

American Journal of Economics and Business Management

Vol. 8 Issue 3 | pp. 1351-1365 **| ISSN:** 2576-5973

Available online @ https://www.globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajebm

Article

The Role of Non-State Actors in Contemporary International Security

Obari Alale Osar*[1], Stanley Aride Dide[2]

1. Associate Professor in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, University of Port Harcourt. His area of interest is International Relations and Human Right Studies
2. Ph.D Student in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, University of Port Harcourt and specializes in International Relations

* Correspondence: obari.osaro@uniport.edu.ng

Abstract: This paper critically examined the role and impact of non-state actors (NSAs), particularly terrorist groups, on contemporary international security. In the context of the ever-evolving global political landscape, these actors have grown in prominence and complexity, challenging traditional security paradigms. This paper explored the rise of NSAs, their strategies, tactics, and the overall impact they have on international security. The study adopted a descriptive research design, using secondary sources of data, and content analysis method. The theory of asymmetrical warfare was adopted. This posits that weaker parties in a conflict can counterbalance the strengths of their stronger adversaries by employing unconventional tactics and strategies that exploit vulnerabilities and take advantage of the asymmetry of power and resources. The study assessed the effectiveness of national and international counter-terrorism responses, highlighting the necessity for comprehensive, adaptive strategies that balance security objectives, human rights, and the root causes of radicalization. In the future of security landscapes, the study reviewed the continued growth of cyber-terrorism, the increasing influence of transnational networks, evolving terrorist tactics in response to counter-terrorism measures, exploitation of geopolitical instabilities, and the greater role of private sector and civil society.

Keywords: Non-State Actors, Terrorism, International Security, Power, Counter-Terrorism

Citation: Osaro, O. A., Dide, S. A. The Role of Non-State Actors in Contemporary International Security. American Journal of Economics and Business Management 2025, 8(3), 1351-1365.

Received: 18th Apr 2025
Revised: 23rd Apr 2025
Accepted: 30th Apr 2025
Published: 10th May 2025

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

1. Introduction

The contemporary international landscape is increasingly complicated by the advent and progression of non-state actors, dramatically shifting the traditional power dynamics and constructs that have hitherto dictated the mechanisms of global politics and security. Non-state actors, particularly those engaging in terrorist activities, have transformed the understanding of conventional warfare, security and international relations. These entities operate outside the realm of government control and oversight, often utilising complex networks that span across multiple countries and regions. This stark departure from traditional state-centric models of international relations demands a comprehensive reassessment of our current security paradigms. The pervasive threat posed by these non-state actors, such as terrorist organisations, is not merely confined to the physical devastation they wreak; their activities hold profound implications for international law, diplomacy, and humanitarian considerations. Terrorism, as a form of political violence, disrupts not only the geopolitical balance, but also the socio-economic stability of countries, thus, necessitating an inclusive approach in addressing the challenge it presents.

Given the potent influence of non-state actors in shaping global political dynamics, the main objective of this paper is to assess their role and impact on contemporary international security, with a special focus on terrorism [1]. We will delve into the nuances that differentiate these actors from traditional state actors, the strategies they employ, and the challenges they present for international security. The scope of this paper necessitates an exploration of the evolution of non-state actors and then- consequent impact on international relations and global security. The mechanisms of terrorism, employed strategically by these actors, significantly challenge the traditional paradigms of conflict resolution and security management. This paper endeavours to dissect the strategies of non-state actors, the propagation of terrorism as a tool for achieving their objectives, and the influence these have on shaping the contemporary global security environment. A nuanced understanding of these entities' motivations, strategies, and structure can pave the way for more effective countermeasures and policy responses. As such, this paper will navigate through the labyrinthine structures of various non-state actors and terrorist organisations to present an in-depth analysis of their operation and their effect on international security [2]. Despite the disparate nature of these organisations, there exist common threads in their use of fear and violence as tools for political coercion. To comprehend the magnitude of the challenge, the paper took a stock of the myriad of ways in which the international community, individual nations, and transnational bodies have responded to the threat. Through a critical examination of various counter-terrorism strategies and their effectiveness, this paper will elucidate the successes and failures in the global fight against terrorism. The discourse surrounding non-state actors and terrorism is rapidly evolving and is often mired in controversy due to its inherent subjectivity. This paper, while cognisant of its limitations, aspires to contribute to this discourse by providing a balanced and comprehensive assessment of the subject matter. This paper acknowledges the limitations inherent in any discussion of such a broad topic, primarily the lack of comprehensive data on all non-state actors, and the diverse, often conflicting, interpretations of 'terrorism'. Nevertheless, the study will provide a well-rounded, thorough examination of this increasingly relevant aspect of international relations [3].

Theoretical frameworks help guide research by providing a lens through which the researcher can interpret their findings. In assessing the role of non-state actors (NSAs) and terrorism in contemporary international security, this paper employed Theory of Asymmetric Warfare. The Theory of Asymmetric Warfare serves as an instrumental lens through which the activities of non-state actors, particularly those involved in terrorism, can be examined. Rooted in the understanding that conflict participants do not always possess equal power or resources, this theory proposes that weaker parties often resort to unconventional tactics to counterbalance the strengths of their stronger adversaries. Tracing the concept of asymmetric warfare back to ancient times, Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" offered early insights into these strategies. However, in the contemporary security landscape, with its complex mix of traditional and non-traditional threats, the theory's relevance has become increasingly pronounced [4]. The Theory of Asymmetric Warfare assumes that weaker actors, despite being conventionally outmatched, can successfully challenge stronger entities by exploiting vulnerabilities, implementing unorthodox strategies, or harnessing the power of international opinion. It further suggests that traditional military superiority does not guarantee victory in asymmetric conflicts, which underscores the complexity of dealing with threats posed by non-state actors. In applying this theoretical framework to the study, it has a valuable insight into the tactics and strategies employed by non-state actors, particularly terrorist organisations [5]. The theory provides an explanatory platform for understanding their ability to undermine international security despite significant power imbalances, their adaptation of innovative tactics to maximise impact, and their exploitation of global interconnectedness to extend their influence. The application of this theoretical lens also elucidates the challenges that states face in countering asymmetric threats. Traditional military responses may be

