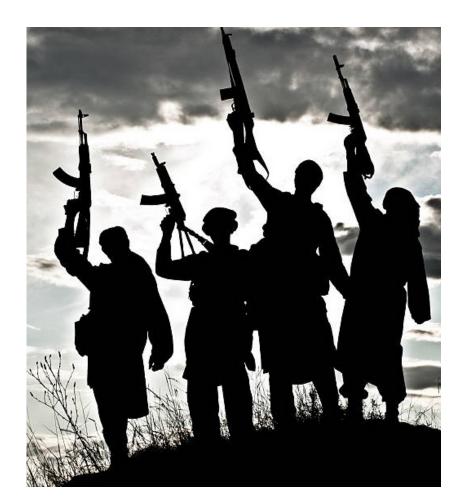# THE DYNAMICS OF
TERRORISM

"TERRORISM" ACCORDING TO THE OXFORD DICTIONARY IS THE USE OF VIOLENCE OR INTIMIDATION AGAINST CIVILIANS FOR POLITICAL GAIN.

There are so many reasons why people choose to define terrorism by the strategies of the acts as well as the motivations behind the actions of the terrorists. To this end, therefore, it is difficult to pick just one definition as satisfactory. Terrorism, therefore, can be viewed from different angles, which makes it difficult to agree on a particular reason in relation to the root causes of terrorism. This is why the subject of terrorism and its various definitions is described as a contested concept.

At the center of the acts of terrorism is the subject of power. Power could be defined as the physical strength or force exerted by something or someone, and by extension, it is the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others as well as the course of events. It is not out of place, therefore, in trying to unravel the causative mysteries behind the act of terrorism, to bring into perspective the case of a hunter and the hunted.

Hunting, as we know, is the pursuit and killing of wild animals for food or sport. The pertinent question here is how man comes to the resolve of identifying certain animals as wild as against the others. A wild animal is an animal that is undomesticated and lives in a natural environment and is therefore considered capable of harming humans. Understandably, the wild animal is not only seen as wild by humans, but by extension, it paints a picture of the place of power where certain animals are considered more powerful than others, and are considered prey to the stronger ones who are referred to as predators.

Several reasons have been adduced to the why of terrorism and these also can be described as probable answers to the question of the root causes of terrorism, and they include; the broad-scale societal, economic, or political conditions. Maybe people use terrorism because they live under a repressive regime, or maybe they use terrorism because they suffer from poverty and discrimination. With this explanation, a satisfactory answer could not be arrived at. The reason is that a very small number of people who are poor or deprived or suffering resort to terrorism. So how do you explain the behavior of a very few people in terms of what happens to a lot of people?

In trying to find a suitable answer to the motive behind terrorism is the consideration of individual psychology. That is, how an individual's psychopathology could answer the reason for his motivation. This idea also falls short of being acceptable or satisfying the quest for an answer for the reason why an individual has chosen the act of terrorism as a means of reaching an end. It follows that not all terrorists are to a considerable extent different from others who are not terrorists when looking at their mental state of mind. Probing further into the reasons why terrorists are who they are is the need to look into the strategies being adopted. Looking at the strategy of ISIS, which demonstrates a high level of organization and articulation, one may be tempted to believe, especially because ISIS always claims credit for their attacks, that their goals in the short term include publicity, wanting to be on the international agenda, and wanting to call at-

Joe Biden, President of the United States

tention to themselves, their goals, and the content of their message.

