



International Terrorism and Prospects for Combating its Spread: From Al-Qaeda to the Islamic State

¹Nwinkol, Barinaadaa, ²Independence Chinonye Enyindah, Ph. D

¹Department of History and International Diplomacy, Faculty of Humanities, Rivers State University

²Department of History and International Diplomacy, Faculty of Humanities, Rivers State University

ABSTRACT

International terrorism is a global menace causing unimaginable number of death and destruction of property. Though on old tactics of drawing government's attention to a particular issue or issues, its risk in modern times became evident in 9 September, 2001, when Al-Qaeda agents hijacked passenger's planes and crashed it into the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, triggering a coordinated world-wide attack on the phenomenon. The paper therefore x-rays the modalities with which the spread of terrorist groups could be contained. A brief study of the two most notorious and brutal terrorist groups-Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is conducted with a view to properly understand their history and operational dynamics. The paper equally noted the plethora of terrorist groups spread across the world; some affiliated to Al-Qaeda, while others imbibe only their tactics and philosophy. The paper concludes that the only way to contain, if not completely defeating them, is to have a global collaboration, like never before, in checking their supply chain, funding, communication channels, etc.

Key words: Terrorism, International Terrorism, Al-Qaeda, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is the use of violent act or threat against the civilian population of an area with the aim of achieving results that may be political, religious, among other things. It aims at demoralizing a civilian population in order to utilize its dissatisfaction as coverage on the national government or an opponent in a conflict. The other aim is to get media attention for a course. For example, the bombing of market areas in London by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the 1960s and 1970s was to continually make life meaningless for Londoners so much so that they would in turn mount pressure on the UK government to look into the issues with Northern Ireland.

Terrorism becomes international when the activities of a terrorist group transcend national borders to other parts of the world. Terrorism is not a new act; in fact, it had existed since the beginning of human society and government. The issues only topped the international agenda after the Al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York in September 11, 2001 and similar bombing in Ankara, Madrid, London, etc. Obviously, when the only super power (after the Cold War) cries out that the greatest threat to its national security is international terrorism, the phenomenon must attract global attention (NNS, 2002).

The complexities of issues involved in terrorism have made it difficult for the United Nations to come out with an acceptable definition of the term. However, it may suffice to consider the UK Terrorism Act 2000. By this act (part 1, section 1), terrorism is interpreted thus:

- (1) In this Act, terrorism means the use of threat of action where:
 - (a) The use of threat is designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public and
 - (b) The use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause.
- (2) Actions falls within this subsection if it:
 - (a) Involves serious violence against a person,
 - (b) Involves serious damage to property
 - (c) Endangers a person's life, other than that of the person committing the action, or
 - (d) Is designed seriously to interfere with or disrupt an electronic system (www.opsi.gov.uk/acts2000/2000000//.htm).

Most terrorist organizations across the world are made up of radical Muslim groups as the list below shows:

- Al-Qaeda (Afghanistan, Islamist)
- Hamas, Islamic Jihad (Palestinian Islamist)
- Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (Palestinian nationalist)
- PELP, DELP, PFLP-GC (Palestinian leftists)
- Hezbollah (Lebanon, Islamists)
- Jamaat al-Islamiyya, Egyptian Islamic Jihad (Egypt, Islamists).
- Armed Islamic Group (Algeria, Islamists)
- Kashmir Militant Extremists (Kashmir, Islamist)
- Mujahedeen-e-Khala (Iranian rebel)
- Abu Nidal Organization (Iraq, extremists)
- Chechnya-based Terrorists (Russia, separatist)
- East Turkestan Islamic movement (China, separatists)
- Kurdistan workers party (Turkey, separatists)
- Jemaah Islamiyah (South-East Asia, Islamists)
- Abu Sayyaf Group (Philippines, Islamist separatists)
- Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam (Sri Lanka, separatists)
- Irish Republican Army (UK, Separatists)
- IRA Splinter Groups (UK, Separatists)
- Northern Ireland Loyalist paramilitaries (UK extremists)
- Basque Father land and Liberty (Spain Separatists)
- November 17, Revolutionary people's struggle (Greece, Leftists)
- FARC, ELN, AUC (Columbia, rebels)
- Shining path, Tupac Amaru (Peru, leftists)
- Aum Shinrikyo (Japan, cultists)
- American Militant Extremists (United States, Radicals)
- Ansaral Islam (Iraq, Islamists/Kurdish separatist) (Council on Foreign Relations).