ineffective or even counterproductive against tactics such as terrorism or guerrilla warfare, and non-state actors often leverage the asymmetry of power and resources to their advantage. Moreover, this framework helps in understanding the changing dynamics of international security [6]. The paradigm of warfare is evolving from conventional, symmetrical conflicts towards a more complex landscape of non-linear, asymmetric engagements. This shift necessitates a rethink of traditional strategies and calls for more adaptive, comprehensive countermeasures that account for the nuances of asymmetric warfare. The Theory of Asymmetric Warfare therefore significantly informs the study's objectives. In assessing the roles and strategies of non-state actors, the theory illuminates the unconventional tactics they employ in their operations. In evaluating counter-terrorism responses, it offers a lens to understand the efficacy of various approaches in an asymmetrical conflict context. Lastly, in forecasting the future of international security, it underscores the persistent relevance of asymmetric warfare, thereby guiding the identification of potential threats and shifts [7]. In essence, the Theory of Asymmetric Warfare not only lends a robust theoretical foundation to our study but also equips us with an insightful perspective to dissect and understand the complexities of non-state actors' influence on contemporary international security. Non-state actors (NSAs) have come to occupy a central position in the discourse of international relations, owing to their increasing prominence and influence on the global stage. These entities, by definition, function outside the confines of state structures, with a level of independence that enables them to significantly affect international affairs. A non-state actor is defined as any entity that is not a state and that influences international relations. These actors can encompass a wide variety of organisations and groups, including but not limited to, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), multinational corporations (MNCs), religious groups, and notably, terrorist organisations. Each of these actors possesses unique attributes and fulfils specific roles within the global arena, contributing to the complexity of international relations [8]. Understanding the context of NSAs in the global arena necessitates an acknowledgement of the paradigm shift from a state-centric model of international relations towards a more complex model, accommodating a diverse range of influences. While the Westphalian system of international relations placed states at the centre of global politics, the advent of globalization and technological advancement has facilitated the rise of NSAs, challenging the dominance of traditional state actors. The influence of NSAs can be seen in various areas, from economic relations to human rights advocacy, and perhaps most significantly, in the propagation of international conflict and security issues. NSAs can exercise 'soft power' through advocacy and public opinion, or 'hard power' through violent means. Particularly, terrorist organisations, as NSAs, have been able to exploit global networks and advanced technology to conduct activities that directly threaten international security. Terrorist organisations, as non-state actors, embody an extreme end of the NS A spectrum. They utilise violence and the threat of violence with the aim of achieving political objectives, often employing tactics of intimidation and coercion to induce fear and disrupt normal societal functions [9]. In this context, understanding the role of non-state actors, particularly those engaging in terrorism, is critical in the analysis and formulation of effective international security policies. Recognising their impact on global security dynamics can provide valuable insights into the evolving nature of international conflicts and guide our approach towards managing these challenges. To delve deeper into the concept of non-state actors (NSAs), it's crucial to note their diverse nature and the varying degrees of influence they wield in international affairs. Their activities often transcend national boundaries, making them significant players in global governance, international law, human rights, and, pertinently, international security. Some non-state actors, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and multinational corporations (MNCs), often operate within legal frameworks, contributing to areas such as development, humanitarian aid, environmental protection, and economic growth [10]. They have increasingly been recognised as influential in shaping global policy-making and discourse.

On the other end of the spectrum, however, we encounter NSAs that exploit the freedoms of an interconnected world to perpetrate acts of violence and terror. The rise of such entities fundamentally disrupts traditional conflict paradigms, where states were the primary actors. These NSAs, particularly terrorist organisations, are not limited by geographical borders, and their operations often defy conventional norms and rules of warfare.

2. Materials and Methods

The concept of terrorism has been defined by several scholars in the field, each contributing distinct insights that underscore the multifaceted nature of this threat. Peter R. Neumann defines terrorism as the intentional creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence to effect political change. This definition succinctly encapsulates the dual elements of fear and political motivation that underpin acts of terrorism. Similarly, Schmid, in the Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research, provides a more nuanced definition, describing terrorism as an anxiety-inducing method of repeated violent action, employed by clandestine individual, group, or state actors for varying reasons. In Schmid's view, the repeated use of violence to instil fear is an essential characteristic of terrorism, distinguishing it from other forms of political violence or criminal behaviour. In his work, "Inside Terrorism", Hoffman echoes similar sentiments, positing that terrorism involves the deliberate use of violence or the threat of its use against civilians. The ultimate aim, according to Hoffman, is to achieve political objectives by instilling fear in a wider audience, beyond the immediate victims. In essence, these definitions offer valuable perspectives on terrorism's defining characteristics, its modus operandi, and its intended effects, namely, to create an environment of fear and coerce political change. Terrorist organisations, by definition, involve politically motivated actors who use or threaten violence, typically targeting civilians to maximise fear, with the aim of achieving political change or destabilisation. This form of non-state actor is especially relevant to contemporary international security due to their potential for causing large-scale damage and political instability. Examples of such entities include Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Boko Haram, among others [11]. These groups often operate in shadowy networks, exploiting state weaknesses, porous borders, and advanced communication technologies to recruit, fundraise, and plan their activities. They pose significant challenges to international security due to their ability to defy traditional countermeasures, their willingness to engage in large-scale violence, and their influence over political discourse and public opinion. In this complex international landscape, non-state actors, particularly those engaging in terrorism, represent a formidable challenge to global stability and peace. Their roles, capabilities, and influence necessitate a nuanced and multifaceted approach to international security policy, acknowledging that contemporary threats to security extend beyond inter-state conflicts. The concept of international security is a dynamic and multifaceted field that has been examined by numerous scholars, including some recent contributors. These scholars have expanded the understanding of international security by introducing new perspectives and frameworks. Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, renowned scholars from the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, have significantly influenced the concept of international security. They argue that security should not be narrowly confined to military aspects but should encompass a broader range of sectors, including political, economic, societal, and environmental dimensions. This sectoral security approach acknowledges that threats to international stability can emerge from various sources beyond traditional military aggression. By broadening the understanding of security, Buzan and Waever highlight the interconnectedness of global challenges and the need for comprehensive responses. Amitav Acharya, another influential scholar, contributes to the concept of international security by exploring the role of "global security cultures." He emphasizes that different regions and actors perceive and prioritize security challenges based on their unique cultural and normative contexts. This cultural lens shapes policy

