

The Role of the United States in the War against Terrorism: An Analysis of the Syrian Crisis

Musharafa Olapeju Rosenje & Toyin Sunday Omojowo

Department of Political Science

Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State

Corresponding author: rosenjemo@tasued.edu.ng

Abstract

Terrorism has become a multifaceted monster that has continued to ravage the globe. The situation in Africa and Middle East, particularly in Syria, which is presently regarded as the hotbed of terrorism, is precarious. Syria remains a terror-ridden nation due to the manifest presence and characteristic ruthlessness of many terrorist groups, prominent among which is the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) that is in control of one-third of Syrian territories. This article examined the role of the United States in the war against terrorism with a specific focus on the situation in Syria between 2011 and 2022. It adopted the descriptive research method, while the humanitarian interventionist theory was used as its theoretical underpinning. It revealed that the series of terrible attacks executed by these terrorist groups have led to loss of lives and properties, and resulted in the emergence of the biggest humanitarian crisis ever in Syria. It discovered that this challenge has led to the intervention of the United States with a view to decimating the threats through airstrikes and ground operations that killed several terrorist leaders and militants. It recommended that the United States must intensify strict financial control measures; improve the justice system to fast track judicial reviews and prosecution processes of terrorism provocateurs. It also recommended that the United States should involve more allies, especially in and around Syria by providing cognate counter intelligence and supplies.

Keywords: Terrorism, Syria, Terrorist groups, US intervention, War.

Introduction

The world has become an unsafe haven due to the rising incidences of insecurity occasioned by the dynamics of terrorism. The contemporary era is characterised by the ever-increasing security challenge, especially of terrorist attacks, which is caused by religious fundamentalist. Despite the fact that terrorism is not a new security threat, the emergence of more hostile and radical terrorist groups continues to soar and threaten the security and peace of the international system (Frampton, 2021). The threat of terrorism got to the fore of global attention when the Al-Qaeda, a terrorist group in the Middle East attacked the World Trade Organisation building on September 11, 2001, in New York, United States. The occurrence left a terrible mark of horror on the timeline of history as it recorded the death of over 3,000 identified persons, innumerable number of injured people and destruction of properties worth several billions of dollars (Jackson, 2021; Hannah & Carroll, 2021). Miracle and Kehinde (2019) identified that ever since, terrorist

attacks have continued to increase on a daily basis. They have become a monster defying all odds, extending beyond the borders of all nations and becoming prevalent in all regions of the world, with different magnitude of effects.

The precarious effect of terrorism has been drastic globally. Statista (2022) argued that the number of people killed by terrorist organisations stands at 29,389 and over 10,172 attacks launched globally in 2020 alone, though far greater numbers were recorded in preceding years. Global Terrorism Index (2022) indicates that Africa and Asia are the most terrorism ridden regions. Asia is worse off because the region has been utterly torn apart by the scourge of terrorist attacks particularly in Syria. Syria is seen as the hotbed of terrorism in the world. This is so because Syria is a safe haven and operational base of many of the strongest and ruthless terrorist organisations in the world, especially the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which is currently the most dangerous terrorist organisations in terms of complexity and model of attacks (Cengiz, 2022; *Global*

Terrorism Index, 2022). Suffice to say that these various terrorist organisations exploited the ongoing civil war, state collapse and geo-political upheaval in Syria to entrench their grip over the region and make it their stronghold after capturing major cities in the state where black flags were hoisted declaring it as its caliphate and ruled with strict Islamic rules (Rachel, 2018; *International Crisis Group*, 2016).

The dynamism in terrorism in Syria is reinforced by the support these organisations enjoyed due to the fact that President Bashar al-Assad led government in Syria had sometimes supported them in an unorthodox strategy in the prosecution of the Syrian civil war against other several opposition groups fighting for state control, despite declaring to support the war against terror (Michael, 2015). In the light of this avowal, Miracle and Kehinde (2019) averred that the government of Syria purchased oil and gas from territories controlled by Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and released several terrorist members that were imprisoned.

The United States strategic intervention in the war against terrorism in Syria has been very impressive conducting military campaigns and lending support for other resistant groups in Syria to alienate the terrorist organisations in the quest to first protect her citizens and other allies from the death grip, and then, savage the situation there (Nate, 2021). The military campaigns embarked upon by the United States against Syrian terrorism as argued by Zvi, (2022) adopted different strategies, spanning from a full-scale war involving airstrikes and ground bombardments. These actions have so much deescalate the impact of the various terrorist organisations operating in Syria, as some were declared defeated while recent attacks were considered as a comeback of the terrorist groups.