Most terrorist groups across the world have successfully co-opted the Islamic tenet of a Jihad – a holy war, a struggle, a challenge into higher operations and further proclaimed the goal of driving the infidels out of the holy lands (Islamic territory) in a bid to impose Islamic hegemony over the world as a whole. In spite of all other motives behind the acts of terrorism ideological (e.g., opposition to the capitalist – industrial model being practiced in much of the world), political (e.g., driving Western states out of oil-rich lands), cultural (e.g., opposition to Western ideals), or psychological (e.g., unemployment, alienated young men willing to give up their life due to pessimism of the future), and so on, their main drive is based on the Koran and its concept of a Jihad and the rewards that awaits a martyr (seven virgins) in paradise (Hall, & Kirk, 2015). Osama bin Laden has been a vanguard in the propagation of this new (relatively) Islamic rhetoric.

Terrorist acts are not only confined to non-state actors, like terrorist groups alone. States, in modern political palace, sometimes sponsor terrorists-usually under state's intelligence agencies – to achieve political aims. Most major powers do, though in a fashion that may not be uncovered in a hurry. A clear case of state sponsorship of terrorism took place in 1988 with the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over the Scottish country side. The US and British governments soon found out that it was carried out by a Libyan intelligence agent, whom they pressed the Libyan government to surrender for trial in a UN Security council resolution in 1992. Under an excruciating UN sanction banning flight into and out of Libya, the government capitulated in 1999, by handing over the suspects for trial – one was acquitted and two received life sentence in return for the suspension of the sanctions. The Libyan government also compensated the families of the victims in 2003 before being fully integrated into the committee of nations.

The globalized nature of the world makes terrorism an evil that could affect anyone, considering the fact that in most cases, a particular individual is not targeted. Nationals of one state residing in another could be affected. The impact of terrorists acts perpetrated in one state may also affect other states in numerous ways. Though Mueller (2004:199) clearly noted that, just like crime has existed in most or all types of societies, terrorism has been around

from the beginning of time, and will presumably continue to exist. However, its spread could be checked through collective security, especially in the area of joint intelligence gathering utilization by vulnerable or target countries.

This research work is targeted at proffering solution, or at least, suggestions on how the rapid spread of international terrorist organizations could be checked. And for a better understanding of the reader, the paper will first discuss the background to the origin and activities of some of the bloodiest ones, like Al-Qaeda and Islamic state of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS) to enable us understand the risk that awaits the world should we sit and do nothing.

The Al-Qaeda Network and International Terrorism in the 21st Century

The rise of Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network cannot be properly understood just by considering the circumstances leading to the formation of terrorist group in the last four and half decades ago or so. It is found in deep seated animosity of the Muslims towards the Christians, whom they consider infidels. This hatred was promulgated by Wahhabi despots or simply, Wahhabism – an Islamic sect of eighteenth century background that preaches what is considered the pure form of Islam. Wahabism enforces strict Islamic customs and laws and rejected foreign cultures and influence in the Muslim world. Their sermons and literature emphasize that the presence of infidels' (Christians) in Sauda Arabia (considered a holy place being the birth place of Islam) was an insult to Allah (God). This Wahhabi doctrine was prevalent in Saudi society when Osama bin Laden was born, and like many young people of his time, he grew engrossed in Wahhabi fundamentalism. In fact, modern terrorism is linked to the Saudi Wahhabis. In the words of Dore:

The ideology of hatred underpinning the attacks of September 11, 2001, had roots that were more than 250 years old. This ideology of hatred was a product of Saudi Wahhabis... and the Saudi regime has been a key backer of Wahhabism's international terror network (2003).

