



The Threat of Transnational Terrorism: Exploring the Global and Regional Impact of Boko Haram and Al-shabab



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Abstract: *Al-Shabaab is an example of a transnational terrorist organisation that has grown because of intricate historical, political, and socioeconomic reasons. Even though each group has its distinct history and traits, they all share certain similar beliefs, strategies, and goals. This chapter will look at how much regional and international security is being threatened by transnational terrorist organisations like Boko Haram and Al-Shabab, the local branches of Islamic State and Al-Qaeda. This chapter emphasises the tremendous influence these organisations have on local communities, governments, and international relations by studying their backgrounds, goals, strategies, and methods of taking advantage of weaknesses and conflicts. The case studies offered provide a greater comprehension of the local and global effects of their actions.*

Key Words: Boko Haram, Al Shabab, Terrorist Organizations, Socio Economic, Strategic goals, Local communities

Introduction

Boko Haram: A Persistent Threat

Boko Haram has been a persistent jihadist organisation operating in Nigeria and its surrounding nations since 2009. The group's name, which is taken from the Hausa language and means "Western education is forbidden," emphasises its disapproval of Western domination. Since its founding in 2002, Boko Haram has been led by prominent Islamist scholar Mohammed Yusuf and seeks to build an Islamic caliphate in Nigeria. The organisation, which emerged as a part of Sunni Islam's Salafi movement, has as its main objective the establishment of a fundamentalist Islamic state with Sharia courts. They caused a great deal of instability and hardship in the area as a result

of their acts (FRANCE 24, 2014; Robinson, 2021; Stanford University, 2018). Since 2009, the organisation has attacked several targets, predominantly in Nigeria, including the armed forces, the law enforcement agency, and citizens. Borno State is at the centre of the crisis, which has spread to nearby Cameroon, Chad, and Niger (FRANCE 24, 2014). Boko Haram is a persistent danger to northern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin because of its violent campaign that has caused the deaths of tens of thousands of people and the relocation of millions of others. The Islamist rebel organisation continues to destabilise the area through bombings, mass abductions, and other terrorist activities, causing great suffering and sparking a humanitarian catastrophe (Klobucista, 2018).

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The northeastern section of Nigeria was severely devastated by Boko Haram assaults during this time, with Borno State being the most hit. Boko Haram brought on thousands of fatalities in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. More than 35,000 people died in Borno State alone, which had the greatest death toll. The 2014 abduction of 276 female students from a secondary school in Borno was one of the significant occurrences that attracted attention on a worldwide scale. More than 100 females were still unaccounted for as of April 2021, and six pupils were thought to have perished (Sasu, [2022](#)). The Nigerian government conducted military actions against Boko Haram with assistance from other countries. Nevertheless, the gang changed its strategies over time, moving towards suicide bombings and assaults on Muslim holy sites. Boko Haram's geographical control was only over a few tiny villages and isolated areas of the countryside because of this, but it nevertheless managed to threaten the government and pose a danger to its authority (Campbell & Harwood, 2018).

Boko Haram has recently demonstrated indications of adapting to the environment. In addition to using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) more often, the organisation has started attacking soft targets including marketplaces and schools. The Nigerian government and its allies have made considerable headway against Boko Haram despite these obstacles. The Nigerian military started a significant operation against the organisation in 2015, and since then, it has regained control of much of the land that Boko Haram had taken over. Abubakar Shekau, the group's head, was also assassinated in 2021 (Blanchard, [2014](#); Brechenmacher, 2019; Oyewole, 2013). Boko Haram continues to pose a danger. The gang has continued to carry out assaults and is still present in various areas of Nigeria. The group has also shown symptoms of fragmentation, with some sections breaking off to start their organisations (Agbibo, 2013; Cook, 2011). This may make future efforts to battle Boko Haram more challenging.

