

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN COUNTERTERRORISM: IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING GAPS AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism is a global phenomenon and it has many implications on the security of the contemporary world. The impact of terrorism is more than the immediate consequences of an attack, it has ripple effect on all aspects of life such as economic, social, psychological, political and others. Economic factors such as poverty, political factors and social/psychological factors are major causes of terrorism. Governments in various nations are committing so much resources in order to combat the menace especially since the turn it has taken after 9/11 attacks on the United States. In explaining this study, Realism Theory is used. Secondary data were utilised to gather information for the study. The study found out that the transnational nature of terrorist organizations presents a significant obstacle to effective counterterrorism efforts; there is also the lack of international

Introduction

There are serious implications of terrorism in and around the globe and it has been a major concern for all security agents and citizens from various parts of the world. It has led to increased military spending, the erosion of civil liberties, the rise of nationalism, and the polarisation of societies. It has significant implications for global security and the impact is multifaceted (International Peace Institute, 2009). According to Frey (2022), terrorism has also led to an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment, which has resulted in a rise in hate crimes. The most obvious

consensus on achieving a comprehensive effort especially on what works and strategies to be adopted in combating terrorism. The study concluded that addressing terrorism requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach, demanding cooperation between governments, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders, with a focus on promoting peace, stability, and economic development in regions affected by terrorism. Effective and comprehensive countermeasures, creating and strengthening international cooperation, addressing the root causes of terrorism are some of the recommendations the study made.

Keywords: Terrorism, Counterterrorism, National, and International Levels.

Impact is the loss of human lives and the physical damage caused by terrorist attacks. The threat of terrorism has led to increased security measures in many countries, which has resulted in a reduction of civil liberties. Unfortunately, the tension between security and civil liberties is a delicate balance that must be maintained to ensure the protection of citizens and their rights.

It is important to note that the impact of terrorism goes beyond the immediate consequences of an attack. Terrorism can have a profound effect on the economy, social cohesion, and political stability of a country (Kuwali, 2022; Raasch, 2019). The fear and uncertainty generated by terrorism can lead to a decline in economic activity, the erosion of civil liberties, and the rise of authoritarianism (Rush, Jenkins-Keenan, & Burton, 2021). Terrorism can also lead to the displacement of people and the destabilization of regions, creating conditions that are conducive to the emergence of new terrorist groups.

The history of terrorism shows that it has evolved over time and has been influenced by political, economic, social, and ideological factors. Also, the impact of terrorism on global security goes beyond the immediate consequences of an attack and can have far-reaching effects on the economy, social cohesion, and political stability of a country. For instance, Brown (2020) states that the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the US, remains the most popular terror attack and its effect is still devastating. Perpetrated by terrorist group Al-Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden, the attack in the US affected the economy negatively as collapse of

businesses occurred significantly. As indicated, terrorist strikes were the greatest misfortune for the insurance business in 2001. The 9/11 assault had both immediate and long-haul economic effect, some of which continues to date. Because of these assaults, over 3,000 lives were lost, the stock market was shut for seven days, and it caused the Dow to drop just about 700 points, exacerbating the 2001 recession. Be that as it may, it cost Al-Qaeda an estimated \$400,000 to \$500,000 to design and execute the attacks, it cost the U.S. much more (Romaniuk, 2012). In addition, the New York Comptroller's Office in 2002 revealed that the real damage caused by 9/11 was assessed to be \$55 billion, of which \$24 billion represents the projected cost of lives lost. The World Trade Centre building alone was estimated to be worth \$8 billion. PCs, furniture, and automobiles cost \$6 billion, while damages to utilities and the subway system cost another \$6 billion and \$5 billion, respectively. \$1 billion was required to clean up the area, while \$5 billion was used to heal injuries, including those sustained by call takers who inhaled toxic dust (Zakariya, 2021).

