listen to such views and compare with the "west-versus-others" interactions, there is unreasonable inclination to add to the massive numbers of active supporters and loyal followers of the Islamist terrorists.

Interestingly, this has evolved into the 'Jihad-collective revenge' propaganda, instigating all Muslims as their individual obligations to Islam to revenge everything America has done against the Muslim world- a point already highlighted. Bin Laden presented not one, but several of such seminars declaring war against America (Alexander and Swetnam, 2001; Scheuer, 2006). The message was clear- Muslims around the world should see it as an obligation to execute Jihad and wipe out anti-Islamic forces (Ibrahim and Venzke, 2003) especially using bloodless conquests of Baghdad and perceived American influence in the region (Scheuer, 2006), historic defeats of Muslim nations by the west, the killing of Muslim children in Iraq and Palestine to make strong their case of this needed revenge (Alexander and Swetnam, 2001,). This choice of propaganda and its method of spread stands out as a benchmark for subsequent terrorist groups.

Boko Haram which means "western education is an abomination" was formed in the North-eastern state of Borno in Nigeria solely for the purpose of establishing an extremist fundamentalist Islamic state based on Islamic law (Sharia). It is to use the hardline Salafi interpretation and implementation of Sharia in accomplishing their aim. Other factors such as the longstanding religious tensions in the region, political corruption, widening economic disparity and the federal government's heavy-handed police and counter-terrorism tactics, the group grew into a terrorist organisation, attacking markets, razing willages, pillaging, committing the massacre of civilians and kidnapping women and girls on a regular basis, one of the most popular and widespread incidences being the 276 "chibok girls" kidnapped (Alvi, 2019).

In Africa, these grievances may not only be the typical anti-western or anti-American grievances but may be local grievances that can be attributed to anti-Islam or pro-western ideas that may be converted into legitimate reasons to commit violence. One of the ways terrorism got its foothold on African societies is by using local root causes and motives such as social grievances and resentments, especially to anything or activity that is perceived as anti-Islam, western or "unclean" (Antwi-Boateng, 2017). For instance, the election of President Goodluck Jonathan in

Nigeria in 2011 caused massive religious violence that ended so many lives in the Northern part of the country and rendered properties destroyed because the preferred Muhammadu Buhari who was Muslim from the North did not win (Okolo and Madu, 2022). Such grievances can be taken advantaged of to recruit young uneducated boys to fight off “infidels”. These grievances are not limited to religious ones alone. They may be political, economic or social, some of which are historically centuries-long and associated with numerous conflicts (Denisova and Kostelyanets, 2022). In Mozambique, local grievances, illicit income opportunities and international linkages to the establishment of terror groups are evidently responsible for the “territorial capture” of Northern Mozambique by Islamist terrorists. A situation that has crippled every chance for the country’s economy to grow and flourish, considering the potential in the nation’s largescale gas exploration investments (Denisova and Kostelyanets, 2022).

The Al-Qaeda legacy

Al-Qaeda has earned for itself a notorious transnational reputation of terror and its fierce opposition to America and the west. It is a sunni pan-Islamist organization that is extreme by operations and champions the global Islamist revolution for the unity of Muslims around the world under the Islamic state called the Caliphate and led by Salafi Jihadists. (Klausen, 2021; Marshall & Spitaletta, 2012) It is responsible for attacks both against civilians and the military around the globe and some popular examples are the 2001 September 11 attacks and the 2002 Bali Bombings (Wiktorowicz et al., 2003). Their mode of operations from being faceless to propaganda and attack tactics have left huge footprints for subsequent terror groups to learn from and possibly adopt. Here are three modes of operations Al-Qaeda have perfected that if adopted by subsequent terror groups both within and outside the western states will put the west on a red alert. Boko Haram, the terrorist organization in Nigeria follows Al-Qaeda’s footsteps. They have since broken into several groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) which is linked to Al-Qaeda Central and the other group is the self-acclaimed “Caliphate” in Northeastern Nigeria called the Islamic State’s West Africa Province. This group has been a thorn in not only Nigeria’s flesh but also Chad Republic’s, Niger’s and Cameroon’s (Alvi, 2019). Here are therefore, some of the characteristics of Al-Qaeda that Islamic terrorist groups around the world and particularly Africa have adopted.