responses and influences security governance at the regional and global levels. Acharya's work highlights the importance of understanding diverse perspectives and promoting dialogue among actors with varying security cultures. Anne-Marie Slaughter, in her analysis of international security in the age of globalization, draws attention to the evolving landscape of security dynamics. She emphasizes the significance of non-state actors, such as multinational corporations and civil society organizations, in shaping security outcomes. Slaughter advocates for a multi-stakeholder approach to security governance that includes collaboration between state and non-state actors. This perspective acknowledges the changing nature of security challenges and the need for inclusive decision-making processes [12]. Audrey Kurth Cronin explores the concept of "hybrid warfare" and its implications for international security. Her work focuses on how state and non-state actors employ a combination of conventional military tactics, cyber warfare, and disinformation campaigns to achieve their objectives. Cronin's research underscores the necessity of developing innovative strategies and responses to address these hybrid threats effectively. These scholars contribute to the understanding of international security by examining diverse dimensions, actors, and challenges within the field. They highlight the importance of considering non-traditional threats, cultural contexts, the role of non-state actors, and the changing dynamics of global governance. By incorporating these perspectives, policymakers and researchers can develop more comprehensive and effective approaches to maintaining international peace, stability, and the protection of shared values. The rise and influence of non-state actors (NSAs) and the spectre of terrorism in the global arena have considerably reshaped the landscape of international relations in recent decades. Such entities, functioning outside traditional state structures, have harnessed the power of globalisation, technological advancements, state decentralisation, and media proliferation to influence international security dynamics and shape political discourse. Globalisation, coupled with advancements in technology, has been instrumental in the rise of non-state actors. The increasing interconnectivity and interdependence among nations have allowed these actors to transcend national boundaries, impacting the world stage in unprecedented ways. This phenomenon has not only facilitated the spread of ideas, commerce, and culture but has also contributed to the proliferation of terrorism and transnational crime. NSAs can tap into these global networks for resources, information, and support, while also employing the internet and social media platforms to disseminate their ideologies, recruit followers, and mobilise support on a global scale. The shift in the nature of state power is another pivotal factor that has contributed to the ascent of NSAs . With the trend of decentralisation, power is increasingly dispersed from central governments to regional or local authorities, and even to non-state entities [13]. This decentralisation is more pronounced in regions where state structures are fragile or inefficient, allowing NSAs to step into the vacuum and perform functions that the state is unable to fulfil. In analysing the rise of non-state actors and terrorism, it becomes clear that these entities have been able to capitalise on the various structural and systemic changes in the international arena. However, their growing prominence and influence raise several critical issues that merit attention. The influence of non-state actors, including terrorist groups, in global affairs has introduced a layer of complexity that disrupts traditional conceptions of sovereignty and statehood. In many instances, NSAs have been able to undermine state authority and challenge the monopoly of states on the use of force, a core Westphalian principle. In the realm of international security, this shift has dramatically altered the nature of threats, with the line between internal and external security becoming increasingly blurred. Moreover, the transnational nature of many non-state actors, especially terrorist organisations, poses unique challenges for states and international organisations. Their operations, often covert and dispersed'across national boundaries, make it difficult for traditional security measures to detect and neutralise them [14]. This difficulty is further exacerbated by the use of the internet and encrypted technologies for communication and coordination, which provide

a layer of anonymity and security for these entities. Furthermore, the rise of NSAs highlights the limits of international law and global governance, which are primarily designed to manage relations between states. Current international law often struggles to effectively regulate the activities of non-state actors and bring them to account, especially those that operate outside the existing legal frameworks, such as terrorist groups. The growth of non-state actors and terrorism has amplified the need for multilateral cooperation. The transnational nature of these threats necessitates a coordinated international response. However, achieving this cooperation is often fraught with challenges due to geopolitical tensions, differing national interests, and the complexities of collective action on the global stage. It is clear that the rise of non-state actors and terrorism has necessitated a paradigm shift in our understanding of global security in the contemporary era. Emerging studies shed light on these evolving dynamics, illuminating new dimensions and trajectories in the post-2017 world. A significant issue in the current landscape is the 'virtual caliphate' employed by terrorist organisations [15]. They utilise digital platforms to propagate extremist ideologies, recruit, radicalise, and even orchestrate terrorist attacks, thus extending their reach far beyond physical territories. This underscores the evolution of the threat posed by non-state actors and their adaptability to exploit technology for their ends. Similarly, the complex and symbiotic relationship between NSAs and failing states has been increasingly examined. The breakdown of central authority in countries like Syria. Libya, and Afghanistan has created a fertile ground for non-state actors, including terrorist organisations, to flourish. Their operations further exacerbate state fragility, thus creating a vicious cycle of instability. Moreover, recent studies underline that non-state actors have adapted their strategies to exploit the socio-political disruptions caused by global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These crises often accentuate state weaknesses and societal divides, which NSAs capitalise on to strengthen their influence.

