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Changing Cycles of Terrorism: The use of Vehicles as a Tool for Violent Attacks

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Abstract- Terrorist activities are usually carried out by men of the underworld who derive pleasure is taking the lives of innocent people through the use of car bombs, suicide bombers and in rare cases sporadic shooting at crowded places. These methods over the years have proved to be very effective and capital intensive with serious logistic planning and critical intelligence and evaluation of the target area before the time or date to strike. However, with the whole world especially the super powers on high alert, the terrorists have changed their tactics and have selected a more discrete but effective method to deploy violence through the use of vehicles to ram into crowds of unsuspecting innocent people. To this end, this it is the aim of this paper to attempt to demonstrate how terrorist have changed their game by now using a motorized technique in their violent operations. The study adopted the use of secondary data and the descriptive method in the analysis of its variables. The research concluded that terrorists have adopted the use of vehicles to ram into crowded places because the method raises little or no suspicion before the attack. The paper recommends that speed breakers should be installed at bus stops and also government of states need to invest in intelligence gathering and proactive to avoid such attacks in the future.

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Changing Cycles of Terrorism: The use of Vehicles as a Tool for Violent Attacks

I S. Ladan-Baki [α] & C. Enwere [σ]

Abstract- Terrorist activities are usually carried out by men of the underworld who derive pleasure is taking the lives of innocent people through the use of car bombs, suicide bombers and in rare cases sporadic shooting at crowded places. These methods over the years have proved to be very effective and capital intensive with serious logistic planning and critical intelligence and evaluation of the target area before the time or date to strike. However, with the whole world especially the super powers on high alert, the terrorists have changed their tactics and have selected a more discrete but effective method to deploy violence through the use of vehicles to ram into crowds of unsuspecting innocent people. To this end, this it is the aim of this paper to attempt to demonstrate how terrorist have changed their game by now using a motorized technique in their violent operations. The study adopted the use of secondary data and the descriptive method in the analysis of its variables. The research concluded that terrorists have adopted the use of vehicles to ram into crowded places because the method raises little or no suspicion before the attack. The paper recommends that speed breakers should be installed at bus stops and also government of states need to invest in intelligence gathering and proactive to avoid such attacks in the future.

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I. Introduction

Over the years, when the word terrorism is heard the first thing that comes to the mind of man is loud bangs, heavy gun fire and other forms of explosions. These are the basic *modus operandi*of terrorist the world over. Various terrorist organizations all over the world including Boko Haram which began in Nigeria most of the time use explosions either through suicide or car bombs to harm innocent civilians and even security agencies at the time of attacks. One main important thing to note is that this method of deploying violence consumes more time to plan, requires heavy funding and other logistics issues associated with it all in a bid to cause havoc. To plan a single attack, terrorists painstakingly devote their whole resources to ensure that the mission never fails and must be successful. They go as far as reaching out to other sister terrorist organizations and other cell terrorist slipper cells in order get tentative information about their target or targets before they strike. These people are heartless and merciless, and sometimes faceless which makes it more difficult to identify a terrorist. They have experts in almost every field of study which is being used at different stages before and after an attack. Most of the time, terrorist acts are religiously related and in other cases politically related. In every part of the world, even in the most powerful state the USA its citizens are constantly living in fear thinking that the country could face another wave of attacks like was seen in some European states where hundreds of innocent lives were lost and of course, this happened in New York on the 31st October 2017.

With the brief analysis, violence deployment by terrorists has begun to change pattern. The most popular methods such as car bombs, road side bombs and even suicide bombing approaches are still being used by every terrorist organization. They have opted for a more tactical and equally effective method which still takes the life of innocent people which we call **Vehicular Terrorism.** This involves the use of vehicles to ram into unsuspecting and innocent people usually at crowded places like markets, night clubs and bus stations thus killing and wounding innocent people. This nefarious and dastardly method of unleashing terror has not only proved to be effective, but also needs very little planning and logistics to deploy. Terrorist who operate in Europe are fully much aware that, any move to procure explosives or other bomb making materials could easily be detected which will equally put their plans in disarray. This is why they have carefully selected this method of violence delivery from various options. However, with this new pattern of attacks, leaders of states especially the leaders of Europe are on high alert and are fully much aware that the attackers can strike at any time. Hence, it has urged its citizens to be extremely vigilant and to report any suspicious driving. Also car and sales outfits have been advised to report any suspicious purchase or rent of any vehicle suspected to be used for terrorist attacks. This new trend if not arrested, will eventually find its way down to Africa especially Nigeria that is still finding it difficult to contain the Boko Haram insurgency that has ravaged the North Eastern part of the country.