Saudi Arabia, as the richest and foremost Islamic State, also supports Islamic movements (the government as well as individuals) in various parts of the world with monies they donate to private charities, religious foundations, schools, etc. There may not be sufficient proof of direct support or sponsorship of terrorist organizations, but as Streissguth (2004), clearly noted, sponsorship may also be indirect. In his words:

Supporting Islamic fundamentalist sometimes means supporting terrorism as a part of the religious work they do. For example, Saudi money that ends up in the hands of Hamas, designated by the United States as a terrorist organization, funds not only health, education and welfare programmes, but terrorist attacks on Israel.

Ironically, this country turns out to be the greatest ally of the United States in the Middle East aside Israel. This is due to the presence of a huge deposit of crude oil (more than any other country in the world), a resource critical to the U.S. industrialization drive and economic standing in the world. The Saudi government (a monarchy) on its parts needs the petrodollars - the money got from oil sold for American dollars - to run state affairs. These monies flow from the treasury into private accounts of the various members of the Saudi ruling family, breeding corruption, while the rest of the population languishes in abject squalor.

Saudi Arabia is also strategic to the US due to its location in the Persian Gulf. Bases have been established by the US in the country in 1991 to prosecute the Gulf war against Iraq, as well as the war against same country in 2003. During World War II, the president of the United States also assured the Saudi ruling family of protection in exchange for continuous access to oil. In 1971, military advisers and weapons were deployed to Saudi Arabia after which the National Guard – a special force directly responsible to the monarch and dealt with internal opponents, were trained and equipped. Scared by the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet in 1979, and overthrow of the Shah by Islamic revolutionaries in Iran, the US initiated the Carter Doctrine – formulated by president Jimmy Carter, and held that any attempt to gain control of the Persian Gulf would be vehemently resisted by all means, and quickly mobilized ships, planes, tanks, and foot soldiers to monitor any intrusion. Bases in Oman, Bahrain, etc were also used to consolidate their hold on the region. Saudi Arabia was also protected from an Iraqi invasion in 1991, with US ground forces using bases in Saudi Arabia.

The greatest or most vociferous of all critics of Saudi – US alliance was Osama bin Laden. He expressed his feelings this ways:

Our main problem is the US government... By being loyal to the US regime, the Saudi regime has committed an act against Islam. We declare Jihad (holy war) against the US government because the US government has committed acts that are extremely unjust, hideous, and criminal... This US government abandoned humanitarian feelings by these hideous crimes. It transgressed all bounds and behaves in a way not witnessed before by any power in the world (Bergen, 2001).

Osama and those who subscribed to this view believes that, if the US withdraw its support for the regime, it will collapse. Therefore, the continuation of US military presence in Saudi Arabia is a support for the repression and a continuation of the poverty and suffering of the ordinary people, which is unacceptable.

Origin of International Terrorism or Jihads

The origin of international terrorism or Jihads-as some will prefer to call it-(in relatively modern times) is associated with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan beginning in 1979 (Gerges, 2011). Throughout the duration of the war (1979 – 1989), there was an exodus of Jihadists from all over the Muslim world into Pakistan and Afghanistan (Billitteri, 2009).

The call to participate in the Afghan Jihad was made by a Sunni Scholar, Abdallah Azzam, who believed in the creation of Muslim Solidarity to fight and build an Islamic State with strict adherence to the Sharia and Islamic Laws. This message reached Muslims throughout the world through audio recordings broadcast magazines and flyers (Watts, 2003). He was a Jordanian whose parents migrated from Palestine. Azzam set up the Service Bureau (a staging base) in Peshawar, Pakistan from where he recruited and deployed Arab fighters to training camps in Afghanistan. By this time, Osama bin Laden was an undergraduate, from Saudi Arabia but of a Yemeni parentage in the 1950s (father was a construction magnate). Bin Laden heard Azzam lectures and agreed to finance it. He also set up his own training camps in Afghanistan which he called Lion's Den. He also established links with radicals from other parts of the world, including Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian and Surgeon by training. He had come to Peshawar as a staff of the Red Crescent (the Muslim version of the Red Cross) in 1986. As the Soviet began to withdraw in 1988, disagreement between Zawahiri and Azzam over their views of Jihad degenerated into civil war. While Zawahiri proposed the redirection of the Jihad against adulterated Muslim regimes across the world, beginning with Egypt and Algeria, Azzam opposed that view, and instead wanted the Jihadists move to Palestinian territories to reclaim it from the Israelis. In 1981, Zawahiri was however arrested for complicity in the assassination of Egyptian president, Anwar Sadat, who just signed a historic peace treaty with Israel in 1979. Zawahiri took over the leadership of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad – a terrorist organization with the vision of instituting religious rule in Egypt – in 1984 shortly after his release from prison.