There could be several reasons behind the act of terrorism thereby making it difficult for one reason to answer the question of why. Some of these reasons in the form of questions could be: Are they national separatists? Do they want to break away from a country that they are part of, and are they an ethno-nationalist group? This would be true of the Basques in Spain, and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. They want to break away and form their own state. Do they want to overthrow an existing government? Are they a revolutionary movement? Are they a right-wing movement? Do they want to enforce a more authoritarian regime? It could be political goals like that. It is believed that some of the major events of the 19th and 20th centuries laid the ideological foundation for terrorist organizations. Having defined terrorism as an unlawful act of violence and intimidation against innocent civilians, it is important to make a clarification between what is believed to be innocent civilians in contrast with the military. The term "terrorism" or "terrorists" has been vague enough to be exploited by the just and oppressive nations alike, so a better definition would be "any person or group who purposely targets innocent civilians for political or ideological ends" and the important point to focus on is "innocent civilians" because many times the media will blur the lines be-

tween what is considered a civilian and an armed soldier, which if that were the case, then every nation that took part in the major wars of the past century would then be guilty of terrorism.

More often than not, it is believed that acts of terrorism are synonymous with Islam, whereas terrorism was foreign to Islam and was only introduced to the Muslim world over the last century. There is a precedent of acts of terrorism that were carried out by non-Muslims and with no connection to the Islamic religion. If we look back at the 1970s, remember, this was the beginning of aircraft hijackings. Passengers were killed. The hijackers threatened to kill everybody on the airplane if their demands were not met. We also, beginning in the 1980s, had midair bombings of aircraft. In the 1980s an airliner was brought down over the Atlantic apparently by Sikh extremists who were seeking independence from India—not jihadists whatsoever. Recall the Oklahoma City bombing in the 1990s, which was American far-right, and a fairly small conspiracy group who were willing to kill not just people in the federal building, but school children—children at a daycare center in the basement of the building. They had to know that the children were there. We have the attack on the Tokyo subways, also in 1995, which fortunately did not kill that many people. It sickened a larger number. But had Aum Shinrikyo—which was the apocalyp-

Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, President of Russia

Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China

tic Japanese cult that perpetrated the attacks—had their sarin gas been of a purer form, it would have killed a whole lot more people. They intended to kill a lot of people. So we do see precedents in the non-jihadist realm of terrorism people who were willing, if not always able, to kill very large numbers of people.

Man, from the beginning of civilization, has grappled with the problem of differentiating between or coming to terms with what is good and bad. This question has given birth to several philosophical concepts that aim at proffering acceptable solutions and answers to this question. This search continued down the line to the philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome who created the foundations of philosophical ethics and the idea of the highest good which later would come to be known as Suman bonum, a term coined by the Roman philosopher Cicero in the 1st century BCE. This, in turn, led the English philosopher by the name of Jeremy Bentham to come up with the concept of utilitarianism which is the moral theory that good and bad decisions can only be judged by the net happiness each produces, this concept would later be built upon by John Stuart Mill who in 1863 wrote a boo titled Utilitarianism, which is considered one of the most influential texts in the history of philosophy. Utilitarianism, which later would come under the general category of consequentialism, is the theory that one should judge an action or decision based on the ends or consequences and that the means or methods are

completely irrelevant to the overall judgment. This would later come to be known in the modern vernacular as "the ends justify the means." In utilitarianism, though there are times when instead of having to choose what causes the most happiness you're left in a situation where you're facing two negative scenarios where you have to choose what causes the least sadness. This would come to be known in our modern vernacular as the "lesser of two evils."

A scenario is presented here to explain further the concept of utilitarianism with respect to choosing the lesser of two evils. There's a runaway trolley barreling down the tracks. Some distance ahead of the trolley, there are five people tied down on one track and a single person on the other. At the time, you just so happen to be standing next to the lever which can determine which track that trolley will go down and who it eventually kills. So you're left with a moral dilemma here, do you choose to pull the lever and have the trolley kill only one person or do you leave it and allow the trolley to kill five people? Utilitarianism would argue that not only should you choose the one person to be killed but that it would be morally wrong not to. Now the problem with the theory is that, as soon as we live in an egalitarian society where everyone is viewed as equal and it ignores such things as nationalism, tribalism, racism, prejudice, and ideological differences, the man at the lever, depending on his loyalty, could view the single person as being more important than the group of people and it is this

vulnerability that extremists and nationalists exploit or through differences in similarities, they try to raise and lower another person's worth. It was this method, for instance, that was employed when the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At the time, invading Japan with ground troops would have taken months and cost tens of thousands of lives. So instead they believed dropping two atomic bombs, which would kill hundreds of thousands of Japanese, was the lesser of two evils. This is because they believed the American soldiers' lives were worth more than the Japanese civilian lives. This is what is referred to as unethical utilitarianism.

