

An Examination of the Root Causes of Terrorism: Nigeria as a Case Study

AYOOLA ABULOYE Ph.D*
LLB (HONS), BL (HONS), LLM, Mphil (Law), Ph.D (Law)
Department of Business Law
Faculty of Law
Obafemi Awolowo University
Ile Ife, Osun State, Nigeria
Email: aabuloye@oauife.edu.ng; ayoolaabuloye@gmail.com

MARGARET ASHIRU Ph.D**
LLB (HONS), BL (HONS), LLM, Ph.D (Law)
Department of Jurisprudence and Private Law
Faculty of Law
Obafemi Awolowo University
Ile Ife, Osun State, Nigeria
Email: ashirumo@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study examined generally the root causes of terrorism, which are the underlying factors that trigger terrorism. The study specifically relates the root causes of terrorism to Nigeria, a country that has been ravaged by terrorist acts for about two decades. The study found that terrorism does not just occur but there are some precipitating factors that cause terrorism. The study concluded that these root causes are the major factors that trigger terrorism, even though there may be some other ancillary causes of terrorism. The study further concluded that in order to successfully combat acts of terrorism, these root causes must be addressed.

Keywords: Root Causes, Terrorism, Nigeria, Boko Haram

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1.0 Introduction

Terrorism is the aggressive acts carried out by individuals, groups or States against people. It includes forms of terrifying, maiming and killing of people. It also involves any violent act or threat to life embarked upon by any individual or a group, which is aimed at endangering lives, security or freedom. It is against this background that it has been argued that other forms of violence such as banditry, kidnapping and human trafficking have also been cited as categories or forms of terrorism. These acts all involve threats or the use of force in perpetrating the criminal acts.¹ Terrorism is usually carried out by a group. It is often linked to the activities of a few misguided groups with an ideology that does not conform with the larger percentage of people.

*LL.B, LL.M, Mphil, Ph.D (Ife); BL, Department of Business Law, Vice – Dean, Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile Ife, Nigeria aabuloye@oauife.edu.org; ayoolaabuloye@gmail.com;

**LL.B, LL.M, Ph.D. Reader, Department of Jurisprudence and Private Law, Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile – Ife, Nigeria. ashirumo@yahoo.com

¹ Brookings, ‘Rising Insecurity in North –West Nigeria: Terrorism Thinly Disguised as Banditry’ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2021/02/18/rising-insecurity-in-northwest-nigeria-terrorism-thinly-disguised-as-banditry/> accessed 30 March 2025; CSS, ‘Kidnapping for Ransom as a Source of Terrorism Funding’ <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSS-Analysis-141-EN.pdf> accessed 30 March 2025; Shanon A. Welch, ‘Human Trafficking and Terrorism: Utilizing National Security Resources to Prevent Human Trafficking in the Islamic State’ *Duke Journal of Gender, Law and Policy* www.heinonline.org accessed 30

This ideology can be religious, political or social. Kaur posits that terrorism is pre-planned and well thought out. It deploys violence to frighten people, government and the society in general. The aim is to achieve political, religious or ideological goals.¹

For Turk, Terrorism is the intentional attack of random individuals who fall victims to these dastardly acts. Their death or injuries is calculated to suppress them in engaging in conflict whether political religious or otherwise with the opponents. Terrorism is also defined as the orchestrated use of violence against innocent citizens with the aim of achieving a political goal.²

Terrorism could be said to be an unconventional method of militancy. It is a phenomenon whose means, more often than not contradicts and therefore negates its end. Terrorism is aimed at causing anxiety in people by repeated occurrence of violence. This tactic is employed by certain individuals, group or state actors, for ideological, criminal or political reasons.

These objectives can be achieved through sinister activities, which result in personal attack to life, disconnecting people from access to basic amenities, threats, violence, kidnappings and other forms of criminalities. As a result, the EU described terrorism as a strategy or method for attaining a variety of objectives rather than a specific ideology or organization.

