# Terrorism in Africa

## A Quantitative Analysis

Adriana Lins de Albuquerque

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# Sammanfattning

De senaste två åren har rapporteringar om att terrorism, och särskilt islamistisk terrorism, ökat markant i Afrika blivit allt vanligare. Den här rapporten ämnar analysera huruvida detta stämmer. Studien finner att terroristattacker har blivit alltmer vanliga sedan 1997, med en markant ökning under 2014 och 2015 (de två sista åren som det finns data för). Afrikas regioner och länder har inte alla drabbats av terrorism till samma grad, något som indikerar att det här är mer av ett lokalt än ett kontinentalt problem. Aktörer med bekräftad islamistisk koppling begick en liten del av det totala antalet attacker från 1997-2010. Men andelen attacker som länkats till aktörer med bekräftad islamistisk koppling har ökat stadigt sen 2011. Mellan 2012 och 2015 begicks 90 procent av de attacker som länkats till organisationer med islamistisk koppling av organisationer med bekräftad anknytning till Daesh och al-Qaeda. Den stora merparten av attacker som tillskrivits organisationer med känd koppling till Daesh och al-Qaeda begicks emellertid enbart av en handfull organisationer. Dessa inkluderar Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, Tripoli Province of the Islamic State och Sinai Province of the Islamic State. Detta tyder i sin tur på en viktig slutsats från denna studie: att problemet med terrorism i Afrika kan härledas till ett fåtal specifika organisationer och de väpnade konflikter de är involverade i.

Nyckelord: Afrika, terrorism, Daesh, Islamiska Staten, al-Qaeda

## Summary

In the last two years, reports of Africa becoming the new frontier for terrorism in general, and Islamic terrorism in particular, has become more frequent. This report seeks to analyse to what extent such concerns are warranted. Terrorist attacks have become more common on the continent, particularly in the last two years for which we have data, 2014 and 2015. It is also clear that certain parts of the continent and particular countries are more frequent locations of terrorist attacks than others, suggesting that this is more of a local rather than continental problem. Actors known to have an Islamist affiliation committed a minority of the total number of terrorist attacks in Africa from 1997-2010. But the number of attacks perpetrated by this category of actors has been steadily increasing during the 2011-2015 period. Organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh have been perpetrating increasingly more attacks starting in 2003. Indeed, roughly 90 per cent of attacks attributed organizations known to have an Islamist affiliation also had a known affiliation with Daesh and al-Qaeda. Yet, the majority of attacks perpetrated by al-Qaeda- and Daesh-associated organizations were committed by no more than a handful of individual organizations. These include Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, Tripoli Province of the Islamic State and the Sinai Province of the Islamic State. An important findings of this this study, therefore, is that terrorism in Africa is a problem associated with the activity of a select number of specific organisations and the armed conflicts they are involved in.


Keywords: Africa, terrorism, Daesh, Islamic State, al-Qaeda

# Foreword

The author would like to emphasize that it is crucial to bear in mind that there are an abundance of organizations with Islamist affiliation that do not employ violent tactics, although these are not discussed within the context of this study, given its focus on terrorism. Hence, looking in particular at actors who are known to have an Islamist affiliation and employ terrorist tactics should in no way be understood as making an implicit causal claim that Islamist organizations are more prone to using terrorist tactics than actors with other affiliations.

The author is very grateful to Camilla Elowsson and Jonas Clausen Mork for reviewing an earlier draft of this report. Their extremely insightful and constructive comments significantly increased the quality of the study. A special thanks as well to Erin Miller and Dr. Victor Asal, for generously sharing their data and taking the time to answer questions about their coding. Needless to say, all errors are those of the author.

# List of Content

# List of Figures

# 1 Introduction

In the last two years, reports of Africa's becoming the new frontier for terrorism in general, and Islamist terrorism in particular, have become much more frequent.[1] Indeed, some scholars claim that "there are worrying signs that Africa may be re-emerging as a new centre of gravity" in the war against Islamist militants,[2] and that "jihadist ideology has for some time been gaining adherents further south," suggesting a "growing influence of" Daesh in all of Africa, in addition to that held by al-Qaeda.[3] This report seeks to analyse to what extent such concerns are warranted and provide an initial assessment of the state of African terrorism.

## 1.1 Purpose of the Report

This study seeks to answer four overarching research questions:

1) Has terrorism become more common in Africa over time?
2) To what extent is the trend driven by particular organizations perpetrating many of the attacks?
3) What share of terrorism in Africa is committed by perpetrators known to have an Islamist affiliation and how has this changed over time?
4) To what extent are organizations that are using terrorism in Africa known to be associated to Daesh[4] or al-Qaeda and how has this changed over time?

In answering these questions, this study seeks to provide a preliminary mapping of terrorism in Africa. The overview seeks to serve as a foundation for more in-depth future research that seeks to better understand what accounts for the employment of this tactic by organizations in Africa, and how the international community can best counter terrorism, from both a prevention and management perspective. In addition, the report attempts to give a more nuanced, disaggregated, and quantifiable view of terrorism in Africa, in general, as well as a better understanding of whether Islamist organizations pose a particular challenge.

[1] Searcey, Dionne et al (2016) "Al Qaeda's Branch in Africa Makes a Lethal Comeback," *New York Times,* 15 March; Gall, Carlotta (2016) "Jihadist Deepen Collaboration in North Africa," *New York Times*, 1 January.

[2] Inboden, Will and Anna Waterfield (2016), "What Africa Tells Us about the Fight Against Jihadist Terrorism," *Foreign Policy*, 4 April.

[3] IISS (2015) "ISIS gains ground in sub-Saharan Africa, IISS Strategic Comments, Volume 1, Comment 40, December

[4] Daesh is an Arabic acronym for the group also known as the Islamic State (IS), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

## 1.2 Method and Sources

To analyse these research questions the author relies primarily on quantitative data collected by various research projects and made publicly available as datasets, as well as secondary sources, consisting mostly of scholarly writing on terrorism. When analysing the quantitative data, the author seeks to be as transparent as possible about the methods employed, particularly pertaining to definitions and coding rules, in order to ameliorate scholarly replication and verification of the study and its conclusions.

## 1.3 Scope Conditions

For the purposes of this study, the time period analysed is limited to 1997-2015.[5] Particular caveats due to data limitations with regard to interpreting the quantitative data used are discussed throughout the text as needed.

Given the resources available to undertake this study, it is beyond its scope to analyse terrorism in Africa both qualitatively as well as quantitatively, especially as it pertains to the activity of particular organizations.

Having said that, the aim of this report is to motivate future research agendas and present data that can be drawn on to explore the topic further in such research. Various such avenues of further research are proposed in the conclusion.

## 1.4 Outline of the Report

The study is organized into six chapters.

Chapter 2 defines, measures, and discusses the level of terrorist attacks in Africa from 1997-2015.

Chapter 3 looks at the extent to which terrorist attacks in Africa are perpetrated by actors either affiliated or unaffiliated with organizations, and which organizations have committed the most terrorist attacks.

Chapter 4 defines what is meant by having an Islamist affiliation, and looks at what proportion of terrorist attacks are perpetrated by actors with such an affiliation. The chapter focuses in particular on presenting data that shows whether particular organizations with an Islamist affiliation have been more active than others.

[5] The Global Terrorism Dataset (GTD) includes data on terrorist attacks internationally going back to 1970. However, changes in the methodology over time as well as missing data on attacks in 1993 led the author to conclude that in order to be more confident that cases are selected into the dataset in the same way it would be best to rely on data from 1997 onwards only.

Chapter 5 addresses the extent to which organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh perpetrate attacks, compared to those without known association with these jihadist groups.

The final chapter summarizes the findings of the study and presents some concluding remarks as well as avenues for future research.

# 2 Is Terrorism on the Rise in Africa?

This chapter seeks to answer the research question of whether terrorism has become more common in Africa over time. It does so by providing a quantitative overview of terrorist attacks in Africa in the period 1997-2015.

## 2.1 Defining and Measuring Terrorism

### 2.1.1 Definition

Despite being a word used frequently among policymakers, analysts, and scholars alike, there is no general consensus as to exactly how to define 'terrorism.'[6] Following Fortna, this study conceptualizes terrorism as a tactic employed by non-state actors and characterized as:

> a systematic campaign of indiscriminate violence against public civilian targets to influence a wider audience. The ultimate aim of this type of violence is to coerce the government to make political concessions, up to and including conceding outright defeat.[7]

What is especially noteworthy about this definition is that it specifies that in order for violence by non-state actors to be considered terrorism, it must be directed towards civilian targets. The criteria that violence must be directed against civilians is one that many, although not all,[8] terrorism scholars tend to agree on.

[6] For an overview and discussion of the various definitions of terrorism see Hoffman, Bruce. 2006. *Inside Terrorism.* New York: Columbia University Press; Gibbs, Jack "Conceptualization of Terrorism" in Horgan, John, and Kurt Braddock, eds. 2012. *Terrorism Studies: A Reader*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 4 pp.63-75.; Weinberg, Pehahzur & Hirsch-Hoefler "The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism" in Horgan, John, and Kurt Braddock, eds. 2012. *Terrorism Studies: A Reader*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 5 pp.76-90; Schmid, Alex "The Response Problem as a Definition Problem" in Horgan, John, and Kurt Braddock, eds. 2012. *Terrorism Studies: A Reader. New York:* Routledge. Chapter 6, pp.91-96; Claridge, David. 1996. "State Terrorism? Applying a Definitional Model." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 8:3, pp.47-63.; De la Calle, L., and I. Sánchez-Cuenca. 2011. "What We Talk About When We Talk About Terrorism." *Politics & Society* 39:3, pp.451-72; Herschinger, Eva. 2013. "A Battlefield of Meanings: The Struggle for Identity in the UN Debates on a Definition of International Terrorism." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25:2, pp.183-201.

[7] Fortna p.522. This definition was chosen among many partly because it includes civilian targeting as part of the tactic and because of the quality of Fortna's scholarship and her standing among the new wave of academic writing on terrorism in the American political science community. She received the Karl Deutsch Award from the International Studies Association in 2010. The award is given to a scholar under the age of 40 who is judged to have made (through a body of publications) the most significant contribution to the study of International Relations and Peace Research.

[8] For example, Hoffman (2006) does not employ the civilian targeting criteria in his definition of terrorism.