Against this background, the article examines the role the United States played in the interventionist war against terrorism in Syria between 2011 and 2022. It is divided into five sections. The first treats the conceptual clarification and theoretical framework while the second attempts an overview of terrorism in Syria. The third examines the factors propelling the spread of terrorism in Syria, and the fourth deals with the evaluation of United States interventionist war against terrorism in Syria

while the fifth and the last is the conclusion and recommendations

Conceptual Clarifications

Terrorism is a disputed term that has created a long time standing debate due to its nature, dimension and application by state actors. As a matter of fact, the word terrorism, which was first used by a French philosopher, François-Noël Babeuf in 1794 was used to qualify the state actions in the revolutionary method used by Robbierpierre Maximilein to execute the antagonist of the French Revolution after he installed a dictatorship rule in 1789 in France (Frampton, 2021; Palmer, 2014). The definitional problem of terrorism has plagued academics, government and even security personnel for decades. Philip (2015) puts it that the concern about terrorism is on the usage for every violent action while some have refused to qualify actions used by a group as terrorist acts others have simply used such in a damning manner.

No wonder, Chalmers Johnson in Third (2014) claimed that “*terrorism is terrorism when some (but which) people think that it is terrorism.*” Terrorism is a concept that is politically and emotionally charged according to Hoffman (2006) and has a level of moral justification as such, especially in the use of violence in the context of the fight for national liberation and self-determination, and in which state reprisal could be identified as a terrorist act, which adds to its definitional problem. Subscribing to the above assertion, it is only obvious that there can be no singularly acceptable definition in spite of the fact that the United Nations had given a definition in 1994. The United Nations conceived terrorism to be “criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them (Phillips, 2015).

The United States Department of State (2011) saw terrorism as the premeditated, politically meditated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine state agents. Contributing

to the debate on terrorism, Hoffman (2006) conceived it as threat of violence politically motivated and intended to have long lasting psychological effects beyond the immediate target, carried out by a group with a clear chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure and committed by a sub-national group or non-state entity. Schmid and Jongman (1988) argued that terrorism is a method of repeated violent actions that inspires anxiety, employed by covert individuals, group or state actor for irrational, criminal or political reasons. The main targets of terrorist acts are not the direct target of violence that are mostly civilians but are picked at random or with care to manipulate the main target turning it into a targeting of terror, attention and demand.

Terrorism is simply an act of terror or violence that transcends the borders or national boundaries in terms tactics used, the targets or the base of operations of the terrorist. It involves terrorist acts in more than one country. As it is arguably justified that domestic politics affects what goes on in another country and international community so also is terrorism, which is the spill over effect of domestic terrorist in other countries. This is why a terrorist organisation in Syria, Afghanistan or Pakistan can have its base in these countries and attack other countries and government it tags “un-Islamic” (Frampton, 2021; Nauro & Martin, 2009). Terrorism is seen as a horrific act of cruelty carried out in another country as aptly captured by Martin (2016) that terrorism spreads to the international scene, where targets are chosen because they are valuable representations of global interests, either within their own country or across international borders. More often than not, terrorists' acts are spill overs of domestic terrorism to attract the attention of the international community to give credence to the claims of the groups involved.

Theoretical Underpinning

This article adopted the theory of humanitarian intervention for analysis. The doctrines of the theory could be gleaned from the writings of Hugo Grotius in the period of European politics in 17th century. However, the theory was first championed by John Stuart Mills in his 1859 essay '*A few words on Non-intervention*'. Copious contributions were made by renowned

scholars like Rawls (1993) and Nussbaum (2006), among others, to illuminate and reshape the theory.

The theory argued that force or coercion can be employed by a state or states across its territorial borders with the aim of putting an end to egregious and pervasive breaches of human rights in a state where the use of force has not been authorised or failed due to state collapse and thereby constituting a threat to the peace and security of other states and international community at large. Though it has been argued by certain scholars like Rawls (1993) that humanitarian intervention theory does not cover or aid peacekeeping, peace-building and development (Seybolt, 2007) but if all these are not focused upon, the human suffering it seeks to curtail will never be alleviated. As human security espoused by the United Nations in 1994 acknowledges that humans are the theme and core of insecurity whether global or domestic.

The theory was further broadened that an institutional organisation such as the United Nations can intervene in the affairs of a nation as far as such nation or groups in the said nation in question breaches any of the international law thereby posing as a threat to the peace and security of the international system. The interventionist strategy could involve threatening, pressuring, or pushing a group or another country to modify its behaviour, government or policies. It could also involve both direct and indirect actions such as the use of threat of force, assassinations, subversions and various economic sanctions to achieve its goals. The goal of humanitarian intervention is to bring change to people's expectation towards government, change in general attitudes of unjust conduct not held in the international community, either by altering a political, cultural and religious belief or general policies (James & Friedman, 2006). Nasu (2012) therefore, posited that interventions have a legal basis in certain cases such as terrorist acts, genocide, mass murder and enslavement.