It is difficult to explain why the fight against the Western powers should be considered terrorism while Islamic fighters equally resisting Soviet occupation of Afghanistan are deemed as freedom fighters. This is because terrorism as a tactic lacks any semblance of an ideological or political underpinning. In this sense, terrorism is defined as the practice of inciting fear in a target population in order to achieve predetermined goals. The inability to have a clear distinction between those who are actually terrorists and those who are freedom fighters is highlighted by the similarity in the use of terror by both factions which ought not to be, as terror for the terrorist is a dominant technique while it is not the main method for the freedom fighter. Although, terrorism does not have a specific definition, terrorism could be stated in terms of its elements or components as follows:

- a. Terrorism includes acts of violence against innocent people or the threat of such acts. Violence also includes assaults on people and their possessions. Terrorist actions do not differentiate between actors and bystanders. Terrorists carry out random attacks.
- b. Terrorism is aimed at achieving goals, which could be religious, political or ideological goal, which allegedly could not be achieved by following due process;
- c. Terrorist acts are carried out by organised groups, over a period of time.
- d. Terrorist acts are often carried out indiscriminately and the sufferers are persons who have no direct relationship with the reason those acts are being carried out.
- e. Terrorism is intended to frighten the people in order to propagate the terrorists' cause;
- f. Terrorism is aimed at dehumanising others.

2.0 Root Causes of Terrorism

Acts of terrorism are regarded as crimes against humanity by the vast majority of people. However, some individuals may attempt a justification of such nefarious acts as allegedly fighting for a cause which, in their view, is more important than the sanctity of the society and sacredness of life of people. The underlying causes of terrorism, just like its definition, are not exact. There is no consensus among the various scholars just like the definitional quagmire. However, scouring the available literature would reveal a common ground agreeable to all as the root causes of terrorism. An integral common ground is existing or perceived injustices.

a. Existing or Perceived Injustice

Actual or perceived injustice as a terminology may not specifically address the issue if the said injustice is not situated within the common domains of socio-political, economic, religious or family. Newman analysed the root causes of terrorism differentiating structural factors that are permissive and some factors with underlying grievances.³ The former represents the pillars that enable, solidify, and implement all kinds of injustices,

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¹ K. Kaur, 'High Technology Terrorisms: A Threat to Global Security' (2007) *India Quarterly Journal of International Affairs* 81-95

² A.T. Turk, 'Sociology of Terrorism' *Annual Review of Sociology* (2004) 245-286

³ E. Newman, 'Exploring the "Root Causes" of Terrorism' (2006) *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29(8) 749-772.

which includes enabling terrorism even at the initial stage. These pillars could be domestic, national or global system that enables poverty, unemployment, or forced migration etc. However, these grievances may include socio-political issues that are unresolved, including inequality, non-inclusion, subjugation, scarcity, alienation, sense of foreign domination/hegemony, violent conflict and negative effects of harsh economy. These inherent conflict precipitants could trigger full blown conflict of which terrorism is an example.

However, Newman further posits that without the presence of quickening agents such as leadership, finance and State sponsorship, terrorism cannot occur as a result of the structural and the underlying factors.

A sober reflection on Newman's scholarly contribution to the root causes of terrorism reveal that his analyses are not far-fetched from that of his predecessors like Martha Crenshaw.¹

b. Pre-conditions and Precipitants

This terminology was expounded by Martha Crenshaw in 1981² in her article, *The Causes of Terrorism*. The pre-conditions to terrorism are those inherent factors that enhance the birthing of terrorism, and they comprise the causes that go to the very root; the environmental or immediate causes. On the other hand, precipitants are the terrorism triggers, and they include counter-terrorism awareness, which sensitises the people to advocate or encourage revenge and retaliation. Both the theories of Crenshaw and Newman show that the causes of terrorism are also the causes of other conflicts. The difficult question is: why the resort to terrorism instead of deploying other methods or tactics of agitation? According to Schmid,³ deploying terrorism as a method of conflict could be based on factors such as the of the size of the group - small or big. It could be easier for small groups to have recourse to terrorism than large ones. Also, the availability of resources is another factor that ginger recourse to terrorism. These could be the readily available arms, being stronger than a political opponent, and the group's idiosyncrasies.

