Chapter 72
Eriksonian Analysis of Terrorism in West Africa

Chris Mensah-Ankrah

West Africa Centre for Counter Extremism, Accra, Ghana

ABSTRACT

The objective of an Eriksonian analysis of terrorism is not to discard other theories, but to build on them, addressing their limitations through a personality development analysis which seeks to examine the susceptibility or eventual radicalization of an individual. So, while the concept attests to various socio-economic and political theories underpinning terrorism, it examines how these theories exposes the weaknesses of identity through a psychosocial analysis of personality development. The crux of the theory is therefore to examine reasons underlying the paths to radicalization from an intra-personal perspective largely influenced by one's immediate social conditions. The basic questions are therefore: Why do individuals of the same socio-economic and political pressure respond differently to the "pressures of radicalization"? Recommendations after the study includes; the concept of an integrating highly segregated extremist communities, a concept called "The Melting Pot", revaluating teaching and learning models of Islamic Institutions offering Islamic studies.

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism ranks topmost amongst the most critical threats to peace and security in the sub-region of West Africa contemporarily. Persistent terrorist activities in Nigeria, Mali, Mauritania and more recently Burkina Faso and Cote D'Ivoire have highlighted the degree of seriousness and entrenchment of terrorism in the sub-region of West Africa. The question that begs discussion is understanding the idiosyncrasies of terrorist and employing same as a counter-terrorism measure. De Angelis, (2009) states that to determine what drives people to terrorism is not an easy task. He asserts that terrorists are not likely to volunteer as experimental subjects. Examining their activities may thus lead to erroneous conclusions. He concludes that, one group's freedom fighter is another's freedom fighter, as some supporters of terrorist activities will opine. It is in the light of understanding terrorist that this document is being developed to create a

new and important perspective that may be the game changer in understanding terrorists and developing effect counter-terrorism measures for the sub-region. That however, does not go without saying that there are already mechanisms in place that contribute to the fight against terrorism. On the continental level, focus will be on the West African sub-region. The Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS), the major West African sub-regional body, deploys two frameworks as its counter terrorism policy and strategy namely:

- The United Nations (UN) framework on terrorism which aims to forestall the work of terrorist organizations through various means and at diverse levels. Key among this terrorism framework is Resolution 1373 which seeks to achieve three major goals namely it mandates member states to put in place legislations and counter terrorism strategies. Secondly, it establishes the Counter Terrorism Committee to monitor state compliance with its provisions and finally it regulates immigration law.
- Secondly, the ECOWAS Counter- Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan which highlights the need for member states to have a common approach in the fight against terrorism is employed. This measure which is constructed on three pillars namely prevent, pursue and reconstruct, contains various mechanisms such as an ECOWAS black list of terrorist and criminal networks and an ECOWAS counter terrorism Training manual.

Although extensive detail of the ECOWAS's counter-terrorism strategy is not available for public consumption, recent global occurrences have indicated the need for an active role of citizens in countering terrorism largely due to the psychological component terrorism presents. This infers the need to examine the path to radicalization of terrorists in the sub-region. This requires psychological profiling of terrorists and thus this piece shall focus on creating such an algorithm for achieving the purpose of understanding this phenomenon. The psycho-social theory of Identity Crisis as posited by Erik Erikson and James Marcia shall be the foundation of this construction. Essentially, Erikson (1950, 1968) adopted a psychosocial approach to understanding identity as the interplay between a person's biology, psychology and social recognition response within a historical dynamic. This psycho-social theory provides a theoretical ground for understanding terrorists and developing counter-terrorism measures. In short, this document explores issues of counter-terrorism from a psycho-social perspective. It deploys identity crisis (a component of Erikson's psycho-social theory of human development) as the theoretical framework in understanding the path to radicalization of terrorists in the African context. As such, most examples of fundamentalism that will be done here is within the domain of the Islamic religion. It is to be noted, however, that fundamentalism goes beyond the corridors of Islam but other religions like Christianity, Judaism, Budhaism amongst other religions with global followership.

Socio-Economic and Political Theoretical Perspectives

It is prudent to hastily proffer a definition of terrorism from a psychosocial perspective. Psychosocial theories of terrorism examine the path to radicalization and acts of violence of terrorists. These theories explain the psychological characteristics of terrorists laying emphasis on their socialization processes and social interaction. Two self-explanatory perspectives are relevant to this document. The first views it as an attempt to understand and explain the thought, feeling and behavior of individuals as influenced by the actual imagines or implied presence of others (Allport, 1986). De la Corte (2007) on the other hand

Related Content

Denial of Service (DoS) Attacks Over Cloud Environment: A Literature Survey
Thangavel M., Nithya Sand Sindhuja R (2021). *Research Anthology on Combating Denial-of-Service Attacks (pp. 491-521).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/denial-of-service-dos-attacks-over-cloud-environment/261996

On More Paradigms of Steganalysis
Xianfeng Zhao, Jie Zhuand Haibo Yu (2020). *Cyber Warfare and Terrorism: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 723-740).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/on-more-paradigms-of-steganalysis/251460

Recent Trends in Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) Distribution in Indian Cyberspace
Sanjay Kumar Gautam, Himanshu Khajuria, Reeta Rani Guptaand Biswa Prakash Nayak (2022). *International Journal of Cyber Warfare and Terrorism (pp. 1-15).*
www.irma-international.org/article/recent-trends-in-child-sexual-abuse-material-csam-distribution-in-indian-cyberspace/297857

Online Research Methods
Linda K. Kaye (2018). *Psychological and Behavioral Examinations in Cyber Security (pp. 253-265).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/online-research-methods/199893

Islamists vs. Far Right Extremists: Insights Derived From Data Mining
Yeslam Al-Saggafand Patrick F. Walsh (2021). *International Journal of Cyber Warfare and Terrorism (pp. 74-92).*
www.irma-international.org/article/islamists-vs-far-right-extremists/289387