The motivation for this distinction is that it makes it possible to better differentiate between this particular tactic and that of guerrilla warfare or insurgency, which primarily focuses on military targets. Not making this distinction could result in our discussing terrorism as a relatively new phenomena, although it may in fact be largely equivalent to what we used to describe as insurgency, guerrilla warfare or rebellion.[9]

### 2.1.2 Data and Caveats

Given the plethora of definitions of terrorism, when seeking to quantitatively analyse terrorism it is very important to be careful about how to employ publicly available data on terrorism, and to pay particular heed to making sure that the definition that the dataset employs to measure terrorism is largely consistent with that conceptualized by the researcher.

The definition of terrorism employed in this study, presented above, corresponds largely to that used by the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).[10] The GTD defines a terrorist attack as "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation."[11]

The GTD definition requires that the following attributes must all be present for an attack to be considered a terrorist attack: 1) "The incident must be intentional – the result of a conscious calculation on the part of a perpetrator"; 2) "The incident must entail some level of violence or immediate threat of violence – including property violence, as well as violence against people"; and 3) "The perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors."[12]

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[9] Certain scholars believe that the civilian targeting criteria is nevertheless too broad, since rebel groups are known to frequently target civilians to control the local population, thereby making civilian targeting an inherent part of insurgency and guerrilla warfare and therefore indistinguishable from terrorism. See for example Fortna, Virginia Page (2015). Do Terrorists Win? Rebels' Use of Terrorism and Civil War Outcomes. *International Organization*, 69, pp 519-556, (2015) Schmid and Jongman 1988, Schmid, Alex P., and Albert J. Jongman. 1988. *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature.* Rev. ed. Amsterdam: North Holland.pp. 13–18; Silke, Andrew. 1996. Terrorism and the Blind Man's Elephant. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 8 (3):12–28; Cronin, Audrey K. (2006). How al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups. *International Security* 31 (1) pp. 31–32; and Sambanis, Nicholas (2008) Terrorism and Civil War. *In Terrorism, Economic Development, and Political Openness*, edited by Philip Keefer and Norman Loayza, 174–208. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

[10] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) (2016), Global Terrorism Database [Data file]. Henceforth referred to as GTD. Retrieved from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd (accessed October 1, 2016).

[11] GTD Codebook (2016), Inclusion Criteria and Variables, June, http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/downloads/Codebook.pdf (accessed 1 November 2016).

[12] Ibid.

Since the GTD definition does not employ the civilian target criteria, the author has made sure to *include only those entries of terrorist attacks from the dataset that do not entail targeting military personnel or other armed groups*, but that are primarily aimed at civilian targets of infrastructure.[13] Government officials and police are considered civilian targets.[14]

The GTD includes data on a multitude of categories related to individual terrorist attacks. For the purposes of this study, the most relevant include where and when the attack took place, the particular target, information on who perpetrated the attack.[15]

GTD data is based on media sources. Because of this, it is necessary to be cautious when interpreting the data and trends over time. One of the primary reasons for this is because there may be underreporting of incidents taking place in areas where there is no press present, which is more likely to be the case in conflict zones.[16]

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[13] The author relies on the coding of the primary target of the attack provided in the GTD. This means that attacks that primarily target military or other armed groups are excluded from the dataset, even if such attacks also incurred collateral damage, killing civilians. For more on how GTD codes the target of an attack see the GTD Codebook.

[14] Taking heed of the fact that there are many different definitions of terrorism, the GTD gives users various options that allow them to select the data that corresponds best to the definition employed. For the purposes of this study, the data used fulfil all three of the following criteria: "Criterion 1: The act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal. In terms of economic goals, the exclusive pursuit of profit does not satisfy this criterion. It must involve the pursuit of more profound, systemic economic change; Criterion 2: There must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) than the immediate victims. It is the act taken as a totality that is considered, irrespective if every individual involved in carrying out the act was aware of this intention. As long as any of the planners or decision-makers behind the attack intended to coerce, intimidate or publicize, the intentionality criterion is met; Criterion 3: The action must be outside the context of legitimate warfare activities. That is, the act must be outside the parameters permitted by international humanitarian law (particularly the prohibition against deliberately targeting civilians or non-combatants)." In addition, entries are only included if GTD does not code the entry as "doubt terrorism proper." This category is included in cases where GTD is uncertain whether the attack was perpetrated by either a non-state, or state, actor, or should more accurately be described as insurgency. Since the GTD has only included this variable from 2012 onwards, it is not possible to screen consistently for these types of cases in the dataset from 1997-2011. For more, see the GTD Codebook.

[15] GTD includes data on terrorist attacks internationally going back to 1970. However, changes in the methodology over time, as well as missing data on attacks in 1993, led the author to conclude that in order to be more confident that cases are selected into the dataset in the same way it would be best to rely on data from 1997 onwards only. For more on this, see GTD Codebook (2016).

[16] For a discussion on methodological issues entailed in using GTD see Jensen, Michael (2013) "Discussion Point: The Benefits and Drawbacks of Methodological Advancements in Data Collection and Coding: Insights from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD)." November 25. http://start.umd.edu/news/discussion-point-benefits-and-drawbacks-methodological-advancements-data-collection-and-coding (Accessed 20 November 2016). For more on the methodological challenges in studying terrorism in general, see Young, Joseph K., and Michael G.

Another is that the media reporting on which the incident entries are based may simply be incorrect.

Despite these caveats, the GTD represents some of the best data on terrorist attacks over time publicly available. Having said that, it is important to be aware of the *known unknowns*: Although sometimes there is no information available about who has perpetrated a terrorist attack, this *does not mean that it has necessarily been committed by an actor that is not affiliated with a particular organization*. Likewise, it is important to be aware of the fact that not having information about whether an organization has Islamic affiliations, or associations to al-Qaeda and Daesh, *does not necessarily mean that we can say with certainty that they do not* have this affiliation or association. I return to discussing these issues further below.[17]

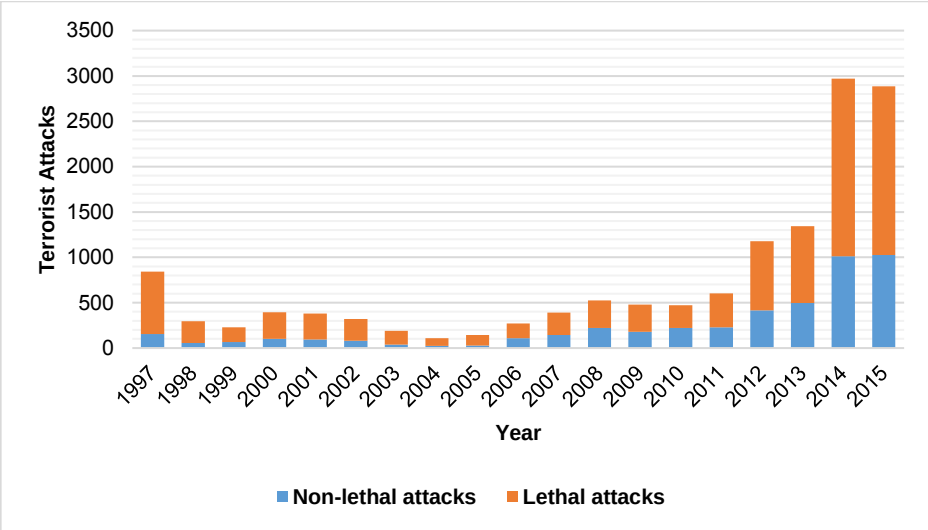
Findley (2011) "Promises and Pitfalls of Terrorism Research." *International Studies Review* 13:3, pp.411-431; Silke, Andrew, ed. 2004. *Research on Terrorism: Trends, Achievements & Failures.* Portland OR: Frank Cass. Chapters 1-3 pp.1-71 by Silke, Horgan, & Silke. Chapter 3, originally published in *Terrorism & Political Violence* 13:4 (2001); Drakos, Konstantinos, and Andreas Gofas (2006) "The Devil You Know but Are Afraid to Face: Underreporting Bias and its Distorting Effects on the Study of Terrorism." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50:5, pp.714-735; Sánchez-Cuenca, Ignacio, and Luis de la Calle (2009). "Domestic Terrorism: The Hidden Side of Political Violence." *Annual Review of Political* Science 12, pp.31-49; LaFree, Gary, and Laura Dugan (2009). "Introducing the Global Terrorism Database." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19:2, pp.181-204; de la Calle, Luis, and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca. 2011. "The Quantity and Quality of Terrorism: The DTV Dataset." *Journal of Peace Research* 48:1, pp.49-58.

[17] I am grateful to Jonas Clausen Mork for making me aware of this very important distinction.

## 2.2 Findings

### 2.2.1 Number of Attacks

**Figure 1. Terrorist attacks in Africa 1997-2015**




**Source: GTD**

Figure 1, above, shows the number of terrorist attacks in Africa from 1997-2015. As can be seen in the graph, levels of terrorist attacks, constituting both lethal and non-lethal attacks, went from a slightly higher level in 1997 to below or slightly above 500 attacks a year from 1998-2011. In contrast, the number of terrorist attacks increased markedly from 2012-2015. This tactic appears to have become significantly more popular among armed actors, especially during 2014 and 2015, when levels are more than twice as high compared to 2013.

During the time period studied, lethal attacks appear to have always been higher than non-lethal attacks. What is striking, however, is that the level of lethal attacks has become increasingly higher compared to non-lethal attacks, at least since 2012. What to make of this distinction, however, is not clear, since one cannot always discern whether the actors perpetrating these attacks intended for them to incur fatalities or not. Some may have purposely meant for their attacks to be lethal, but were unsuccessful in this mission. Likewise, some actors may have intended their attacks to be non-lethal, yet ended up incurring fatalities anyway. What is

nevertheless clear is that terrorist attacks, whether intended or not, have become much more lethal, starting in 2012.