3. Results

Despite these challenges, recent scholarship also points towards promising strategies to counteract these threats. Multilateral collaborations and international institutions have been gradually adapting their approaches, implementing measures to combat online radicalisation and terrorist financing, and addressing the root causes of state fragility. It's evident that the evolving dynamics of non-state actors and terrorism pose significant challenges to global security. However, by building on the lessons learned from past experiences, employing multidimensional strategies, and fostering international collaboration, the international community can effectively navigate this complex landscape.

Role, Strategies, Tactics and Impact of Non-State Actors on International Security. Non-state actors (NSAs), especially those engaged in terrorist activities, have significantly influenced international security dynamics [16]. Their strategies, tactics, and overall impact warrant detailed analysis.

Strategies and Tactics of Non-State Actors

The strategies and tactics employed by NSAs often involve a blend of traditional and innovative approaches, based on their specific goals, capabilities, and operating environments. Non-state actors (NSAs), particularly terrorist groups, have increasingly adopted asymmetrical warfare in their confrontation with state powers. Asymmetrical warfare refers to conflict wherein the involved parties have unequal military capabilities and the weaker party uses unconventional tactics to offset their deficiencies. In the face of superior military power, these groups leverage tactics that maximise their strengths while exploiting their adversaries' weaknesses. Tactics such as suicide bombings, kidnappings, and guerrilla warfare are frequently utilised. They create a climate of fear and uncertainty, disrupt normal societal functions, and attract attention to the groups' causes. These tactics also render conventional military superiority less effective, as traditional forces often

struggle to respond without causing collateral damage or violating human rights, thus making the conflict more complex and protracted. Moreover, the adoption of asymmetrical warfare by NSAs highlights their strategic use of the 'power of the weak', which involves using their perceived weakness to gain advantages. This has been observed in various conflict zones around the world, from the Middle East to Africa and beyond, leading to prolonged conflicts and significant destabilization.

Exploitation of Technology

Technology, particularly digital platforms, has become a potent tool in the hands of NSAs. The Internet, social media, and encrypted communication platforms are frequently used for various purposes ranging from propaganda dissemination and recruitment to the coordination of activities.

Online platforms provide a means for these actors to reach a global audience, enabling them to disseminate their ideologies, attract sympathisers, and even recruit new members from across the globe. Furthermore, NSAs use these platforms to communicate, plan, and coordinate activities, often in real-time. This virtual connectivity enables a decentralised and fluid organisational structure that is difficult for security agencies to infiltrate or disrupt. The use of encrypted platforms adds another layer of complexity [17]. Services like WhatsApp, Signal, and Telegram offer end-to-end encryption, which means that only the communicating users can read the messages. For NSAs, this feature provides a secure means of communication that is resilient to surveillance, thereby making their activities more concealed and their networks more resilient. These trends underscore the necessity for security agencies and policymakers to understand and adapt to the evolving tactics of non-state actors. Given the complexities of asymmetrical warfare and technological exploitation, strategies must be multifaceted, incorporating both hard and soft power approaches while respecting the rule of law and human rights.

The operations of non-state actors (NSAs), particularly those involved in terrorism, have increasingly become transnational in nature. This transnational character, exemplified by activities that transcend national borders, significantly complicates the security challenges they pose. One of the key aspects of these transnational operations is the use of global networks for various purposes, including financial support, arms smuggling, and recruitment. Financial Support: NSAs often rely on transnational networks to fund their activities [18]. They employ a variety of methods to raise funds, ranging from donations, illicit trade, and ransom payments, to more sophisticated methods such as the use of cryptocurrencies. Money laundering techniques are also frequently used to conceal the origin and destination of these funds, further complicating efforts to disrupt these financial networks.

Arms Smuggling: Arms smuggling is another critical area of NSA transnational operations. The global arms, trade, both legal and illegal, offers ample opportunities for these actors to acquire weapons. These weapons not only facilitate their activities but also enhance their capacity to challenge state forces.

Recruitment: The recruitment strategies of NSAs have also become transnational. Online platforms enable them to attract and radicalise individuals from all over the world. Foreign fighters, individuals who travel from their home country to join a conflict in another country, have become a significant component of many terrorist groups, illustrating the transnational nature of these recruitment processes. The transnational operations of NSAs pose substantial challenges to state-centric security systems [19]. Traditional security frameworks are predominantly nation-bound, whereas NSAs' activities often cut across national borders, thus necessitating international cooperation and coordination for effective response. Moreover, these operations often exploit the gaps in international law and the disparities in the capacities and commitments of different states, thereby complicating countermeasures. The rapid globalisation and technological advancement of the 21st century have significantly facilitated NSAs' transnational operations. The Internet and digital technologies enable these actors to reach a global

audience, network with likeminded groups, and coordinate their activities across different geographic locations, in ways that were not possible before. Moreover, NSAs take advantage of weak governance and lax regulations in certain regions to establish safe havens, often in failing or failed states, from where they can launch their transnational operations with relative impunity. This situation is further exacerbated by the intricate and complex web of connections and relationships among various NSAs, such' as terrorist groups, transnational crime syndicates, and militant groups, which often collaborate in ways that enhance their capacity for transnational operations. Transnational operations of NSAs also involve the use of refugee flows and migration routes for the movement of their members. Such movements often remain undetected amidst the massive human displacement, making the task of tracking and intercepting these individuals even more challenging. The transnational operations of NSAs underscore the pressing need for a shift in the conventional state-centric approach to security. Given the increasingly globalised and interconnected nature of these security threats, a more global, comprehensive, and collaborative approach is essential. This approach should include mechanisms for international cooperation and coordination, strengthening of global legal frameworks, and capacity-building efforts for states that are vulnerable to exploitation by NSAs.