The study of challenges in counterterrorism by identifying and addressing gaps at national and international levels is essential to understanding these challenges as faced by the world today. It is essential to understand the gaps to fill in identifying and addressing these challenges in combating terrorism effectively. This study examines the contemporary challenges in counterterrorism by identifying and addressing the gaps at national and international levels in the 21st century.

Objectives of the Study

- identify the key challenges and obstacles in countering terrorism effectively at both national and international levels.
- propose effective strategies, policies, and counter measures to counter the threat of terrorism both national and international levels.

Literature Review

Counter-Terrorism Strategies

Terrorism as earlier stated is a global monster that has come with indelible pains and agonies on the social, economic and overall aspect of human life. Countries in a bid to fight it have employed several methods, strategies, and means. More

so, researchers have come up with ways by which this monster can be tamed and shut up. However, different countries and authors addressed the monsters from their differing ideologies. Counter-terrorism strategies are comprehensive approaches employed by governments and security agencies to prevent and respond to acts of terrorism. These strategies aim to deter, disrupt, and mitigate the threat posed by terrorist organisations and individuals. Counter-terrorism strategies can vary from one country to another, depending on the specific threat environment and political context. For instance, a researcher found that the use of Counter Narratives can be used to terrorism as against the radical movement embraced by many countries and government agencies. It is believed that for many scholars, terrorism is an ideological problem that must be tackled using ideological solutions as opposed to the military-based approaches that have dominated most of security spending in the US. Given that youth and young adults are more vulnerable to radicalised messaging and recruitment, it is essential to focus interventions on those who engage most with youth who are at risk to participate in violent extremism. Greater vigilance is needed in our communities to help individuals in the realm of preventative efforts (Speckhard, Shajkovci, & Yayla, 2018).

Counter-narratives become essential because of the existing volumes of extremist propaganda already in circulation over the Internet and other media outlets. Jihadist groups and other extremists have mounted several social media campaigns and have used various platforms to spread terrorist propaganda to recruit new members or to garner support for their activities (Hemmingsen, & Castro Møller, 2017). The strategy has been widely accepted and used in diverse systems, with governments, policymakers, and other international organisations championing for their use in countering extremism especially among the youth (Gemmerli, 2015). The effectiveness of this strategy makes it a viable option for countering the effects of extremism among college-going students, who are widely targeted by terrorist organisations. Counterterrorism can especially be useful in the fight against lone-wolf terrorism, which has gained popularity and has led to the public murder of hundreds of souls. counter-narratives refer to the messages that provide “a positive alternative to extremist propaganda,” with the ultimate aim of deconstructing extremist views within a population.

Garry, Walther, Rukaya, & Mohammed (2021) posit that, in a policy brief for efforts to fight radicalisation in online platforms, three major categories of counter-narratives that the government could adopt include direct counter-narratives, positive alternatives, and critical reflection. Direct counter-narratives are the category which squares up to the ideology and lifestyle of extremism. For instance, the U.S. Department of State's Think Again Turn Away campaign is a direct counter-narrative approach which illuminates the mistakes that terror organisations have made and present an analysis of the testimonies by defectors to portray violent extremism as a negative and ill-thought strategy. The second approach to counter-narratives is the use of positive alternatives, which elucidate the importance of moderation. This approach promotes the alternatives to 25 extremist religious views and radicalisation by painting an attractive picture of moderate ideologies, non-extremist leisure activities, and promoting solidarity based on common goals and shared values. This strategy influences the youth and other members of society who appreciate such ideas to adopt positive alternatives instead of falling back to religious or ideological extremism in fighting radicalisation. The third approach is the improvement of digital competences, which focus on young people's ability to critically review information to diminish the attractiveness of extremism.