Boko Haram poses a threat not just to Nigeria. Attacks by the organisation have also occurred in nearby nations including Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. These assaults have exacerbated the region's instability and sparked a humanitarian catastrophe (Kah, [2017](#)). The world community may contribute to the fight against Boko Haram. Nigeria and its allies have received financial and military support from the United States, the United Kingdom, and other nations. The capabilities of Boko Haram have been significantly diminished as a result of this aid (Udoh, [2017](#)). To combat the threat presented by Boko Haram, more work must be done. The international community must try to tackle the root problems of the crisis while continuing to assist Nigeria and its allies. These involve inadequate schooling, joblessness, and destitution. Boko Haram poses a tremendous challenge, but it is not overwhelming. Nigeria and its allies may eliminate Boko Haram and restore peace to the area with the continuing backing of the global community.

Objectives and Regional Impact

Since 2009, the Nigerian government has been at war with the Islamist terrorist organisation Boko Haram. It rejects secular rule and whatever it considers a product of Western control, including voting and education. Christians and Muslims who disagree with its beliefs are both attacked. Boko Haram's main goal is to turn Nigeria into an Islamic state controlled by Sharia law; its backup objective is to increase its influence outside of Nigeria. Boko Haram is a terrorist group that mostly operates in Nigeria but also in nearby countries. Its primary operations include committing different terrorist crimes, including attacking military and civilian targets, launching suicidal assaults, and engaging in abductions. The gang has sworn allegiance to the Islamic State and has been behind multiple attacks. Boko Haram, which adheres to an extremist version of Islam, rejects internationally recognised borders and legitimately elected governments, using force when necessary to overthrow them. It

continues to have a decentralised leadership structure but periodically has internal conflicts between its leaders. Boko Haram, which has tens of thousands or more members, recruits people through a variety of tactics, including coercion and forced conscription. The group recruits members by taking advantage of the social and economic situations of poverty, and it uses abduction to increase its membership (Dailyplanet360, 2020). It changed its name to the Islamic State West Africa Province (IS-WA) in 2015 after pledging affiliation with the Islamic State (IS) (Husted, 2021).

In the Lake Chad Basin region, which includes portions of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, Boko Haram has wreaked tremendous pain and destruction. It has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths, hundreds of thousands of homeless individuals, and a humanitarian disaster (Husted, 2021). Additionally, it has interfered with the region's safety, education, healthcare, and way of life. Amnesty International reports that Boko Haram has carried out at least 330 raids and bombings in northern Nigeria since 2013, resulting in the deaths of at least 5,400 people (Amnesty International, 2015). The real figure might be substantially higher.

Boko Haram has recently had to contend with internal conflicts as well as opposition from the Nigerian military and outside forces. A section of IS-WA that was commanded by Abubakar Shekau broke away in 2016 due to a leadership disagreement. Shekau's side persisted in using the moniker Boko Haram and its ruthless strategies of widespread murder and kidnapping. On the other side, IS-WA pursued a more practical strategy by concentrating on state goals and establishing connections with select local communities. Furthermore, it developed to become one of the world's busiest IS associates. After Shekau was slain by IS-WA terrorists in May 2021, hundreds of his supporters turned themselves into police (Husted, 2021).

The complicated and ongoing war between Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin continues. In addition to tackling the

insurgency's root causes, including income disparity, misconduct, and bad administration, the Nigerian government and its regional partners have battled to limit the danger posed by Boko Haram and IS-WA. The world has offered the region humanitarian aid and counterterrorism support but has also voiced alarm over human rights violations committed by regional law enforcement forces (Dieng, 2019; Husted, 2021; Husted *et al.*, 2018; Kerins & Mouaha-Bell, 2018). Although it is unclear how Boko Haram and IS-WA will fare in the future, their influence on the area is likely to last for many years.