Vague Identity

The question is ‘what exactly is Al-Qaeda?’ Despite the devastation this terrorist group has caused on the world trade Centre and the Pentagon, the true identity and definition of Al-Qaeda is still confused. Is it monolithic, whilst being an international organization with a clear hierarchy of command and control to cause terror or a larger and uncoordinated movement but held together by a loosely connected transnational authority? Does it operate like a franchise with local but independent representatives with same vision as they propagate the goals of their parent organizations? Does it operate like a centralized authority with liaison placed around the world? Is it a concept or a virus, an ideology or an army, a populist transnational association or an international militant or criminal association? All of these? None of these? Some of these?

(Hoffman, 2002) Interestingly, these questions ignite more disagreements than agreement among academics, intelligence agencies and governments (Hoffman, 2002).

A good example is the capture of Khalid Sheik Mohammed, popularly called KSM, the Pakistani Islamist Militant that was allegedly the principal architect of the September 11, 2001 attacks. His capture was widely applauded but did not yield much as he neither had contact with bin Laden for more than a year nor had any knowledge of future attacks by Al-Qaeda and their operations (Hoffman, 2002). Also, the capture of Hambali, the former leader of Jamaah Islamiyah, the Indonesian terrorist organization in August 2003, had a similar outcome as commentaries in charge of his capture could not conclude differentiating between Al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah (New York Times, 2003a; Bonner and Johnson, 2003; Nakashima and Sipress, 2003; Cloud and Lopez, 2003).

Despite nearly half of the senior leadership of Al-Qaeda been killed or captured in 2003, which should weaken the terrorist organization and significantly undermine its operational capabilities, the organization still maintains a vital core of its leadership which remains large, highly functional and unaccounted for. This is the major factor for the organization's longevity and regenerative capacity (MEMRI, 2003; Gordon, 2003). The post 2001-September 11 era was characterized by relentless attacks and harassments of the Al-Qaeda organization, yet, the group seem to stand firm and continue to function. Its replenishment abilities to produce successor echelons for mid-level operational commanders who were captured or killed helped maintain the depth of their size.

President Bush had once claimed that tens of thousands of jihadists have been trained in Al-Qaeda Camps in Afghanistan, Sudan and Yemen, and 70,000 worldwide as claimed by a German intelligence (Hoffman, 2002). The same is the case with its finances. Some \$120 Million of identifiable Al-Qaeda assets have once been reported to be seized or frozen (Hoffman, 2002). Osama Bin Laden is alleged to amass finances in billions of dollars as he was reported to own or control about 80 companies globally. And as reported by Peter Bergen (2001), he owned all of Sudan's most profitable enterprises and their well-managed operations profited local Al-Qaeda cells which practically became entirely self-sufficient in the counties that they operated (Hoffman, 2002).

The "cat-with-nine-lives" attribute of Al-Shabaab, a terror group that has not only terrorized Somalia but also Kenya and Uganda is a good example of this Al-Qaeda legacy. It is no surprise that the group immediately rise up each time they are cornered and defeated (Anzalone, 2016). As the Al-Qaeda's foot soldiers in Africa, Al-Shabaab has grown to be fearsome, unpredictable and a constant menace in the eastern region of Africa (Alvi, 2019). Terrorist groups such as Tawhid al-Jihad (Shweitzer, 2012; Tuitel, 2014), Fatah al-Islam (Gade, 2007; Haddad, 2010) and ISIS (Foroughi, Peshkova, Abdullaev, Zartman, Thibault & Roche, 2020) have adopted these patterns of operations. ISIS in particular has mastered the art of facelessness and financial autonomy, making money through oil production and smuggling, ransoms from kidnapping, looting and selling stolen artifacts and antiquities, 'taxes' or extortion, stealing, organs harvesting and the sale, control of crops and to some extent, the operation of a separate economy (Faritz, 2015). Front

