Ungoverned Spaces and the Challenges of Terrorism in Africa

Anthony Israel Rufus
Administrative Staff College of Nigeria,
Topo – Badagry, Lagos State.
Corresponding author: rufus4anthony@gmail.com

Abstract

Ungoverned Spaces and the Challenges of Terrorism in Africa explores the nexus between ungoverned territories and the proliferation of terrorism across the African continent. Ungoverned spaces, which refer to areas where state control is weak or non-existent, provide fertile ground for terrorist groups to thrive. These regions often suffer from poor governance, economic deprivation, and social marginalization, creating a vacuum in which extremist ideologies can easily take root. The article examines how terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, and ISIS affiliates, exploit these areas to establish operational bases, recruit fighters, and engage in illicit activities like arms smuggling and human trafficking. The article highlights the complex challenges African governments face in combating terrorism in ungoverned spaces, such as vast geographical areas, porous borders, and limited state capacity. Regional and international efforts to address these issues, including military interventions and capacity-building programs, are also discussed, emphasizing the need for a more holistic approach that includes addressing the underlying socio-economic and political drivers of extremism. Furthermore, the article argues that without significant improvements in governance, security, and development, these ungoverned spaces will continue to serve as sanctuaries for terrorist groups, posing a persistent threat to regional and global security. The conclusion calls for a coordinated, multi-faceted response that integrates local, national, and international efforts to restore state authority and promote sustainable peace and development in affected areas.

Keywords: Ungoverned spaces, terrorism, transnational crimes, porous borders and small arms trafficking.

Introduction

Violent crimes and terrorism have become one of the important defining features of African historical development. The character of postcolonial African states and the behaviours of their leadership created conditions favourable for conflict which breeds crime and criminality. The postcolonial political contention, struggle for resource control, bad governance, poverty, religious extremism, tribalism, corruption, and other negative consequences of neoliberal economic reforms further exposed the continent to different forms of violent crimes which includes human, drugs and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) trafficking, armed banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, transnational organized crimes (TOC's), insurgency, and terrorism (Tar and Dawud, 2022). The existing insecurity climate in most African states reveals very strongly, the inability of states to maintain internal cohesion and secure their borders. The internal conflicts as well the porous nature of Africa's borders serves as ample routes for criminality and violent crimes to fester. The unsecured border territories allow the movement of terrorists, militias, and other

criminal actors who spread violence and insecurity from one territory to the other; (Carik, 2009). The nature and criminal activities taking place in most of these ungoverned spaces, particularly the Horn of Africa and the Sahel regions is worrisome. Mercenaries have become primary actors in African civil wars (such as those fought in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR), and Somalia). Several of the mercenaries have fought in most of these civil (Okumu, 2011).

Ungoverned spaces and territories in Africa have emerged as insignificant spaces that are susceptible to capture by criminal and clandestine elements who seek shelter and hideout, to carry out nefarious activities. Terrorists and other criminal elements find solace in these ungoverned spaces and utilize them as staging posts to conduct their terror activities. Unless the state takes sufficient control of the ungoverned spaces, they are bound to become lasting safe haven for criminals and terrorist organizations. Ungoverned spaces in the continent are fast becoming bases for terrorists to launch attacks, and hideouts for TOC's. Typical examples are most of the ungoverned spaces in CAR, DRC, Southern Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Mali, and Nigeria to mention but a few.

The ugly nature of these ungoverned spaces is majorly associated with the uncontrolled proliferation of illicit SALWs, drugs with other contraband products smuggled through the porous borders (Tar and Safana, 2021). The existence of terrorist groups across the ungoverned spaces in Africa, has led to properly damage, and loss of lives and sustaining various degrees of injuries. Furthermore, terrorist activities on the continent have contributed to massive displacements of the civilian population (Kambela, 2019). Cross-border criminal activities tend to undermine good governance and border security. These activities have made borders in Africa to be notably porous, ungoverned, and ungovernable prime areas for organizing and maintaining terrorism and organized violent crimes (Asiwaju, 2015). As noted by Ladan (2014), efficient management of ungoverned spaces in Africa has become problematic due to the expanse and density of these ungoverned spaces. In effect, most of these ungoverned spaces in the continent have become centres for illicit criminal activities.

Several factors contribute to the existence of ungoverned spaces in Africa. Weak governance, political instability, corruption, marginalization, poverty, and ethno-religious tensions can create power vacuums, and undermine state control over certain regions. In some cases, ongoing conflicts and civil wars have led to the collapse of state institutions, leaving behind territories that are difficult to govern. Regions in Africa that have experienced the existence of terrorist groups in ungoverned spaces which include the Sahel region (Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso), Horn of Africa (Somalia), and parts of East Africa (Kenya and Tanzania). Al-Shaaba in Somalia, Boko Haram Terrorist (BHT) in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad as well as Islamic States West African Province (ISWAP). The activities of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the Sahel, with other extremist groups have exploited vulnerabilities in these areas to carry out attacks, exert control, and challenge state authority. Addressing the issue of securing and properly controlling ungoverned spaces in Africa is very essential for the security peace, and stability of the continent. It is against the back drop of this that the chapter attempts to examine the security implications of terrorism on ungoverned spaces in Africa. The chapter is structured into five major sections: introduction; conceptualizing ungoverned spaces and terrorism; terrorism and insecurity

in Africa's ungoverned spaces; combating terrorism in Africa's ungoverned spaces; and conclusion.