However, the theory has been criticised especially by non-interventionist doctrine theorists like Christian Wolff and Nussbaum. They argued that there is no justification whatsoever a nation has for the intervention in the affairs of another as it constitutes a breach of the sovereignty of such nation. According to

them nations possess absolute state rights to political sovereignty and territorial integrity and as such are inviolable. They argued that intervention in affairs of other nations is always counter-productive because it will lead to the collapse of a nation and should not be practiced as it will only deepens violation of fundamental human rights to the point where it can no longer be considered appropriate representative as the case in Libya and Somalia, which led to the collapse of those states (Pablo, 2018).

In spite of the explication above, the theory is useful in this article as it explicitly explains why United States had to intervene in the affairs of Syria. It argues that to a considerable extent, the domestic politics in the state continues to have reverberating effect over her national interest. United States involvement in containing terrorism in Syria can be seen as a counter strategy of 9/11 attack, which remains a driving historical force propelling the war on terror as it saw the death of not just only American citizens but different nationalities of the world since it would enhance the pride of terrorist organisations that they have conquered the world if they could successfully attack the pride of the Western world. Severe attacks are continuously been planned and launched against the West on their own soils frequently and it is in the purview of the national interest of United States to protect her citizens just in the dictum "*Americans' First*" (Criddle, 2015).

Also, considering its role as world police, there is the urgent need to prosecute every group that constitutes a threat to the peace and security of the international system. More importantly, from the humanitarian perspective, there requires an urgent intervention in Syria, as many Syrians continue to die daily in large numbers in the wake of state terrorism by Assad government, while the level of humanitarian crisis continues to soar higher leading to a regional crisis. It is argued that if the trend is not checkmated, its impact will be detrimental to the world. These reasons majorly justify the United States intervention in the affairs of Syria to seek justice for the victims of terrorism (Erameh, 2017).

Overview of Terrorism in Syria

Terrorism in Syria has a long history dating back to the first Islamic uprisings in the 1980s, which

can be traced to the armed insurrections by the Sunni Islamist, primarily Muslim brotherhood members from 1976-1982. The rebellion, which was called the "the long campaign of terror" was directed against Syria's secular Ba'ath party controlled government after the party came into power through a coup in 1963 and another in 1970. The 1970 coup brought Hafez Al Assad to power and he amended the constitution with a non-Muslim criterion to become the President of Syria, which led to a national crisis (Lia, 2016; Michael, 2015).

This action led to his being labelled the '*enemy of Allah*' that Islamist assaulted both civilians and military personnel, who were on duty during these violent acts to which the security responded by killing civilians as well (Alianak, 2007; Kaplan, 1993). The first terrorist attack was aimed at government personnel who were mostly the Alawis; the minority incorporated to be part of Shia Muslim. The attack, which became frequent and on large scale masterminded by the Sunni Islamist brotherhood, eventually culminated in the Hama revolt of 1982, which claimed the lives of over 25,000 people in Hama (Conduit, 2019; Lia, 2016; Wright, 2008).

However, the status of terrorism changed dramatically in 2011 when the Syria Civil war, which was inspired by the recoil of Arab Spring uprising across the Middle East engulfed the state. The war started with Syrian youths scribbling anti-regime graffiti on walls, their arrest and torture by the regime led to a massive protest for their release and anti-government demonstrations against Bashar al-Assad (Droz-Vincent, 2014). The war became escalated and bringing about the massive attack and killing of civilians by the government. President Bashar al-Assad proscribed the opposition classifying them as armed terrorist groups with Islamist extremism.

By July 29th, the defected officers and rebel army formed the Free Syrian Army (FSA), and fought vigorously to remove the government of Bashar al-Assad (CNV, 2012). By 2012, the uprising had degenerated into a full scale war as many opposition factions began to scabble for control over the cities in the state fuelled by the support of foreign compradors. The government lost control, which allowed Iranian Revolutionary Guard, Al-Qadea and other

neighbouring armed groups to take serious advantage by attacking the government of Assad and taking over some cities. As the war continued fiercely in 2014, the Islamic State emerged, which ruthlessly and bloodedly took over a third of Syrian territory (Mona, 2021).

The situation of terrorism in Syria became more complex as there were many terrorist groups, foreign fighters, rebel and armed groups all fighting for territories giving many conflict compradors a field day. In the process, Syria territories were divided between the state and non-state actors (*Committee for Foreign Affairs, 2017*). The State actors were divided into Pro-Assad and those opposed to Assad, while non-state actors are the several terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, ISIS, among others. The frightening intricacy is the fact that terrorist groups are on both sides, the Hezbollah for

instance, was obviously fighting on behalf of Assad government, attacking civilians and blaming the opposition for such grave act of terror.