The use of vehicles to conduct acts of terror is an area that has not really been examined by scholars of international relations and politics. To this end, this paper will attempt to extensively analyze the shifting patterns in the deployment of terror using vehicles and also endeavor to provide theoretical explanations on why the change from the use of explosives for attacks to

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the use of vehicles. The paper will further discuss the attacks that occurred at Berlin, Barcelona, Westminster and Sweden just to mention a few. Also the study will attempt to provide answers. The paper consists of seven parts. The introduction, conceptual clarifications, brief history of terrorism, theoretical framework, vehicular terrorism, conclusions and recommendations.

II. Conceptual Clarifications

a) Terrorism

Terrorism is said to be the unlawful use or the deployment of violence and intimidation against civilians usually for the purpose of political or religious aims. According to Steven Best & Anthony J. Nocella (2004) in their study Definition of Terrorism, they defined it as the deliberate use of physical violence directed against innocent persons for the purposes of political, religious and economical aims. Jensen (2004) defines terrorism as the deliberate use of force or the threat of force by an individual, or by a nation-state against a civilian population to achieve a political end.

b) Vehicular Terrorism

This concept is virgin in its nature and scholars of politics have not explored this particular area. This is because the focus is mainly on the acts of terror by terrorists such as the use of chemicals, bombs, suicide bombers as a delivery method of violence on innocent lives. To this end, Ladan-Baki & Enwere (2017) define vehicular terrorism as an act of violence that involves the use of high speed vehicles to ram into unsuspecting innocent people.

c) Brief History of Terrorism

Terrorism didn't just surface in the 20th or 21st century, but this dastardly act can be traced back to the 19th century under Adolf Hitler's Germany where he terrorized the world especially Jews and in the 18th century at the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 headed by Otto von Bismarck, the host of meeting of the Scrabble for Africa where world powers met with the aim of partitioning and conquering Africa using any means necessary including violence and terror. With the conclusion of the August gathering, the stake holders mobilized and descended on the African continent slaughtering, maiming and killing innocent people including women and children. The invasion was purely for political and economic interest with violence to hasten the compliance of the Africans to adhere to the demands of the European invaders who had sophisticated weapons at their disposal. To this end, we can say the colonization of Africa by Europe was an act of terrorism as opined by Best & Anthony J. Nocella (2004).In a bid to drive home their agitations, terrorists deploy various means such as the use of bomb explosives, kidnapping and other dangerous methods. Conventionally, this involves the use of explosives and most often the use of suicide bombers.

Terrorism in the name of religion can be traced as far back as the first century Jewish Zealots' also known as the *Sicarii*(Adams, 1986). This murderous sect aided the spark of an uprising against the roman occupation that ended up inter alia in the devastative destruction of the second temple in 70 C.E. and the diaspora. According to Adams (1986), the Ismaíli sect which were known to be assassins was an Islamic correlate. Between 1090 and 1272, the sect succeeded in eliminating Muslim dignitaries using the blade which was known to be its trademark for carrying out gory assassinations. Looking at past history especially during the regime of Mao Tse-Tung of China, Kamal Ataturk of Turkey. Historical records have shown that one of the earliest manifestations of coordinated and organized terrorism in the Middle East in first-century Palestine. The nefarious Zealots sect was the first sect to practice systematic terrorism which is properly documented.