Bin Laden's allegiance was bitterly sought by both parties including his funds. Unfortunately, Bin Laden had a different view of how the Jihad should go. As noted by Wright (2007) "At the time he envisioned moving the struggle to Kashmir, the Philippines and particularly, the central Asian republics, where he could continue the Jihad against the Soviet Union". Bin Laden and some of his associates formed another association they called Al-Qaeda, meaning, "The base" in Arabic to coordinate the best jihadists among those that fought in Afghanistan. Even if the new organization had its agenda, the US was not top on the list at this time (Wright 2007, 150-152).

Azzam was killed in 1989 by unknown gunmen. The following year Bin Laden had returned to Saudi Arabia, proposed that he be allowed to use the jihadists who fought in Afghanistan – now dispersed across Afghanistan, Pakistan and other Middle East States – to fight Iraq which invaded Kuwait, and was also planning to invade Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government refused the offer and instead allowed the United States to take that responsibility. Bin Laden became perplexed as U.S. moved in troops and set up bases throughout Saudi Arabia. From this time, he became fully aware that the US was a barrier to his ambitions of overthrowing the Saudi monarchy and driving America out of the country and elsewhere in the Middle East so as to prevent them from desecrating Islam's citadel. Bin Laden began to build up a network across the Muslim world. The Islamist – backed government in Sudan invited him in 1992, believing he will use his wealth to develop the country, but this did not happen. He rather invested in factories (those for ammunition may have been part of it) and agricultural estates. However, America remained in Saudi Arabia overseeing the cease fire with Iraq. Bin Laden's ancestral home Yemen was also used by the US troops as stopover as they transit to Somalia to protect UN aid workers. As a result of frustration with the level at which his course of spreading Islamic revolution was dwindling due to American continuous presence, Bin Laden launched an attack on a hotel hosting foreigners and US troops in Aden in December, 1992. Only but two tourist from Australia died in the bombing.

This Al-Qaeda attack in Aden marked a new phase in international terrorism. The United State who had firm footing in the region, seemingly, saw itself as the only country that could champion the crusade against the resurgence of an Islamic caliphate that had long passed away (Wright, 2007).

In October, 1993, local militia groups were seen on international TV, dragging 18 dead and naked American soldiers on the street of Mogadishu, Somalia. Their bodies were later burnt causing outrage across the world. Bin Laden entered the US wanted list, especially after his alleged complicity in the attack on a US Blackhawk (a helicopter). Sudan was also compelled to expel Bin Laden who has been living there at the instance of the Taliban government in Pakistan, who enforced a strict form of Islamic administration based on the Sharia law.

A joint declaration was made by Zawahiri, Bin Laden and similar Islamist groups in February 1998 that killing "Americans and their allies – civilians and military – is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it" (Wright, 2007). There are now additional grievances apart from presence and support for corrupt regimes in Saudi Arabia, the Middle East and North Africa. They also fear that the US was bent on destroying Muslims in Iraq, not only through direct attack, but economic sanctions, as well as backing their collective act enemy, Israel (Jones, 2012).

This call signaled a shift from Jihad as conceived by Zawahiri – attacking apostates and those supporting the West, to a direct attack on the West and their allies.

Young jihadists (and potential ones) were gravitated from all over the world to Al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. According to a terrorist analyst, Seth G. Jones (2012), the US government continually disregarded intelligence reports on Al-Qaeda plots to bomb strategic locations in the US and elsewhere in Europe. They belittled their capabilities. It was not until the attacks started coming that the government swung into action. For instance, the embassies of the United States in Nairobi, Kenya and Dares Salaam, Tanzania, were bombed on August 7, 1998 in which 224 fatalities were recorded, and another 4500 sustained various degrees of injuries. In response, the US president ordered a cruise missile attack on training camps suspected to be owned by Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. However, none of the significant members of the group were killed. While the CIA intensifies search through special units, it didn't yield the expected result of either killing or capturing key members of the group. To further frustrate the United States effort in the fight against terrorism, the U.S.S. Cole, a Navy destroyer, was attacked with a boat loaded with explosives at the Yemeni port of Eden. This October 12, 2000 attack caused the death of 17 sailors.