Conceptualizing Ungoverned Spaces and Terrorism

There are different views among scholars as to what constitutes ungoverned spaces. Some wonder whether there is such a thing known as ungoverned space at all (Igboin, 2021). It is however worthy to note that the notion of "ungoverned spaces" is not new. It is commonly recycled in counter-terrorism discourses especially to problematize the concept of weak states or regions as potential terrorist sanctuaries (Arsenault and Bacon, 2015; Oakley and Proctor, 2012; Korteweg, 2008). What is new is the fact that we are looking at ungoverned spaces as a twenty-first century threat (Whelan, 2006). In order to comprehend the concept of ungoverned spaces or territories, there is need to first understand what ungovernability imply. Ungovernability shows the inability, unwillingness, and the ineffectiveness of the state to perform its functions within a particular territory.

In contrast, governability simply means the ability, willingness, and effectiveness of the state to perform its function over a given territory (Rabasa, Steven, Peter, Kim, Theodore, Jennifer, Kevin, and John, 2007). According to Whelan (2006pp 64-65), "ungoverned space is a physical or non-physical area where there is an absence of state capacity or political will to exercise control. Physical space can be land area, such as the Sahel region, where terrorists have successfully conducted attacks, or the Niger Delta, where corruption and criminal activity is pervasive, or something we often forget, maritime areas, such as the African coastal waters in the Gulf of Guinea or Swahili coast. Non-physical space might, for example involve financial space where there is little capacity or legal authority to prevent terrorists from raising, and moving monies in support of attacks. This is a space that terrorists thrive in and need to exist".

Ungoverned spaces, therefore, means both the non-existence of effective state sovereignty and governmental control in both physical and non-physical geographical territory (Raleigh and Dowd, 2013). What this suggest is that in such territories, the state is entirely non-physical; and such non-existence results to ineffective governance, and can lead to the rise of conflict and other forms of insecurities (Sackflame and Omitola, 2022). Ungoverned spaces or territories, may remain partially governed, or ineffectively governed (Olaniyan and Akindele, 2017). Similarly, Forest (2010), opined that an ungoverned space can be seen in most instances as a failure of capacity by a sovereign state to exercise effective control over a geographical area or location within the state. Furthermore, he identified a more complex modern security challenge referred to as a "zone of competing governance," or "region with parallel governance structures," an area that is governed by non-state actors other than those of an established nation-state.

Rabasa et al (2007), views ungoverned territories as places in which a state or government encounters serious challenges in establishing control, in which the national government's authority does not reach those areas thereby serving as breeding grounds for terrorists. Ungoverned spaces should not only mean isolated regions of inhospitable terrain where governments cannot reach, but also in migrant and immigrant populated slums and inaccessible border regions of well governed states (Cronin, 2009). Risse (2011), asserts that ungoverned spaces or restricted statehood are territories in a country in which the national governments have no ability to enforce laws and decisions or in which the legal power over the means of violence is absent.

Ungoverned spaces are regarded as the mere absence of a state as the authoritative allocator of value, provider of collective goods, and as the holder of a monopoly of legitimate coercion. The obvious remedy, then, is state building. This apparently simple formulation obscures the complexity and variability of ungoverned spaces or territories and the motive for their emergence. Moreover, this ignores the fact that ungoverned spaces may lack government but certainly not governance (Taylor, 2016). Clunan and Trinkunas (2010), views ungoverned space as social, political, and economic arenas where states lack "effective sovereignty," or where state control is non-existence, weak, or contested by other entities. This is prevalent in many regions across the world, especially Arab and African territories like Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Lebanon, Libya, and South Sudan among others, where some parts of their territorial areas are being controlled by terrorist groups and international forces.

In the sub-Saharan African region, ungoverned space exists between North Africa, the Sahel region, and the Sahara Desert, where criminal elements move and governments do not have the capacity to control such movements (Southern Pulse, 2011). These ungoverned territories are witnessing different forms of insecurities as a result of the inability or unwillingness of the governments to perform certain functions; and the breakdown or absence of state, (Sackflame and Omitola, 2022). Ungoverned spaces can exist as a result of weak states in which the organizations, most especially, the security agencies of the national government are unable to maintain authority or political law beyond the major cities. These ungoverned spaces are locations, usually borderlands, mountainous regions and inaccessible terrains, characterized by the absence of government, and where terrorist and other non- state actors dominate.

The concept of terrorism continues to attract debate in academic and policy circles in recent times. While "terrorism" is one of the most commonly used terms in political discourse, there is still no international consensus about its exact meaning (Schmid, 2023). Terrorism is defined as an act that entails deliberate use of violence, threat of symbolic low-level violence by persons, conspiratorial organizations, or independent ideological opposition groups within a nation (Enders and Sandler, 1993; Crenshaw, 1981). Terrorism is seen as the use of violence against random civilian targets in order to intimidate or to create generalized pervasive fear for the sole purpose of achieving political goals (Alexander, 1976).

Terrorism is therefore, the use or the threat of the use of violence, a method of combat, or strategy to achieve certain targets. It aims to induce a state of fear in the victim or target, that is ruthless and does not conform with international humanitarian rules (Laqueur, 1987). Terrorism according to Hoffman (2006), is ineluctably political in aims and objectives, violent- or equally important, threatens violence which is designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim, conducted by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure (whose members wear no uniform or identifying insignia) and perpetrated by a sub-national group or non-state entity. Terrorism is therefore intended to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is very little.