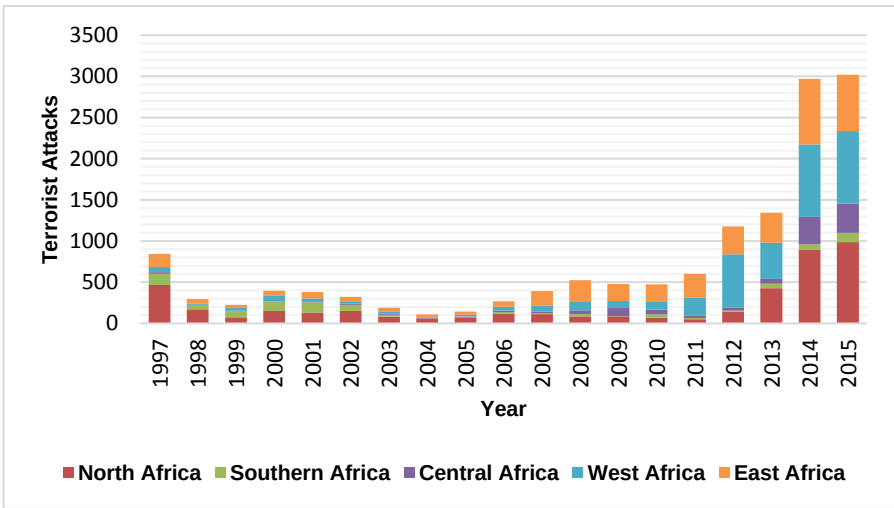
Lethal attacks are all those that incurred fatalities, including those among the perpetrators themselves. GTD data does not currently allow selection of only those attacks that incurred fatalities other than the perpetrator/s. Hence, it is possible that the increase in lethal attacks may potentially be partly due to a rise in frequency of suicide terrorist attacks, a trend scholars have observed with regards to terrorism in general, world-wide.[18]

[18] Bloom, Mia (2005) *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*. Columbia University Press; Pape, Robert (2005) *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism.* Random House; Horowitz, Michael C. (2010) "Non State Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations: The Case of Suicide Terrorism." *International Organization,* 64(01), 33-64.

### 2.2.2 Geographic Spread

As can be seen in figure 2 below, terrorist attacks are not only unevenly spread over time, but also over region. In general, North[19] and East Africa [20] have more or less consistently been the primary locations of terrorist attacks over time. The number of attacks appears to have increased in East Africa, starting in 2007 and onwards. For North Africa the number of attacks started peaking in 2013. Although largely spared from terrorist attacks from 1997-2006, Central Africa [21] saw an increase in attacks from 2006 onwards, with a particular spike starting in 2014. West Africa [22] also experienced a relatively modest number of attacks during 1997-2006, but attacks have become incrementally more numerous following 2011. Indeed, of the different African regions, only Southern[23] Africa appears to have been largely spared the increase in terrorist attacks experienced by the rest of the continent in 2014-2015.

**Figure 2. Terrorist attacks in Africa 1997-2015, by region**




**Source: GTD**

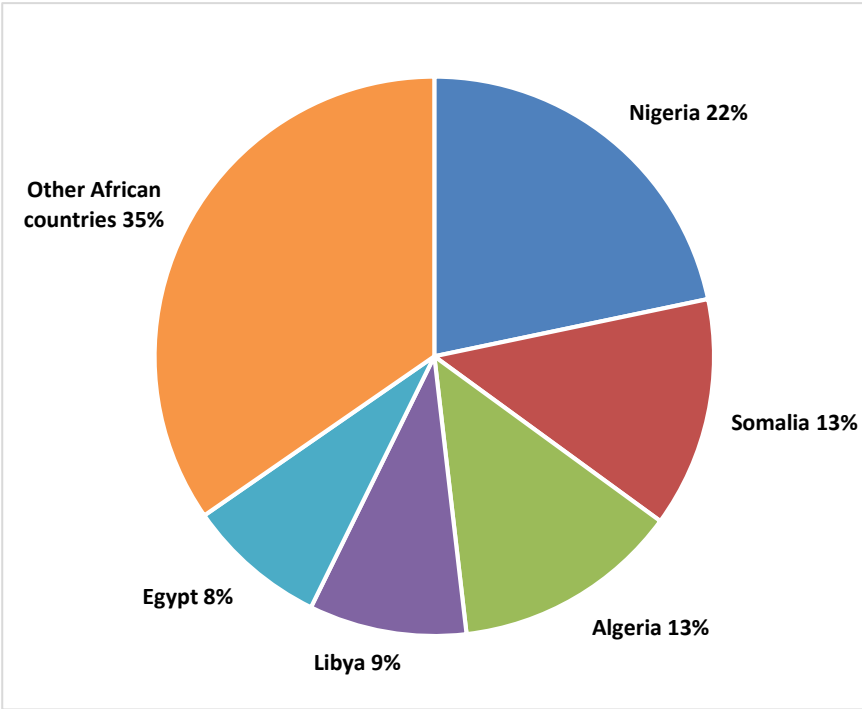
[19] Countries in North Africa include Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco.
[20] Countries in East Africa include Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Mali, South Sudan, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti.
[21] Countries in Central Africa include Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Zaire/Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon.
[22] Countries in West Africa include Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Liberia, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Benin.
[23] Countries in Southern Africa include Burundi, Angola, South Africa, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Zambia, Madagascar, Swaziland, Comoros and Lesotho.

### 2.2.3 Countries Most Affected

Regional trends are obviously linked to particular armed conflicts that are going on in the region at various times, since terrorist attacks tend to be common in non-conventional wars, such as insurgencies.[24] This becomes increasingly evident when one breaks down the data across countries, rather than regionally.

As is evident from figures 3, 4, and 5, below, the overall number of terrorist attacks appears to have been perpetrated predominantly within particular countries. Tallying the total amount of attacks perpetrated in Africa from 1997-2015 tells us that 65 per cent of all attacks occurred in five countries, namely Nigeria (22%), Somalia (13%), Algeria (13%), Libya (9%) and Egypt (8%) (see figure 3).

**Figure 3. Countries with most terrorist attacks 1997-2015**

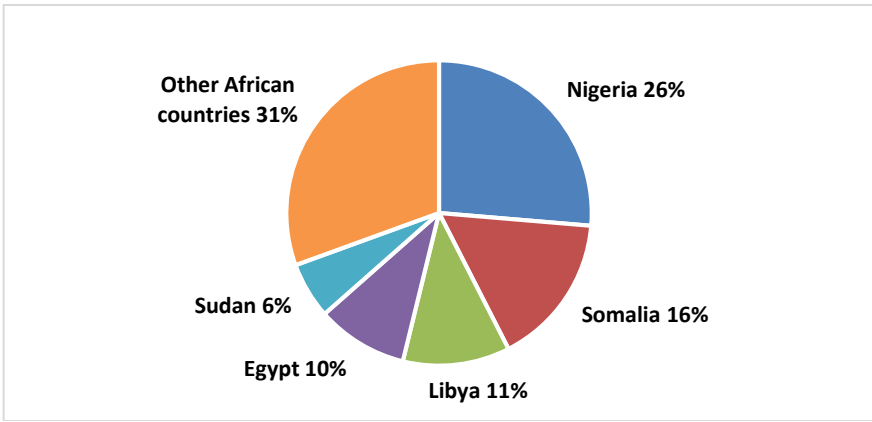



**Source: GTD**

[24] Merari, Ariel (1993) "Terrorism as a Strategy of Insurgency." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 5:4, pp. 213-251.

Limiting the time period to 2005-2015, all but 31% of attacks occur across five countries, namely Nigeria (26%), Somalia (16%), Libya (11%), Egypt (10%), and Sudan (6%) (see figure 4).

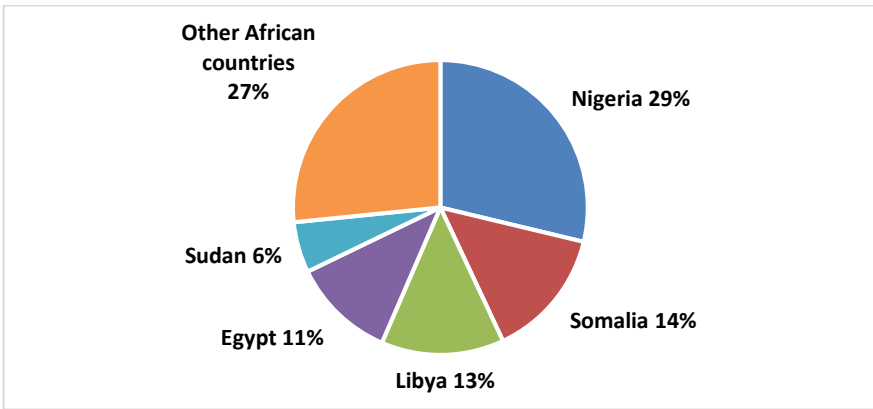
**Figure 4. Countries with most terrorist attacks 2005-2015**




**Source: GTD**

Looking only at the most recent five-year period for which we have data, 2010-2015, close to 75 per cent of all terrorist attacks took place within the same five countries that made the list in the 2005-2010 period (see figure 5). This may not be surprising, given the peak in overall attacks seen in 2014 and 2015, suggesting that those attacks may also be driving the numbers when extended to the 2005-2015 period.

**Figure 5. Countries with most terrorist attacks 2010-2015**




**Source: GTD**

### 2.2.4 Summary of Findings

The data presented in this chapter tells us several things about terrorism in Africa. First, it illustrates that terrorist attacks have become more common on the continent, particularly in the last two years for which we have data, 2014 and 2015. Second, it is also clear that certain parts of the continent – North and West Africa – are more frequent locations of terrorist attacks than others. Finally, when breaking down the data further, to a country level, it is evident that the vast majority of terrorist attacks occurred in a handful of countries – especially Nigeria and Somalia – and that these countries have remained largely similar across the three overlapping time periods analysed (1997-2015, 2005-2015, and 2010-2015).

What is clear is that these national trends are better understood if they are further disaggregated. This is particularly with regard to identifying the perpetrators behind these attacks – which do not always work exclusively nor solely within one country – and in particular whether these actors constitute formal organizations or not. Information about these organizations can in turn give us more clues as to whether groups known to have an Islamist affiliation are overrepresented among groups employing terrorist tactics, something that has been suggested by some scholars.[25] Such further disaggregation is the purpose of the remaining chapters in this study.

[25] Inboden and Waterfield.

# 3 Who Are The Perpetrators?

To what extent is the trend in terrorist attacks explored in the previous chapter driven by particular organizations, perpetrating many of the attacks?

Although this study seeks to map terrorism in Africa over time, and as such is interested in the number of attacks committed, regardless of who the perpetrator is, it pays special heed to understanding whether, and which, specific organizations are responsible for these acts.