The worst of the attacks by Al-Qaeda was carried out on September 11, 2001, when two hijacked planes were crashed into the twin tower of the World Trade Centre in New York. The 9/11 attack, as it came to be known, killed 2,977 persons and triggered renewed vigour in the fight against international terrorism not only in the United States, but in Europe and other parts of the world. Although the 9/11 attack eventually led to the withdrawal of the US

military from Saudi Arabia, it equally led to the invasion of more Muslim lands across the world. The Al-Qaeda leader praised the hijackers and proclaimed victory in his war with the U.S. In a televised video, Bin Laden delivered a short speech:

The Arabian Peninsula has never - since God made it flat, created its deserts and encircled it with seas – been stormed by any forces like the crusader armies now spreading in it like locusts, consuming its riches and destroying its plantations. The United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbours and turning its bases in the peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighbouring Muslim peoples.

...Every Muslim must rise to defend his religion. The wind of change is blowing to remove evil from the peninsula of Muhammed ... As to America, I say to it and its people a few words: I swear to God that America will not live in peace before peace reigns in Palestine and before all the army of infidels depart the land of Muhammad, peace be upon him. God is the greatest. And holy be to Islam (Sammon,2002).

The 9/11 attack strengthened the United States and attracted sympathy to their course. The war against terrorism, more than ever before became a global war with troops and various forms of logistics given by nations in Europe, especially the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, etc. Al-Qaeda terrorists equally spread across Europe. They work and live in what are known as “Sleeper cells”. These sleeper cells are scattered all over the world, including Europe. Members of the group do not live in these sleeper cells as homes. They live and work like ordinary people to sufficiently blend with their environment. They however maintain constant touch with handlers – those responsible for training and teaching them Al-Qaeda philosophy and principles. The main Philosophies of Al-Qaeda are as follows in addition to the overthrow of the Saudi monarchy and other secular regimes in the Muslim world.

These principles are recorded in an Al-Qaeda training manual discovered in the residence of a member by police in Manchester, England, and subsequently published on the website of US Department of Justice:

- (1) Gathering information about the enemy, the land, the installations and the neighbours.
- (2) Kidnapping enemy personnel, documents, secrets, and arms.
- (3) Assassinating enemy personnel as well as foreign tourists.
- (4) Freeing the brothers who are captured by the enemy.
- (5) Spreading rumours and writing statements that instigate people against the enemy.
- (6) Blasting and destroying the places of amusement, immorality and sin; not a vital target.
- (7) Blasting and destroying the embassies and attacking vital economic centres.
- (8) Blasting and destroying bridges leading into and out of the cities. (www.usdoj.gov)

The battle against terrorism spearheaded by the United States continued with the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups also spread to other parts of the Middle East gaining affiliations. Conversely, there were splinter groups from Al-Qaeda specifically the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria, also the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS).

The Death of Osama Bin Laden

The invasion of Afghanistan did not yield the expected result – the hope of apprehending or killing Osama and other Al-Qaeda members. Soon, it was discovered he was hiding in the mountains on the Afghan – Pakistan border. There were speculations that he had been offered safe haven by senior members of the Pakistan military. The search for him became more and more frustrating and futile. Then, it came as a surprise, when the president of the United States, Barack Obama, made it known in an address on May 1, 2011, that he had been killed. A unit of the US Navy’s Sea, Air, Land Team (SEALs) had launched an attack on a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, where allegedly he had been living for five years. It was revealed that the US CIA and other intelligence agencies had gathered that Bin Laden had been living in the said compound for years and not in the suspected mountains. The compound was an army base just 35 miles from Islamabad, the capital city (Hall and Kirk, 2015, 892).