The Al-Qaeda, a terrorist group that has taken advantage of the civil war aligned with the opposition Free Syrian Army (FSA); it launched attacks on the civilians and blamed the Assad government for attacking its own citizens. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) grew out of the disagreements and factions in Al-Qaeda while Al-Nusra evolved from the raging peculiarities of the civil war, both fighting for territorial ground. Syria thus became a breeding ground for ruthless and blood mongering terrorist groups (Azeez, 2014). These groups and their strongholds in Syria are listed in Table 1:

Table 1: List of some Terrorist Organisations and their Strongholds in Syria

S/N	Terrorist Groups	Year founded in Syria	Leadership	Stronghold
1.	Islamic State	2013	Abu Musa al-Zarqawi	Raqqa, Albu Kamal, Swedia
2.	Al-Nusra Front/Jabhatfateh al-Sham/ Hayat Tahrir al-Sham	2011	Abu Julaybib	Idlib Governorate, Harasta, Syria
3.	Hezbollah	2013	Sayyed Abbas Al-Musawi	Baalbek, Syria
4.	Failaq al-Rahman Legion	2013	Abdul al Nasr Shamir	Western Ghouta, Syria
5.	Jaish al-Islam	2011	MumtazDughmush	Eastern Ghouta
6.	Guardian of Religious Organisation	2013		Idlib Governorate, Hama

Source: Charity & Security Network (2022).

Simultaneously, there are about five countries with military presence in Syria. These countries include Russia, Turkey, Iran, Israel and the United States conducting offensive attacks against terrorist organisations domicile in Syria (*Committee for Foreign Affairs, 2017*). The citizens are suffering terribly from the frenzied complexities of terrorism in Syria. According to the United Nations humanitarian overview for 2022, over 14.6 million Syrians are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance (*Every CRS, 2022*). BBC News (2021) estimated that the

total number of casualties vary due to improper documentation and limited coverage caused by the intensity of the attacks. The United Nations estimated 350,209 deaths while it affirmed that such statistics was an under count. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (2022), however, puts the total figure between 499,438-610,000 since the uprising started in 2011, representing about 1.5% of the total population of Syria. Several terrorist deadly attacks were executed in Syria, some of which are carefully documented in Table 2.

Table 2: Catalogue of Terrorists Lethal Attacks in Syria.

S/N	Date of Incidence	Nature of Occurrence	Terrorist Group Responsible	Casualties Recorded
1.	January 6 th , 2012	Al-Midan bombing	Jabhat al-Nusra	26
2.	May 10 th , 2012	Damascus bombings	Jabhat al-Nusra	55
3.	October, 2012	Aleppo Bombings	Jabhat al-Nusra	34
4.	February 1 st , 2013	Sahash Bombings	Jabhat al-Nusra	53
5.	February 21 st , 2013	Syrian Party Bombings	Jabhat al-Nusra	80
6.	August, 14 th , 2014	Mass execution	ISIS	700
7.	August, 2013	Execution	Jabhat al-Nusra	190
8.	December 11 th , 2015	Tell Tamer bombings	ISIS	60
9.	February 21 st , 2016	Suicide bombings	ISIS	83
10.	July 25 th , 2018	Suicide bombings and gun attacks	ISIS	255
11.	June 2 nd , 2019	Car bombings	ISIS	30
12.	November, 2019	Syria bombings	ISIS	73
13.	April 28 th , 2020	Tanker bombing in Afrin town market place	ISIS	43
14.	June 20 th , 2022	Bus attack in Raqqa	ISIS	13
15.	December 29 th , 2022	Bus attack	ISIS	10

Source: Author's Compilation (2022)

Factors Propelling the Spread of Terrorism in Syria

Several factors have been identified as propelling dynamics behind terrorist acts in Syria. The push and pull factors responsible for the upsurge of terrorism in Syria are multidimensional in character. Prominent among them are; radical Islamic extremism, the Arab Spring backlash and foreign support enjoyed by these terrorist groups.

The significant dynamics of terrorism in Syria is the spread of radical Islamic extremism. Syria is predominantly home to Muslims, of which the Sunni constitute 80%, while the Alawi remains the minority. The Alawi believe that they are the 'chosen ones' because they seek a secular nation where anyone irrespective of religion and tribe can thrive. However, the Sunni tagged them 'heretics' and 'un-Islamic' (Polk, 2013). The Sunni favours the Salafi Islamic teaching which is extreme. This teaching advocates violence against anyone considered un-Islamic and as such, were always at war with the Assad family from the Alawi which ascended power through a coup d'état. As a result of their philosophical leading, the Alawis were the first point of attack, which was regarded as the first terrorist act in Syria (Laila, & Thomas, 2021). Radical Islamic extremism grew significantly in Syria and this was

attributed to be the major cause of terrorism in the country due to the Sunni's adherence to Salafi's violent doctrine, which necessitated the emergence of the Islamic Brotherhood that carried out the attack on the Alawis' (Sunmola, 2017).