While the acclaimed premise and foundation for the rise of terrorism is notable, some researchers found out that factors such as poverty and harsh economic conditions are only remotely connected to terrorism⁴. On the contrary, some scholars opine that higher education could be a reason for terrorism⁵. Also, State oppression, injustice ethno- and religious crises could trigger terrorism. It is uncertain to explain how education could orchestrate terrorism. It is true that people who are highly educated would want to assume political leadership in any group. Also, people who are highly knowledgeable and proficient in the use of technology could be very useful to terrorists. However, it has not been proved that education alone, aside other factors could motivate people to pursue their terrorism- related goals. Nevertheless, there maybe a likelihood of an upsurge in inter-tribal or inter-religious conflicts, serving as a radicalization pathway toward terrorism.

It has been posited that an understanding of the underlying causes of terrorism requires an exposition into radicalization and the components of lone wolves, particularly the transition from having merely radical opinions to taking radical actions. The extreme opposition to a political *status quo* and its sometimes, resulting outcome – terrorism could be justified through the theory that cleaves the society together and the dynamism of the already in place conflict that exists within groups. Individuals tilt towards and defend what they identify with. Thus, what is regarded as terrorism is a defense in support of the ideology that people believe in.

It is apposite that people are attached to the groups they identify with but what causes a shift from just being attached to a group, to radical actions or acts of terrorism against another? King and Taylor⁶, in their research on the wildness of terrorists that spring up locally aver that the underlying factors, which result in radicalization, go beyond the cleavage perspective, to incorporate other factors relating to group deficiency, struggles with identity and bespoke character disposition.

The duo further reveals that that the denial of what should accrue to a group, in addition to some other factors could account for the gap between having a radical stance and also acting it in explaining the motivations of terrorism. Some scholars argue that this analysis provides a foundation for lone wolf terrorists. McCauley and

¹ Ibid

² M. Crenshaw, 'The causes of terrorism' (1981) 13(4) Comparative Politics 379-399.

³ A. P. Schmid, 'Root Causes of Terrorism: Some conceptual Notes, A Set of Indicators, and a Model' (2005) 1(2) *Democracy and Security* 127-136.

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

⁶ M. King, and D. M. Taylor, 'The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence' (2011) 23(4) *Terrorism and Political Violence* 602-622.

Moskalenko¹ identified distinctive features of isolated terrorists in explaining the fundamentals of terrorism. These are disengaged-chaotic and considerate- obliged. The disengaged-chaotic are isolated terrorists who are not psychologically fit and could be spurred into action by their agitations and easy access to arms. The caring-compelled are those who engaged in terrorism because they care for the people. They are motivated by the suffering of others and therefore compelled to take actions in order to mitigate the suffering of people. This may serve as a defense to hitherto innocent people, who act as suicide bombers in order to be termed heroes of the course they believe in.

In suicide terrorism, suicide bombers act from a deep seated, and intentional decision making, resulting in a well – reflected strategy. This view does not however take into cognizance, minors who are being kidnapped by terrorist organisations, brain washed to carry out suicide terrorism. These children are also victims, just like victims of the suicide bombings that they carry out. Onuoha and Ugwueze² opine that the common causes of terrorism could be religious or political in nature. The religious school opines that Boko Haram insurgency is an orchestrated plan to islamise Nigeria. However, irrespective of the different schools, there is a consensus on the motivations for terrorism, which could be psychological, ideological, or strategic.

- a. Psychological Perspective: Proponents of this school are of the view that terrorists' actions are based on their own psychological state of mind. This is purely personal reason. The motivation may be hatred for the establishment or a thirst for power.
- b. Ideological Perspective: An Ideology is defined as the pillar or bedrock for a group's actions. It is the beliefs or values on which a group hinges its aim and objectives.
- a. Strategic Perspective: This stems from the failure of Government to act or satisfy the people. The people may result to violence when Government fail to redress or correct the anomalies in the society.

La Free and Ackerman³ identify the inter-connectivity between terrorism and other factors such as legitimacy, democratisation, and failed or failing states. For example, according to Ross and Gurr,⁴ the electoral success of the Parti Quebecois, a legitimate, non-violent political party, is one of the major reasons that the political strength of Front de Liberation du Quebec waned.