According to Hall and Kirk:

In the early morning hours of May 2 (Pakistani time) 24 SEALs flown from a base in Afghanistan in two helicopters, landed at the compound where Osama’s house was located and as some stood guard, others methodically moved through the compound and up the stairs to the top floor where (Osama showed his face from a doorway, he was instantly shot by a SEAL sniper. His body was placed in a body bag and along with masses of records and CDs seized in the house, carried to a waiting helicopter; back in Afghanistan, after Bin Laden was absolutely identified, his body was taken to a US Navy ship and buried at sea so as not to allow his burial place to become a Martyr’s shrine (Hall, 2015).

Al-Qaeda has a network that spans Africa and the Middle East. Its operatives work from camps in eastern Afghanistan and the Western parts of Pakistan. This Pakistani based leadership has been described by experts as Al-Qaeda core. This core Al-Qaeda leadership work in close collaboration with a network of affiliates, supporters and associates to control territories in trouble parts of the middle east; Syria, Iraq, Yemen, etc. The affiliates, for instance, operate in Syria, the Arabian Peninsula and parts of northwestern Africa. These affiliates have sworn allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri that took up leadership of the terrorist group after the death of Bin Laden. These affiliates are described below.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP):

Based in Yemen. It emerged when Yemen and Saudi terrorists' groups unified in January, 2009. Targets local, U. S. and other Western interests in the Arabian Peninsula, and has attempted attacks against the United States. Leader Nasir al-Wahishi is second in command to Zawahiri.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM):

Based in Algeria. It operates in the country's coastal areas and parts of the South, as well as in Mali's northern desert regions. It was founded in 1998 as a faction of Algeria's then-largest terrorist group. Algeria's counter-terrorism measures have reduced its ranks from more than 30,000 to fewer than 1,000. It targets local and western interests.

Al-Shabab:

It emerged from militant wing of Somali Council of Islamic Courts that took over most of Southern Somalia in 2006. Recently, weakened by Somali, Ethiopian and African Union Military Forces, but continues lethal attacks in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia. Members come from desperate clans, but its senior leaders are affiliated to al-Qaeda, and are believed to have fought the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Jabhat Al-Nusra:

It was created in January 2012 to overthrow regime of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. It is composed mostly of Syrians, but also attracts Western Fighters. It controls territory in Northern Syria. (National Counter Terrorism Centre, www.nctc.gov).

There are also groups that share Al-Qaeda philosophy but not affiliates. They include Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS). They were formerly Al-Qaeda in Iraq, but split off from Al-Qaeda in February,.... (Freeman, Henerson, Oliver, 2014).

The Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) and the War against International Terrorism

As earlier noted, ISIS was part of Jabhat Al-Nusra, which is an al-Qaeda affiliate. But during the Arab Spring, and subsequent civil war in Syria, there was division in al-Nusra, which Berger (2014) called 'a full-scale civil war.' Protest over the repressive regime of Bashar al-Assad, who has ruled Syria from the year 2000, have taken over power from his father Hafez al-Assad, who had ruled for over three decades. As the protest escalated, the army was called in and they began to fire on unarmed civilians. By July 2011, the situation had degenerated into a full-scale civil war with army defectors forming Free Syrian Army. The international community backed the Free Syrian Army, with the aim of overthrowing the Assad regime. Though there was much carefulness on the part of the USA and some of the Western European States, their concern was what would likely happen if the jihadist or militia's army wins. It was known that some of the fighters were jihadist, and having ties with al-Qaeda. If they prevail, the weapons may be used against their former allies as was the situation between the US and mujahedeen, after the former assisted the later in driving the Soviet from Afghanistan in the 1980s. Later, the fears of the US and the western powers proved to be true when, while the war raged on in 2014, a group of jihadists, who called themselves, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), also Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (composed of Sunni jihadists), proclaimed their ultimate goal of a global caliphate. This means a world-wide government or empire controlled by Muslims with strict adherence to Islamic laws (Hall and Kirk, 2015:904). Initially, the group was made up of some 20,000 fighters, they soon moved from their base in Syria into Northern Iraq, dislodging the Iraqi army as well as Kurdish militia with some of the weapons provided by the US seized from their allies (Kurdish militias, government troops). ISIS was unique from its brutal tactics of slaughtering any individual or group they saw as unsupportive of their goals – not Westerners, Christians and Shiites alone, but also Sunnis they saw as opponents to their cause. Just a year after the declaration of a global jihad by ISIS, thousands of Syrians, Iraqis and Westerners, have been slaughtered in the worst forms, including beheading. Three American were victims of these beheadings. And the life video tape distributed to international televisions provoked worldwide outrage. In spite of these brutalities, thousands of Jihadists, most of them radicalized or dissatisfied Muslims, were gravitated from all over the world into Syria and Iraq to join the ISIS army.