Through the publicity generated by their violence, terrorists seek to obtain the leverage, influence, and the power they otherwise lack to effect political change on either a local or an international scale. In his analysis, Snow (1993), presents six descriptive characteristics of terrorism. The first is that it involves the use of criminal acts to achieve the ultimate objectives of the terrorists. The second characteristic is that terrorists use organized violence indiscriminately. This leads to the

third aspect which is the ultimate goal of terrorists is to influence government's action rather than taking over government. In other words, terrorism is a weapon of the "weak" against a strong government. This constitutes the fourth characteristics. The fifth is that terrorism is usually sponsored by some individuals, group or even a government that trains, equip, and fund those who actually carry out the act. The sixth is that terrorism originates from two competing set of causes. Those sympathetic to terrorism blame the problem on some social, economic, and political deficits in the society. The other explanation is that certain cultures, religious, and ideological orientations promote it.

The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) defines terrorism as the use or threat of illegal force and violence by non-state actors to achieve political, economic, religious, or social objectives through fear, coercion, or intimidation (GTI, 2020, p.6). This definition highlights that terrorism goes beyond physical acts of violence, emphasizing its long-lasting psychological impact on society. The U.S. Department of Defense (2008) similarly describes terrorism as the deliberate use or threat of unlawful violence to instill fear, aiming to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in pursuit of political, religious, or ideological goals. Sloan (2006) notes that while the concept of terrorism has evolved over time, its core objectives—political, religious, and ideological—have remained constant.

Chomsky (2001) views terrorism as coercive actions targeting populations to achieve specific aims, while Chalk (2007) defines it as organized violence by sub-state actors to accomplish political goals, which vary depending on the group involved. Schmid and Jongman (1988) describe terrorism as a method of repeated violent actions by semi-clandestine individuals, groups, or state actors driven by political or criminal motivations. Rapoport (1977) sees terrorism as a tool to provoke emotional responses, such as sympathy or revulsion. According to the U.S. Department of State (1996), terrorism is politically motivated violence directed against non-combatants by sub-national or clandestine state actors. Imobighe (2006) emphasizes that terrorism can be employed by both state and non-state actors to address grievances, including by freedom fighters, insurgents, and even national armed forces. In Africa, terrorism thrives in ungoverned spaces due to weakened state authority, enabling terrorist groups to operate and carry out devastating attacks.

Terrorism and Insecurity in Africa's Ungoverned Spaces
Terrorism in Africa is a complex issue, and ungoverned spaces play a significant role in its challenges. These spaces often found in regions with weak or ineffective governments which provide fertile ground for terrorist and other armed groups to operate and thrive. Terrorism in Africa has been exacerbated by porous borders. Sadly, much of these ungoverned spaces in Africa are hospitable grounds for terrorist groups, insurgents, bandits, drug, and SALWs traffickers, human traffickers and other organized criminal elements (Rufus, 2022).

As noted by Ochoche (2006), since the end of colonialism in Africa, governments and their citizens have been confronted by new forms of legitimate as well as illegitimate dissents, often fuelled by as desire for control over political power, resources, ideology, ethnic, and religious exacerbation. Africa's political structure is also characterized by violations of civil and political rights, fused with violations of economic, social, and cultural rights. It is a known fact that terrorism has the tendency to flourish more in states where violations of rights occur. Many governments in Africa perceive ungoverned spaces or territories as a serious threat because the borders of weak, or failing, states can produce spillover effects, with turmoil spreading across countries. As state powers are

challenged, withdrawn, or rejected, porosity created by these conditions tends to promulgate further conflict and ungovernability. This situation occurred in West Africa during the 1990s, when the Liberian conflict metastasized, undermining Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. "Bad neighbourhoods," areas characterized by the absence of order and stability, can encourage failure in vulnerable states. More specifically, shared borders can transmit unrest from a singular ungoverned space to neighbouring states whereby affiliations that challenge the state create transborder territorial networks (Taylor, 2016).

Several African countries have witnessed incessant occurrences of conflicts, high crime rate, corruption, and various levels of insecurities such as the instability caused by intra and interstate conflict, banditry, Al-Shabaab in East Africa, Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, BH) and its faction, ISWAP in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad, Group for the Support of Islam and Moslems (GSIM) in Mali and Burkina Faso, and Ansarul Islam in Burkina Faso, AQIM in Algeria among others due to the lack of well-organized system of governance. Africa's porous borders, weak law enforcement, inadequately trained or ill-equipped security agents, historical grievances, lack of the rule of law, and economic opportunities have contributed to the rise of terrorism in Africa (Apau and Banule, 2019), one of the regions in Africa with rising incidence of terrorism and insurgencies is the Sahel region, with complex and intertwined security and humanitarian challenges.