Exploitation of State Weakness and Societal Divides

The vulnerabilities inherent in state governance structures and societal divisions provide fertile ground for non-state actors (NSAs) to extend their influence and perpetuate their activities. The strategic exploitation of these weaknesses is a common characteristic of NSAs, particularly those involved in terrorism.

4. Discussion

The strategic exploitation of state weaknesses is a recurring theme in the operational pattern of nonstate actors (NSAs). Fragile states, often characterised by weak governance, corruption, and lack of basic services, tend to provide a conducive environment for the operations of these actors. In places where the state has failed to establish its authority, maintain rule of law, or provide for the basic needs of its citizens, NSAs can often step in and take up these roles. They fill governance vacuums by delivering a range of public goods and services such as security, education, healthcare, and even dispensing justice. For instance, groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Taliban in Afghanistan have been known to establish complex administrative structures that effectively replace the role of the state in some areas. This 'state-building' or 'service provision' strategy not only garners local support, enhancing the legitimacy of these actors, but also deepens their control over the population and territory [20]. By providing services, these actors embed themselves into the social fabric and position themselves as alternatives to the state. This in turn, not only strengthens their local base, but also provides them with a degree of international legitimacy as de facto state entities. Over time, these entities can evolve from being non-state actors into significant political players. This process can further exacerbate the fragility of the states in which they operate, creating a vicious cycle of state weakness and non-state actor empowerment. Thus, the strategic exploitation of state weaknesses by NSAs further underscores the complexities and challenges of contemporary international security. This opportunistic penetration into the governance structures is not merely a survival tactic for these non-state actors. It represents a strategic manoeuvre designed to provide a veneer of legitimacy to their operations and further their agendas. This strategy often transforms these NSAs from mere militant groups into socio-political entities with substantial influence over local populations. NSAs also employ this strategy as a means to enhance their resilience against counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency measures. By intertwining their operations with local communities, they make it more difficult for states or international actors to target them without inflicting harm on civilian populations. This often places states in a complex dilemma, forcing them to balance the need for effective action against these actors with the requirement to minimise civilian harm. Furthermore,

the provision of public goods and services allows these NSAs to foster an environment of dependency among local populations. This can effectively bind these communities to the fortunes of these actors, making it even harder for states to regain control and reassert their authority. Thus, the exploitation of state weakness by NSAs significantly contributes to the persistence and intensification of conflicts, thereby posing significant challenges to international securityv[21]. Moving forward, it becomes evident that countering these NSAs requires more than traditional military or policing measures. There is a pressing need for holistic strategies that address not just the symptoms, but also the root causes that enable the rise and resilience of these actors. These strategies should encompass political, socio-economic, and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening state capacity, enhancing governance, and fostering inclusive development. Absolutely, societal divides present another ripe opportunity for NSAs to further their agendas. They strategically manipulate divisions based on ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status to foster sectarianism and extremism, thereby creating a fertile ground for radicalisation and recruitment.

Ethnic and religious fault lines, in particular, can be manipulated to foster a sense of communal identity that is juxtaposed against 'the other'. The narrative of 'us versus them' is perpetuated, driving a wedge deeper into the societal fracture. This narrative often posits these actors as the defenders of the 'us' against perceived injustices or threats from the 'them', thereby justifying their violent activities and even gaining support and recruits from certain sections of society. Moreover, these actors also exploit socio-economic divisions, particularly in contexts of stark income inequality or perceived marginalisation. They tap into the frustrations and grievances of the less privileged, promising them empowerment and a sense of belonging. This strategy often enables these actors to present themselves as champions of social justice, further bolstering their popularity and support among the disaffected segments of society. Such manipulations of societal divides have far-reaching consequences. They not only exacerbate the societal fractures but also undermine social cohesion, creating a vicious cycle of violence and extremism that can be hard to break. Over time, these manipulations can polarise societies, making it even more difficult for states to reassert control and restore peace. Therefore, counteracting this strategy requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the societal divides and fosters social cohesion. Such an approach should involve inclusive policies, dialogue initiatives, and socio-economic interventions aimed at addressing grievances and reducing inequalities. The exploitation of societal divisions by NSAs has a profound effect on the societies in which they operate. It disrupts the social fabric and can lead to a self-perpetuating cycle of violence and division. The narratives propagated by these groups, painting conflict as a struggle between distinct and incompatible groups, only deepen these divisions [22]. This process of societal polarization exacerbates the state's challenge to regain control and restore peace. Additionally, the consequences of such exploitation are not limited to the immediate context. They have ripple effects that can destabilise entire regions and even influence global geopolitics. For example, conflicts fuelled by sectarian divisions often spill over national borders, disrupting regional stability and drawing in external powers. Such situations also provide a conducive environment for the spread of transnational terrorism, as seen with groups like ISIS and Al Qaeda, thereby posing challenges to international security. From this perspective, it becomes clear that the manipulation of societal divides by NSAs is not merely a local issue, but a global concern that requires collective action. Addressing this challenge involves not just reactive counter-terrorism measures, but proactive steps aimed at resolving societal divisions and promoting social cohesion. These steps may involve political reforms that ensure inclusive governance, social policies that promote inter-group dialogue and reconciliation, and economic policies aimed at reducing socio-economic disparities. It is crucial to acknowledge the dynamic nature of this challenge. The strategies and tactics of NSAs evolve in response to changes in their environment, including state responses. Therefore,