Islamique du Salut (FIS) also known as the Islamic Salvation Front, and also the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt are formidable militant Islamic forces possessing a vast network of charitable organizations, well equipped health facilities, worship centres and educational institutions (Miller, 1993). As long as they maintain this strategy of sustainability and survive well, more terror groups will be encouraged, and this translates to more problems to the west.

Africa is economically growing to global relevance on the world stage. Even with the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa's future as a new centre for global development seems certain. This has also caught the interest of global terrorist groups (Denisova and Kostelyanets, 2022, p.171). It is not surprising that Osama Bin Laden made a strategic decision to use Africa as a target ground for Al-Qaeda's global network and appeal (Alvi, 2019, p.111).

Dangerous Propaganda, disseminated in Sophistication

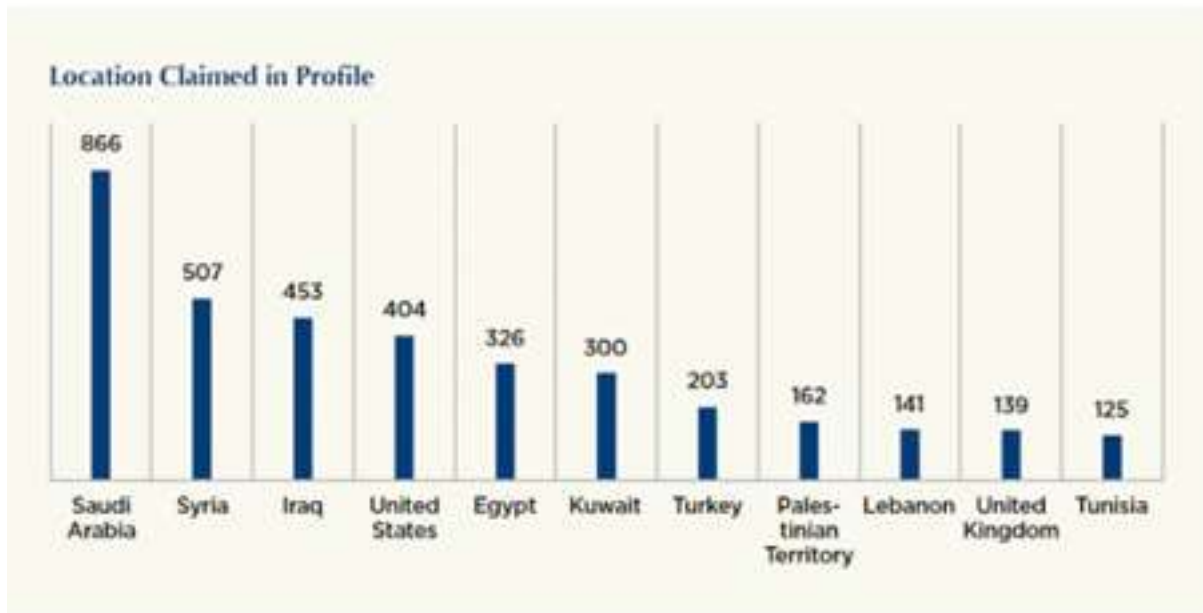
The Islamist terrorists have a well-networked and powerful tool for the dissemination of their propaganda, which is laden with western hate, twisted narratives of factual historic events and misinterpretation of Qur'anic verses to instigate the 'false' need to defend Islam as a major way of evidently being Muslim. As already discussed, their propaganda cuts across the creation of dangerous ideology to make Islam seem grossly anti-western and the west grossly anti-Islam, and as well as using political manipulation of America's relationships with Muslim nations, influenced by their foreign policies to prove the point of America's anti-Muslim drive. But they disseminate this propaganda through sophisticated means. Their sophistication includes but is not limited to: using multimedia machinery-pre-recorded audio and video tapes, CD-ROMs, DVDs and the internet; dramatically choreographed and stage opportunities of dissemination, Al Neda Website-the Al-Qaeda's Phantom etc (Hoffman, 2006). Most of the messages are driven with the agenda of hate-motivation and recruitment. (New York Times, 2003b; Shmidt and Shanker, 2003).