Terrorism and insurgencies in the region have adversely impacted security with huge death toll, refugee crisis, and millions of internally displace persons (IDP's). The geographic nature of the Sahel belt, and particularly in West Africa, lends itself to terrorism, insurgencies and insurrection (Waddington, 2016). The BHT began in Nigeria's northeast region and gradually spread to other areas of the country and to a large portion of the Lake Chad Basin (LBC). The scourge threatens not only Nigeria's territorial integrity but also regional stability and security of millions of people within and across the country (Olu-Adeyemi and Makanjuola, 2020). According to Onapoja (2013), the LCB region has witnessed various violent conflicts, guerilla wars, warlordism, terrorism, and militias insurgency stemming largely from the Chadian civil war of the 1980s, followed by armed rebellions and factional militias in both Niger and CAR that emerged to capture ungovernable spaces due to lack of political legitimacy, leadership squabbles, and political fragmentation that bedeviled states across the region. Since 2012, the BHT rapidly expanded their operational frontiers through the regionalization of terrorism. This was aided by taking advantage of the porous borders and the collapse of Gaddaffi's regime, which triggered regional SALWs proliferation, thereby aiding jihadist violence in the region (Eveslage, 2013).

In Nigeria, BHT have attacked military and non-military targets, killed thousands of people, displaced more than two million citizens, and abducted hundreds of students, majority of who are females and hundreds of them remained in their captivity for several years. Cross-border armed banditry and kidnapping for ransom have festered in the country. Thousands have been kidnapped and villages raided and destroyed by bandits (Alemika, 2022). Al-Shabaab is an Al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist group that has risen rapidly to prominence in the midst of Somalia's decades-long war (Wise, 2011). Al-Shabaab terrorism in Africa has contributed significantly to instability on the continent and further polarized an already fragmented Somali society. Somalia's Al-Shabaab and its Islamic extremism dates back to the mid-1980s, when the group began as a clandestine movement opposing the repressive and corrupt regime of Siad-Barre. This rebellion

was coupled with Barre regimes failure to resolve economic challenges that Somalis, who were living outside the colonial borders, faced. Al-Shabaab terrorist group has remained a notorious group and poses serious security threat in Africa, having successfully regained territories in most borderlands of Somalia's Southern and Central regions (Kambela, 2019). Clearly, Al-Shabaab continued terrorist activity is not detached from that of other jihadist groups in Africa-including BHT, Ansaru, and Al-Qaeda's North African wing and beyond (Agbiboa, 2014).

Violent conflict remains the primary motive of terrorism, with over 88 per cent of attacks and 98 per cent of terrorism deaths in 2022 occurring in countries already in conflict. The Sahel region in sub–Saharan Africa is now the epicenter of terrorist activities, with the Sahel accounting for more terrorism deaths in 2022 than both South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa combined. Deaths in the Sahel constituted 43 per cent of the global total in 2022, compared to just 1 per cent in 2007. Burkina Faso and Mali, accounted for 73 per cent of terrorism deaths in the Sahel in 2022 and 52 per cent of all deaths from terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa. The two countries recorded high increases in terrorism, with deaths in Burkina Faso increasing by 50 per cent to 1,135 and in Mali by 56 per cent to 944.

Most attacks in these countries are attributed to unknown jihadist, though both Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), and Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) operate in these countries. The increase of violence in Burkina Faso has also spread to neigbouring countries, with Togo and Benin Republics recording their worst scores on record. The political situation in the Sahel region aggravates this increase, with six coup attempts since 2021, of which four were successful. The underlying drivers are complex and systemic including poor water utilization, food insecurity, ethnic polarization high population growth, external interventions, geopolitical competition, pastoral conflict, the growth of transnational Salafi-Islam ideology and weak governments. Most of the terrorist activity occurs along ungoverned spaces (border regions) where government control is weakest (GTI, 2023).

Figure 1: The deaths from terrorism by country, 2022
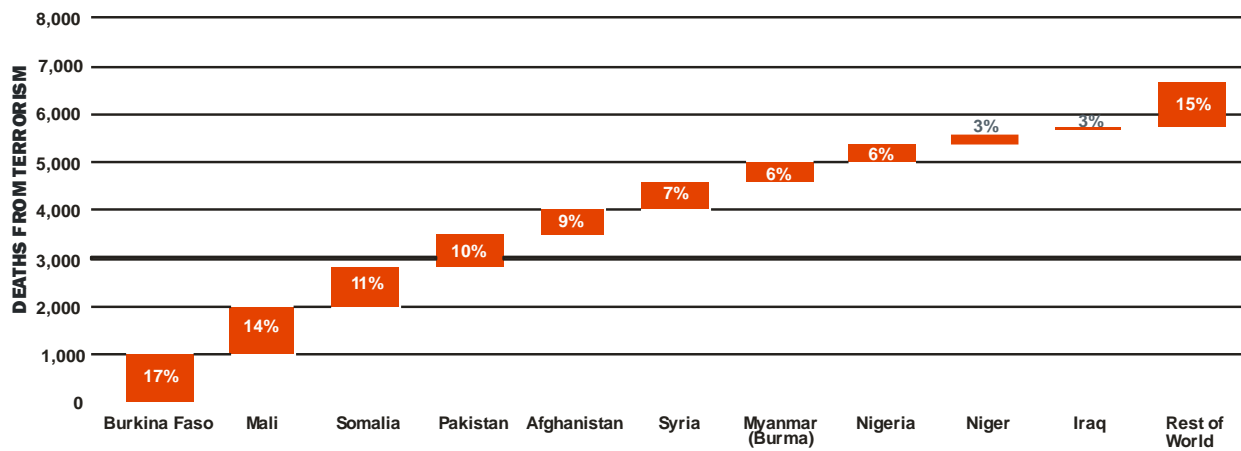
Source: GTI, 2023.