The reason for this is to enable efforts to prevent and deter terrorism. Understanding whether organizations are committing these acts is important, because it is generally possible to find out more about the political motivations of organizations than about perpetrators that do not form part of an organization.

Knowing the political motivations and agendas behind terrorist attacks can in turn provide clues to why terrorist tactics are employed; insights that can be drawn on for counter-terrorism purposes. Hence, although the data analysed includes information on both attacks perpetrated by identified and unidentified actors, it is of particular interest to identify those perpetrators that are part of an organization.

## 3.1 Definitions

For the purposes of this study, *organizations* are defined as groups with a particular, chosen name. Hence, perpetrators described merely with a generic description, such as "Hutus," or "Former soldiers," are not considered organizations, but instead referred to merely as the broader category *actors*, which also includes organizations. Militias are considered organizations if they have a specific name. Organizations must be non-state actors and have no official links to the government. Using this definition results in a total of 218 organizations known to have perpetrated terrorist attacks included in the dataset used in this study.

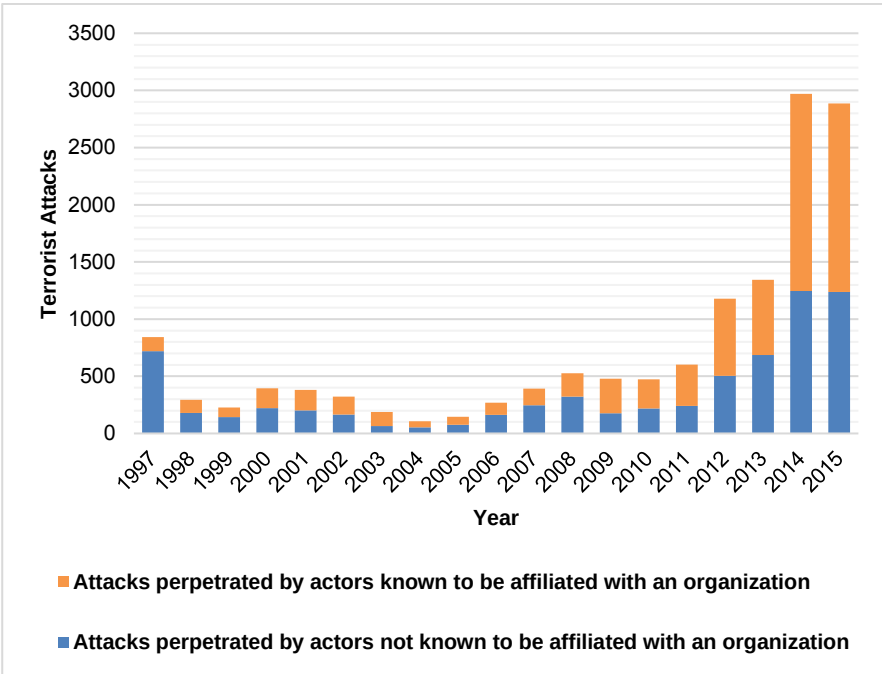
# 3.2 Findings

## 3.2.1 Perpetrating Organisations

Figure 6 shows that a significant number of terrorist attacks are not known to be attributed to any particular organization.[26] Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of terrorist attacks can be directly linked to specific organizations.

This information makes it possible to better understand whether particular organizations share a greater part of the responsibility for the trends in terrorist attacks over time than others. It also gives us greater insights into whether the increase in terrorist attacks in Africa since 2011 is emblematic of a more general trend among armed organizations in Africa, or alternatively, merely represents that certain organizations are employing this particular tactic more frequently.

**Figure 6. Terrorist attacks in Africa 1997-2015: Perpetrators known to be affiliated or not known to be affiliated with an organization**




**Source: GTD**

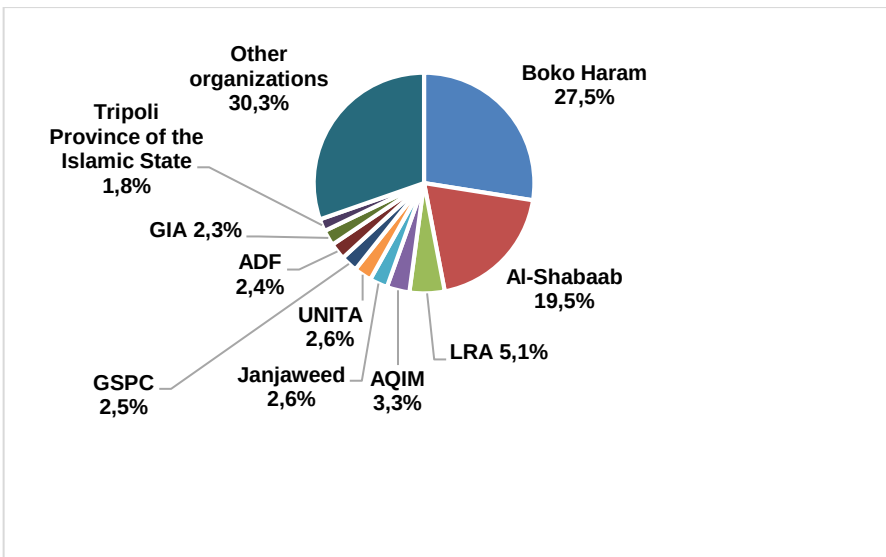
[26] As stated previously, this may be due to a lack of data and not solely due to any actual lack of organizational affiliation.

### 3.2.2 Organisations Attributed Most Attacks

Looking at the number of terrorist attacks perpetrated by actors known to be affiliated with an organization over time, it becomes clear that the majority of attacks can be attributed to a short list of organizations. Observing the entire period studied, 1997-2015, shows that ten organizations are responsible for close to 70 per cent of all terrorist attacks (see figure 7).

These are Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Janjaweed[27], National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Salafist Group for Preaching and Fighting (GSPC), Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Armed Islamic Group (GIA), and Tripoli Province of the Islamic State (for alternative names of these groups and the countries where they perpetrated attacks, see appendix). The data also shows that there are two key organizations responsible for close to 50 per cent of all attacks during this period, namely Boko Haram and al-Shabaab.

**Figure 7. Organizations attributed most terrorist attacks in Africa 1997- 2015**



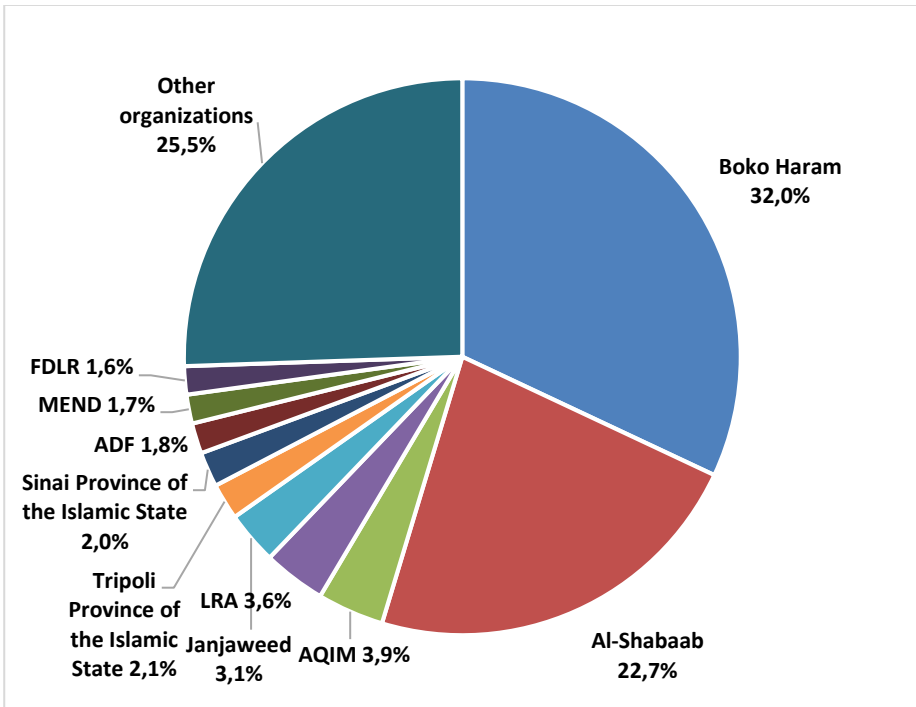

**Source: GTD**

[27] Janjaweed is somewhat of an outlier within this group, given that it is a militia that has worked closely with President Bashir, in Sudan, and as such could be considered a state actor. However, because the GTD does not make this distinction in current versions of the dataset, the author has nevertheless chosen to include this organization to maintain a consistent methodology and case selection criteria.

As demonstrated in figure 8, Boko Haram and al-Shabaab remain the main perpetrators with regard to terrorist attacks committed by organizations in the last ten-year period for which we have data (2005-2015), committing close to 55 per cent of all attacks. Some of the most active terrorist organizations during the entire period of study are also included within this shorter time period, namely AQIM, LRA, Janjaweed, ADF, and the Tripoli Province of the Islamic State. GIA and UNITA are no longer included in this list, largely due to the ending of the civil wars they were involved in. New additions to this top-ten list include Sinai Province of the Islamic State, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) (for alternative names of these groups and the countries where they perpetrated attacks, see appendix).

The ten organizations identified in figure 8 are together responsible for close to 75 per cent of all terrorist attacks perpetrated by organizations during this period, indicating again how much the phenomena is driven by the activity of a small number of particular organizations, rather than constituting a broader generalizable trend among a broader set of groups.