Some factors contributed to the increase in terrorist activities. A major reason for the surge was the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) particularly because of its networks in other nations and its involvement with terrorists not affiliated to already established organisations..⁵ Another underlying factor was the intense attack on Boko Haram by the Nigerian Armed Forces and other partners in the Military operations, which resulted in Boko Haram members fleeing their hitherto occupied territories in the Northern part of Nigeria to neighboring Countries like Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. These groups further recruited members and perpetrate acts of violence in rural areas and on Government facilities⁶ Another major factor is the reformation of Al-Qaeda following the death of Osama bin Laden and the death of Muammar Gaddafi, which made terrorists' activities to thrive in Libya. Also, other factors such as counterterrorism measures by the US and other supporting States; the Taliban activities in Pakistan and total take-over of Afghanistan; the activities of home-grown terrorists, who are lone-wolves in the Western countries; the global nature of modern - day terrorism, which indicates that it is not just an Asian, Middle East or African issue. This position is ably substantiated with the occurrence of terrorism in Western cities like Boston, Orlando, Paris, Brussels, Ankara, London, and Berlin.⁷

Scholars have also identified some precipitating factors of terrorism surge. In third world nations, the presumption is that state sponsored political violence and existing defiant conflicts with terrorism are not unconnected. This may be illustrated with the widely believed claim that the assassination of the Boko Haram

¹ C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko, 'Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism' (2008) 20(3) *Terrorism and Political Violence* 415-433

² J. Onuoha, & M. I. Ugwueze, 'United States Security Strategy and the Management of Boko Haram Crisis in Nigeria' (2014) *Global Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* 22-43

³ LaFree, G., & Ackerman, G. 'The Empirical Study of Terrorism: Social and Legal Research' (2009) 5 *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 347-374.

⁴ Ross, J. I., & Gurr, T. R., 'Why Terrorism Subsides: A Comparative Study of Canada and the United States' (1989) 21(4) *Comparative Politics* 405-426.

⁵ C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko op. cit. p. 415-433

⁶ *START, 'Boko Haram: An Assessment of Strengths, Vulnerabilities and Policy Options' start.umd.edu/publication/boko-haram-assessment-strengths-vulnerabilities-and-policy-options, accessed 20 April 2025.*

⁷ C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko op. cit. p. 415-433

founder and leader, Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, by the Nigerian Police ignited revenge terrorist attacks. Also, the US occupation of Iraq and killing of Sadam Hussein is believed to have caused enmity between the west and the Arabs. The killing of Gaddafi, the war in Syria and Iraq are believed to have accounted for the attempt to foist Islamic State ideology on other States. In some developed countries, however, the common causes of lone wolf Terrorism have been identified as unemployment, non-inclusion, grievances against the State and easy access to weapons.¹

Some scholars have however, cautioned that eliminating the leaders of terrorist groups would only curtail the effectiveness of such groups in the short term but would resurface and be difficult to curtail in the long term. The Boko Haram example is a pointer to the fact that militarization alone cannot solve the problem of terrorism. It is therefore posited that solutions to terrorism should solve a long - term goal, which Stakeholders should first study before deploying the use of such methods. According to Hoffman² combating terrorism must be all-encompassing. He recommends some solutions:

- a. Denial of terrorist safe haven, restricted movement, and funds deprivation;
- b. Identification and weakening of terrorists' powers
- c. Providing a safe environment for the public;
- d. Campaigns against terrorism and neutralizing their propaganda.
- e. A cooperative effort in building an efficient mechanism that eliminates terrorism.

A study of Hoffman's solutions reveal that they are reactionary. Hoffman fails to consider the factors that trigger terrorism. It also fails to align with some critical strategy factors as recommended in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy such as restoration and reintegration.

3.0 Nigeria as a Case Study

Nigeria has been ravaged by terrorism for close to two decades. The Boko Haram terrorist group is largely responsible for acts of terrorism in the Country and also the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP). Boko Haram is another name for *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad*, an Islamist terrorist organization, which is centered in Northern Nigeria. The group is orchestrating unrest and tension in a country with a relatively equal population of Christians and Muslims.³ Since the Civil war, which was catastrophic, the nation has had numerous incidents of violence, frequently between Muslims and Christians and frequently motivated by politics. Boko Haram has killed several Nigerians, primarily in the North, through bombing attacks and it is believed to have recorded more deaths than during the civil war.⁴

At inception, due to their conservative nature, members of the group were not allowed to mingle with other Muslims and had previously assassinated anyone who criticized them, including Islamic clerics. Boko Haram's ideology and practices closely resemble that of the Taliban.⁵

The group considered western education as an anomaly and that was the basis of attempting to force their ideology of non-acceptance of western education and islamisation on the Nigerian State. The youths that joined the group or got convinced by their ideology dropped out of school, many of the youths also abandoned their families; working class people abandoned their jobs to follow them. Some others even sold their belongings and contributed the money to the upliftment of the organization in furtherance of the Islamic ideology.