To further demonstrate how nations and people use certain criteria to lower and raise a person's worth is the use of strike drones by America targeting leaders of terrorist organizations. A case in point is the killing by drone strike of the second in command to the slain Al Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda Emir Ayman al-Zawahiri on July 31st, 2022 in Afghanistan. This method is considered a good alternative to putting the military on ground and for the avoidance of the loss of military personnel. However, what one is not sure of is the extent to which this method of decimating the leaders of terrorist groups can guarantee the eradication of terrorists and their ideological beliefs. This is a mystery to be unraveled, as well as a question that awaits a satisfactory answer. Nonetheless, as effective as this method is

Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain

presumed to be, only time will tell how far. The concept of utilitarianism had been foreseen to have some intricacies that make it unreliable in reaching a balanced and satisfactory judgment. Hence, the concept of "categorical imperative," which tries to provide a level playing ground that is supportive of the saying that what is good for the goose is also good for the gander.

If we talk about a military response to terrorism, the one that's been most popular with the American government, certainly for the past eight years or so, is the use of drone strikes. This is a very pinpointed use of military force. There are civilian casualties; no one knows how many exactly, but it is believed to be relatively precise and it avoids having to put troops on the ground. The purpose is believed to be to degrade the leadership of the terrorist groups being confronted.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant had foreseen the problem of utilitarianism previously in the 18th century and came up with a theory known as the "categorical imperative." Kant explained that the validity of an action can be judged by if it can be universally applied to all people at all times, which means whenever a person or nation adopts a certain policy what they are initially saying is that this can be adopted by all people in all nations. So take for instance the US drone program which has been estimated to have a 90% civilian death rate, now even pseudophilosophers like Sam Harris who claimed that the actions of the US are morally upright since they don't intend to target civilians like terrorists do, the categorical imperative would state that by the US doing such an action, they are insinuating that any other state could do the same to them so long as they intend to target criminals and not innocent civilians and if innocents were to die, then up to a 90% casualty rate would be acceptable. Of course, the US and any other first-world nation would never accept such actions on their soil. So like what we saw with the concept of unethical utilitarianism, here is what is known as a selective categorical imperative. Right now every single one of the nine nations that currently have nuclear weapons are potential terrorist states and these include the Unit-

ed States of America, Britain, France, Russia, China, North Korea, India, Pakistan, and Israel.

From all we have witnessed and experienced in our world, which today fits in for description as a global village, there is no gainsaying the fact that no stone has been left unturned in our counterterrorism campaign as emphasis is being laid more on the threats from outside but with little efforts being made to confront head-on the threats from within. A good example is the January 6th insurrection against Capitol Hill, which represents the citadel

of democracy as well as the temple of justice and freedom. The world has so many problems than can be imagined and these problems are not just from the terrorists in turbans but those who are in expensive suits. They are those who ignite the fire of hate and unhealthy competition among the superpower countries, who are known to have nuclear weapons in their arsenal. Good examples are the Russia-Ukraine war, the China-Taiwan situation, and the Israeli-Hamas war, which if not carefully managed, a Third World War becomes inevitable.

IN TRYING TO HELP US VISUALIZE THE DEGREE OF PROBLEMS THAT WE HAVE ON OUR HANDS, WHICH CAN IN NO WAY BE COMPARED TO THE THREATS FROM ALL THE IDENTIFIED TERRORIST GROUPS, IN TERMS OF THEIR SEVERITY AND POTENTIAL DANGER, IS A PICTURE PAINTED BELOW ABOUT WHAT THE SUPERPOWERS HAVE AS NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN THEIR ARSENAL.