The ten countries accounted for 85 per cent of all terrorism deaths in 2022, as shown in Figure 1. Five of the ten countries with the highest terrorism deaths were in Africa: Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, Nigeria, and Niger. Burkina Faso recorded the most deaths in 2022. This is the first time that Burkina Faso has been the deadliest country, replacing Afghanistan who had held the position for the four prior years. Burkina Faso accounted for 17 per cent of terrorism deaths globally, a

significant increase from 2021 when the country accounted for 10 per cent of the global total (GTI, 2023).

Terrorism flourish on SALWs, for instance, in Nigeria, the BHT is known to have acquired, through clandestine means, a large number of assault rifles, rocket propelled grenades (RPG's), mortars and improvised explosive devices (IED's), in its stockpile. The BHT possesses a limited anti-aircraft capability, and a large number of pickup trucks that have been adapted as improvised fighting vehicles to carry heavy machine guns (Steve and Chris, 2015). Therefore, one of the effects of conflicts facilitated by the spread of SALWs is that of IDPs, and cross-border refugees. The challenges of refugees and IDPs mainly stem from the proliferation of inter-and-intra state conflicts.

The fact is that apart from the refugee flows themselves, there is the possibility of refugee camps being used to conceal SALWs, and the likelihood of the refugees wanting to arm themselves for their personal security (Ladan, 2004). In many countries in Africa, SALWs circulate beyond state control because they are easy to conceal and their light weight facilitates their transportation across international borders. The cross-border demand for SALWs attracts anticipated profits, and nonexistent or ineffective national laws regulating brokering and trafficking of SALWs across porous borders emphasizes the importance of adequate border control framework in Africa. Libya is known to be one of the most prolific SALWs trafficking routes into Africa. In Sahel-Sahara, conflict in Mali and Libya have led to subsequent proliferation of terrorists and other armed groups in border regions with increased militarization and criminalization of traditional trading routes that fell under the control of vicious armed actors (Arbia and Kartas, 2015). The rapid transfer of Libyan stockpile weapons to Algeria, Tunisia, and Mali down to Chad, Niger, and Nigeria was characterized by porous borders and established smuggling networks and the rising demand by terrorist groups across Africa.

While the violent non-state actors in Sahel-Sahara may be driven by religious identity, ideological motivations, secessionist claims, and economic interests to challenge the African postcolonial state project, there are violent terrorist and insurgent groups, especially in Eastern DRC whose primary motivation is the control of territory using discourses of autochthony, access to local customary power, and extraction of mineral resources in the Kivu provinces through a network of militia groups, local elites, and criminal regional actors (verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015; Baaz and Verweijen, 2013; Titeca and Vlassenroot, 2012). Some of these terrorist and insurgency groups in Eastern DRC include the Congolese Rally for Democracy-Goma (RCD-G); National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) and its breakaway faction M23 led by General Laurent Nkunda and Bosco Ntaganda, respectively (both of whom have been indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crime offences); Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR) composed mainly by Rwanda Hutu refugees fighting against President Paul Kagame's regime; Banyamulenge and the Mai Mai militia, to mention a few (Abubakar, 2022). The dynamics in Eastern DRC are multi-layered and armed group formation is motivated by such variegated factors such as inter-and intra-community conflicts around political, economic and military influence, power disputes at and with the national center; the general nature of the state, governance, and the political economy in the DRC centered around extraction of precious minerals such as coltan, diamonds, copper, zinc, cobalt etc (Verweijen, 2013). Lemarchand (2009), also persuasively asserts that understanding the mosaic of crises in the GLR requires a regional lens that effectively brings into fore the violent patterns of interactions that form the essential backdrop to the spread

of bloodshed within and across borders. Thus, whether it is the LCB in Northeastern Nigeria, the Sahel-Sahara region in North and West Africa, or the GLR in Central Africa, understanding the dynamics of radicalization and violent conflicts in these regions necessarily requires attention not only to the local socio-economic, political, cultural, historical factors but also the role of geopolitical and external actors/interests in those regions (Abubakar, 2022).

The growth of international commerce and transport has made Africa, with a weak enforcement capacity and underpaid officials, an ideal hub for organized criminal elements. Africa is used to route drugs destined for other markets, and consequently, it is becoming a destination hub with a growing consumer base. Organized criminal elements usually take advantage of Africa's weak institutions, corrupt public officials to advance their activities (Tar and Dawud, 2022). Marenin (2014), opined that countries can be infiltrated by TOC's through corruption and the threat of violence. Weaker, authoritarian, and smaller states, especially, can be susceptible to the rewards offered by corruption. TOC's survives by three illegal ways: violence against suppliers, customers, and each other; corruption, especially of border and port security agents, and paper fraud (which enables much of TOC's).

Human trafficking, particularly child trafficking is a serious security concern in Africa. Perhaps, the most notorious, dangerous, and evil service which trafficked persons, youth mostly, provide is as fighters in the various low-intensity conflicts dotting the political landscapes of Africa. Terrorist groups in Africa, and other marauding bandits competing for dominance in ungoverned spaces in Africa use abduction and kidnapping as the most dependable and cheapest way to recruit and replenish their fighters (Sawadogo, 2012). The infamous child soldiers that terrorized substantial portions of Africa and contributed to the fires of civil wars in places such as DRC, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Somalia were mostly abducted at tender ages (Annan, 2014; Sawadogo, 2012).