The civil war within Al-Qaeda, which Berger (2014) talked about, started when Zawahiri authorized ISIS to vacate Syria, and allow its rival Jabhat Al-Nusra (an Al-Qaeda affiliate) to spearhead Al-Qaeda's war against the Assad regime. ISIS outrightly disregarded the order, and continued in its confrontation with al-Nusra. As if that was not enough, ISIS ridiculed Zawahiri on social media platform (<http://einyurl.com/Kvtuvdo>). ISIS didn't have widespread support unlike al-Qaeda and Zawahiri with a wide range of assistance from its affiliates and other militant Jihadists groups and some extremist clerics (Gartenstein-Ross, 2014). Most al-Qaeda affiliates, including ISIS raise their money sometime through kidnapping for ransom. However, it was alleged that ISIS stole 430 million dollars, in June 2014, from the coffers of the Iraqi central bank in Mosul, making it the richest terrorist group in the world (McCoy, June 12, 2014). ISIS (former al-Qaeda affiliate) and other al-Qaeda affiliates controlled more territory than they had before the death of Bin Laden in 2011. Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS control large territory in Northeastern Syria. ISIS is also acquiring similar space in Iraq and attempting to gain entrance into Lebanon.

The United States had begun aerial bombardment on ISIS positions in Syria and Iraq with considerable effect. The Obama administration had vowed to destroy the group but could not achieve it without creating some form of alliance with Assad, whom he had fought against, and continued to fight against

by aiding the Free Syrian Army, since the US does not have vested interest in Syria. Obama emphasized that ground troops will not be committed to them.

ISIS, though recruiting volunteers, suffers heavy casualties from the Kurdish forces as well. The ISIS leader Abubakar Al-Baghdadi is also targeted by the United States in the continuous fight against terrorism.

Prospects of Checking the continuous Spread of Terrorist Groups across the World

Since 2011, when Osama Bin Laden was killed, “we have seen al-Qaeda offshoots active in Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and crossing the border to stage attacks in Cameroon” (Bruce, 2014). Since the 9/11 attacks in the US, so many terrorist groups have emerged some of which were not known before. Al-Qaeda is known to have affiliates across the Middle East. It is also known that there are terrorist groups that are not affiliated to Al-Qaeda, but adopts its strategies and Philosophies. This means that terrorism is a global phenomenon, and it is spreading.

The world is doing its best not only in checking the spread of existing terrorist groups, but the rise of new ones. For instance, when the strength of ISIS became undoubted haven driven the Iraqi army from cities and occupying them, the US president Barrack Obama, quickly made known that he is deploying 300 military advisers to assist the Iraqi government security force, and would be ready to launch air strikes against them, if the need arises (Landler and Gordon, 2014).

The Iranian government being the largest Shiite nation in the world, also mobilized three battalion to protect the Nouri Kamal al-Maliki government and Shiite holy sites in the cities of Karbala and Hajaf, then under threat of ISIS capture (Fassini, *et al.*, 2014). Perhaps, if the U.S. government had reached an agreement with the Iraqi government to leave a handful of troops back, ISIS may have been contained when they (US troops) pulled out in 2011. On the other hand, a second approach would have been to arm moderate rivals of the Assad regime. Maliki had been blamed for riding the Iraqi military of capable hands and centralized decision-making processes, leaving the army weak. As noted by a retired army lieutenant general of the US, who supervised training of Iraqi troops from 2009-2011, “It is hugely frustrating; we know they had chinks in their armor, and we knew they weren’t going to get better once we left. And yet we didn’t try hard enough to get an agreement to keep some people there” (Sullivan and Jaffe, 2013).