Governments and other anti-terrorist organisations can use this approach to build a society of democratic digital citizens who critically evaluate the information they come across from different media outlets to choose the side that provides the soundest ideas or has the best effects on the community. This approach helps the target audience make better and informed decisions when they encounter extremist propaganda by looking into the rationale and validity of violent actions (Chibuike, & Eme, 2019). Furthermore, such an investigative approach can be used in research to discredit inaccurate historical narratives.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Realism

The theory of realism offers an alternative explanation, the failure of idealism to reduce the problems for international peace and security caused by terrorism. Realists see the main players on the international stage as states looking after their own security, pursuing their national interests and fighting for power. The

flip side of the realists' emphasis on power and self-interest is their scepticism about the importance of ethical norms in interstate relations. Another thought is that "national politics is the domain of might and law, while international politics, as it is sometimes argued, is a sphere without justice, characterised by active or potential conflicts between states". This realistic vision underscores the nature and behaviour of states. National goals, values, interests, and international obligations compete with the security needs of collective action...national security takes precedence over collective, cultural, traditional, trade and investment, alliances, and ideology are balanced by a general commitment to world peace. Therefore, the selfish and competitive aspects of international relations pose a major challenge to the success of the collective security agenda at the regional and global levels. The study found that people are needy, vulnerable, and easily misled by our attempts to learn about the world and communities around us, so we may act selfishly and impulsively based on flawed one's reflections or theologies (Wardlaw, 1989).

Methodology

Since the study made use of secondary sources to gather data, it adopts a review which focuses on the contemporary challenges in counterterrorism by identifying and addressing gaps at national and international levels. This was implemented by examining previous studies on the subject as it remains relevant to the concept. Also, this study develops inclusion and exclusion criteria that informed the literatures that are fit for adoption. Purposive sampling technique is used focusing on materials such as books, journals, internet sources, etc.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Objective I

The dynamic nature of terrorism makes it difficult to combat headlong (Usman & Aghalino, 2020). In fact, terrorism is not a static phenomenon; it continually evolves, adapting to changing circumstances and exploiting new opportunities (Combs, 2015). For instance, the emergence of online platforms and encrypted communication has enabled terrorist organizations to disseminate propaganda, recruit sympathizers, and coordinate attacks globally (Al-Sabahi & Montasari, 2023). The online presence of groups like ISIS has attracted individuals from

various backgrounds, making it challenging for law enforcement agencies to monitor and combat this virtual threat effectively (Pashentsev & Bazarkina, 2021). Moreover, the use of emerging technologies, such as drones and cyberattacks, has expanded terrorists' operational capabilities (Kallenborn, Ackerman, & Bleek, 2022). In regions like Africa, according to Dass (2023), extremist groups have employed drones for surveillance and reconnaissance purposes, allowing them to adapt their strategies in response to evolving counterterrorism efforts.

Furthermore, the transnational nature of terrorist organizations presents a significant obstacle to effective counterterrorism efforts. Groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS operate in multiple countries, making it difficult to contain their influence and activities within national boundaries (Lee, Choi, Shandler, & Kayser, 2021). The 2015 Paris attacks and the 2016 Brussels bombings reveals how coordinated terror organizations are with strategies, mapping and communication thus exploiting the weaknesses in international cooperation and intelligence sharing (Jain & Vaidya, 2021). These terror groups further exploit porous nature of many nations' border especially regions with ongoing conflicts to facilitate movement of terrorist, weapons and funds across national borders thus posing a huge challenge to counterterrorism efforts and agencies (Alice & Hyacinthe, 2023).

Another challenge is the varying and changing recruitment tactics that shown that the process of radicalization seems untamable (Ogunnubi & Aja, 2022). The radicalization process is fast becoming a mystery as it can occur beyond online propaganda, social networks and exposure to recruiters or mentors (Winter, Neumann, Meleagrou-Hitchen, Ranstorp, Vidino, & Fürst, 2020). For example, the case of the "Underwear Bomber," Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who attempted to detonate explosives on a flight to Detroit in 2009, highlights the recruitment and radicalization efforts of groups like Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Abdulmutallab was influenced by AQAP's propaganda and underwent a radicalization process that culminated in a terrorist plot (Celso, 2020).