Terrorism and insurgency are evolving global issues that have challenge the international community. On the African continent, terrorism and insurgency have continued to affect people's fundamental human rights both directly and indirectly, including contributing to high numbers of people being forcibly displaced from their residence or countries. Africa, particularly the eastern, northern, and western regions have witnessed a rapidly growing movement of terrorist and organized criminal elements and insurgent activities. This disturbing upsurge in terrorism is demonstrated not only by the number of attacks but also by the number of countries affected.

Combating Terrorism in Africa's Borderlands
The growing incidence of terrorism and violent crimes in Africa, with complex and intertwined security challenges, underscore the need to have a reliable border control framework that will make the continent safer. African states need to pay serious attention to border security and management with a view to understanding the dynamics of security challenges confronting most of Africa's borderland. Moreover, ungoverned spaces appeared to be the major security challenge facing African states. Until recently, most of the defense and national security policies of African states were silent over measures and strategies of combating criminal activities in Africa's ungoverned spaces. Terrorists and other organized criminal elements have exploited the porous borders, the massive decline in security regulations, lessened border controls, and the resultant greater freedom of movement, to expand their nefarious activities across borders. Thus, the influx of illegal and undesirable immigrants is a potential source of threat to security of the African continent.

Where border regions are neglected, local populations are isolated from the regalia role of the state law enforcement. They therefore do not maintain trustful relationship with law enforcement authorities and do not cooperate with them on security matters relating to border governance. Where borders do not fulfill their function as nodes and bridges, they may deprive local populations of their livelihoods and opportunities to fulfill social obligations. Where the prevalence of insecurity or the lack of development denies border communities economic and social benefits, and access to services, legitimate economic activities may be replaced by illegitimate undertakings (AU, 2017).

The ease with which governance-related national conflicts in individual states have spilled over to entire regions, as has been the case in the GLR, West Africa, and Horn of Africa is attributed to the artificial and arbitrary creation of boundaries by the colonial powers (Ikome, 2012). The cross-border spillover effects of protracted civil wars have introduced the more worrisome dimensions of the proliferation of SALWs and the incidental generalized insecurity arising from familiar impunity of operations by terrorists, armed bandits, insurgents, and organized criminals who use border regions as lines of defence and quickly escape from law enforcement. The dearth of manpower, logistics as well as the lack of proper coordination of border security agencies serve as a constraint towards effective monitoring of activities along the vast borderlands of Africa.

Addressing the phenomenon of terrorism in Africa's ungoverned spaces requires a multifaceted approach. It is important to advocate for a broad base regional integration in order to consolidate on the existing framework of the African Union (AU), as it relates to the promotion of good governance and in particular border governance in Africa. The idea is to contribute to proper border management in Africa by encouraging AU member states to demarcate their boundaries and assist local communities in their cross-border activities by developing curriculum that seeks to enhance the capacities of personnel to effectively manage borders (Okumu, 2011). Promoting regional cooporation among African nations in terms of intelligence sharing and coordination, as well as the establishment of joint task forces to combat cross-border terrorism is fundamental.

Though, it is very difficult to eradicate the illicit proliferation of SALWs in Africa, especially because of the very nature of the continent with regards to tribal conflicts, militancy, secession, insurgency, armed banditry, and terrorism (Onuoha, 2012; Onuoha, 2011), but putting in place a joint communication structure with neighbouring countries in order to effectively track down criminal positions and movements in the border regions, will drastically minimize the inflow of SALWs which fuelled terrorist activities. The shortfall of governance in the border regions of Africa has led to the rise of terrorists, militia groups, insurgents, and other organized criminal gangs who are challenging their governments. Hence, the need to strengthen governance. Government should be able to work with local authorities to advance governance, rule of law and service delivery in ungoverned spaces to reduce the appeal of extremism. The provision of physical infrastructures such as roads, water, electricity, schools, health services, and other basic amenities; and investments in job opportunities will go a long way in addressing the basic needs of border communities thereby reducing poverty and insecurity that characterized border regions in Africa. The deployment of well-trained security agents, the training and re-training as well as the provision of adequate logistics and modern communication and surveillance equipment will significantly improve the performance of border security agents in securing most of the ungoverned spaces.

Conclusion

The patterns of violent conflict in Africa, particularly in ungoverned spaces, reveal the challenges of state formation and nation-building in postcolonial contexts. The uneven distribution of political power and economic resources in many postcolonial African states often creates conditions ripe for the emergence of radical terrorist groups and insurgencies that question state legitimacy (Abubakar, 2022). The remote and expansive nature of African border regions, coupled with weak governance and inadequate border control, makes these areas safe havens for criminals, including terrorists, insurgents, drug traffickers, human traffickers, and arms smugglers. In these fragmented micro-regions, various violent non-state actors not only compete for control of territory, resources, and trade routes but also resist interference by central authorities seeking to assert control over contested areas (Dunn, 2009).

The proliferation of terrorist networks and armed militias, fueled by illicit small arms and light weapons (SALWs), has destabilized the continent, creating spillover effects in neighboring states. This "weaponization" of Africa has led to the collapse or failure of states such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, CAR, and the DRC. The absence of strong regulatory frameworks and the influx of non-state actors have further exacerbated security challenges across the continent. To address these issues, improving governance through the development of physical infrastructure, establishing robust communication systems with neighboring countries to monitor criminal activities, and equipping border security agents with modern tools and training can significantly curb criminality and terrorism in Africa's ungoverned spaces.