The Arab Spring that swept the North Africa and Middle East was another decisive factor in the rise of terrorism in Syria. The Arab Spring started in Syria as a simple protest against the socio-economic policies that had crushed the means livelihood of peasants and workers. Thereafter, the Islamic oppositions, which were formed with the support of foreign powers, began to attack the government of Assad. Rozsa (2012) canvassed that the Free Syrian Army (FSA) was the strongest faction of opposition, which inflicted well over 9,000 deaths on the Assad army in the first year of the uprising. The Arab Spring was hijacked by other different terrorist groups that saw an opportunity in the collapsed state to fully establish their strongholds.

Terrorist groups cannot survive without funds in any form, as funds are used for the day to day running of its base, acquisition of weapons from the black market, getting foods and supplies and many other necessities. Al-Nusra Front enjoyed support from many foreign countries that were interested in the clampdown

of Assad's government. Arab government was accused of funding the al-Nusra Front in 2014, United States alleged that Qatar, Turkey, Saudi-Arabia, United Arab Emirates heavily poured tons of weapons and hundreds of dollars to the fight against Assad's regime through the al-Nusra (Sengupta, 2015). The Iranian government and Assad showed open support to the Iranian based Hezbollah to have joined in the fight against oppositions (Mohanad, 2019; Anti-Defamation League, 2013). Lafarge, a popular global building materials manufacturer with its headquarter in Paris, France, was also accused of providing materials and resources to Syrian based al-Nusra and ISIS from 2013-2014 (*U.S Department of Justice, 2022*).

From the exposition above, it could be logically deduced that the spread of terrorism in Syria could be said to have been significantly propelled by external factors of Arab Spring and external support though the foundational cause could be traced to the Islamic fundamentalists within Syria.

Evaluation of United States Interventionist War against Terrorism in Syria

There is no doubt that the United States is regarded as a global power and 'Police of the world'. Possibly on account of this appellation, the US sought to fight terrorism in Syria as part of the objectives of the Bush administration in the 'War against Terror'. The foremost focus of the US in the "war on terror" was targeted against the seemingly terrorist groups in Syria: the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and al-Nusra Front that had gained over one-third of Syrian territories and other terrorist groups in a bid to annihilate them (Peter, Helene & David, 2015).

United States started its intervention campaign against terrorist groups ISIS and al-Nusra Front with surveillance missions on the terrorist positions in Syria in September, 2014. By September 22nd, 2014, in its bid to protect American citizens in Erbil, the United States launched foremost attack with series of airstrikes on the ISIS forces around Syria-Iraq border and attacked another against al-Nusra Front in Idlib Governorate, hitting their military bases, control centres and camps and a follow

up attack again the day after, leaving several scores of militants dead (Tess & Brianna, 2022; Julian & Sam, 2014). On July 4th, 2014, the United States conducted another attack against the ISIS military base, which is traditionally known as the 'Osama Bin Laden' camp with a view to rescuing the U.S nationals abducted by the terrorist group. The U.S forces engaged the ISIS forces in the camp exterminating them all but found out that the hostages have been removed from there earlier (Jose & Sherlock, 2014).

With a view to decimating terrorist onslaught in Syria, Al-Jazeera (2021) inferred that United States launched series of airstrikes and destroyed multiple facilities of Hezbollah and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada at the border near al-Hurri village killing 17 militants. The United States also attacked the Khorasan group, an affiliate of al-Qaeda, destroying its training camps, explosives and arms production facilities and command control. In order to strengthen his operations against terrorism, the United States in 2017 deployed additional 400 marines to join the fight against terrorism in Syria. These forces captured the oil rich al-Omar region and by 2018, a large military facility was built to ward off insurgent attacks from ISIS and to block them from harassing the field (Calcuttawala, 2018; Josh, Paul & Tim, 2014).

Furthermore, an airstrike was launched on former Syrian army, attacking Sheikh Suleiman military base in Western Aleppo, which killed over 110 terrorists who were believed to be Al-Qaeda fighters that were sent to assist the al-Nusra Front while it was its affiliate in Syria (Mee, 2017). This camp, which was to have been used to train fighters of the opposition, was utterly destroyed by the US interventionist force (*U.S Department of Defence, 2017*). The United States also joined military forces with local Syrian forces and other allied countries such as United Kingdom, France, Canada and Turkey, to form a U.S led Coalition against terrorism in Syria. The operations of this joint force were airstrikes and ground operations, which resulted in the extermination of major leaders and commanders of terrorist groups as depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: US Interventionist Attacks against Terrorist Groups in Syria