efforts to counter these actors must also be adaptable and continually updated based on a thorough understanding of the changing dynamics. The rise and proliferation of non-state actors (NSAs) in the global arena has dramatically transformed the landscape of international security. Traditional concepts of security have been state-centric, with the principal actors being sovereign states and the primary threats originating from inter-state conflicts. However, the increasing prominence of NSAs, particularly those involved in terrorism, has fundamentally challenged these traditional notions. The influence ot NSAs on international security is profound, multifaceted, and far-reaching, necessitating a comprehensive reassessment of the strategies and mechanisms employed to maintain global peace and security. The study will explore several dimensions of the impact of NSAs on international security. These include the erosion of state sovereignty, the fuelling of instability and conflict, the creation of humanitarian crises through large-scale displacement, and the challenges posed to international legal and normative frameworks. Each of these dimensions underscores the complexity of the threat posed by NSAs and the urgency of developing effective strategies to counter it. The activities of non-state actors pose a significant challenge to the traditional concept of state sovereignty, which rests on the premise that the state has exclusive control over its territory and the use of force within it. NSAs, particularly those involved in terrorist activities, have effectively eroded this principle, creating complex security dilemmas for states.

The modus operandi of these actors often transcends national boundaries, blurring the line between internal and external security threats. This is especially evident in the case of transnational terrorist networks like Al-Qaeda and ISIS, which operate across multiple countries, leveraging global networks for recruitment, funding, and the execution of their operations. The transnational nature of their operations undermines the ability of individual states to effectively counter them within their borders and challenges the state-centric international security framework. Moreover, as we have discussed earlier, in contexts of state fragility, these actors often step in to fill governance vacuums, effectively challenging the state's monopoly on the use of force. This phenomenon is evident in various conflict-ridden regions, such as Afghanistan, where the Taliban have established de facto control over vast territories, and in parts of Iraq and Syria, where ISIS, at the height of its power, established a self-proclaimed caliphate.

The erosion of state sovereignty by NSAs, therefore, significantly complicates the international security landscape. It challenges the traditional state-centric security paradigm, necessitating a more comprehensive and cooperative approach to security management. Such an approach should not only involve states but also international organisations, non-governmental organisations, and even private sector entities, given the multi-dimensional nature of the threats posed by NSAs.

The challenge NSAs pose to state sovereignty leads to a considerable increase in instability and conflict. Particularly, those engaged in terrorist activities can escalate existing local tensions into full-blown conflicts, often further destabilising already fragile regions. A pertinent example of this is seen in the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria. The subsequent insurgency didn't just destabilise Nigeria, but its shockwaves reached neighbouring countries such as Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, significantly impacting the entire Lake Chad Basin.

As these conflicts intensify, they often result in large-scale displacement and humanitarian crises. Take, for instance, the Syrian conflict, which was largely propelled by the activities of numerous NSAs. This resulted in one of the largest refugee crises in recent history, posing an immense challenge to both regional and global security. The implications of this crisis extend far beyond the immediate region and require concerted international effort to effectively address. Moreover, the activities of NSAs present substantial challenges to international legal and normative frameworks. Traditional international law, with its primary focus on the actions of states, -often finds itself inadequate in dealing with NSAs. This inadequacy creates a grey area that these actors

frequently exploit, complicating efforts to hold them accountable and pursue justice. This reality necessitates a reevaluation of the international legal frameworks to better equip them to address the actions of NSAs. In view of the substantial threats posed by NSAs, it is clear that traditional approaches to security management, which centre around state actors, are insufficient. The international community must adopt a more nuanced understanding of the non-state actor landscape. In addition to this, a multifaceted approach is required - one that not only responds to the immediate threats posed by NSAs but also addresses the root causes enabling their rise.

Globalised Threats: NSAs, with their transnational operations, have essentially globalised security threats. Their extensive reach, specifically in the case of terrorist groups, surpasses traditional nation-state boundaries. Consequently, their threats are not limited to any one region but are a shared concern for multiple countries across the globe. This ability to operate and influence on an international scale complicates the task of addressing the issues they pose. As such, these NSAs represent a new breed of global actors, ones that challenge the very basis of traditional international security paradigms which are predominantly state-centric. The ubiquitous and borderless nature of the threats they present make them a shared problem for the global community. As a result, their activities highlight the interdependence of nations in the realm of security and underline the necessity for international cooperation. It has become abundantly clear that no single state, irrespective of its power and capabilities, can single-handedly manage or contain these threats. Effective countermeasures, therefore, require a global collaborative effort, incorporating not only states but also international and regional organisations.

Heightened Instability and Conflict: Another crucial dimension of the impact of NSAs is their contribution to heightened instability and conflict, especially in regions characterised by state fragility. The operations of these actors, in many instances, exacerbate existing societal divisions and further undermine the already strained capacity of weak states. The resulting power vacuums and social tensions provide fertile grounds for NSAs to propagate their agendas, further fueling the cycle of violence and instability. This heightening of conflict and instability is particularly prevalent in regions where the state apparatus is fragile and unable to effectively provide public goods or maintain social order. NSAs exploit these vulnerabilities, often establishing parallel systems of governance and security. Such dynamics not only undermine the authority and legitimacy of the state but also result in an entrenched state of conflict and instability, becoming a self-perpetuating cycle. Thus, NSAs, through their actions and influence, contribute significantly to instability and conflict, particularly in fragile states. Their activities further weaken state capacity, exacerbate societal divides, and fuel violence, thereby posing a formidable challenge to regional and international security.