References

Abubakar, D. (2022). The Dynamics of Radicalization and Insurgency in Africa. In U.A. Tar and D.M. Dawud (Eds), *Policing Criminality and Insurgency in Africa: Perspectives on the Changing Wave of Law Enforcement* (pp. 107-129). London: Lexington Books.

African Union.(2017). Draft African Union Border Governance Strategy.https://www.peaceau.org. Accessed October 5, 2023.

Agbiboa, D.E. (2014). Terrorism Without Borders: Somalia's Al-Shabaab and Global Jihad Network. *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 5(1), 27-34.

Alemika, E.E.O. (2022). Pattern of Crimes and Insecurity in Africa. In U.A. Tar and D.M. Dawud (Eds), *Policing Criminality and Insurgency in Africa: Perspectives on the Changing Wave of Law Enforcement* (pp. 131-150). London: Lexington Books.

Alexander, Y. (1976). *International Terrorism: National, Regional and Global Perspectives*. New York: Praeger.

Annan, N. (2014). Violent Conflicts and Civil Strife in West Africa: Causes, Challenges and Prospects. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 3(1), 23-45.

Apau, R., and Banule, A. (2019). Terrorism, Violent Extremism and Insurgency in the Sahel Region: An Assessment. *African Journal of Terrorism*, 1(9), 18-26.

Arbia, A., and Kartas, M. (2015).*Curbing Small Arms and Light Weapons Trafficking, and Increasing Border Security*. Workshop Summary Report: Tunis, 20-21 March, 2015.

Arsenault, E.G., and Bacon, T. (2015). Disaggregating and Defeating Terrorist Safe Havens. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 38(2), 85-112.

Asiwaju, A.I. (2015). Terrorism and African Border Governance. In *Reflections on Nigeria's Foreign Policy: The Challenges of Insurgency*. Society for International Relations Awareness (SIRA). Friedrich-Ebert-stiftung, Nigeria: Abuja, 4(1), 15-42.

Baaz, M.E., and Verweijen, J. (2013). The Volatility of a Half-Cooked Bouila-Baisse: Rabel Military Integration and Conflict Dynamics in the Eastern DR-Congo. *African Affairs*, 112(449), 563-582.

Carik, D.S. (2009). Porous Borders and the Insecurity of Civilians: Cross-Border Violence in Darfur and Eastern Chad. *Policy Brief*.Ford Institute for Human Security. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press.

Chalk, P. (2007).The Evolving Dynamics of Terrorism in the 1990s.*Australian Journal of Politics*, 20(1), 18-32.

Chomsky, N. (2001). *9-11*. New York: Seven Stories Press.

Clunan, A.I., and Trinkunas, H.A. (2010).*Ungoverned Spaces: Alternative to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Crenshaw, M. (1981).The Causes of Terrorism.*Comparative Politics*, 13(4), 379-399.

Cronin, P.M. (2009). *Global Strategic Assessment 2009: America's Security Role in a Changing World*. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press.

Dunn, K. (2009). Contested State Spaces: African National Parks and the State.*European Journal of International Relations*, 15(1), 423-426.

Enders, W., and Sandler, T. (1993). The Effectiveness of Anti-Terrorism Policies: A Vector-Autoregression-Intervention Analysis. *American Political Science Review*, 87(4), 829-844.

Eveslage, B.S. (2013). Clarifying Boko Haram's Transnational Intensions, Using Content Analysis of Public Statement in 2012.*Perspectives on Terrorism*, 7(5), 47-76.

Forest, J.F. (2010). Ungoverned Territories Engaging Local Non-Governmental Entities in U.S. Security Strategy.*Journal of Threat Convergence*, 1(1), 10-21.

Global Terrorism Index. (2023). *Measuring the Impact of Terrorism.* New York: The Institute for Economics and Peace. https://visionofhumanity.org/resources. Accessed October 11, 2023.

Gobal Terrorism Index. (2020). *Measuring the Impact of Terrorism*. New York: The Institute for Economics and Peace. http://visionofhumanity.org/reports. Accessed October 5, 2023.

Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside Terrorism* (2nded.) New York: Columbia University Press.

Igboin, B.O. (2021). Ungoverned or Alternatively Governed Spaces in North-Eastern Nigeria: A Critical Exploration of Boko Haram's Motif. In M.A. Upal and C.M. Cusack (Eds), *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movement* (pp. 421-444). Netherlands: Brill Publishers.

Ikome, F.N. (2012). Africa's International Borders as Potential Sources of Conflict and Future Threats to Peace and Security. *Institute for Security Studies*, 233(1), 1-4.

Imobighe, T. A. (2006). Rethinking Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism.In T.A. Imobighe and A.N.T. Eguavoen (Eds), *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: An African Perspective* (pp.7-28). Ibadan: Heineman Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc.

Kambela, L. (2019). Terrorism in Africa: A Manifestation of New Wars. http://www.accord.org. Accessed October 7, 2023.

Korteweg, R. (2008). Black Holes: On Terrorist Sanctuaries and Governmental Weakness. *Civil Wars*, 10(1), 60-71.

Ladan, M.T. (2004). *Migration, Trafficking, Human Rights and Refugees Under International Law: A Case Study of Africa*. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press.

Ladan, S.I. (2014). An Appraisal of the Status and Consequence of Encroaching into Forest Reserves in Kastina Urban Environment, Katsina State.*Danmarna International Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Studies*, 5 (1), 91-101.