In some African societies like in Nigeria, for instance, hate messages from Islamic clerics are condoned and ignored. These hate messages sink deep into Muslim adherents and subsequently make them easy proponents of radicalism and fundamentalism. For instance, in 2024, Idris Tenshi, a Northern Nigerian Islamic cleric in a sermon described the wife of the President as an infidel who should be killed. He spoke in Hausa language inciting violence against the first lady of the Nation by saying "Tinubu's (the president) wife is an unbeliever and even among the unbelievers, she is a leader (being a pastor herself)." (Sahabi, 2024). Despite calls for his arrest from all quarters of the nation, he was not arrested. He only gave an apology and that was it (Sahabi, 2024; Vanguard, 2024). Such situations fuel extremism and fundamentalism the more in African societies and if Islamic terrorism must be dealt with, such preachers should never be spared.

This legacy of the sophisticated dissemination of their dangerous propaganda has not only been carried on, but advanced into using the social media platforms to propagate terror and champion their propaganda. In contemporary terrorism, almost all known terror groups of western concern use social media to disseminate ideas (Rothenberger, 2012; Lieberman, 2017). The Taliban in Pakistan has been noted to improve in their overall organizational strength due to the use of the internet (Abbas, 2008). According to Berger and Morgan (2015), 'in a Brookings Institute

report, The ISIS Twitter Census, uses social media metrics to map the geographical distribution of IS supporters. It also reveals tweeting patterns, follower ratio and the number of accounts followed. The most interesting finding shows that the U.S. is fourth in the world and the U.K. 10th for IS-supporting Twitter users who can be located. While these numbers are small set against the total number of Twitter accounts connected with ISIS (46,000), they still indicate a surprisingly strong online support base for ISIS in these two countries, which are clearly high up ISIS' target list (The Conversation, 2016) as shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: The top locations claimed by IS supporting Twitter users



Brookings Institute (Berger and Morgan, 2015)

Operational Tactics- Guerrilla Warfare

Bin Laden has emphasized on the strategic effectiveness of using Guerilla warfare to defeat the Americans, citing examples of Somalia against American forces in October 1993 (Bowden, 2010). His reasoning being the imbalance of forces between them and the military might of America (Scheuer, 2006). This legacy continued to subsequent figure heads in the terrorist organization; Suleiman Abu Ghaith and to Saif al-Adel, a former most senior operational commander of Al-Qaeda who was a former Egyptian Army Special Forces Officer (Mintz, 2003). After American forces entered Baghdad in 2003, Al Neda published on the need to use guerrilla warfare to defeat the Americans on the 9th of April 2003, and this is what was published:

“Guerrilla warfare is the most powerful weapon Muslims have, and it is the best method to continue the conflict with the crusader enemy. Prominent lessons of history are invoked to rally the Jihadists for renewed battle..... The Americans were defeated in Vietnam and the Soviets were defeated in Afghanistan. This is the method that expelled the direct crusader colonialism from most of the Muslim lands, with Algeria the most well-known. We still see how the method stopped

Jewish immigration to Palestine and caused reverse immigration of Jews from Palestine. The successful attempts of dealing defeat to invaders using guerrilla warfare were many, and we will not expound on them. However, these attempts have proven that the most effective method for the materially weak against the strong is guerrilla warfare” (Hoffman, 2002, p.432).