Transformation of War and Conflict: The increasing prominence of NSAs in global security dynamics has catalysed a transformation in the nature of warfare and conflict. This transformation is most starkly evident in the rise of terrorism and the consequent shift in the locus of conflict. Traditional wars, typified by state-led armies engaging in battlefield confrontations, have been progressively overshadowed by irregular warfare tactics implemented by NSAs, particularly terrorist groups. In many ways, NSAs have managed to re-define the battle space. The battlefield is no longer limited to remote or border areas, but increasingly includes urban landscapes and civilian populations. NSAs have brought the 'war' to population centres, using cities as stages for their operations. This form of urban warfare, often conducted amidst civilian populations, has resulted in a stark increase in civilian casualties and infrastructural devastation. NSAs commonly employ tactics such as suicide bombings, hostage-taking, and guerrilla warfare, which are indiscriminate in nature and primarily aimed at inciting fear and chaos.

This transformation of war and conflict has posed significant challenges to states and international security apparatuses. Traditional strategies for warfare, predicated upon discernible opponents and clear battle lines, are ill-suited to address the realities of

contemporary conflicts involving NS As. The shift towards urban warfare, and the indiscriminate targeting of civilian populations, requires a comprehensive reassessment of strategic and tactical approaches to conflict. It further underscores the need to enhance mechanisms for civilian protection, strengthen urban resilience, and cultivate effective counter-terrorism strategies. It is worth noting that this transformation of war and conflict brought about by NSAs, particularly terrorist groups, has fundamentally challenged accepted norms and laws of warfare. The intentional targeting of civilians and the use of civilians as shields have placed NSAs in stark violation of international humanitarian law. This necessitates renewed international efforts to hold these actors accountable and to reinforce the commitment to upholding the laws of war, even in the face of such unconventional conflict dynamics. The landscape of international security is likely to continue being shaped significantly by nonstate actors and terrorism. The following are a few likely trends and potential shifts: Indeed, as the world continues to digitalise, the landscape of international security is likely to be further reshaped by the proliferation of cyber-terrorism. The increasing reliance on digital platforms in both private and public sectors is a double-edged sword, enabling efficiency and convenience while simultaneously opening up new avenues for potential attacks. Non-state actors, and particularly terrorist groups, have shown a propensity to adapt and exploit technological advancements to further their aims. This trend will likely continue and even escalate. Cyber-terrorism refers to the use of information technology by terrorist groups to further their ideological or political agenda. This can take numerous forms, from attacks on networks and critical infrastructure to the propagation of extremist ideologies and recruitment drives. With the world becoming increasingly interconnected, the impact of such cyberattacks can be far-reaching, potentially disrupting economies, governments, and societies on a global scale. The targets of cyber-terrorism are as diverse as the digital world itself. Critical infrastructure, such as energy grids, transportation systems, and healthcare facilities, can be especially vulnerable due to their essential roles in society and the severe consequences of their disruption. Disinformation campaigns, often disseminated through social media, can be used to sow discord, manipulate public opinion, and even incite violence. Furthermore, the relative anonymity afforded by the digital space allows these activities to be conducted with a degree of impunity, making tracking and prevention a significant challenge. In light of these factors, the likelihood of non-state actors increasingly resorting to cyber-terrorism is a pertinent consideration for the future of international security. Counteracting this threat will require comprehensive and multi-faceted strategies that encompass not only technical defences but also education, legislation, and international cooperation.

Increasing Influence of Transnational Networks: The globalisation of information and commerce has given rise to a complex web of transnational networks that crisscross the globe. These networks can take many forms, from the digital connections of the internet to the physical pathways of trade and migration. While these networks have brought about unprecedented levels of interconnectivity and cooperation, they have also opened up new opportunities for exploitation by non-state actors. Non-state actors have proven adept at utilising these global networks to their advantage. They can leverage digital platforms for propaganda dissemination, recruitment, and coordination of activities, enabling them to project their influence far beyond their immediate geographical location. Similarly, the physical networks of trade and migration can be exploited for smuggling arms, trafficking illicit goods, and facilitating the movement of operatives. These transnational operations have profound implications for international security. By operating across national borders, non-state actors pose a shared threat to multiple nations. This globalized nature of the threat necessitates a corresponding global response. International cooperation and information sharing become critical in countering these transnational threats. Efforts to combat non-state actors must, therefore, incorporate strategies that foster international

collaboration, harmonise legal frameworks, and enhance the capacity for cross-border intelligence sharing.

Yet, this is easier said than done. Differences in national priorities, legal systems, and capabilities pose significant challenges to international cooperation. Additionally, the very nature of these transnational networks - diffuse, decentralised, and often obscured - makes them difficult to monitor and control. However, in light of the increasing influence of non-state actors in the international arena, the need for comprehensive and coordinated global responses has never been greater. Adapting Tactics in Response to Counter-Terrorism Measures: Non-state actors, particularly Terrorist organisations, are known for their adaptability in the face of counter-terrorism measures. As strategies evolve to counter their activities, so too do their methods evolve in response, reflecting a dynamic and constantly shifting threat landscape. In operational strategies, for example, terrorist groups have demonstrated an ability to innovate and adjust their methods based on the changing security environment. In the face of hard-line security measures, they have transitioned from large-scale, highly coordinated attacks to smaller, more dispersed forms of violence such as lone-actor attacks. These are typically more difficult to predict and prevent, reflecting a strategic adaptation to heightened security measures. Communication and coordination are another area where adaptability is key. As governments and tech companies crack down on the use of mainstream online platforms for terrorist activities, NS As have migrated to encrypted platforms and the dark web, where detection and monitoring are more challenging. They, have also developed sophisticated techniques for spreading propaganda and recruiting members online, exploiting the reach and anonymity afforded by the digital space. Recruitment tactics have also evolved in response to counter-terrorism measures. There has been a shift from mass recruitment to a more targeted approach, focusing on individuals who are most likely to be radicalised. Online platforms have been instrumental in this, providing a means to reach and influence individuals on a global scale. These adaptations underscore the complexity and persistence of the threat posed by NSAs and terrorism. They highlight the need for flexible, adaptable counter-terrorism strategies that can respond effectively to an evolving threat landscape.