S/N	Terrorist group	Leader	Date of attack	Place of Attack	Casualties
1.	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria	Maher al-Agal	July 12 th , 2022	North West Syria	1
2.	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria	Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi	February 3 rd , 2022	Atimah, Syria	Unspecified
3.	Guardian of Religious organisation	Khalid al-Aruri	June 14 th , 2020	Idlib, Syria	2
4.	Guardian of Religious organisation	Bilal al-Sanaani	June 14 th , 2020	Idlib, Syria	2
5.	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria	Abu Bakral Baghdadi	October 29 th , 2019	Jindayris, Northern Syria	3
6.	Al-Nusra Front/Jabhatfateh al-Sham/ Hayat Tahrir al-Sham	Abu Omar al-Turkistani	January 1 st , 2017	Sarmada, Syria	2
7.	Al-Nusra Front/Jabhatfateh al-Sham/ Hayat Tahrir al-Sham	Abu Hassan al-Taftanaz	January 19 th , 2017	Western Aleppo	110
8.	Al-Nusra Front/Jabhatfateh al-Sham/ Hayat Tahrir al-Sham	Abu-Humam al-Suri	February 27 th , 2015	Abu-Talhah	3
9.	Al-Nusra Front/Jabhatfateh al-Sham/ Hayat Tahrir al-Sham	Abu MusabFalastini	February 27 th , 2015	Abu-Talhah	3
10.	Al-Nusra Front/Jabhatfateh al-Sham/ Hayat Tahrir al-Sham	AbuBaraa Ansari	February 27 th , 2015	Abu-Talhah	3

Source: Author’s Compilation (2022)

Before the commencement of US military actions in Syria, it had started with the provision of supplies of food ration, weapons, vehicles, medical kits to the opposition, the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Shortly after, she embarked on training, and trained close to 15,000 fighters, and also gave intelligence and provided funds to some selected rebel group commanders. Mark, Adam and Michael (2017) reported that the United State early in the fight against terrorism had spent about \$500 million and \$1 billion on a covert programme called the “Timber

Sycamore”. The United States also supported other forces in the war against Syrian terrorism by providing arms and ammunitions, medical kits and other essentials to the Kurdish led ground forces on October 20th, 2014 (Mark, Adam, & Michael, 2017). The United States also prosecuted individuals and organisations that collaborated with terrorist groups in Syria for conspiracy and were duly sentenced for their involvement in providing technical support or intelligence. This is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Judicial Trial and Conviction of Terrorist Collaborators in Syria

S/N	Name	Charges	Date	Sentence
1.	Alison Fluke Ekren	Provided military training to 100 women and girls on behalf of ISIS	November 1 st , 2022	20 years
2.	Lafarge building Materials manufacturer	Conspired by providing material support and funds.	October 18 th , 2022.	Fined \$787 million.
3.	Abdullahi, Ahmed	Provided funding for ISIS.	October 17 th , 2022.	20 years
4.	Mirsad Kandic	Charged for recruiting foreign terrorist fighters, obtaining false identity and trafficking weapons.	May 5 th , 2022	Life sentence
5.	Elvis Redzepagic	Provide material support to ISIS	November 19 th , 2021	16 years
6.	Dilsod Khusanov	Provided funding and material support to those intend to join al Nusra and ISIS	October 18 th , 2021	11 years
7.	Jaylyn Christopher Molina, aka Abdur Rahim	Provided technical support and equipment to ISIS	January 25 th , 2021	20 years
8.	Kristopher Sean Matthews (aka Ali Jibreel)	Share bomb-making information for the purposes of domestic and foreign attacks on behalf of ISIS	November 24 th , 2020	20 years
9.	Samantha Marie Elhassani	Charged for financing terrorism	November 9 th , 2020	78 months
10.	Kotey and Mohamed Emwazi	Charged with deaths of Americans in Syria	October 7 th , 2020	Life sentence
11.	David Daoud Wright	Conspiracy	September 29 th , 2020	30 years
12.	Zoobia Shahnaz	Charged with providing material support to ISIS	March 13 th , 2020	13 years
13.	Rasheed Al Jijakli	Conspired with other individuals to export weapons to Syria	August 14 th , 2018	20 years
14.	Aws Mohammed Younis Al -Jayab	Provided material support to al-Nusral and false statement	October 31, 2018	23 years
15.	Rasheed Al Jijakli	Provided technical support and equipment to ISIS	December 18 th , 2018	4 years

Source: U.S. Department of Justice (2022)

Though, the United States could be commended for championing the interventionist war against terrorist groups in Syria, with a view of stopping its menacing impact on Syria and its regions, the fact however, remains that most of the steps taken by the US were borne out of the desire to realise its vested national interest. Suffice to say that US is in a diplomatic relations with Syria and the interest of Israel its friend also within that region has to be protected too. Hence the United States interventionist war against terrorism in Syria could be seen as a camouflage to realise national interest rather than humanitarian service to humanity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The article examined the role of United States in the war against international terrorism, taking a cursory look at the situation in Syria. The situation of terrorism in Syria is complex due to the multidimensional factors, especially the civil war that gave an acute advantage for the emergence of terrorist organisations and the foreign support enjoyed by them. The intervention of the United States in Syria was engineered by her declaration of war against terrorism anywhere in the world and the humanitarian crisis, which terrorism had wrecked on the citizens of Syria. The intervention of the United States, through her strategic operations and led joint forces in Syria

helped in containing annihilation and recovering territories amounting to a third of Syria being formerly held by terrorist groups. In the light of the above findings, the article recommends that apart from the military action embarked upon the United States, US should intensify strict financial control measures and improve the justice system to fast track judicial reviews and prosecution processes of terrorism provocateurs. It also recommends that the United States should involve more allies especially in and around Syria by providing cognate counter intelligence and supplies.