The group was initially described by the leader as non-rebellious but just a group who wanted to uphold Allah's tenets. Thus, they started their activities in Borno, Yobe, Katsina, Kaduna, Bauchi, Gombe, and Kano states but is now visible in all the Northern states.⁶

Boko Haram is of the opinion that western education has failed the nation. It is the reason for the pervading poverty and corruption and should not be embraced by anybody.⁷ Yusuf, the leader began the movement quietly, preaching and trying to convince people. He gained followership mostly among the youths who bought

¹ M. King and Taylor D. M., op. cit. p 602-622.

² B. Hoffman, 'A Counterterrorism Strategy for the Obama Administration' (2009) 21(3) *Terrorism and Political Violence* 359-377

³ Akinfala, Akinbode and Ferma, 'Boko Haram and Terrorism in Northern Nigeria: A Psychological Analysis' *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, Vol.17No.I (2014) <http://www.bjournal.co.uk/BJASS.aspx>. accessed on 20 January, 2025; Tariella Juliet Ike, (2018) 'Reconceptualising the Role of Law in Countering Terrorism' *Journal of Law and Criminal Justice* [https:// doi.org p. 107](https://doi.org/p.107)

⁴ Akinfala Akinbode and Ferma Op. Cit P. 115

⁵ Akinfala Akinbode and Ferma Op. Cit P. 115

⁶ Njadvara, M. 'Non-violent Muslim Cleric Killed in Nigeria' (2011) *The Associated Press* accessed 21 January 2025.

⁷ Ibid

into his ideology. However, the report that the group was becoming dangerous and intended to launch attack on the Nigerian State drew the attention of the Police to the group. Yusuf was arrested and detained a number of times by the police but he was also released in due course.

The feud between the group and the Police heightened because of the law compelling motor cyclists to wear helmets. The members of the group defied this law and the police clamped down on them. Violence erupted in the Northern part of Nigeria and many public buildings were destroyed; criminals were also freed from prison in Maiduguri by the group. The Police arrested Mallam Yusuf and was killed extra-judicially while in police custody.¹ It was reported by the BBC that Yusuf had visible signs of injuries, when he was paraded by the police after his arrest and his body was left outside the police headquarters for days after his death.²

Being a devoted group, it was expected that the organization would launch its first attack in Borno in January 2011 following the death of Mohammed Yusuf. Four persons were killed as a result of the assault. Since then, both the frequency, intensity, and sophistication of the violence, as well as the number of casualties, have all increased. After Mohammed Yusuf's death in 2009, Abubakar Shekau, a former subordinate of Yusuf, announced his takeover of leadership of the group on social media in January 2012.³

The group swore allegiance to the head of ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in March 2015, and remained loyal to him until their differences in 2016, which led to the formation of the Boko Haram offshoot group, ISWAP. Nonetheless, ISIS and Boko Haram were allies until 2021, when they turned against each other and ISIS fighters attempted to kill Abubakar Shekau, the head of Boko Haram.⁴ Shekau has reportedly passed away a few occasions, only for videos of him to later surface online. The most recent of these rumors is that he passed away on May 20, 2021, after coming into contact with ISWAP, a rival terrorist organization. It was alleged that Shekau used explosives inside his home to prevent being captured by ISWAP, and as a result, he was murdered or seriously hurt.⁵ Since then, his recent photograph has not surfaced online.

The group's core arguments and convictions include the notion that the nation's banking, taxing, and legal systems are wholly unreligious. They contend that accepting these voids the entirety of a real Islamic religion and that western education is un-Islamic.