Our in-depth knowledge of the Zealots struggle is based upon the reporting of *Flavuish Josephus* in his *Jewish Antiquities*, published in 93-94 C.E and in his account of the Jewish war. Josephus used the word *sicarii a generic latin* term which is a derivation of the work *sicarius* which means "dagger man" to refer to the Zealots (Gerard and Blin, 2003).According to Gerhard and Blin (2003) in their study, they noted that the immediate cause of the Jewish rebellion against the Roman empire was the census conducted by the Roman authorities all over the empire in the early years of the common era. The Jews were abundantly humiliated by its clear submission to a foreign power. However, the situation turned incendiary in the year 6 B.C.E, about eight years after the demise of Herod the Great, an event that marked the decisive turning point in the history of the Jews, who had enjoyed more than a century of relative independence and prosperity since 129 B.C.E.

The history of the Assassins postulates to a degree of dynamic movements that have resorted to terrorist tactics and manipulations over centuries. A thorough analysis of the organization is definitely of the essence. The history of the great monotheistic religions-Islam, Christianity and Judaism is inseparable from the idea of struggle. Just like any social party, the religious or divine party is first and natural rival of the political power. The Assassins fall within the rule, in that their dreaded or organization fall within the rule, in their organization fall within the logic of political power plays. By taking up arms for terrorism, was a logical choice for the Assassins, as it had been for the *sicarii*. Thus, its effectiveness made it the primary weapon in their strategic arsenal and eventually defined the organizations very essence.

The French revolution marked a devastating turning point in the history of terrorism. Thus it gave birth to the terminology" terror" or what other scholars call "state induced terrorism". With the advent of

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totalitarianism and violence at a very large scale, the term terrorism derives from the experience it gathered from the French revolutionary terror it gained in 1793 and 1794 (Gerhard and Blin, 2003). With the Age of Enlightenment at hand, it had bequeathed humanity in the name of popular sovereignty. It was in the same name of sovereignty that the revolution claimed to retain thereby unleashing state terror and mayhem in which the ends justifies the means.

Following the Terror, the nineteenth century marked the beginning of a long pause for state terrorism, which did not reemerge in any significant form until 1917. The pause instead saw a new form of terrorism that has been endured till this day. However, terrorism against a state is not a new phenomenon like was seen with the case of Zealots and the Assassins. Though modern terrorism was different, it was no longer religious to maintain its dominance a form of terrorism. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, there was a new form of terrorism practiced by marginal groups who didn't have a clearly defined political objectives (Ladan-Baki, 2017). The late nineteenth century was a violent century characterized by immense violence of the highest level, when war became a mass phenomenon, involving not just heads of states but also armies of different states and even entire societies. The advent of technology and industrialization gave way to different forms of violence. This gave a great deal of considerable impetus to terrorist movements, which by definition engage in a form of low cost struggle.

On the geographical level, the ushering of the nineteenth century was marked by the gradual and incremental collapse of the Peace of Westphalia and the Balance of Powers, it was also known to be an era of rising nationalism. However, lying at the divide of between two declining empires- the Australian and the Ottoman- the Balkans became an extremely precarious region. It was however in this political context that the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 transcended the regional framework, becoming the spark that ignited WW I. before that time, terrorism manifested in France and in southern Europe in the form of anarchist movements that was known to be promoted by heavy propaganda. In Russia at that time under Lenin, he used state terrorism to entrench and consolidate his tyrannical powers. His successor Stalin who was head of the Soviet Empire, exploited the terrorist system that was already well ensconced, thanks to a well-oiled political apparatus, and wielded absolute power concentrated in his person. This model of state terrorism would be emulated all over the world particularly in China and the Khmer rouge in Cambodia both in the 1970. Ireland offered another kind of terrorist model, which was taken up by numerous nationalist movements throughout the world. By confronting the British democracy in the midst of WWI the Irish Republican Army (IRA) won the independence of the Irish Free State in the war's aftermath.

III. Theoretical Framework

According to McNabb (2006), a theory is a set of postulations or ideas used to analyze events or possibly forecast the future. Therefore, this study will attempt to explain the research using the Rational Choice Theory. The rational choice theory of terrorism postulates that terrorist acts usually emanate from deliberate and well calculated acts using clinical and surgical precision and also are conscious of their decisions (Ladan-Baki and Enwere, 2017). These decisions, represent an optimal strategy to fulfill the sociopolitical goals of these perpetrators (Crenshaw, 1983). However, in other words, the act of terror might not represent pathological or illogical behaviors but could represent the best means to fulfill personal needs in some or most circumstances.