Emmanuel Macron, President of France

Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel

Every elected leader within these countries takes office knowing full well that one day they might be called to launch a nuke which would result in the death of millions of innocent people and the worst thing about such weapons is that those who weren't fortunate enough to die right away and were on the outer limits of the blast will be caught with a slow and agonizing death, some will have their skin peel off if it wasn't already ripped off from the initial blast while some will swell up due to burns and trauma while others will rot from the inside out due to radiation poisoning, all of which is far worse and crueler than any terrorist beheading we've seen."

God forbid. "If the US, for instance, were to launch a nuke into the heart of Moscow using the b83 which is 1.2 megatons and is the most common nuke in the U.S. arsenal, one missile would kill almost 1.4 million people and would injure another 4 million. Let's say Russia decided to respond by targeting New York with their nuke called the SS 25 which is an 800-kiloton missile, this would result in almost 1.6 million people dying and another 3 million being injured, and you need to be reminded that the United States has a stockpile of 5244 nuclear warheads while Russia has 5889 and if the two nations ever did go to war, scientists believe that it would only take 100 nukes with the explosive force of the Hiroshima bombing to throw the whole world into a nuclear winter for years which in turn would

create widespread famine across the globe and again this deterrent threat is taking place as we speak. 24 hours a day, seven days a week, politicians and Western democracies are threatening our very existence just like a terrorist organization would. The only difference is one group can only kill a few thousand people at a time while the other could kill millions at a time, and oh, let us not forget that it was a man in a suit who dropped not one but two atomic bombs on a civilian population which if history were written by anyone other than Western powers would be considered the largest and most deadly terrorist attack in history now.

A former president of the United States of America alludes to the danger that we have in our hands resulting from

Baruch presented a comprehensive control plan to the United Nations.

A war today or tomorrow, if it led to nuclear war, would not be like any war in history. A full-scale nuclear exchange, lasting less than 60 minutes, with the weapons now in existence, could wipe out more than 300 million Americans, Europeans, and Russians, as well as untold numbers elsewhere. And the survivors, as Chairman Khrushchev warned the Communist Chinese, "the survivors would envy the dead." For they would inherit a world so devastated by explosions and poison and

free choice have been caught up in a vicious circle of conflicting ideologies and interest. Each increase of tension has produced an increase of arms; each increase of arms has produced an increase of tension.

Yesterday a shaft of light cut into the darkness. Negotiations were concluded in Moscow on a treaty to ban all nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space, and under water. For the first time, an agreement has been reached on bringing the forces of nuclear destruction under international control, a goal first sought in 1946 when Bernard

the unhealthy arms race embarked upon by most of the superpower countries in his address to the American People on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, July 26, 1963.

"Eighteen years ago the advent of nuclear weapons changed the course of the world as well as the war. Since that time, all mankind has been struggling to escape from the darkening prospect of mass destruction on Earth. In an age when both sides have come to possess enough nuclear power to destroy the human race several times over, the world of communism and the world of
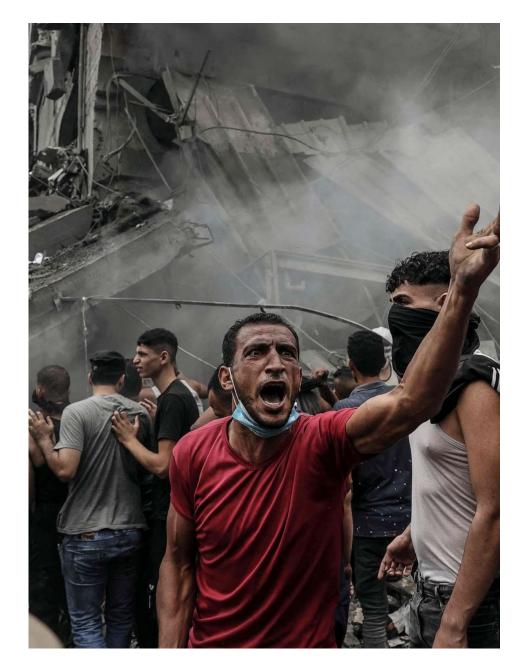
fire that today we cannot even conceive of its horrors. So let us try to turn the world away from war. Let us make the most of this opportunity, and every opportunity, to reduce tension, to slow down the perilous nuclear arms race, and to check the world's slide toward final annihilation.