Exploitation of Geopolitical Instabilities and Societal Divides: Non-state actors have historically shown a keen ability to exploit vulnerabilities within societies and states for their own advantage. Looking ahead, this trend is likely to persist, with geopolitical instabilities and societal divides remaining key areas of exploitation. Regions of the world marked by state fragility—such as those suffering from poor governance, corruption, or civil unrest—present ripe opportunities for non-state actors to embed themselves within the social fabric. By providing public goods and services in areas where the state has been unable or unwilling to do so, these groups can garner local support and legitimise their activities. Moreover, non-state actors, particularly those with extremist ideologies, can capitalise on societal divides, manipulating them to foster sectarianism and extremism. These divides can be based on a variety of factors including ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status. By framing their narratives in terms of 'us versus them,' these groups can galvanise support from certain segments of society, fuel tensions, and exacerbate existing conflicts. Regions marked by such vulnerabilities—whether societal divides, state fragility, or a combination of both—will therefore continue to be particularly vulnerable to the activities of non-state actors. This underscores the need for efforts to address these underlying vulnerabilities and prevent their exploitation by nonstate actors. Approaches that foster societal cohesion, enhance state capacity, and address the root causes of societal divides will be crucial in this regard.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the influence of non-state actors, particularly those engaged in terrorism, on contemporary international security cannot be overstated. They have reshaped the nature of conflict, posed complex challenges to state sovereignty, and

globalised security threats. As entities that often operate transnationally, they challenge the traditional state-centric security paradigm, necessitating a reassessment of current strategies and the fostering of increased international cooperation. The strategies and tactics employed by these actors are continuously evolving, exploiting technological advancements, state weaknesses, and societal divisions. They have successfully manipulated and utilised these elements to perpetuate their influence, causing an escalation in both conflict and instability. Their rise has fundamentally transformed the landscape of warfare, as evidenced by the increase in urban warfare and indiscriminate attacks on civilian populations.

Counter-terrorism responses, while essential, need to be continuously evaluated and adapted in response to the ever-changing landscape of threats. These strategies must balance between achieving security objectives and respecting human rights, a delicate balance that is crucial to sustainable peace and security. Looking ahead, the role of non-state actors in international security will continue to be significant. With the potential for greater cyber terrorism, heightened exploitation of societal divides, and new tactical responses to counter-terrorism measures, the landscape of international security remains fluid and uncertain. It requires constant vigilance, adaptability, and a robust commitment to international cooperation, regulation, and respect for the rule of law. The trajectory of international security will undoubtedly continue to be influenced by the activities of non-state actors and the evolution of terrorism. It is crucial for academia, policy-makers, and security practitioners to continue studying and understanding these phenomena to create effective and sustainable solutions to the challenges they pose.

REFERENCES

[1] J. Arquilla и D. Ronfeldt, Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy. Rand Corporation, 2001.

[2] I. Arreguin-Toft, How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict. Cambridge University Press, 2021.

[3] N. Asika, Research Methodology in the Social Sciences and Education. Snaap Press Ltd, 2017.

[4] E. Azani, Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

[5] A. Baczko, The Politics of the Islamic State. Oxford University Press, 2022.

[6] N. Bapat, «Terrorism and the State: A Dynamic Perspective», в Handbook of Terrorism and Counter Terrorism Post 9/11, M. Sager и E. Stephens, Ред., Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011, сс. 42–56.

[7] J. M. Berger, Extremism. The MIT Press, 2021.

[8] I. Bremmer, Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World. Portfolio, 2012.

[9] R. J. Bunker, «Asymmetrical Warfare: The Century Ahead», Count. Terror. Mag., т. 12, вып. 1, сс. 24–29, 2019.

[10] D. Byman, «How to Fight Terrorism in the Era of ISIS», Foreign Aff., т. 95, вып. 2, сс. 78–94, 2016.

[11] D. E. Cunningham, Inside the Politics of Self-Determination. Oxford University Press, 2021.

[12] T. Davies, NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society. Oxford University Press, 2014.

[13] W. Enders и T. Sandler, The Political Economy of Terrorism. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

[14] E. V. Gallagher и S. Hanson, Rethinking Global Security: Emerging Threats and Responses. Oxford University Press, 2021.

[15] D. George, The Elements of Library Research: What Every Student Needs to Know. Princeton University Press, 2019.

[16] T. R. Gurr, Why Men Rebel: Patterns of Political Violence in International Comparison. Routledge, 2023.

[17] M. Hafez, «Fractured Rebellion: The Rise of Salafi-Jihadi Movements in the Wake of the Arab Uprisings», Middle East Policy, т. 24, вып. 3, сс. 61–74, 2017.

[18] J. Haken, Transnational Crime in the Developing World. Global Financial Integrity, 2021.
[19] B. Hoffman, Inside Terrorism. Columbia University Press, 2017.
[20] T. Holman, Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts. Oxford University Press, 2021.
[21] H. J. Ingram и A. Reed, «An Analysis of Islamic State's Dabiq Magazine», Aust. J. Polit. Sci., т. 51, вып. 3, сс. 458–474, 2022.
[22] M. Kaldor, «In Defence of New Wars», Stab. Int. J. Secur. Dev., т. 2, вып. 1, сс. 1–16, 2013.