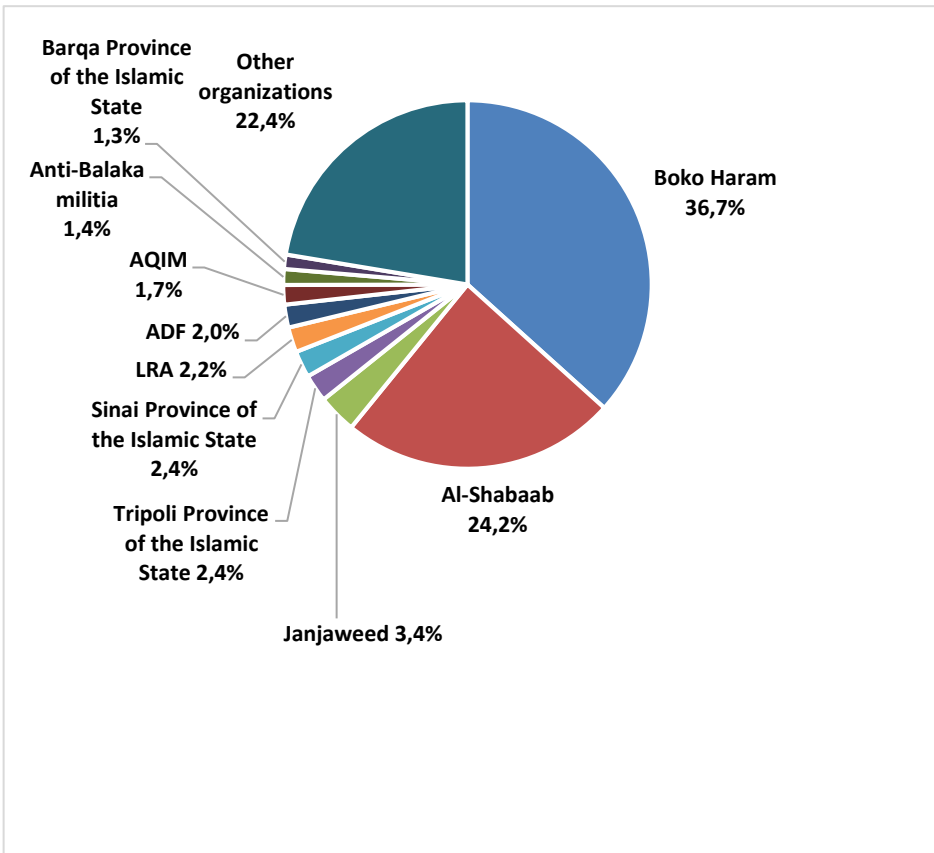
**Figure 8. Organizations attributed most terrorist attacks in Africa 2005-2015**




**Source: GTD**

Summary statistics from the last five years for which there is data, 2010-2015, show that close to 77 per cent of all terrorist attacks perpetrated by organizations in Africa were perpetrated by ten specific groups (figure 10). During this period, Boko Haram and al-Shabaab committed more than 60 per cent of all terrorist attacks perpetrated by actors known to be affiliated with organizations in Africa. The remaining eight organizations – Janjaweed, Tripoli Province of the Islamic State, Sinai Province of the Islamic State, LRA, ADF, AQIM, anti-Balaka militia, and the Barqa Province of the Islamic State – were responsible for the remaining 17 per cent of the terrorist attacks committed by the ten most active organizations.

**Figure 9. Organizations attributed most terrorist attacks in Africa 2010-2015**




**Source: GTD**

### 3.2.3 Summary

Perhaps surprisingly, this chapter shows that a substantial amount of terrorist attacks (close to 50% from 2012-2015) were perpetrated by actors not known to be affiliated with an organization. We also learn that the vast majority of attacks perpetrated by actors known to be affiliated with organizations – between 70-77 per cent depending on the time period in question – were committed by ten out of a total of 126-203 organizations (the total number of organizations varies depending on the specific time period in question). Boko Haram and al-Shabaab are particularly active. This suggests that much of the trend in terrorist attacks over time in Africa can be attributed to a small subset of particular organizations.

# 4 Islamist Affiliations?

To what extent do some of the attacks perpetrated by actors and organizations have an Islamist affiliation? This is the research question explored in this chapter.

As mentioned in the introduction, there are many reports in the media and in policy circles that suggest that Africa is the new frontier for Islamic terrorism. However, these statements are often not backed up with corresponding quantitative evidence. Hence, this study seeks to explore to what extent Islamic terrorism in Africa is on the upswing on the continent, by analysing quantitative data on terrorism in general, over time.

In order to contextualize the dangers of Islamic terrorism in Africa, it is necessary to compare the proportion of attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamic affiliation, to that of actors without such affiliation. That is the primary purpose of this chapter.

## 4.1 Method

### 4.1.1 Definitions

For the purposes of this study, actors with an Islamist affiliation are defined as those seeking to establish an Islamic state, based on the laws (*sharia*) outlined in the Koran.[28]

Since this study is focused primarily on understanding to what extent actors employing terrorist tactics in Africa have an Islamic affiliation, the author would like to emphasize to the reader that this focus should in no way be understood as making a causal claim that Islamist organizations are more prone to using terrorist tactics than other groups,[29] something that should be evident from the abundance of Islamist organizations using exclusively non-violent tactics.[30]

[28] For more on various strands of political Islam and its development over time, see Sadowski, Yahya (2006) "Political Islam: Asking the Wrong Questions?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 9: 215-240.

[29] For a discussion about the pitfalls entailed in linking Islam with terrorism, see Fisher, Max (2016) "When a Phrase Takes on New Meaning: 'Radical Islam,' Explained," *New York Times*, 16 June http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/17/world/when-a-phrase-takes-on-new-meaning-radical-islam-explained.html?_r=0 (Accessed 1 November 2016).

[30] For more on non-violent Islamist organizations, see Stephan, Maria, ed. (2009), "Civilian Jihad: Nonviolent Struggle, Democratization, and Governance in the Middle East."Springer; Zunes, Steve. (1999) "Unarmed Resistance in the Middle East and North Africa." *Nonviolent Social Movements*, Massachusetts and Oxford, Blackwell.

### 4.1.2 Sources and Data Limitations

There are 208 organizations represented in the dataset; about the majority, there is not much or any information available, besides their names. This presents certain challenges in identifying whether these organizations have Islamist affiliations. As such, the author employed several rules for coding whether actors perpetrating terrorist attacks included in the dataset were coded as being known to have an Islamist affiliation.

First, organizations known to be *associated* with Daesh and al-Qaeda,[31] two jihadist groups well known as having a very extreme Islamist political agenda, were assumed to share the same ideology. These organizations were coded as being known to have an Islamist affiliation for the entire time period that they have been active, and hence not only since the time they pledged allegiance to these Salifi-Jihadist organizations. Second, organizations not known to be associated with Daesh and al-Qaeda, but described as having the establishment of an Islamic State as a political goal in the Big, Allied, and Dangerous (BAAD) dataset,[32] or other sources, were also coded as being Islamist organizations. Third, organizations for which there was little available information, but whose names when translated into English included words emblematic of groups with such a political agenda, such as 'Islamist,' 'Salafi,' 'Jihad,' and 'Caliphate,' but also "Muslim" were coded as being organizations with an Islamist affiliation. Finally, a number of actors not belonging to a specific organization, but described in GTD as for example "Muslim fundamentalist," or "Islamic Extremists," were also coded as having an Islamist affiliation.[33]

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[31] Miller, Erin and Kane, Sheehan, (2016), "Global Terrorism Database ISIL Auxiliary Dataset," doi:10.7910/DVN/KNERY9, Harvard Dataverse, V2 https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/KNERY9, August, (Accessed 1 November 2016; CRS, "Al Qaeda-Affiliated Groups: Middle East and Africa," 10 October 2014, Congressional Research Service Report R43756 , http://www.refworld.org/docid/54660ccc4.html (accessed 21 November 2016); United Nations (2014) "The List established and maintained pursuant to Security Council res. 1267/1989/2253," https://scsanctions.un.org/fop/fop?xml=htdocs/resources/xml/en/consolidated.xml&xslt=htdocs/resources/xsl/en/al-qaida.xsl, United Nations (Accessed November 1, 2016). I return in the following chapter to describing in detail the sources used to code whether organizations have links to Daesh and al-Qaeda and what is meant by "association."

[32] Asal, Victor H. and R. Karl Rethemeyer. (2015) "Big Allied and Dangerous Dataset Version 2." www.start.umd.edu/baad/database (accessed 30 October 2016). BAAD is a dataset hosted within the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), which also hosts the GTD.

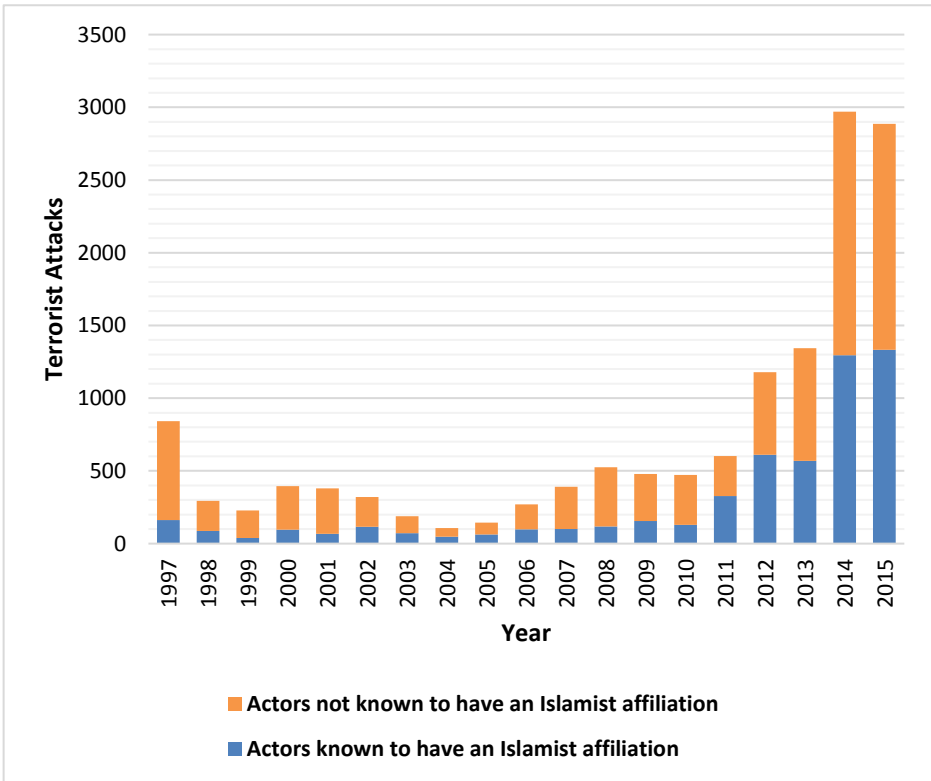
[33] The author realizes that this is not a perfect way in which to code Islamic affiliation, but it is nevertheless deemed the best manner in which to do for the purposes of this study. In email conversation, on 9 November 2016, Erin Miller, Program Manager of the GTD, explained that the coding of generic perpetrators was based solely on what was reported in the media reports about the attack. The reasons why this information is included in the GTD was because it was considered to be more informative and methodologically correct than merely leaving the description of the perpetrator as unknown.