International Efforts to Combat Boko Haram

Boko Haram, a terrorist group with roots in northeastern Nigeria, seriously threatens Nigeria, the most populous country on the continent. This gang has caused a wave of violence that has resulted in forced evictions of millions of people, attacks on schools, village burnings, and kidnappings (Onuoha, 2014). To confront Boko Haram and deal with the security and humanitarian effects it has had, international initiatives have been made. Here are a few noteworthy actions:

The United Nations Office has aggressively addressed the Boko Haram terrorist threat in Central Africa (UNOCA). UNOCA has concentrated on finding long-term solutions to terrorism and the spread of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, working closely with governments in the sub-region, UN organisations, and partners including the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). To confront the catastrophic effects of Boko Haram assaults in the Lake Chad Basin region, UNOCA has played a crucial role in organising efforts and requesting international help through workshops, field trips, and the creation of a regional anti-terrorism strategy agreed upon in November 2015. To successfully battle and eliminate the ongoing terrorist threat, the Senior Military Adviser of UNOCA closely analyses the situation and coordinates with other departments (UNOCA, 2015).

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was founded by nations in the Lake Chad Basin, including Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, to assist in coordinated actions against Boko Haram. Strengthening military operations, encouraging intelligence cooperation, and tackling the underlying socio-economic conditions that support the insurgency are among its main goals (Assanvo *et al.*, [2016](#); Gaye, 2018).

The United States has been actively involved in aiding Nigeria's government in its fight against Boko Haram. This assistance includes giving advice, exchanging intelligence, and helping with capacity-building projects. To help Nigeria and its regional allies find and target Boko Haram fighters as well as improve their capacity to stop and respond to assaults, the United States has given them intelligence and analysis. The US has also used surveillance planes and drones to track the whereabouts and activities of Boko Haram. Nigerian and regional troops have received training and equipment from the US to increase their competence and proficiency in counterterrorism operations. The United States has provided food, water, housing, healthcare, and safety to the millions of people who have been affected by the carnage committed by Boko Haram. The US has also pledged support for development programmes that try to address the region's underlying problems with instability and radicalization, including poverty, inequality, weak government, and poor educational opportunities. In its efforts to combat terrorism, the United States has urged Nigeria and other regional allies to preserve human rights and the rules of the rule of law. The US has also vehemently condemned the atrocious crimes committed by Boko Haram against civilians, with a focus on their targeting of women and girls (Achkar, 2015; Amnesty International, 2015; Oriola, 2021).

The African Union (AU), among other regional organisations, has actively taken part in efforts to combat Boko Haram. The AU has supported programmes like the Multinational Joint Task Force and stressed the importance

of increased cooperation among African countries to successfully combat the insurgency (Coning, 2017; Dieng, 2019).

Al-Shabab: The Menace in East Africa

The expression "The Menace in East Africa" refers to a range of concerns and crises that the area has experienced and that have had a detrimental effect on growth and development, safety, and stability. Terrorism, political unrest, wars, and economic hardship are just a few of the major issues the area has recently had to deal with. Terrorist organisations have been a problem in East Africa, most notably the Somali-based Islamist insurgency organisation al-Shabaab. Attacking military as well as civilian targets, Al-Shabaab has carried out several assaults in Somalia and its neighbouring nations (Claire *et al.*, 2022; Omenma *et al.*, 2020). The region's development attempts have been hampered by the group's actions, which have raised serious security concerns. Political unrest and wars in several East African nations have resulted in emigration, violations of human rights, and economic failures. As an example, the lengthy political dispute in South Sudan has led to severe bloodshed and humanitarian catastrophes (BBC, 2023). Similar to how continuous wars in Ethiopia's Tigray region and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have destabilised the area.

Severe economic hurdles, such as poverty, joblessness, and restricted accessibility to essential services, beset East Africa. The area's economy has suffered due to issues including corruption, poor infrastructure, and a lack of economic diversification. These difficulties impede economic expansion and aggravate social inequality (Juju *et al.*, [2020](#)). East Africa is susceptible to several environmental problems, such as water shortages, forest destruction, and global warming. Insufficient food supplies, relocation, and disputes over natural resources are all caused by these circumstances. Natural calamities including droughts, floods, and locust infections are also common in the area, which makes things much

more difficult for residents (Oluoko-Odingo, 2022; Scheffran *et al.*, 2019).