Furthermore, efforts to curb radicalization and terrorism is strongly linked to accurate and timely intelligence gathering and sharing among security agencies with and across nations. Gathering intelligence on terrorist activities, networks, and intentions is a daunting task, often requiring covert operations and

infiltrating extremist circles (Tinumbang, Syaroni & Daryanto, 2023). The successful tracking of Osama bin Laden by intelligence agencies exemplifies the importance of intelligence in counterterrorism efforts (Suong, 2019). However, intelligence sharing among nations remains a complex challenge. While international cooperation is crucial, it can be hampered by political considerations, differing national interests, and concerns about data privacy. Balancing the need for information sharing with the protection of sensitive intelligence sources can be a delicate and intricate process (Ibid).

In another dimension, certain lines are crossed in curbing and countering terrorism. Balancing the imperative of counterterrorism with the preservation of civil liberties is indeed an ongoing challenge. The response to terrorist threats often involves enhanced surveillance, data collection, and expanded powers for security agencies (Shor, & Sailofsky, 2019). Unfortunately, in democratic societies those expanded powers are subjected to scrutiny thus hampering effective delivery and performance of counterterrorism agencies. In the United States, the 9/11 attack led to the passage the USA PATRIOT Act, which granted law enforcement agencies broader surveillance authority (Richardson, 2020). Balancing these measures with the protection of individual rights and freedoms is a contentious issue, often requiring legal and policy frameworks that strike a delicate equilibrium (Aolain, 2019).

Also, there is a lack of international consensus on achieving a comprehensive effort especially on what works and strategies to be adopted in combating terrorism. This lack of consensus rightly starts with definitions of terrorism, priorities, and ideologies that hampers the unified actions and coordinated efforts (Nyadera & Islam, 2020). Some nations may label groups as terrorists, while others see them as freedom fighters, complicating international cooperation and diplomatic efforts. This is also worsened by complex legal frameworks across numerous nations that makes extradition and prosecution complex and close to impossible (Senu, 2020).

Objective II

Managing, curbing or preventing terrorist attack is important and the first strategy is intelligence gathering. This involves gathering information about potential threats and analysing them to prevent attacks (Aleyomi & Nwagwu,

2023). The 9/11 attacks in the US have shown that intelligence gathering and prompt action of security agencies is important to prevent terrorist from striking. Intelligence gathering as a tool can be helpful on many fronts as it can aid global efforts at understanding the strategies, identification of means of communication adopted by terrorist among others (Levitt, 2021). This medium can also be deployed with the strict border control and policy across the globe as terrorist are known to network deploy resources but human and non-human where needed (Chalk, 2022). This is evident globally as many nations are tending towards conservationist policies that prevent migration from certain nations that serves as popular hub for terrorist.

Another dimension for mitigating the threat of terrorism in a bid to enhance global security is an effective public awareness campaign (Qurtuby & Aldamer, 2021). Truly, inactive terror cells and terror organizations are spread globally and they exist within every other human, families living their normal day-to-day life. Regardless of their latent and dual lives, security agencies are of the strong opinion that suspicious signs should be reported (Thamrin, Prasajo, Hutahaeen, Perдини, 2022). In fact, many nations have championed this cause and public campaigns. In the United Kingdom, the “See it, Say it, Sorted” campaign encourages citizens to report dubious and suspicious acts and characters to some dedicated lines and contact (Hazebrouck, 2020). In South Western Nigeria, local policing; “Amotekun” was also introduced to forestall peace and enhance stability at the local and communal level. This is same strategy can be adopted at the communal level as every terror attack is planned at the community level but has national and global impact (Abdulrasheed, 2021).

Another important countermeasure to be adopted to prevent terror organization from performing their deadly act is disruption of terror-financing. Farber, (2023) asserts that terrorists require funding to carry out their activities, and disrupting their financial networks can significantly weaken them. To implement this, nations should check illicit flow of funds in and out of their borders and freeze suspicious accounts and assets. This medium can be coupled with strict cyberterrorism plans which will mitigate the medium of recruiting and training new members (Chandra, 2020).