# 4.2 Findings

## 4.2.1 Attacks

As is clear from figure 10, the vast majority of terrorist attacks perpetrated in Africa from 1997-2010 have been committed by actors (those associated and not associated with an organization) not known to have an Islamist affiliation. Indeed, actors known to have an Islamist affiliation are responsible for a limited fraction of terrorist attacks from 1997-2010. This started changing in 2011, when the proportion of attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation started increasing. The spike has been especially dramatic in 2014 and 2015.

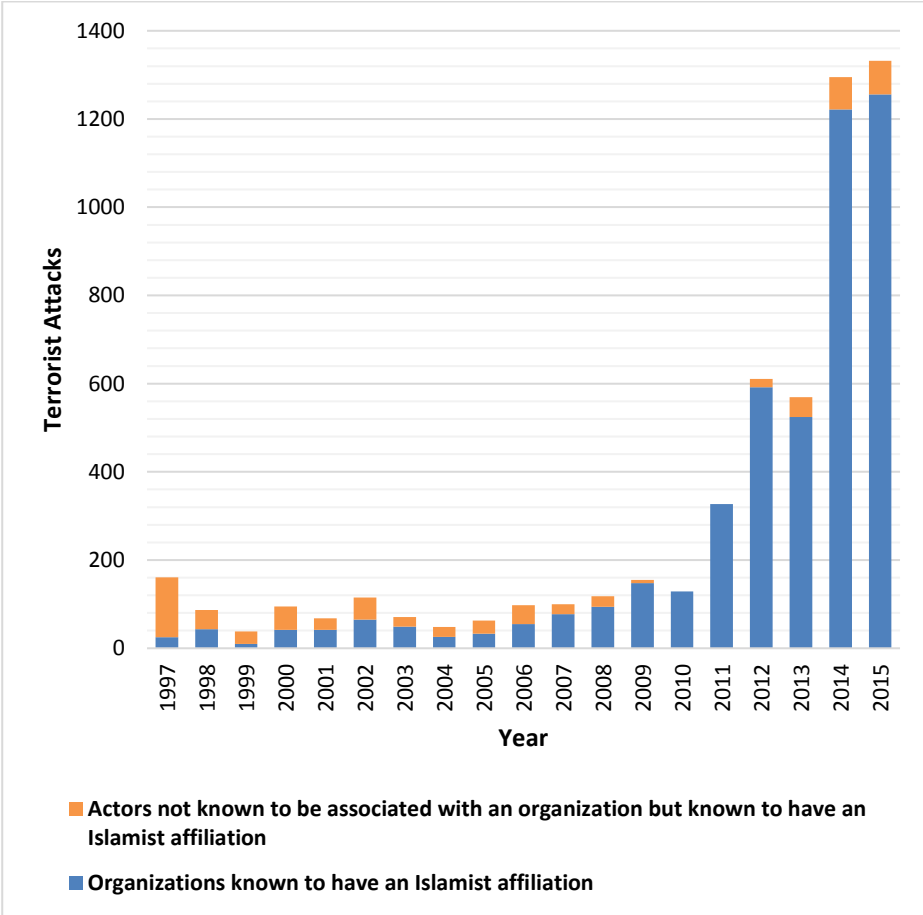
**Figure 10. Terrorist attacks in Africa by perpetrators known to have an Islamist affiliation or those not known to have an Islamist affiliation**




**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

What is clear from figure 11 is that the vast majority of attacks following 2007 perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation are attributed to actors that are associated with particular organizations.

**Figure 11. Terrorist attacks perpetrated by actors not known to be associated with an organization but known to have an Islamist affiliation versus organizations known to have an Islamist affiliation**



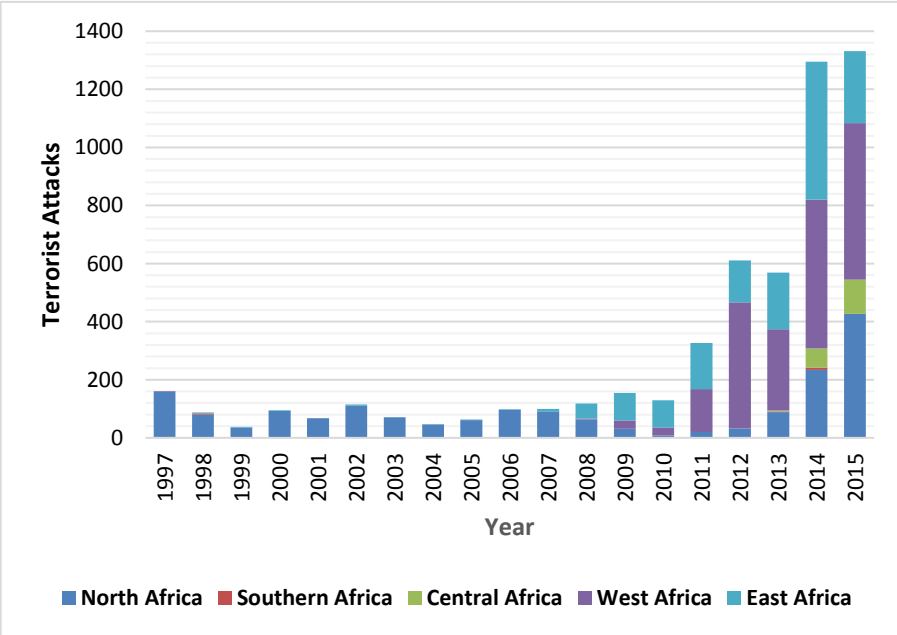

**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

### 4.2.2 Regional Breakdown

Figure 12 breaks down the data on terrorist attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation, by region. Not surprisingly, given religious demographics for North Africa, the majority of terrorist attacks committed by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation during the period studied take place in

this region. Indeed, almost all attacks committed by such actors from 1997-2007 took place here. What is particularly interesting in what figure 12 tells us, however, is that the number of terrorist attacks committed by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation has increased in regions that have historically not been afflicted by these attacks since 1997. There has been an increase in attacks by this category of actors in East Africa (starting in 2008), West Africa (starting in 2009), and Central Africa (starting in 2014). Whereas Central Africa has been largely spared terrorist attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamic affiliation since 1997, this changed starting in 2014, and increased further during 2015. The number of attacks by this category of actors in East Africa has also increased since 2008, as have attacks by this category of actors in West Africa, with a marked increase starting in 2011.

**Figure 12. Terrorist attacks in Africa perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affliation, by region**



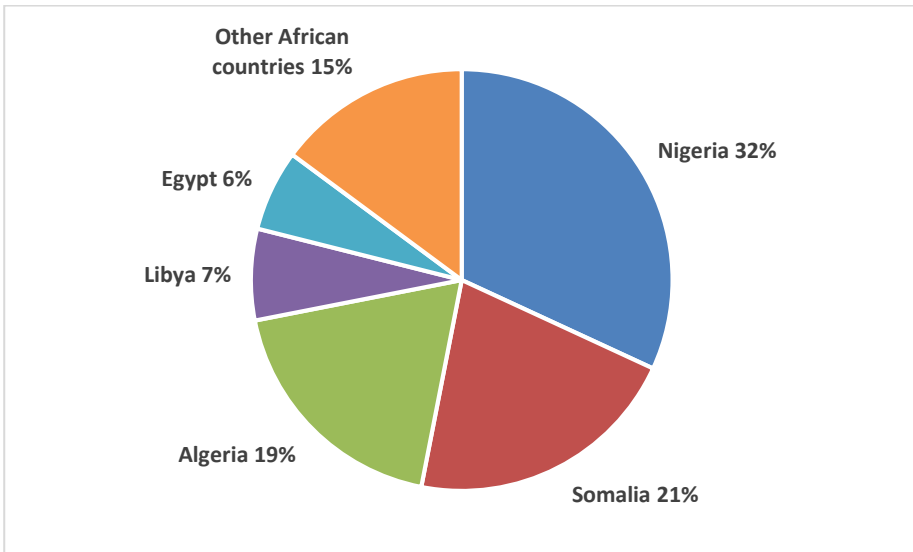

**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

Not surprisingly, the regional trends with regard to terrorist attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation are largely mirrored in corresponding data on attacks by organizations known to have such an affiliation.

### 4.2.3 Countries Most Affected

Disaggregating the data further, to the country level, demonstrates that 85 per cent of attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation during 1997-2015 took place in five countries, namely Nigeria (32%), Somalia (21%), Algeria (19%), Libya (7%) and Egypt (6%) (see figure 13). What this data shows is that terrorism perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation may be more associated with conflicts in particular countries than a phenomena equally ubiquitous throughout entire regions.

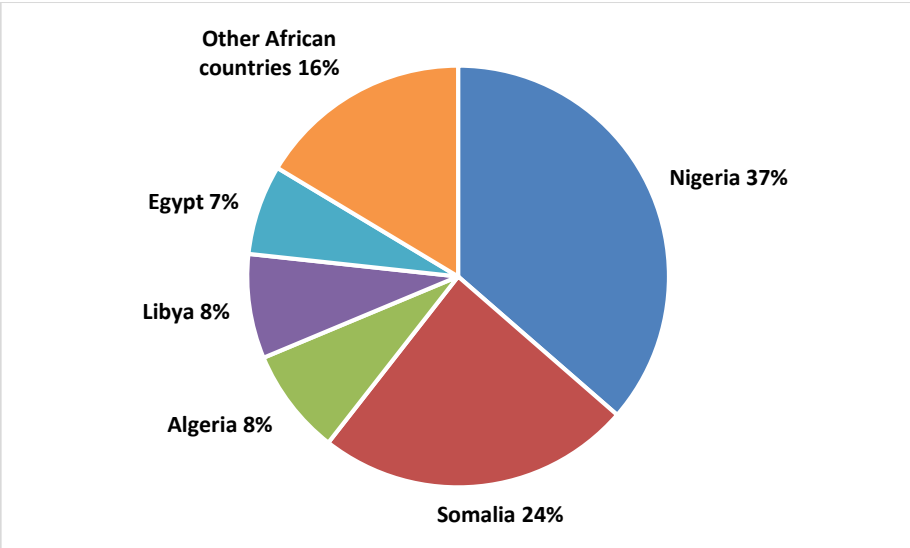
**Figure 13. Countries with most terrorist attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation 1997-2015**




**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

The same countries that experienced the most terrorist attacks in the entire period studied remain the ones most afflicted by terrorist attacks in the period 2005-2015 (see figure 14). During this period five countries again were the location of roughly 85% of all attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation.