I ask you to stop and think for a moment what it would mean to have nuclear weapons in so many hands, in the hands of countries large and small, stable and unstable, responsible and irresponsible, scattered throughout the world. There would be no rest for anyone then, no stability, no real security, and no chance of effective disarmament. There would only be the increased chance of accidental war, and an increased necessity for the great powers to involve themselves in what otherwise would be local conflicts.

If only one thermonuclear bomb were to be dropped on any American, Russian, or any other city, whether it was launched by accident or design, by a madman or by an enemy, by a large nation or by a small, from any corner of the world, that one bomb could release more destructive power on the inhabitants of that one helpless city than all the bombs dropped in the Second World War."

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MORALITY OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC, WHICH IS, FOR THE MOST PART, GOOD, JUST, AND UPRIGHT, AND THE MORALITY OF THE MILITARY AND THEIR STRATEGISTS.

The protocol of the Geneva Convention is clear about what is considered a counter-value target in contrast with what is a counter-force target. The counter-value target includes places such as churches, mosques, bridges, hospitals, dams, and places that are of value to the civilians, and to that effect are illegal to be targeted in the face of war or war situations, whereas the counter-force targets are things and places that are of value to the military, which can be targeted in war situations. In wars that involve the use of nuclear weapons, both the counter-value tar-

gets as well as the counter-force targets will be considered the same.

Even though the Cold War officially ended in 1991, the US and other nuclear nations like Russia and China continue to compete for influence throughout the globe, and with the right-wing on the rise in the United States and across Europe, we're beginning to hear once again the same rhetoric we heard during the Cold War. Teresa Mae's Party, for instance, said that they wouldn't rule out a nuclear first strike under extreme circumstances meaning that

now, the conversation about nuclear weapons has shifted from only being a last-resort deterrent to a viable military option under extreme circumstances, what exact circumstances those are, only they know.

This is the world that we live in today and the arms race that goes on within it. To those of us who hitherto have held onto vague impressions about the magnitude of the problem that we have on our hands concerning the evolution and escalation of terrorism across the globe, the insight gained surely provides us with the requisite knowledge that enables us to make informed decisions and arrive at conclusions that help us play a major role, engendering the only and the most important universal commodity that for centuries has been elusive and which is peace. With the understanding gained, we are better equipped to appreciate the problems we have on our hands in the Russia-Ukraine War, the Israelis-Hamas war, and the likelihood of the escalation of war that may engulf the entire Middle East.

The international community, under the umbrella of the United Nations Organization, has failed in its responsibility regarding preventive diplomacy, which is the sure road map to world

peace. Rather than the United Nations Organization being proactive and preventing wars among member nations, it has always been reactive and found it difficult to de-escalate war situations. The case of the Russia-Ukraine and the Israelis-Hamas wars is a point of reference. Because of the complexity of terrorism which comes in different shades and colors, the United Nations Organization has found it difficult to

pinpoint terrorist acts beyond those that are noised in certain quarters such as those that are affiliated with religious extremists, including the ISIS, ISHWAP, and the Boko Haram, whereas, the pursuit of the advancement of the nuclear weapon projects by the superpower countries is more dangerous to the World peace than the terrorist organizations that the eyes of the world are focused on.