To tackle these issues and advance stability, prosperity, and safety in East Africa, actions are being taken at the local, regional, and global levels. These endeavours range from diplomatic initiatives to peacekeeping deployments, humanitarian aid, and development projects aiming at enhancing the region's infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economic possibilities (Ichimi, 2023). To tackle the region's many problems, governments, international organisations, and local people must remain committed and work together to combat the threat in East Africa.

Origins and Ideology

Al-Shabaab is a violent rebel organisation that wants to turn Somalia into an Islamic state. Since its inception in Somalia, the insurgent organisation Al-Shabaab has posed a serious security threat to the region. Although the exact date of al-Shabaab's formation is unknown, it is believed to have started as a branch of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), an organisation that served as the *de facto* government in parts of Somalia until Ethiopia attacked the nation in December 2006 (Bacon & Muibu, 2019; ICG, 2022). The organisation was established in the early 2000s as a part of the ICU, an association of regional and clan-based Islamic courts established in southern Somalia in 2004 to fight the criminal activity and terrorism that had plagued the region since the fall of Mohamed Siad Barre's rule in 1991. The Somali ICU organisation is where Al-Shabaab first appeared. The ICU began as a group of Sharia Courts and over time developed into a strong Islamic militia that by 2006 controlled much of Southern Somalia. Al-Shabaab sometimes referred to as "the youngsters," was the ICU's extremist and hard-line youth section (Claire *et al.*, 2022; Gartenstein-Ross, 2009).

Al-Shabaab is a clan-based rebel and terrorist organisation with a diverse set of objectives. Since the group's rank-and-file members are drawn from several clans, clan politics, internal strife, and changing alliances may affect it. The majority of its warriors are

not in favour of global jihad; instead, they are primarily focused on the nationalistic conflict with the Federal Government of Somalia. The top commanders of al-Shabaab continue to be connected to al-Qaida (Counterterrorism Guide, 2021). Al-Shabaab has seen setbacks recently because of a military campaign spearheaded by the African Union, but it still can conduct lethal strikes throughout East Africa. In an effort to stop al-Shabaab from destabilising the Horn of Africa, the United States has relied more and more on airstrikes targeting putative militants. The rebellion has proven tenacious and continues to pose the biggest threat to Somalia's security, holding most of the southern portion of the country and launching deadly assaults on both foreign troops and residents (Claire *et al.*, 2022; Onditi *et al.*, 2021). Al-Shabaab made a name for itself as an autonomous participant in the War in Somalia in 2007-2008, rising to popularity as a means of violent opposition against Ethiopian rule. Most of its founding leaders and adherents used to belong to both the earlier al-Ittihad al-Islamiya and the ICU, an organisation established on the principles of Salafism and hostility to clannism. Many of the early al-Shabaab commanders had also received Mujahideen training in Syria and Afghanistan (Bacon & Muibu, 2019; Barnett, 2020; ICG, 2022).

The International Crisis Group claims that Salafism has served as the fundamental, uniting basis of al-Shabaab, although those who are part of the organisation have different interpretations of this idea. Al-Shabaab, in particular, openly and usually promotes a kind of Salafi jihadism with global objectives, connecting Somali nationalism and local concerns to the suffering of Muslims across the globe. This viewpoint sees non-Muslim violence in other Muslim-majority nations as parallel to Ethiopia's intrusions into Somalia, followed by those of Kenya, the United States, and others (Barnett, 2020; ICG, 2022; Vidino *et al.*, 2010). However, there are ideological differences within the organisation that may culminate in rivalry and conflict within it. The cosmopolitan paradigm is not universally adopted inside the organisation. The main objective of al-Shabaab is to establish a solid

Islamic state within Somalia or, probably broaden to encompass the Somali populations of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti, creating what is known as Greater Somalia. A sizeable portion of al-Shabaab's Somali supporters share this goal. On the other hand, some domestic supporters put clan-related and local objectives first, which leaves them vulnerable to internal disagreements and often-shifting allegiances (Petrich, 2022; Schaefer & Black, 2011; Senate Hearing, 2009; Solomon, 2014).