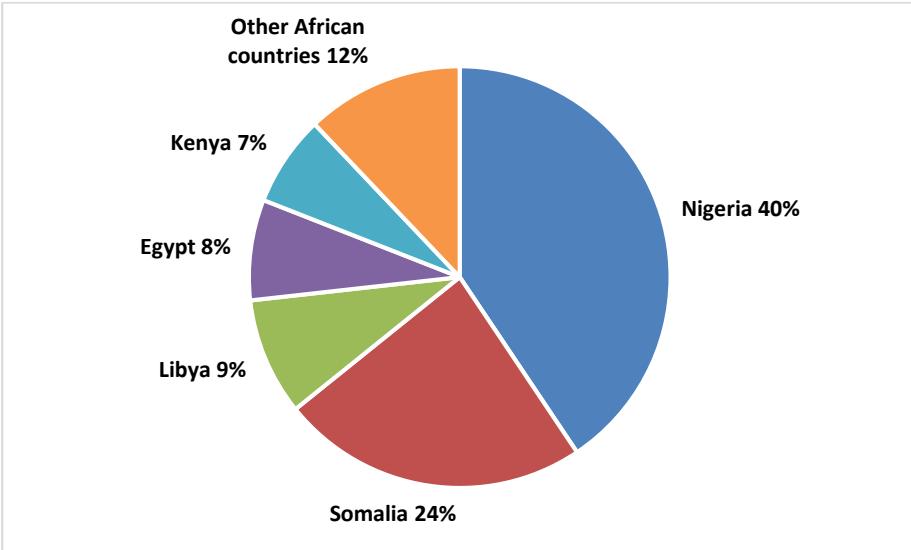
**Figure 14. Countries with most terrorist attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation 2005-2015**




**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

The five countries most afflicted by terrorist attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation remains largely the same in the 2010-2015 period. The one exception is that Kenya has replaced Egypt. Nigeria was once again very afflicted by attacks by this subcategory of actors, being the location of 40 per cent of attacks. A total of 88 per cent of all terrorist attacks committed during 2010-2015 by actors known to have this affiliation in Africa took place in these five countries (see figure 15).

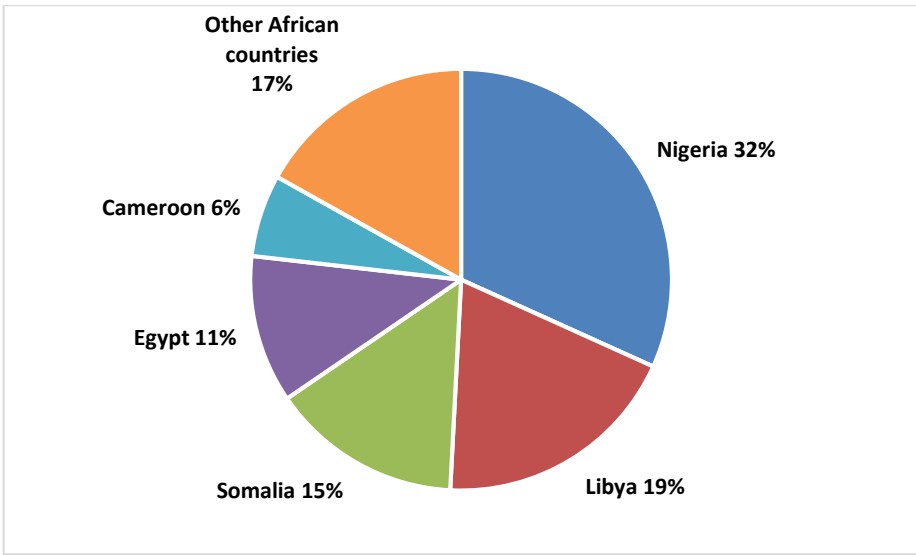
**Figure 15.Countries with most terrorist attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation 2010-2015**




**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

Looking only at the last year for which we have data, 2015, figure 16 below shows us that 32 per cent of all attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamic affiliation took place in Nigeria, followed by Libya (19%) and Somalia (15%). A new addition to the top five afflicted countries is Cameroon, which replaces Kenya compared to the previous period examined (2010-2015).

**Figure 16. Countries with most terrorist attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation 2015**




## 4.3 Summary

This chapter shows several things. First, actors known to have an Islamist affiliation committed a minority of the total number of terrorist attacks in Africa from 1997-2010 but the number of attacks perpetrated by this category of actors has been steadily and markedly increasing from 2011-2015. Fourth, terrorist attacks committed by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation are overrepresented in particular regions, but appears to have become much more common throughout the continent starting in 2009 onwards. Whereas North Africa has historically been the site of most attacks committed by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation 1997-2008, attacks perpetrated by this subcategory of actors have increased markedly in West and East Africa since 2008. Finally, 85 per cent of all terrorist attacks perpetrated 1997-2015 by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation took place in only five countries (Nigeria, Somalia, Algeria, Libya, and Egypt), with more than 50 per cent of all attacks occurring in Nigeria and Somalia.

These two countries were also the site of more than 60 per cent of attacks by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation in the 2005-2015 period. The number increases even further in the 2010-2015 period, with 64 per cent of attacks by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation taking place in Nigeria and Somalia. Looking only at 2015, the five countries most afflicted by terrorist attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation are Nigeria (32%), Libya (19%), Somalia (15%), Egypt (11%), and Cameroon (6%), totalling 83 per cent of all attacks by this category of actors.

# 5 Associations to al-Qaeda and Daesh?

In order to further understand what the data on terrorist attacks committed by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation actually entails, it is necessary to parse whether organizations known to have this affiliation in turn are known to be associated with Daesh or al-Qaeda. This is the purpose of this chapter.

Concern about Islamic terrorism in Africa (as well as internationally) is closely linked to worries about the political aspirations and subsequent activities of the two currently most predominant Salafi-jihadist organisations, namely al-Qaeda and Daesh.[34] Reports of organizations in Africa pledging allegiance to either of these organizations are met by distress in mainstream media and elsewhere, since they suggest that the network of these infamous terrorist groups is expanding widely in Africa.[35]

What such pledges of allegiance really signify, however, is uncertain. Whereas some organizations may be genuinely devoted to the political agenda of al-Qaeda and Daesh, others may be aligning themselves for purely opportunistic reasons, seeking to ride on the reputation and successes of these groups to attract recruits and secure material and financial support.[36] It is beyond the scope of this study to delve further into this topic, but it is something the reader should nevertheless bear in mind when interpreting the data presented below.

## 5.1 Coding Association

For the purposes of this study, and following Miller,[37] organizations are coded as having an *association* to al-Qaeda and Daesh if they are *predecessors* or *affiliated* to these organizations. *Predecessor* groups are those that were part of al-Qaeda and Daesh prior to the organizations' taking their names. Organizations *affiliated*

[34] There is a plethora of scholarly literature devoted to al-Qaeda and Daesh. For a good overview of the interrelated histories of both, see Byman, Daniel. (2015) *Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement: What Everyone Needs to Know.* Oxford University Press, USA.

[35] IISS (2015) "ISIS gains ground in sub-Saharan Africa," *IISS Strategic Comments*, Volume 1, Comment 40, December; Inboden, Will and Anna Waterfield (2016) "What Africa Tells Us about the Fight Against Jihadist Terrorism," *Foreign Policy*, 4 April; Searcey, Dionne et al (2016) "Al Qaeda's Branch in Africa Makes a Lethal Comeback," *New York Times*, 15 March; Gall, Carlotta (2016) "Jihadist Deepen Collaboration in North Africa," *New York Times*, 1 January.

[36] IISS.

[37] Miller, Erin (2016) "Patterns of Islamic State-Related Terrorism, 2002-2015." https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_IslamicStateTerrorismPatterns_BackgroundReport_Aug2016.pdf (Accessed 15 November 2016).

with al-Qaeda and Daesh are those that have *publicly declared allegiance* with either of these two jihadist groups.[38] Needless to say, al-Qaeda and Daesh proper are also coded as being part of this category of actors. Attacks perpetrated by organizations known to have pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda and Daesh are only coded as such starting the year the organizations made the pledge. The reader should be aware that since we have very little information about the majority of organizations included in the dataset, it is therefore possible that the number of attacks perpetrated by organizations associated with Daesh and al-Qaeda is actually higher than reported in this chapter.

## 5.2 Findings

### 5.2.1 Attacks by Organizations Known to Be Associated with Daesh and Al-Qaeda

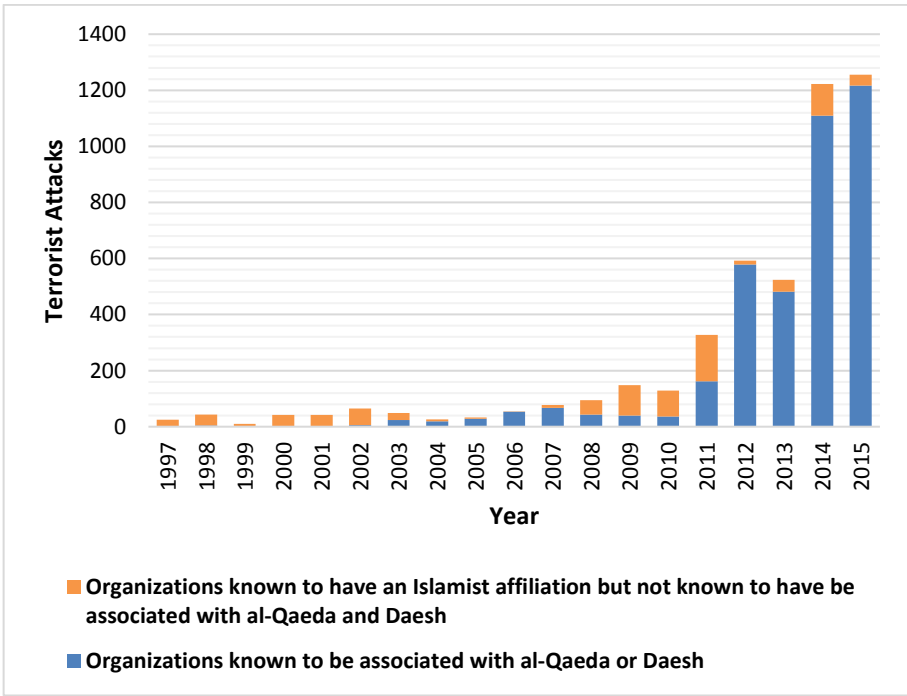
Figure 17 below demonstrates the extent to which attacks perpetrated by organizations known to have an Islamist affiliation are also committed by organizations known to be associated with Daesh or al-Qaeda. As can be seen, from 1997-2004, almost none of the attacks perpetrated by organizations known to have an Islamist affiliation were also known to be associated with these Salafi-jihadist groups. This appears to change starting in 2005, however, with more attacks perpetrated by organizations known to have an Islamist affiliation also being known to be associated with Daesh or al-Qaeda. Not only does data from 2012-2015 show a significant peak in the number of attacks perpetrated by organizations known to have an Islamist affiliation, over 90 per cent of these attacks are attributed organizations also known to be associated with Daesh or al-Qaeda. This is a rather startling development.