The majority of information about the Boko Haram men came from Jadamana Mada, where they have their Jummat mosque and are close to the Maiduguri airport. Due to the sources of their food, they avoid eating either commercial food or dishes made by non-members (Haram). They don't actually eat much; some of them are rumored to survive solely on fruits and dairy products. The acceptable pieces of clothing to be worn according to them are long sleeve robes, short pants, a turban, a long beard, a little coat over the long robe's sleeves and a chewing stick.⁶ It is widely reported that members of the group disowned their families; discarded their certificates including higher degrees like masters and PhD degrees certificates. Their major enemy was the government and the educated elites.⁷ In 2011, Boko Haram launched suicide bombings attacks, which were unprecedented in Nigeria and the government responded by dealing with the sect as a terrorist organization. The three North Eastern States of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa were placed under a state of emergency as a result of the insurgency's escalation between 2012 and 2013. The actions of Boko Haram have typically remained uninterrupted notwithstanding this change. Their actions have resulted in unprecedented humanitarian crises for the nation, which have had a catastrophic impact on human security and public safety.⁸

The Boko Haram sect has been in the business of terror against the government and the general populace of the nation for several years. The organization has planned attacks on the police department, banks, churches, and recreation centers, among other targets. It has also attacked public and international buildings like the United Nations Building in Abuja on August 26, 2011,⁹ Nigeria Police Force Headquarters bombing in Abuja on June 16, 2011;¹⁰ Police Headquarters and other government buildings in Damaturu, Yobe State on September 25, 2012;¹¹ Christmas day bombing at St Theresa Catholic Church in Madalla near Abuja on 25th December 2011;¹²

¹Akinfala Akinbode and Ferma Op. Cit P117

²BBC, 'Nigeria Row Over Militant Killing' www.bbc.com accessed 21 January, 2025

³Youtube, www.youtube.ng accessed on 22 January, 2025

⁴This Day News, 'Situating Shekau's Latest Death'

<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/05/23/situating-shekaus-latest-death/> accessed 24 May 2025

⁵ Ibid; Aljazeera, 'Nigerian Army investigates report of Boko Haram Leader's Death' <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/21/nigeria-investigates-reports-of-boko-haram-leaders-death> accessed 24 April 2025

⁶ Ibid

⁷ World Report 2014 www.hrw.org accessed 18 February, 2025

⁸ Aljazeera, 'Nigeria marks 500 days since Chibok Girls' abduction' www.aljazeera.com accessed 24 February 2025.

⁹ BBC News, 'Abuja Attack: Car Bomb Hits Nigeria UN Building' www.bbcnews.com accessed 20 April 2025

¹⁰ BBC News, 'Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists Bombed Abuja Police Headquarters' www.bbc.com accessed 21 April 2025

¹¹ The Guardian Newspaper, 'Boko Haram Attacks-Timeline' www.theguardian.com accessed 21 April 2025.

The motor park bomb blast at Nyanya on April 14, 2014.¹ The terrorist gang assaulted the town of Rann in Bornu State on January 28, 2019, in what was called their worst strike in more than a decade of terrorism.²

Abduction has become a regular occurrence with the sect, the abduction of about 294 secondary school girls in Chibok, Bornu State on April 14, 2014³ has gained international recognition with the bringbackourgirls group at the front burner of the campaign for the release of the girls. Over the years, 107 girls have been released by Boko Haram in a deal brokered between the sect and the Federal Government while over a hundred girls are still missing.⁴ On February 19, 2018, Boko Haram kidnapped 110 girls in their school at Dapchi, Yobe State.⁵ Following negotiations between the cult and the federal government, the majority of the girls were given back. One girl, Leah Sharibu, was kept back, though. Leah has remained in captivity for the past two years since the abduction. Unexpectedly, IDP camps are not exempt from this problem, as demonstrated by the suicide bombing that took place at an IDP camp in Dalori, Bornu State, on July 26, 2019.⁶

The Military Forces of the Buhari-led Federal Government launched an offensive against Boko Haram. The Nigerian Army reclaimed previously Boko Haram-controlled towns like Barga and Gwoza after releasing some hostages, particularly women.⁷ Nonetheless, because suicide bombings continue to happen, particularly in Bornu State, citizens still live in fear. Recent years have seen a rise in terrorist attacks along with several kidnappings and murders. Their kidnapping of Chibok schoolgirls on April 14, 2014, is one among their more notable acts,⁸ the Dapchi school girls' kidnap of February 19, 2018⁹; the kidnap and eventually beheading of Lawan Andimi, the President of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Adamawa State on January 21, 2020;¹⁰ the abduction and killing of a doctor's wife and a seminarian in Kaduna on February 1, 2020;¹¹ and the more recent Kankara school boys kidnap of December 11, 2020¹²; Kagara school kidnap of 17th February 2021¹³; and the Zamfara school girls kidnap of 27th February 2021, Kaduna train attack of 28 March 2022 and the Kuje prison break of 5th July 2022¹⁴. ISWAP has also been held responsible for the Owo, Ondo State, Southern Nigeria, terrorist attack.¹⁵