This theory is often applied to forecast the utility of various policies. In analyzing this theory and looking inwards in the minds of the terrorist, the rational choice theory explains how the terrorist weighs the advantages and disadvantages before carrying out an attack. This involves critical thinking and calculations even going as far as using mathematical models for illustrations of the theory which emanated from the field of economics and applied mathematics (Morrow, 1994). As a limitation of this theory some scholars are of the view that some of the acts done by terrorists, seems to contradict the assumption that such acts represent optimal attempts to fulfill sociopolitical goals. Crenshaw (2000), concurs that the goals of terrorists are sometimes implausible. However, their actswill not fulfill their goals and thus cannot be regarded as a rational attempt to pursue their objectives (Strindberg, 1979).

Riker (1998), opines that political actors are faced with numerous options in order to attain a collective or desired goal but need to think deeply in order to pick the most suitable option that will satisfy their desires with minimal errors. By the above statement, it is clear that before a terrorist makes a move to strike, from the planning all the way to the execution stage there is a critical need to make use of the cerebral before arrivingat the decision to use a particular method of attack. However, to these end terrorists the world over use this theory either directly or indirectly to carry out their dastardly attack. The rational choice theory allows the terrorists to carefully plan and coordinate their attacks after studying their targets, the situation, the behavior of security agencies and counter security agents before they carry out their attacks. The best element of attack is surprise, which is why terrorists make their move within seconds after months or even years of planning. Attackers make consultations and even draw in experts of various fields such as electrical

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years of planning. Attackers make consultations and even draw in experts of various fields such as electrical electronic experts, bomb makers, chemists and other experts that will be relevant to the success of their attacks. Rationally, terrorists are constantly conducting research on silent but also highly potent and deadly delivery methods of violence. This leads this study to discuss next on the modern attack strategy on innocent civilians. We define this new concept as ***"Vehicular Terrorism".***

a) Vehicular Terrorism: The New Strategy of Violence Deployment

Vehicular terrorism can be defined as a premeditated and discreet but very effective use of high velocity vehicles to plough or ram into innocent people with the sole aim to unleash terror and maximizing causality for political or religious motives.This area is virgin in nature and has not yet been discussed extensively by scholars. Therefore, we shall attempt to shed light on this virgin area. Though journalist have discussed in the tabloids on this area but their perspectives does not have empirical evidence or explanation to this new wave of terrorism. With states of Europe and USA on constant high alert and also entry visa to the former and latter are difficult to secure, global terrorist networks have activated sleeper cells. These cells may be found in the countries where the strike is likely to occur. This makes planning and execution easy since the executioners are already within the locality and are already citizens of the target state. We shall attempt to discuss some of the attacks that occurred using vehicles to attack innocent and law abiding citizens predominantly in Europe and of recent the USA.

b) Chronology of Vehicular Terrorist Attacks

i. *Dijon France Car Attack 21 December, 2014*

A solo assailant alleged to be shouting "Allahu Akbar" (God is Great) attacked pedestrians with his car in the central town of Dijon on Sunday night injuring 11 people. It was reported by the French authorities that the attacker was receiving psychiatric treatment before the event (The Guardian 2017).

ii. *Nice France Truck Attack 14 July, 2016*

About 84 people including several children were confirmed dead in the French city of Nice after a truck loaded with grenades and other sophisticated arms plowed into a large crowd during Bastille Day celebrations on a Thursday night. At press time, the French authorities concluded that the attack was an act of terrorism which was a premeditated attack in its form (ABC News, 2016).

iii. *Berlin Truck Attack 19 December, 2016*

It was on Monday night when people were at the Christmas market when a tractor trailer barreled into a crowded Christmas market killing 12 people and injuring 48 others. Shoppers screamed in fear and dropped their packages as the truck plowed into the market (CNN, 2017). Of course this was not a mere accident. This was premeditated. The new weapon of choice for most terrorist organization was the use of vehicles to carry out attacks. According to CNN (2017), ISIS has encouraged their members all over the world to use trucks as an attack tool to carry remorseless attacks on the countries of the west. This instruction was adhered to and were carried out by ISIS members, affiliates and other loyalists with similar dastardly motives, intentions and ideology. German authorities were still gathering information to know the motives and aims of the attacker.