Almost all known terrorist groups with the capacity to attack the state use guerrilla tactics (Carter, 2016; Jenkins, 2006), even in Africa where Al-shabaab (Wise, 2011; Azalone, 2016) and Boko Haram (Maszka, 2017; Oladimeji et al., 2012; Onapajo et al., 2012; Nnam, 2018) operate, they do so via guerrilla tactics. Therefore, by operating in a vague identity, persistently disseminating dangerous propaganda through sophisticated means and using the Guerrilla warfare in attacking their enemies, Al-Qaeda have created a legacy for subsequent terror groups around the world to adopt and implement. Those capable of attacking the west today have their operational activities and intelligence driven by this legacy and hence, the west should indeed be worried.

Easy Recruitment

There are many factors responsible for the joining of terrorists and militant Islamic groups by young people and their easy recruitment proves to be a problem, serving as the engine to the sustainability of Islamic terrorism. A past survey of 35 incarcerated terrorists in the Middle East strongly suggested the multifactorial element of their motivation to commit terror (Gupta, 2020). Jessica stern interviewed religious terrorists in Pakistan, Indonesia, Palestine and the USA and discovered that a huge number of suicide bombers are usually troubled teenagers, who once lived in refugee camps or stayed in Israeli prisons, or have no jobs and/or girlfriends, or just living desperately (Stern, 2003). Therefore, it is very easy to recruit, indoctrinate and train them into terrorism (Gupta, 2020). A consequence of this is, for instance, while the Sri Lankan Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE)- a political terror group, recruit their bombers from the most battle-hardened veterans within the organization as suicide bombers; Hamas, Hizbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)- Islamist terror groups only need to recruit teenagers who have no formal connection with them, until months or weeks before an attack (Stern, 2003). These teenagers are readily available in a pool of socio-economically deprived group, empowering the Islamic groups to even be deadlier than other terror groups and in extension more of a threat to the world in general and to the West, specifically.

Various factors are responsible for the motivation of Middle East bombers, ranging from personal to religious, nationalistic, economic or sociological (Moghadam, 2003). But the biggest is the personal factor which usually is driven by any of these: revenge for the death of a loved one, reward in the afterlife, renowned status in the bomber’s society or succumbing to peer pressure of avoiding being ostracized from society if one wouldn’t join a terror organization. Bin Laden’s deputy, for instance, who was known to be the ‘brain’ behind Osama’s operations and Al-Qaeda’s evolution to a global network, Ayman Mohammed Rabie Al-Zawahiri was highly educated and skilled as a surgeon. He was highly motivated to uncompromising vengeance on account of losing his wife and only son from a U.S air strike in Afghanistan in November 2001 (Jehl, 2001; Riedel, 2010, p.16; Youseef, 2004).

A Muslim family once told Jessica Stern, ‘everyone treats me with more respect now that I have a martyred son... When a son dies in jihad, the family’s standing in the community goes way up. I sent my son to fight in the jihad myself, and I would send all seven sons’ (Stern, 2003, p.221). In Palestine, dignity restored from humiliation is a huge encouragement to join terrorists (Gupta, 2020). Some terrorist organisations offer housing, wages or other economic incentives to the families of martyred sons (Gupta, 2020). The leading Islamic party in Pakistan, through a foundation they established, provides financial support to more than 900 families of martyrs. This is to maintain the motivation for these families and others to keep sources of recruitments (Moghadam, 2003).

In Pakistan, the secondary level of educational system is divided into the publicly run schools that are free and usually called the ‘Madrasahs’ which are also religious schools where the Qur’an and Muslim grievances are taught and the privately run expensive schools. The second set of schools are very expensive that a massive percentage of the Pakistani parent population cannot afford to send their children to these schools. The Madrasahs are free boarding schools with free books, housing, food and healthcare. Since majority of the Pakistani population is poor, a lot of young boys and girls are sent to Madrasahs and this is where a ‘protracted’ period of indoctrination takes place (Gupta, 2020). It is same with Indonesia and Palestine and in fact, the Indonesian Islamist group generously ‘employs’ University students and graduates, whilst giving their families “stipends” as they serve these organizations (Stern, 2003).