¹² BBC News, 'Nigerian Churches Hit By Blast' www.bbc.com accessed 19 April 2025

¹ Aljazeera, 'Boko Haram and Nyanya Blast' www.aljazeera.com accessed 19 April 2025

² Aljazeera, 'Boko Haram killed dozens in Monday's attack in Nigeria' www.aljazeera.com accessed 19 April 2025; www.bringbackourgirls.ng accessed 18 April 2025

³ *ibid*

⁴ Aljazeera, 'Nigeria Chibok SchoolGirls: Five years On' www.aljazeera.com accessed 26 April 2025

⁵ Foyou, V.E., Ngwafu, P., Santoyo, M. & Ortiz, A. (2018). The Boko Haram Insurgency and its Impact on Border Security, Trade and Economic Collaboration between Nigeria and Cameroon: An Exploratory Study. *African Social Science Review*, 9(1), 7; Onuoha, F. C. & Oyewole, S. (2018). Anatomy of Boko Haram: The Rise and Decline of a Violent Group in Nigeria. *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies*, 1-10.

⁶ Premium Times, 'Two Killed as Boko Haram Attacks Maiduguri IDP Camp' www.premiumtimes.com accessed 05 March 2025

⁷ Premium Times, 'Artillery Gun Used by Boko Haram Destroyed By The Nigerian Soldiers during The Recapture of Gwoza' www.premiumtimesng.com accessed 06 March 2025

⁸ On the night of 14th April 2014, the Boko Haram Terrorist organization kidnapped 276 students of the Chibok girls school, Bornu State; 57 of those girls managed to escape in the succeeding months. BBC News 'Nigeria Chibok Abductions: What we Know' www.bbc.com accessed 06 March 2025. In May 2016, one of the girls, Amina Ali also escaped and claimed 6 of the girls had died in custody. Upon negotiations between the Nigerian Government and Boko Haram, 21 girls were freed in October 2016; one girl was rescued later and another was found. 82 more girls were released in May 2017 and one girl was rescued in January 2018.-

⁹ Leadership Newspapers, 'Nigeria ranking on Terrorism Index' www.leadership.ng/2019 accessed on 18 March 2025. 113 school girls of the Government Girls Secondary School Dapchi were abducted by the Boko Haram terrorist organization; 107 of the girls were later released by the group after negotiations with the Nigerian government; 5 of the girls died during the abduction and 1 of the girls-Leah Sharibu still remains in custody.

¹⁰ Pulse, 'Murder of Lawan Andimi a shame on Federal Government says CAN president' www.pulse.ng accessed 19 March 2025

¹¹ PM News 'Doctor's wife, seminarian Killed by their Abductors' www.pmnewsnigeria.com accessed 19 March 2025.

¹² The Economist, 'The Lost Boys of Kankara' <<https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2020/12/19/more-than-300-schoolchildren-are-abducted-in-nigeria>> accessed on 18 March 2025. On the night of 11th December 2020, more than 300 boys were abducted from a Government Boys Science School in Katsina State, the boys were later freed upon negotiation by the Federal Government of Nigeria with the Boko Haram organization.

¹³ Aljazeera News, 'Kidnappers Release 42 Abducted From School In Nigeria' <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/27/kidnappers-release-42-abducted-from-school-in-nigeria> accessed on 09 May 2025. On 17th February 2021, 42 people, including school children, their teachers and relatives were kidnapped from a Government school. One person was killed during the raid. The abductees were later released upon negotiation by the Federal Government and the Boko Haram organization.

¹⁴ BBC News, 'Nigeria's Zamfara School Abduction: More Than 300 Nigerian Girls Missing' <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-56188727> accessed 4th March 2021. On 27th February 2021, more than 300 girls were kidnapped from a boarding school in Jangebe Zamfara State. The girls like the earlier cases too were released upon negotiations by the

There was improvement in terrorism incidents in Nigeria in 2023 and 2024 and the Country's ranking. The Country ranked 8th position in both years on the list of terrorism ravaged countries in the world as supposed to 3rd position in previous years. However, Nigeria shot up to 6th position in 2025¹, which is an indication that terrorist acts are on the increase.