Nevertheless, these ideological disparities can account for widespread disapproval inside the organisation to prevalent enemies, particularly opposition to foreign interference in Somalia, which is frequently openly expressed using quasi-Qutbist phrases, and disagreement with the worldwide recognised Somali government, which is viewed as without legitimacy because it lacks a foundation in religious (Sharia) law (ICG, 2022; Joscelyn, 2017).

Al-Shabaab's philosophy noticeably spins around Somali devout patriotism, which is consistently coordinates into its broader Pan-Islamist motivation. The development reliably emphasizes enthusiastic topics to caution Somalis around seen schemes organized by universal NGOs and what they allude to as "Christian Crusaders," specifically the Joined together States, Ethiopia, and AMISOM (African Union Mission to Somalia), at the side their collaborators. All through the Ethiopian attack of Somalia, Al-Shabaab deliberately depicted itself as a unflinching patriot local army working inside the Islamic Muqawwama, the resistance consolidation of the Islamic Courts Union. The gather received an uncompromising position against the attacking "Christian Crusaders," looking for to protect Somalia's sway and stand up to its impact. Al-Shabaab propelled its guerilla in 2007 when the ICU collapsed, accepting gigantic back from Somalis who regarded them as defenders against American dominion and remote inclusion within the country. Al-Qaeda fortified its bolster and participation with Al-Shabaab at this time, empowering the association to develop and take control of the

military in Southern Somalia. The Federal Government of Somalia is seen by Al-Shabaab as an illicit "defector" association that's supported by outside intruders (Menkhaus, 2009).

The association has particularly focused on individuals of Somalia's little Christian minority, blaming them of supporting outside "Crusaders" in mistreating other Somalis for changing over to Christianity. It said that changing over graves and a Sufi mosque into sanctums with over the top ornamentation damages Sharia standards and thus tainted them. Clashes with Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a, pro-AMISOM Sufi local armies, brought about from this movement. Furthermore, the association has made comments that appear anti-Zionist perspectives and said that its 2019 assault on the DusitD2 office was in striking back for Jerusalem being perceived as Israel's capital (Aljazeera, 2010; McKenzie; Sheik, 2009; The Financial specialist, 2009).

Part in Somalia and the Horn of Africa

Al-Shabaab may be a revolt association that needs to turn Somalia into an Islamic country. Since the early 2000s, the association has worked within the Horn of Africa, where it executed different fatal assaults (CFR, 2022; Claire et al., 2022). A few annihilating ambushes in Somalia and its neighbors have been carried out by Al-Shabaab. A suicide vehicle assault in Mogadishu that cleared out 82 individuals dead and near to 150 harmed was faulted on the organisation in 2017. Three Americans were slaughtered when the pack attacked a Kenyan military installation housing American troops. The group focused on a Kenyan military establishment within the Joined together States in 2019. Also, Al-Shabaab has had a long administration and political situation. Whereas the country was soiled in a respectful war in 2015, hundreds of Al-Shabaab warriors crossed the border into eastern Ethiopia. Afterward, AMISOM warriors took the put of Ethiopian powers in Somalia (CFR, 2022; Zeuthen, 2022).

Al-Shabaab is still very effective within the locale, notwithstanding the joint endeavors of

the Somali armed force, clan volunteer armies, and remote supporters. Through these measures, their nearness in central Somalia has diminished. The group, in any case, is faithful and employments each opportunity to strategically take advantage of government weaknesses. Al-Shabaab's future is still vague, but they will likely proceed to have an affect on the flow of the Horn of Africa for the time being. In spite of the fact that Somalia proceeds to be their central point, its impact moreover has territorial suggestions (Center for Preventive Activity, 2023a; CFR, 2022; ICG, 2023; Zeuthen, 2022).