TERRORISM IS A GLOBAL PROBLEM THAT NEEDS TO BE GIVEN GLOBAL ATTENTION EVEN BEYOND THE COMMON WARS BETWEEN ONE NATION AND THE OTHER. UNTIL THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND ALL OTHER MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS CAN REDEFINE WHAT TERRORISM IS AND IDENTIFY THE TRUE TERRORISTS WHO ARE THE SUPERPOWERS THAT DAILY THREATEN THE WORLD WITH THEIR NUCLEAR WEAPON CAPABILITIES, ACHIEVING THE LONG SORT ELUSIVE WORLD PEACE WILL REMAIN A MIRAGE.

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of Mudi

Asif Ali Zardari, President of Pakistan

While power tussle and political egoism is the root cause of terrorism in advanced societies, other factors such as inequality, marginalization, and social injustice, are the root causes of terrorism in less advanced and developing nations. It is therefore not out of place to conclude that it is easier to wipe out terrorism in developing countries and democracies than in advanced countries where the major superpowers who also are members of the Security Council of the United Nations with the power to veto any resolutions that are not in conformity with their interest are.

The effects of Terrorism are numerous but with one common denomination which is the lack of peace and stability. The United Nations was established to prevent wars and ensure a sustained peaceful world but has little power with

cold blood and another 250 taken away as hostages on October 7, 2023. The reprisal attack carried out by Israel on the Palestinians has led to the death of more than 37 thousand Palestinians and several thousand injured. This also has led to the destruction of key infrastructures, including hospitals, schools, houses, and worship centers, as well as unprecedented humanitarian crises.

Apart from the escalation that has made Israel culpable for genocide offenses and blatant disregard for the international rules of engagement in war situations, the intransigent posture of the Israeli army and its leaders who have turned deaf ears to the pleas from multilateral organizations as well as their allies paints a picture that makes the actions of the Israelis fit in for description as terrorism. The role of the allies of Israel such as the United States of America, Britain, and France, to mention just a few in the escalation of the crisis, is to say the least, hypocritical and discriminatory.

FOR INSTANCE, AMERICA IS A COUNTRY THAT ADVOCATES FOR A TWO-STATE SOLUTION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE BUT ALSO VETOED A RESOLUTION IN THAT SAME REGARD, THAT IS, A TWO-STATE SOLUTION.
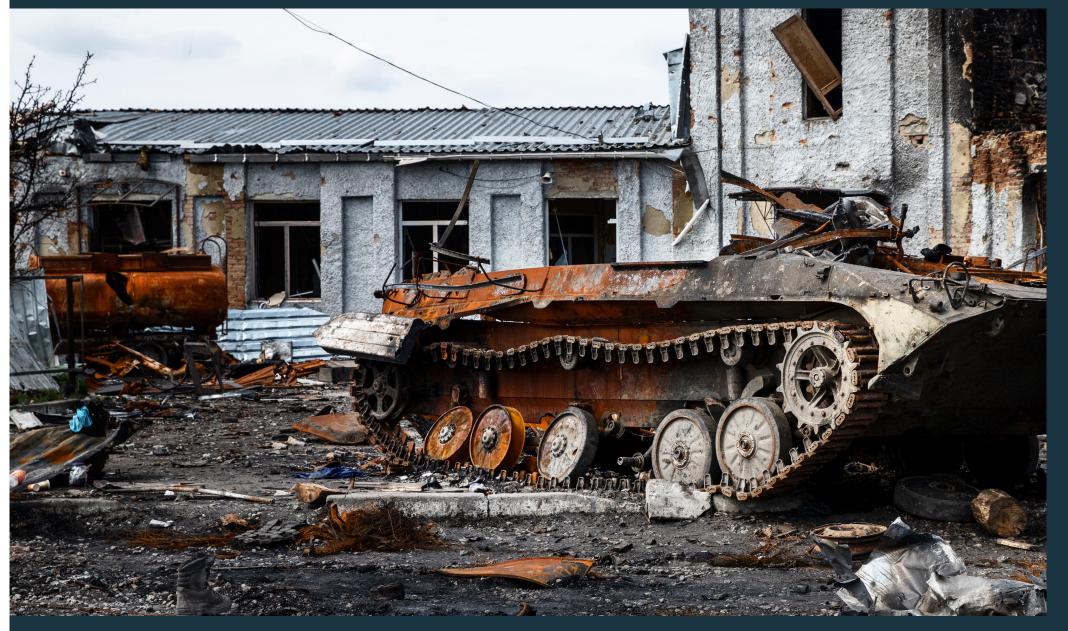
regard to preventing the superpower countries from advancing nuclear programs. This situation has resulted in putting the entire world in jeopardy and making life uncertain by being under the threat of destruction at will by the powerful leaders.