ReferencesAlianak, S. (2007). *Middle Eastern leaders and Islam: A precarious equilibrium*. Peter Lang.

Anti-Defamation League (2013, November, 22). *American clampdown and international militants drawn to Syria*. Retrieved from <https://www.adl.org/news/articles/america-and-international--militants-drawn-to-syria>

Azeez, I. (2014). *The resurgence of Al-Qaeda in Syria and Iraq*. United States: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College Press.

BBC News (2021, September, 24). *Syria War: UN calculates new death toll*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-58664859>

Calcuttawala, Z. (2018, March 21). U.S. bases on Syrian oilfields receive new equipment. *Oil Price*. Retrieved from <https://oilprice.com/latest-energy-News/World-News/US-Bases-On-Syrian-Oilfields-Receive-New-Equipment.html>

Cengiz, M. (2022, January 10). ISIS or Al-Qaeda: Which looms as the greater threat to global security? *Small Wars Journal*. Retrieved from <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/isis-or-al-qaeda-which-looms-greater-threat-global-security>

Charity and Security Network (2022). *Syria: Listed terrorist groups and humanitarian crises*. Retrieved from <https://charityandsecurity.org/country/syria/>

CNN (2012, April 7). *Opposition: 127 dead as Syrian forces target civilians*. Retrieved

from <https://edition.cnn.com/2012/04/07/world/meast/syria-unrest/index.html>

Committee of Foreign Affairs (2017). *Defeating terrorism in Syria: A new way forward*. Retrieved from <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-115hhrg24241/html/CHRG-11hhrg24241.htm>

Conduit, D. (2019). *The Muslim brotherhood in Syria*. Cambridge.

Criddle, E. J. (2015). Three Grotian theories of humanitarian intervention. *Theoretical Inquiries in Law*, 16(2), 473-505.

Droz-Vincent, P. (2014). State of Barbary (Take two): From the Arab Spring to the return of violence in Syria. *Middle East Journal*, 68(1), 33-58.

Erameh, N. I. (2017). Humanitarian intervention, Syria and the politics of human rights protection. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 21(5), 1-14.

Every CRS Report (2022). Armed conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. response. Retrieved from <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL33487.html>

Frampton, M. (2021). History and the definition of terrorism. In E. Richard (Ed.), *The Cambridge history of terrorism*. Cambridge University Press.

Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside terrorism* (2nd ed.). Colombia University Press.

International Crisis Group (2016). *Exploiting disorder: Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State*. Retrieved from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/exploiting-disorder-al-Qaeda-and-the-islamic-state>

Jackson, P. (2021, August 3). September 11 attacks: What happened on 9/11? *BBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-57698668>

James, P., & Friedman, J. (2006). *Globalization and violence 3: Globalizing wars and intervention*. Sage Publication.

Jose, E., & Sherlock, R. (2014). The failed US mission to try and rescue James Foley from Islamic State terrorist. *The Telegraph News*. Retrieved from