Having pointed out these flaws associated with the rise of ISIS, as part of the general commentary on the spread of terrorism, it is also imperative to add that lack of sincere and sufficient collaboration across all divide was lacking and highly needed. When the USA started full scale war on terrorism after 9/11, many countries saw it as a US war (though it is well acknowledged that their approach aided the spread of Jihadism). The Muslim world saw it as a war against their fellow Muslims, and did not wholeheartedly support the course except in situations where the particular group involved is an enemy – Sunni/Shiite.

For the third world, waging such a war is expensive, and they cannot undertake, especially when it hasn’t affected them directly. Even in situations where the groups exist, corruption, political instability and ethnicity have made it difficult to record decisive victory. Nigeria’s Boko Haram is clear case where billions of naira has been set aside by respective governments to combat them since its emergence only to end in the private pockets of military generals, while the group waxes stronger.

There should be a well-coordinated global approach in fighting and containing the spread of international terrorism. A network of communication should be created among states to share information about terrorist groups, even when such group is still domicile locally. The intention is to track such group down before they could muster sufficient power and influence to extend their operations beyond the borders of the state of origin. Provocative rhetoric against any religious group, however small should be avoided. It has been found that most of the terrorist groups across the world are tied to one religion or another, especially Islam. For instance, mere words and not action, against such groups in one country could trigger hatred in people in other countries far away so much so that it will be desirable to wreak havoc on the country such comment emanated. Collective effort is therefore needed to cut-off terrorist sources of supplies and funding so as to reduce their capabilities.

Impacts of International Terrorism

Terrorism is simply geared toward killing a large number of people and to inflict pains and agony. Therefore, a major consequence is death on a large scale. The 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and Pentagon in Washington DC cost 2,977 lives (Mantel, 2014). In 2013 alone, terrorism cost 7,278 lives as shown in the table below:

Group that Committed Deadliest Terror Attacks, 2013

Group	Total Killed	No. of Attacks
Taliban (Afghanistan)	2,340	641
Al-Qaeda in Iraq	1,725	401
Book Haram (Nigeria)	1,589	213
Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan	589	134
Al-Shabab (Somalia)	512	195
Communist Party of India-Maoist	190	203
Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula	177	84

New People's Army (Philippines)	88	118
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia	45	77
Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (Philippines)	23	34

Source: Annex of Statistical Information: Country Reports on Terrorism 2013, "US State Department, April 2014 and in Global Issues Selection from CQ Researchers.

Terrorism also hinders the free movement of people across international borders. This is a characteristic feature of this age. However, free movement has often been thwarted by the activities of terrorist groups. National government does not waste time to publish a list of countries unsafe for their nationals. Such will hinder tourism as well as foreign direct investment needed by all governments. This will in turn affect employment, and further breed greater insecurity, as is the case in Nigeria.

Some parts of the world have been turned to what resembles 'a state of nature', where there is no law and order (except the laws of the terror group operating), and people live by the strength of their arms. Societies where terrorists are in control is like hell on earth. In such places, there is greater risk to one's life when they are not part of the group in charge than being associated. Such a society is not wanted in modern world, where freedom and liberty are a catch words.

Conclusion

Terrorist attack is not new tactic to the world except in magnitude like the one carried out by al-Qaeda in the US on 9/11. The fight against terrorism is not an easy battle to wage, since it is not against national armies in uniform. The United States of America has taken the war against terrorism to a new level by employing everything possible: resources, technology, etc. However, the phenomenon continually defiles all attempts at stamping it out. While no major attack occurred in the USA since 9/11, new and unprecedented atrocities and brutalities were witnessed in other parts of the world by terrorist groups – Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, etc. From 9/11 till date, the number of terrorism related deaths have quadrupled.

The world therefore needs to come together to control, and if possible, mobilise as much resources as could be possible in order to defeat this ugly moister called terrorism, that is spreading like wildfire. Complete victory against terrorists' acts may never be achieved since it is an age-long instrument for drawing attention to a cause, political and otherwise. It strives on Mass Communication, no wonder it becomes difficult to eliminate. Therefore, internationally synergy may be the only way, if not to eliminate, to check its continuous spread.

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