The case is different, especially with what has evolved over a period of time in the Middle East, where a religious dimension was introduced into terrorism. Looking into the root cause of terrorism in the Middle East, one would see the nexus between power, oppression, and suppression.

The Arabs in the Middle East resulted in acts that are synonymous with terrorism as a reaction against the injustice meted out to them by the Western countries, who are seen as more pow-

erful. Some of the cases for reference are the suspicions that led America to invade Iraq under the guise of looking for weapons of mass destruction, which Saddam Hussein was alleged to be developing and amassing. That accusation later turned out to be false, but that was after America had invaded Iraq and Saddam Hussein was killed. That action of the Americans had a lot to do with power tussles and has continued with its effects as getting the Arab countries agitated and incensed.

The Israelis' occupation of Gaza, beginning in 1948, and its blatant disregard for the 1967 border arrangement accounts for why there has been no peace between Israel and Palestine, with the most recent being the massacre carried out by Hamas in Israel, where 1200 Israelis were murdered in

America was seen as championing the cause of a cease-fire and the creation of a humanitarian passage in Gaza but was also on the other hand, supplying Israel with sophisticated ammunition as well as financial aid to pursue their goal of destroying the Palestinians. If terrorism is therefore an act that has to do with a show of force by the powerful against the vulnerable, there is no gainsaying the fact that America, Israel, and their allies are terrorists in suits and who have nuclear weapons to engage when the need arises.

It is important at this juncture to note and examine the nexus between democracy and terrorism in the African continent. Ideally, democracy is defined and expected to be the government of the people, for the people, and by the people, however, the fallout from the inability of this system of government that is practiced in most African countries to deliver to the people its dividends is the major and one of the root causes of terrorism in Africa. Terrorism in Africa therefore has its root causes in inequality, marginalization, and social injustice.

The failure of democracy in Nigeria stems from the interplay of historical, political, social, and economic factors. Since Nigeria gained independence in 1960, the democratic system has been fragile and fluctuating. We have had successive governments who come into power with many promises and end up fulfilling little or none at all. Abraham Lincoln also posits that democracy is a rule of the people, for the people, and by the people, it means that democracy is a form of government in which the rulers are elected by the people and everyone is socially equal but this is not the case as we see in the happenings of today.

John F. Kennedy, 35th U.S. President

Kim Jong Un, Supreme Leader of North Korea

From the happenings in Nigeria presently, we can see how this failure is serving as a fertile breeding ground for terrorism. Marginalization, inequality, and social injustice serve as motivation for extremist violence, which undermines peace, stability, and development in the country. It is important to note that these factors often interact and reinforce each other. Inequality leads to social injustice and social injustice leads to marginalization.

African leaders who have their nations as members of both ECOWAS and the African Union, or one of the two umbrella bodies are expected to be sincere and live up to the expectations of the social contract that is binding on both the leaders and the followers, if eradicating the problem of terrorism will be realized.

The world as it is today is sitting on a keg of gunpowder, and it is also chaotic and uncertain. International hypocrisy and suspicion are the bane of a peaceful world. It is time to identify both the bigger and the smaller terrorists, for focusing on one and leaving the other is, to say the least, unfortunate.

By
Samuel Tunji Adeyanju
Sharon S. Johnson