- <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11049814/The-failed-US-mission-to-try-and-rescue-James-Foley-from-Islamic-State-terrorist.html>
- Josh, L., Paul, C., & Tim, L. (2014, September, 23). Source: Al-Qaeda group in Syria plotted attack against U.S. with explosive clothes. *CNN World*. Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/22/world/meast/al-qaeda-syria-khorasan/>
- Julian, E. B., & Sam, D. (2014). Syria strikes: U.S. reports significant damage in attacks on Islamic State, Khorasan. *WSJ*. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/syria-strike-u-s-reports-significant-damage-in-attack-on-attacks-on-islamic-state-khorasan-1411486035>
- Kaplan, R. (1993, February). Syria: Identity Crisis. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1993/02/syria-identity-crisis/303860/>
- Laila, A. & Thomas, P. (2021). Religious governance in Syria amid territorial fragmentation. In W. Frederic (Ed.), *Islamic institutions in Arab states: Mapping the dynamics of control, co-option, and contention*. Berg Press.
- Lia, B. (2016). The Islamist uprising in Syria, 1976-1982: The history and legacy of a failed revolt. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 43(4), 542.
- Mark, M., Adam, G., & Michael, S. (2017, August 2). Behind the sudden death of a \$1 billion secret C.I.A. War in Syria. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/02/world/middleeast/cia-syria-rebel-arm-train-trump.html>
- Michael, B. (2015). When terrorist and target government cooperate: The case of Syria *Perspective on Terrorism*, 9(1), 95-103.
- Middle East Eye (2017). *Strikes warns of open war in Idlib as coalition strikes Jabhet Fateh al-Sham*. Retrieved from <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/syria-warns-open-war-idlib-coalition-strikes-fateh-al-sham>
- Miracle, A. A., & Kehinde, K. K. (2019). Terrorism: A global issue. In J. Merrick (Ed.), *The Boko Haram terror: Adversary to the wellbeing of Nigerian kids*. Nova Science Publisher.
- Mohanad, H. A. (2019, March 29). Power points defining the Syria-Hezbollah relationship. *Carnegie Middle East Center*. Retrieved from <https://carnegie-mec.org/2019/03/29/power-points-defining-the-syria-hezbollah-relationship--pub-78730>
- Mona, Y. (2021). Syria timeline: Since the uprising against Assad. *United States Institute of Peace*. Retrieved from <https://www.usip.org/syria-timeline-uprising-against-assad>
- Nasu, H. (2012). Revisiting the principle of non-intervention: A structural principle of international law or a political obstacle to regional security in Asia? *Asian Journal of International Law*, 3(1), 25-50.
- Nauro, F. C., & Martin, G. (2009). *International terrorism, political instability and the escalation effect*. Discussion paper 406, For schungsinstitut zur Zukunft de Arbeit Institute for the Study of Labour.
- Nussabaum, M. (2006). *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, nationality, species membership*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University.
- Pablo, K. (2018). Sovereignty, pluralism and regular war: Wolff and Vattel's enlightenment critique of just war. *Political Theory*, 46(2), 218-241.
- Peter, B., Helene, C., & David, E. (2015). Obama sends special operation forces to help fight ISIS in Syria. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/31/world/obama-will-send-forces-to-syria-to-help-fight-the-islamic-state-.html>
- Phillips, B. J. (2015). What is a terrorist group? Conceptual issues and empirical implications. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 27(2), 225-242.
- Polk, W. R. (2013, December 13). *Understanding Syria: From pre-civil war to post-Assad*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2103/12/understanding-syria-from-pre-civil-war-to-post-assa/281989/>

- Rawls, J. (1993). The law of people. *Critical Inquiry*, 20, 36-68.
- Rozsa, E. N. (2012). *The Arab Spring: Its impact on the region and the Middle East conference*. Policy Brief for the Middle East Conference on a WMD/DV Free Zone.
- Schmid, A., & Jongman, J. A. (1988). *Political terrorism. A new guide to actors, authors, concepts, databases, theories and literature*. Transaction Books.
- Sengupta, K. (2015). Turkey and Saudi Arabi alarm the west by backing Islamist extremist the Americans had bombed in Syria. *The Independent*. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-crisis-turkey-saudi-arabia-shock-western-countries-by-supporting-antiassad-jihadists-10242747.html>
- Seybolt, T. B. (2007). *Humanitarian military intervention: The condition for success and failure*. Oxford University Press.
- Statista (2022). *Terrorism-number of fatalities worldwide 2006-2020*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/202871/number-of-fatalities-by-terrorist-attacks-worldwide/>
- Sunmola, A. M. (2017). *Religious extremism in Syria: The Islamic State as a case study*. A Masters project submitted to the Department of Political Science, Babcock University, Ogun state.
- Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (2022). *Syrian revolution 11 years on SOHR documents by names nearly 161,000 civilian deaths, including 40,500 children and women*. Retrieved from <https://www.syriaohr.com/en/243125/>
- Tess, B., & Brianna, R. (2022). Still At war: The United States in Syria. *Just Security*. Retrieved from <https://www.justsecurity.org/81313/still-at-war-the-united-states-in-syria/>
- Third, A. (2014). *Conceptualizing terrorism. In Gender and the Political*. Palmgrave Macmillian.
- United State Department of Defence (2017). *U.S. airstrikes kills more than 100 al-Qaida fighters in Syria*. Retrieved from https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/1055_727/us-airstrikes-kills-more-than-100-al-qaida-fighters-in-syria
- United State Department of Justice (2022). Lafarge pleads guilty to conspiring to provide material support to foreign terrorist organisations. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/lafarge-pleads-guilty-conspiring-to-provide-material-support-to-foreign-terrorist-organizations>
- United State Department of State (2011). *Foreign terrorist organisations*. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>
- Wright, R. (2008). *Dreams and shadows: The future of the Middle East*. Penguin Press.
- Zvi, M. (2022). The risks of an ISIS comeback. *Gist Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.gistreportsonline.com/r/isis-return/>