Osman Antwi-Boateng (2017) in his Academic paper “The Rise of Pan-Islamic Terrorism in Africa: A Global Security Challenge” aptly summarized terrorism in Africa in his Abstract: “Although the vast majority of Africans are peaceful moderates, radical Islamic ideology that fuels pan-Islamic terrorism is on the rise in the continent because of factors that can be categorized under push and pull forces. The push forces are conditions that drive people to embrace the ideology of violent jihad. These involve: local backlash against Americanization/globalization, authoritarian/oppressive political systems, lack of basic human rights, youth bulge/high unemployment, corruption/lack of meritocracy, state collapse, and porous borders. The pull factors are the advantages terrorist/jihadi movements have that attract people to their cause. These include radical Islamic ideology, humanitarian networks, media propaganda, provision of a ‘purpose and mission’, the lure of martyrdom and influences of madrasahs.”

Radicalization

For the radical Islamists to directly attack the west, they will need to be in western societies, so also is the case with Africa and its societies. Radical Islam or Islamism has no headquarters and has expanded beyond ISIS and Al-Qaeda to smaller substantial groups of Muslims in pocket-settlements around the world (Singer, 2018). Radicalization is a process which involves the adoption of extremely social, political or religious ideologies by a person or group, which involves the rejection of contemporary ideas, the freedom of choice and the acceptance of associated violence to cause the aspired change that they hope to make (Wilner and Dubuoloz, 2011). The west is currently marred with radicalization from Australia to Western Europe. For instance, more

than one suspected Australian Islamic terrorist was captured from an international flight every day in 2015 (News Corp Australia, 2015) and in 2016, it is reported that about 850 Britons joined ISIS and similar terrorist groups abroad (MacAskill, 2016). Since after the September 11 bombings in 2001, there has been a surge in the radicalisation of British Muslim Youths, especially the young boys into terrorism. This has also significantly distorted the integration patterns of the multicultural nature of the British Society (Lynch, 2013), as a lot of homogenous communities increasingly exist and continue to grow in the United Kingdom. Popular names among the radicalized Britons include Kadiza Sultana, Mohammed Emwazi, also called Jihadi John, Amira Abase, Shamima Begun, Aqsa Mamood, the twins- Salma and Zahra Halane, and Khadijah and her son, Isa Dare. Some of them were distinction students in their class, but all of them, born and bred in the United Kingdom without any form of physical contact with the terror-country, prior to their travel. One of them was even caught on tape, declaring war against the West, while with the terrorist group abroad (MacAskill, 2016). In the same vein, most of the Australian terrorists of 2015 were young and second-generation immigrants, born and bred in Australia who know nothing about the war-torn countries they travelled to. Australia was recorded to be the highest exporter of Jihadists outside the middle east region the same year.

It is the same with Germany as concern was raised about the gradual rise in the radicalization among its 4 million Muslim Citizens. One of the outcomes is the 300 Germans who flew to Syria to take part in the radical-militant organization Islamic state (Brenner, 2015). Same goes with Italy, Spain, France and the USA (Hunter and Heinke, 2011). The obvious threat here is that they get back to these western societies with their passports and continue to propagate this same hate against the societies they live in, putting innocents at risk of periodic terror attacks of all degrees. It is for this reason that Shamima Begun lost her case over the decision to deprive her of British Citizenship after traveling to Syria to be part of the terrorist Islamist State, despite strong evidence presented by lawyers in the argument that she is a victim of sexual trafficking and exploitation (Casciani and Seddon, 2023). There is substantial evidence to show that there is an increase in the degree of lethality of terror attacks for the past five years (Global Terrorism Index, 2023). If radicalization is not curbed, western societies may still survive but on eternal vigilance.