Al-Shabaab's activities have caused genuine worldwide alert, which has prompted the US to require action to halt the gather from causing precariousness within the Horn of Africa. The bunch has been utilizing more progressed and deadly tactics, and the US government has assigned it as a remote fear monger association with known associations to Al-Qaida. This increment in their control and impact postures a genuine risk to the locale (Claire et al., 2022; Counterterrorism Direct, 2021; UN, 2023). Counter-narratives, which are intentionally built to invalidate the declarations made by Al-Shabaab, are regularly utilized in endeavors to draw in turncoats. For occasion, these counter-narratives can point to undermine the organization's claims of devout authenticity by persuading members and other groups of onlookers that their acts go against Islamic lessons or that the administration mishandle gather funds for individual pick up (Khalil & Zeuthen, 2023).

Within the a long time to come, it is expected that Al-Shabaab will proceed to have a noteworthy affect on the flow of the Horn of Africa, especially in Somalia but moreover in encompassing ranges. The pack is taking a calculated technique, misusing any government shortcomings that show themselves. Fortunately, Al-Shabaab's impact in central Somalia has diminished as a result of the combined endeavors of the Somali armed force, clan militias, and outside supporters (ICG, 2023).

Conclusion

This paper presents an broad ponder of the threat postured by worldwide psychological militant groups, with an accentuation on Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab. The perplexing flow of these groupings and their impacts on territorial and worldwide security are clarified by the talk about.

The diligent jihadist bunch Boko Haram, which was established in Nigeria in 2002, is propelled by the crave to form an Islamic caliphate inside Nigeria. The title of the gather, which interprets to "Western instruction is illegal" in Hausa, emphasizes its opposition to Western impacts. Boko Haram has waged a rough campaign all through time that incorporates kidnappings, suicide bombings, and assaults on both military and civilian targets. Especially in northeastern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin, this has driven to extraordinary precariousness and wretchedness. A humanitarian disaster has brought about from the misfortune of tens of thousands of lives and the uprooting of millions more individuals. Boko Haram has appeared resiliency by changing its strategies and keeping up a nearness in a number of areas, indeed as the Nigerian government has made strides in its battle against it with help from the worldwide community. To totally kill the danger presented by Boko Haram, it is still fundamental to address underlying issues like destitution, unemployment, and destitute instruction.

Similar to ISIS, Al-Shabaab could be a Somalian-based revolt group that dates back to the early 2000s. The most objective of the association is to construct an Islamic state in Somalia and maybe to spread its impact to other ranges. Al-Shabaab has carried out a number of obliterating attacks in Somalia and encompassing nations, frequently centering on both military and civilian targets. Its different ideological base incorporate perspectives of Somali devout patriotism and Salafi jihadism. Others are in line with the objectives of the worldwide jihadist development, while some members are centered on nationalistic battles inside Somalia. Due to Al-Shabaab's acts,

there's a extraordinary bargain of stress around the world, and as a result, the Joined together States and other nations have assigned it as a remote fear based oppressor organization. Al-Shabaab proceeds to function, controlling region in southern Somalia and carrying out deadly assaults in spite of experiencing military operations and airstrikes from outside troops. In spite of the fact that counterterrorism measures, like as counter stories to discourage potential recruits, have been executed, the organization's impact on the Horn of Africa holds on.

Within the final examination, given their savage operations, selecting procedures, and intricate ideological underpinnings, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab both posture serious dangers to regional and worldwide security. In spite of the fact that worldwide endeavors have made advance in diminishing psychological militant bunches, addressing the fundamental issues, fostering stability, and combating radical convictions proceed to be major impediments within the battle against transnational psychological warfare.

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