iv. *Westminster Car Attack London March 23, 2017*

According to Aljazeera News (2017), at least four people were killed and 20 left wounded after a car ploughed into pedestrians and later the attacker went on a stabbing spree to kill more people or inflict more injury as the case may be. This event occurred near the British Parliament but the attacker was later shot dead by the Metropolitan Police. Mark Rowley, the Metropolitan Deputy Police Commissioner told reporters at press time that full counterterrorism investigation was under way. He further went on to demonstrate that violence began when a car was driven over Westminster Bridge, assaulting and injuring a number of civilians and three police officers on their way back from a commendation ceremony (Aljazeera News, 2017). With this wave of attack, it was clear that it was a terrorist attack. This was one of a serially planned attack that was carried out by terrorist across Europe. This was mostly done by people who had dual citizenship or had permits to live and work in the state where the attack was carried out.

v. *Stockholm Truck Attack April 7, 2017*

At least four people are reported to be killed when a hijacked truck drove into crowds on a crowded street in central Stockholm (Sunday Express, 2017). The report further confirmed that 15 people were injured in the attack. Security agencies confirmed that arrests have been made. The first man according to media sources, is believed to be a 39-year-old man from Uzbekistan. He was arrested after acting strangely in a store moment after the attack.

vi. *Barcelona Spain Van Attack 18 August, 2017*

This wave of attack in Barcelona claimed the lives of 13 people and left dozens injured. Authorities confirmed that the van which was rented sped along the pedestrian area popular with tourists crushing down people while those who had the time to react took cover (BBC, 2017).

vii. *Manhattan New York Truck Attack 31 October, 2017*

On this faithful day, a driver rammed a pickup truck down a crowded bike path killing 8 people and injuring 11 others. He was shot at with a bullet hitting his abdomen by a brave police officer. Officials have

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confirmed that this is the deadliest attack on New York City since September 11, 2001 (New York Times, 2017). The short rampage came to an end when the driver of the truck identified as Sayfullo Saipov smashed the truck into a school bus. As soon as the vehicle stopped, he exited the truck waving a pellet gun and a paint ball gun alleged to be shouting "Allahu Akbar" an Arabic word which denotes or means "God is great" (New York Times, 2017). At press time, preliminary reports showed that Mr. Saipov came into the United States from Uzbekistan in 2010.

IV. Conclusion

There is no doubt at this moment but to confirm terrorism has changed with the use of vehicles to carry out attacks. The main targets are Western countries predominantly the Super Powers. All the countries attacked are developed countries with resource in abundance yet the security infrastructure and human intelligence failed to detect the attack because of the delivery method of attack. With all the resources channeled to homeland security terrorist have been able to penetrate and carry out their attacks which we forecast there will be more attacks of this naturebut it's just a questions of when? where? and what time? The use of vehicles to carry out attacks comes all of a sudden which gives the attacked zero or little reaction time to dodge or run for cover.

V. Recommendations

Following this new mode of violence deployment, there is every need for security agencies and also governments of states to be on top of their game through the following ways.

1. Companies whose business it isto rent out vehicles need to involve the police and relevant authorities before releasing any vehicle. This will aid the security agencies to determine if the purpose is to actually rent the vehicle for genuine reasons or otherwise. This may be able to prevent an attack.
2. Technology experts need to design a new software that does not allow a vehicle to exceed a particular speed once the vehicle enters a particular zone or area. By doing this, the device will communicate with the computers of any vehicle irrespective of size not to exceed the decided speed to be determined by authorities.
3. Security agencies need to focus their energy and resources to intelligence gathering so as to avert future attacks.
4. People need to be on the lookout for any fast moving vehicle and try to use the walk ways while using the road.
5. With this wave of attacks rampant in Europe, African leaders need to put the necessary intelligence and infrastructure in place because there is every tendency this sort of attacks may be used by African terrorist organizations.

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