If radicalization is an issue in stable and highly developed societies as the western ones, how much more of poor, unstable, chaotic and porous societies like the ones in Africa? Out of the 830million people facing food insecurity in the world, 58% live in the 20 countries most affected by terrorism located specifically in Africa (Wudil, Usman, Rosak-Szyrocka, Pilař & Boye, 2022). This will enable the easy radicalization of African youths, especially if food and social incentives are involved. Also, there are numerous criminal organisations involved in the smuggling of illegal drugs, goods and people which easily join Islamist jihadists with little convincing from these terrorist groups. The remote and isolated border areas that form the border triangle of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso known as Liptako-Gourma has now been converted to the gravity of terrorism throughout the Sahel due to its logistic bases for launching attacks and massive recruitments (David, 2023). As of 2022, Muslims constitute 26% of the Cameroon's population but demonstrate faster demographic growth and spread as they have strategically placed themselves in all corners

and segments of Cameroon's population. Unfortunately, radicalization comes as a side effect of this growth. Wahhabism as sponsored by Gulf Monarchies for years is spreading to implant Sufi Islam in Cameroon. Their strategy includes the building of Wahhabi educational facilities that offer free education and developing Wahhabi organisations that render social support in times of economic crises, making Wahhabism more popular among Cameroonians. When boko haram terror activities reached the border of Cameroon, the government arrested Wahhabi Imams and their local supporters to the outrage and anger of Muslims around the region. This further encouraged the radicalisation of more Cameroonian Muslims (Denisova and Kostelyanets, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Islamic Extremism is discussed and how it is still a threat to Africa by analysing these threats through the lens of the west. Firstly, the ideological factor characterized by the clash of civilization- the west in direct opposition to Islam where the former is immoral, materialistic and evil, whilst the latter is pure, holy and must stand alone by eliminating the former. Radicals prey on this to spread anti-Americanism, and anti-Western propaganda. The dangerous ideology is disseminated even to regular, moderate Muslims, exposing many of them to be sympathisers. This poses a serious threat to the West if their Muslim citizens are also exposed to it.

Then there is the political factor which revolves around vengeance to America and the West due to their foreign policies believed to be anti-Islam and against Muslims. Some of the unpleasant historic relationships between America and some of the Muslim Countries are used as evidence to convince Muslims of 'anti-Americanism' whilst motivating them to defend and act as a mandatory task demanded of them in Islam. Al-Qaeda's mode of operations, existence and survival capabilities are also a huge factor. The organization's legacy is stamped through its relentlessness and tenacity, thriving via having a vague identity, its sophistication in disseminating its dangerous propaganda and its guerrilla tactics in attacks, leaving a legacy for contemporary terror groups around the world. This has made it difficult for them to be wiped out and hence, a continued threat to the west. Then there are factors such as socio-economic, psychological, personal factors of the vengeance of the loss of a loved one, societal pride and even nationalistic factors which are all responsible for the easy recruitment of terrorists. The use of sophisticated tools, in particular, the internet and specifically, social media platforms have significantly contributed to the potency and threats of the various Islamic terror groups, especially Al-Qaeda (Jain & Vaidya, 2021). Finally, the radicalization of citizens of the western states is another issue that sustains the threat of Islamic terrorism to the west (Goodman, 2018; Nouh et al., 2019; Reuter et al., 2017). Islamic terrorism is still very much of a threat to the West and until these factors 'disappear', the potential and then threat of terrorism will always be there. By applying all these factors into the African context, I have described how terror groups such as Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and other Al-Qaeda and Islamic State Organization have adopted these patterns to commit havoc in numerous African societies (Rădulescu, 2020).