However, security agencies need to find ample resources to monitor and track communication of terror organizations and its members (Fishman, 2019). This

evidently helps in stopping radicalization and reducing the numbers of new recruit (Zeiger & Gyte, 2020). In fact, it helps better when religion and inter-faith dialogue is added to the equation of things as there is an obvious but latent notion that religion plays a huge and strong role in radicalization and desire to join terror groups (Gjana, 2022). Alternatively, nations need to identify the root causes of terrorism as peculiar to their borders. Examining this proffer, a bottom-to-top approach that will aid the effective curbing of terror operations. For instance, some terror groups are fighting for freedom or secession, equal rights to natural resources while others are fighting for the declaration of their religion.

Basically, in addressing the root causes of terrorism, political leaders should rejig the instruments of good governance that can translate to improved social economic development (Zaman & Saeed, 2019). In many cases as with developing nations, many organizations that have been declared and proscribed as terror groups are fighting for improved standard of living and equal representation or access to natural resources available in their region. This is the case of Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) also referred to as Niger Delta Militant whose modus operandi is blowing up of petroleum pipelines and kidnapping of oil workers in the Niger Delta region of the country. Addressing issues or terror groups with social or economic causes can help prevent loss of lives and economic gains (Ugwueze, & Onuoha, 2020).

Nations can also rejuvenate emergency response capabilities. In the event of a terrorist attack, a swift and effective emergency response can save lives and mitigate damage (Skryabina, Betts, Reedy, Riley & Amlôt, 2021). In fact, it is important that government establishments, security agencies and public establishments should have emergency unit for a coordinated response in the wake of any emergency. This also helps intelligence and covert operations of security outfits and no organization is overwhelmed in the process of forestalling or managing an attack (Muraya, Okuto, Ochieng & Gabow, 2020).

Counter measures should be holistic and dynamic covering every sector and corners of a nations. To this end, another strategy that can be employed is to strengthen aviation security (Koroniotis, Moustafa, Schiliro, Gauravaram & Janicke, 2020). Notable, suicide plane attacks are rare forms of terrorism globally as it varies across different regions but the 9/11 event remains a wake-up call to many nations to strictly scrutinize their aviation sector by tightening security and

implement effective measures to safeguard lives and properties (Fox, 2021). Counter measures can also include improving of critical infrastructure. Terrorist targets critical infrastructure such as power plants, transportation systems, and communication networks; and nations but be a step ahead by improving the resilience of critical infrastructure can ensure that these systems continue to function in the event of an attack (Wisniewski, Gladysz, Ejsmont, Wodecki & Van Erp, 2022).

Conclusion

In the light of these challenges, addressing terrorism requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach. It demands cooperation between governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders, with a focus on promoting peace, stability, and economic development in regions affected by terrorism. A sustained effort is necessary, recognizing that the underlying causes and drivers of terrorism are multifaceted and ever-evolving. Only through concerted global efforts can we hope to mitigate the complex threat that terrorism poses to the world in the 21st century.

Recommendations

1. There should be a common, designation and understanding of the concept of terrorism as achieving a unified definition of terrorism is a fundamental in tackling the menace. Such clarity would significantly reduce political ambiguities and facilitate global cooperation in combating terrorism.
2. An effective and comprehensive countermeasures, framework and policy should be created and re-evaluated occasionally due to the dynamic nature of terrorism. This approach is proactive as state and non-state-sponsored entities are seeing new ways to enforce their reign.
3. The need to create and strengthen international cooperation is rife due to the transnational nature of terrorism which needs a coordinated global response. This fosters intelligence gathering and sharing that can harmonize counterterrorism effort.
4. A holistic framework that is comprehensive and has a clear balance that preserves civil liberties in a democratic dispensation but effective in

curbing the menace of terror organizations should be drafted and implemented.

5. There is need to address the root causes of terrorism that have long fuelled the dastard acts of terror groups. Addressing these causes and concerns can lead to economic prosperity, promotion of education, fostering social inclusion, cohesion among others.

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