Laqueur, W. (1987).*The Age of Terrorism* (2nded.) Boston: Little and Brown.

Lemarchand, R. (2009). *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Marenin, O. (2014). Styles of Policing and Economic Development in African States.*Journal of Public Administration and Development*, 34(1), 149-161.

Oakley, D., and Proctor, P. (2012). Ten Years of GWOT, the Failure of Democratization, and the Fallacy of Ungoverned Spaces. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 5(1), 1-14.

Ochoche, S.A. (2006). Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: The African Experience. In T.A. Imobighe and A.N.T. Eguavoen (Eds), *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: An African Perspective* (pp. 155-177). Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc.

Okumu, W. (2011).Border Management and Security in Africa.http://www.researchgate.net.Accessed September 30, 2023.

Olaniyan, R., and Akindele, R. (2017). Nigeria's Ungoverned Spaces: Studies in Security, Terrorism and Governance. *Arts and Life – The Midweek Magazine*. March 15, 2017

Olu-Adeyemi, L., and Makanjuola, S.T. (2020). Is There Borderline in Nigeria's Northeast? Multinational Joint Task Force and Counter-Insurgency Operation in Perspective.*African Journal ofPolitical Science and International Relations*, 14(2), 33-45.

Onapajo, H. (2013). Why Nigeria is not Winning the Anti-Boko Haram War. In I. Mantzikos (Ed), *Boko Haram: Anatomy of a Crisis* (pp. 53-90). United Kingdom: E-International Relations Publication Limited.

Onuoha, F.C. (2011). Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Human Security in Nigeria. *Conflict Trends*, 1(1), 50-56.

Onuoha, F.C. (2012). Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa: Implications for Sub-Regional Security. Fort Leavenworth's: Army Command and General Staff College.

Rabasa, A., Steven, B., Peter, C., Kim., Theodore, W.K., Jennifer, D., Kevin, A., and John, E. (2007). *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

Raleigh, C., and Dowd, C. (2013).Governance and Conflict in the Sahel's Ungoverned Space.*Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2(2), 1-17.

Rapoport, D.C. (1977). The Government is Up in the Air Over Combating Terrorism. *National Journal*, 9(1), 1853-1856.

Risse, T. (2011).*Governance Without a State? Policies and Politics in Areas of Limited Statehood*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Rufus, A.I. (2022). Policing Borderlands in Africa. In U.A. Tar and D.M. Dawud (Eds), *Policing Criminality and Insurgency in Africa: Perspectives on the Changing Wave of Law Enforcement* (pp. 233-249). London: Lexington Books.

Sackflame, M.M., and Omitola, B. (2022). Ungoverned Spaces and Alternative Sovereignties in Nigeria: Terror Groups, National Security and Sustainable Development. *Law Research Review Quarterly*, 8(1), 133-152.

Sawadogo, W.R. (2012). The Challenges of Transnational Human Trafficking in West Africa.*African Studies Quarterly*, 13(2), 95-115.

Schmid, A.P. (2023). *Defining Terrorism*.International Centre for Counter Terrorism Report.

Schmid, A.P., and Jongman, A. (1988).*Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature*. Amsterdam: North Holland Transaction Books.

Sloan, S. (2006). *Terrorism: The Present Threat in Context*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Snow, D.M. (1993). *Distant Thunder: Third World Conflict and the New International Order*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Southern Pulse. (2011). The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica: Arlington, VA.

Steve, H., and Chris, A. (2015).*Intelligence Brief: Reducing the Supply of Weapons to Boko Haram*. http://www.openbriefing.org. Accessed September 30, 2023.

Tar, U.A., and Dawud, D.M. (2022).Policing Crime and Insurgency in Africa. In U.A. Tar and D.M. Dawud (Eds), *Policing Criminality and Insurgency in Africa: Perspectives on the Changing Wave of Law Enforcement* (pp. 1-18). London: Lexington Books.

Tar, U.A., and Safana, Y.I. (2021).Forest, Ungoverned Spaces and the Challenge of Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in Africa.In U.A. Tar and C.P. Onwurah (Eds), *The Palgrave Hanbook on Small Arms and Conflicts in Africa* (pp.223-244). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Taylor, A.J. (2016). Thoughts on the Nature and Consequences of Ungoverned Spaces.*SAIS Review of International* Affairs, 36(1), 5-15.

Titeca, K., and Vlassenroot, K. (2012). Rebels Without Borders in the Rwenzori Borderland? A Biography of the Allied Democratic Forces.*Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 6(1), 154-176.

United States Department of Defense (2008).*Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*. Washington, DC: DoD.

United States Department of State (1996).*Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1995*. Washington, DC: US Department of State.

Verweijen, J., and Vlassenroot, K. (2015). Armed Mobilization and the Nexus of Territory, Identity, and Authority: The Contested Territorial Aspirations of the Banyamulenge in Eastern DR-Congo. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 33(2), 191-212.

Waddington, C. (2016). The Battle for the Sahel: Confronting Islamist Terror Groups Throughout *the Region*. http://www.inonafrica.com/2016/01/20 the-battle-for-the-sahel-confronting-islamist-terror-groups-throughout-the-region.Accessed September, 29, 2023.

Whelan, T. (2006).*Africa's Ungoverned Space*. Briefing addressed at the Portuguese National Defense Institute, Lisbon, 24th May 2006.

Wise, R. (2011). *Al-Shabaab, Case Study Number 2*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.