4.0 Situating the Root Causes of Terrorism Within the Nigerian Context

Relating Newman and Crenshaw's perspectives on the theory of Root Causes of terrorism to Nigeria reveals that the Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorist groups believe that there is an actual or perceived injustice within the socio – political sphere. These actual or perceived injustice include unresolved socio-political issues such as inequality, non-inclusion, subjugation, scarcity, shame/alienation, sense of foreign domination/hegemony and harsh economy.

This theory can be conceptualized particularly, within the Boko Haram terrorist group. In the early years and formation of the group, western education was forbidden among the group (Haram). Western education was considered as a sense of foreign domination or subjugation. They attempted to force their ideology of non-acceptance of western education and islamisation on the Nigerian State. Their members were convinced to jettison schooling and every form of western education. It was even alleged that some burnt their educational certificates even Ph.D degree certificates. They also rejected western mode of dressing and preferred to dress in long sleeve robes, turbans and wearing long beards.

These underlying grievances turned a hitherto merely radical group, who set out to protest a perceived injustice to full blown terrorists. This is in tandem with the stance of King and Taylor, who opine that underlying grievances result in radicalization, before they balloon into full scale terrorism. The assassination of the Boko Haram founder and leader, Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, by the Nigerian Police ignited revenge terrorist attacks, which gives credence to Crenshaw's view that counter-terrorism awareness can spur a radical group to resort to revenge and retaliation.

La Free and Ackerman² identify the inter-connectivity between terrorism and other factors such as legitimacy, democratisation, and failed or failing states. Scholars have also identified some precipitating factors of terrorism surge. For several years, Nigeria had been under military rule, which robbed the country of legitimacy and democratization. During these years and the advent of democratic rule in 1999 after a protracted military rule, the country witnessed brutal inter/ethnic conflicts, which has even lingered in some parts of the country till date like the Northern part, which is the most affected by terrorism.

Also present in the Nigerian State are Newman's permissive factors, that are referred to as pillars that enable, solidify, and implement all kinds of injustices, which include enabling terrorism. These pillars could be domestic, national or global system that enables poverty, unemployment, or forced migration. There is a feeling of neglect and inequality among a group of people, who are discontent that their economic and political needs are being deprived and enjoyed only by a few people instead of circulating to everyone. Thus, there is a resort to terrorism when the State is somewhat incapacitated to deliver political dividends and economic stability to her people. Some scholars posit that Nigeria is tending towards a failing State. According Onapajo and Uzodike,³ a weak State cannot give what it does not have albeit basic amenities such as security, education, healthcare, social infrastructure, employment opportunities and legal framework for law and order.

5.0 Conclusion

The Root Causes of Terrorism as propounded by various scholars have been identified and analysed within the Nigerian context. It cannot be over-emphasised that security is germane to the life of a nation. The Nigerian

Federal Government and the Boko Haram organization; CNN News, 'Nigeria Train Attack Survivor Ambushed by Armed gang' www.cnn.com accessed 09 May 2025.

¹⁵ BBC News, 'Owo Church Attack-Gunmen Kill Catholic Worshippers in Ondo' www.bbc.com accessed 09 May 2025

¹ World Relief Web "Global Terrorism Index 2025" <https://reliefweb.int/report>

² LaFree, G., & Ackerman, G. 'The Empirical Study of Terrorism: Social and Legal Research' (2009) 5 *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 347-374.

³H. Onapajo and U. O. Uzodike, 'Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria: Man, the state, and the International system' (2012) 21(3) *African Security Review*, 24-39. www.researchgate.net accessed 05 March 2025

nation has been bedeviled by spates of insecurity particularly from terrorism incidents for close to two decades. This has greatly affected the country particularly in terms of economic vibrance and productivity. Although, the Nigerian Government through its counter-terrorism measures especially the military approach has recorded some success, terrorism still remains prevalent because the root causes have not been dealt with. This study concluded that for counter – terrorism to be effective, the root causes of terrorism must be adequately addressed.

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