The west has applied data mining technology in tracking down threats and potential terrorists over the past years (Thuraisingham, 2004). Also, the use of real-time analyzation has been used in

recent times to detect real-time terrorism-supporting tweets (Abrar, Arefin & Hossain, 2019). It is recommended that these two strategies be harnessed to better improve the effectiveness of tracking down terrorists whilst implementing a compulsory integration initiative, especially at school levels to reduce the chances of indoctrination and increase the chances of the integration of children in western societies. African will need to adopt these strategies as well. Finally, whistleblowing is also recommended, especially for Muslim adherents who may be living close to a region where terror activities or planning are carried out (Bazzichelli, 2021; Kumar and Santoro, 2017). But above all, the socioeconomic status of Africans must improve in order to effectively address the spread of Islamic terrorism (Coccia, 2018; Dowd, 2015; Majekodunmi, 2015).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Before delving into technical strategies of countering terrorism in Africa, it is important to note that the improvement of the socioeconomic living and general quality of life of Africans is compulsory if the spread of Islamic terrorism must stop. Without this, no matter the strategy and technology used in counterterrorism in Africa, efforts and resources will just be wasted.

Counter-terrorism strategies are usually classified information, held by top-level security agencies so as not to reveal their methodology to the same terrorists or potential terrorists that they want to apprehend. But it is still important that this is discussed to an 'overview' degree for academic purposes, leaving technicalities and detail off public space for security reasons. One of the ways the west has been successful in bringing down the rates of terror attacks is by the implementation of data mining. Data mining is the analysis of queries and the extraction of useful patterns or trends which were previously not known from enormous data collection, using different techniques in the execution of this analysis. This technology is being used in Medicine, biotechnology, multimedia and entertainment, and can hence, be used in counter-terrorism applications. The unusual patterns could be, but not limited to, fraudulent behaviours, unusual real-time activities, and in terms of Islamic terrorism, any of the features mentioned in this paper. Data mining can thoroughly focus on the activities of known extremists or proponents of anti-westernism, and their cohorts or followers.

Just as earlier discussed, as the world advances, so is terrorism and this age of social media is also enjoyed by terrorists' networks. Twitter or now known as 'X' is the most common and easiest way to reach out to many people, and a significant number of terrorist organisation have adopted it as a means of indoctrination and communication to followers and potential followers alike. The use of real-time analyzation technological tools to detect terrorism-supporting tweets is a new development that is becoming popular in the counter-terrorism industry. Tools such as the Support Vector Machine (SVM) and the Multinomial Logistic Regression have been proven to be effective in detecting terror-supporting tweets. Therefore, a combination of real-time analyzation of social media and Data mining further improves the effectiveness of detecting terrorism. When individuals constantly propagate hate, discrimination, anti-social ideologies or perspectives against humanity on social media, they can be identified, and their activities closely monitored.

Integration is key. The educational system of the west should not change to suit any particular ethnicity or group of people. Schools should be the major avenue for children to integrate, learn other cultures and know other people. The Muslim children in particular will most likely learn their Islamic values at home, and they may even learn more in a supplementary educational centre, maybe an Islamic or Qur'anic school, but these supplementary centres should never substitute the main schools. In the event that there are large clusters of homogenous people living together as communities, their schools must be ensured to follow the rule of diversity in staffing. The staff of such schools MUST be adequately diverse so that the children would not be deprived of the broad knowledge of their western society. This will also hinder indoctrinations in schools and limit the indoctrination they get at home.

Finally, whistleblowing has been shown to be an effective counter-terror tool. As earlier discussed, these terrorists are an infinitesimal fraction of an infinitesimal fraction of the Muslim community. A massive number of Muslims are not in support of both their ideologies and their actions. Whistleblowing gives a good Muslim and non-Muslim citizen alike the opportunity to secretly expose potential terrorist attacks or terror threats. African states, hence, need to sit up and draft out a framework that will effectively protect and silently reward the whistleblower, so that others may be encouraged to do the same.

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