Although these figures may suggest that it is indeed organizations known to have association with Daesh and al-Qaeda that seems to be driving the increased number of attacks within the broader category of organizations known to have an Islamist affiliation since 2012, it is impossible to deduce whether this correlation is in fact causal without further enquiry. As noted above, it is beyond the scope of this study to analyse what factors motivate organizations to employ terrorist tactics.[39]

[38] To code whether organizations are associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh, several sources were employed. These include Miller, Erin and Kane, Sheehan (2016) "Global Terrorism Database ISIL Auxiliary Dataset," United Nations (2014), CRS and BAAD (2015).

[39] For more on why actors may seek to employ terrorist tactics, see Crenshaw, Martha (1981) Explaining Terrorism, *Comparative Politics* 13:4, pp.379-399; Goodwin, Jeff (2006) "A Theory of Categorical Terrorism." *Social Forces* 84:4, pp.2027-
2046; Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan (2013) "Rebel Tactics." *Journal of Political Economy* 121:2, pp. 323-57; Abrahms, Max (2008) "What Terrorists Really Want." *International Security* 32:4, pp.78-105.

**Figure 17. Terrorist attacks by organizations known to have an Islamist affiliation but not known to have an association with al-Qaeda and Daesh versus organizations known to have an Islamist affiliation and to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh 1997-2015**

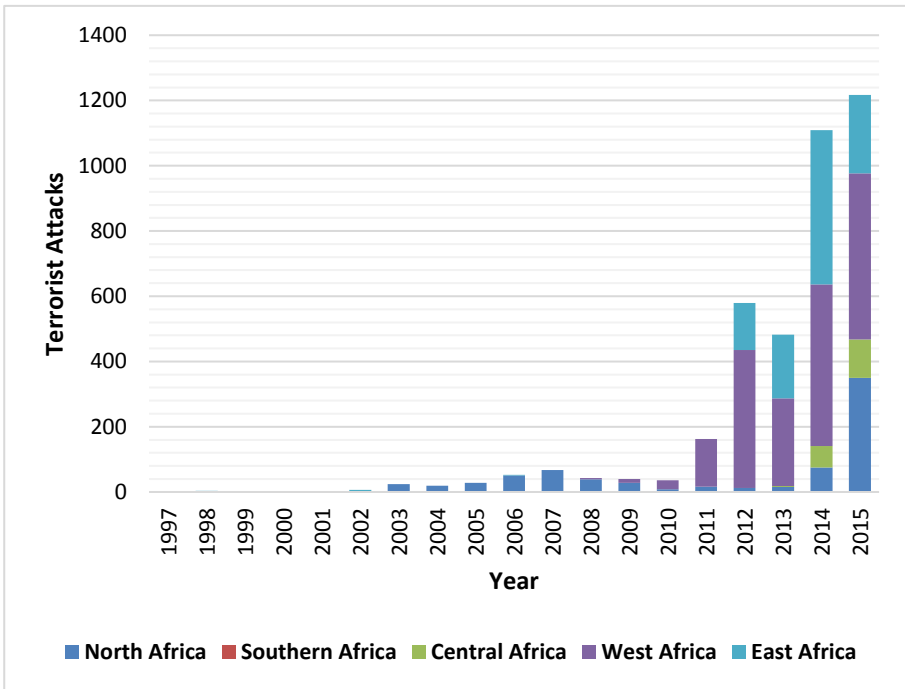



**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

### 5.2.2 Regional Breakdown

In which regions have organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh committed the most terrorist attacks over time? As can be seen in figure 18, organizations known to be associated with these Salafi-jihadist groups committed almost no attacks in Africa from 1997-2002. Those attacks that were perpetrated focused primarily on targets in North Africa from 1997-2009. However, starting in 2010, West Africa has become the location of markedly more numerous attacks by organizations associated with these Salafi-jihadist groups. Overall, since 2012 onwards, West, but also East Africa has been the location of the majority of attacks by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh. A region that has historically (at least since 1997) been largely spared attacks by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh, namely Central Africa, has seen an increase in attacks in 2014 and 2015, a worrisome development. In addition, after a respite from 2010-2013, North Africa has once again become the location of more attacks by organizations known to be associated with these Salafi-jihadist organizations.

**Figure 18. Terrorist attacks by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh, by region**

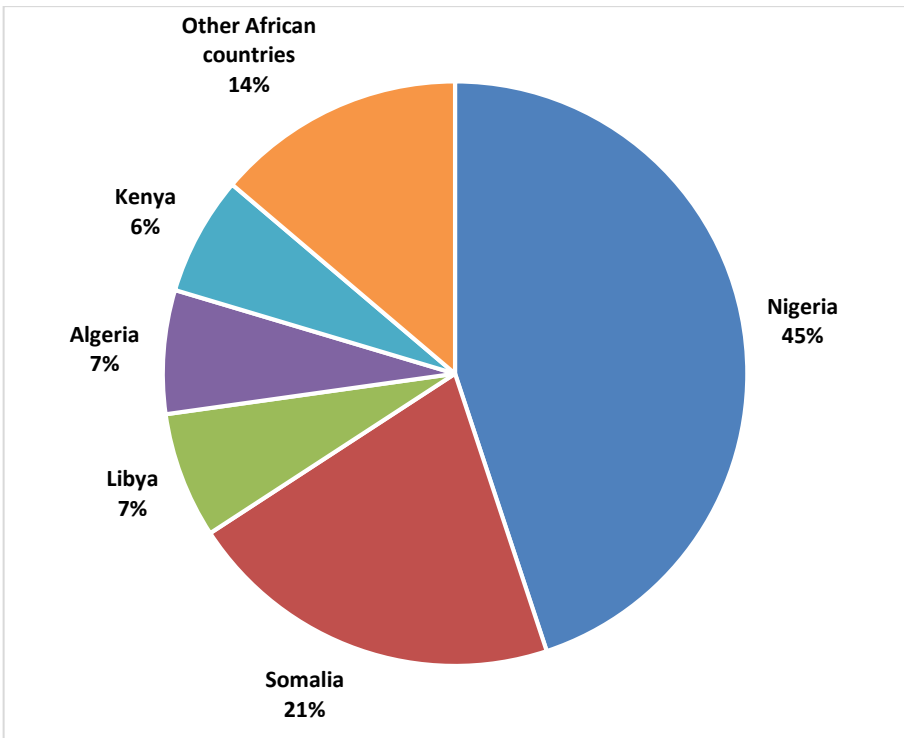



**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

### 5.2.3 Countries Most Affected

Breaking down the data further, to country level, tells us even more about the location of attacks by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh. Since we know that almost no attacks were committed by this subcategory of organizations between 1997-2004, we focus on 2005 onwards. Figure 19 demonstrates that 86 per cent of all terrorist attacks perpetrated by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh took place in no more than five countries, namely Nigeria (45%), Somalia (21%), Libya (7%) Algeria (7%), and Kenya (6%). This data reveals rather clearly that the vast majority of attacks perpetrated by organizations known to have this association takes place in a handful of countries rather than being a continental scourge.

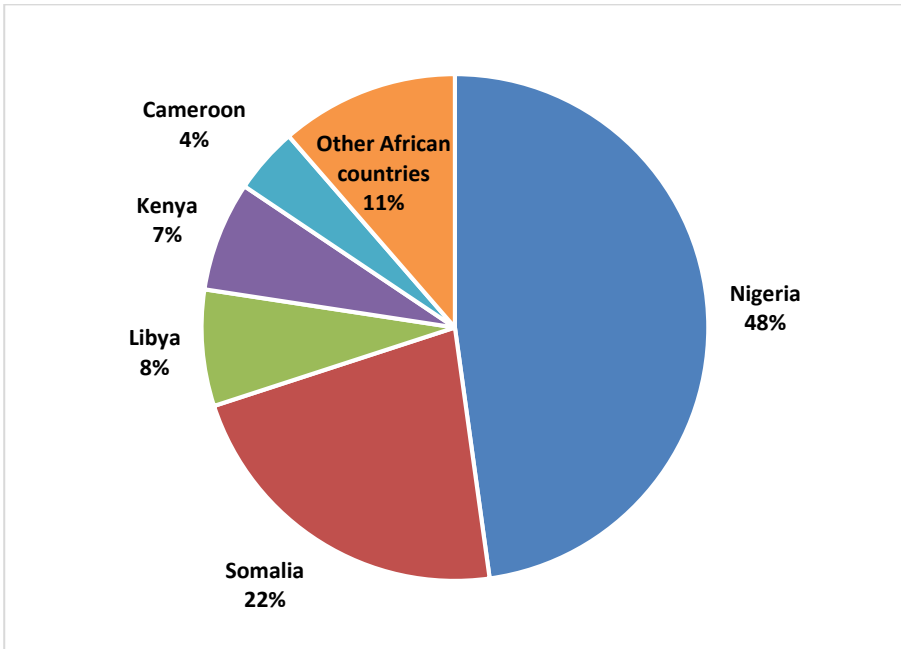
**Figure 19. Countries with most terrorist attacks perpetrated by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh 2005-2015**




**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

Looking at the last five years for which we have data, 2010-2015, demonstrates that close to 90 per cent of attacks committed by organizations known to be associated with Daesh and al-Qaeda took place in five countries (figure 20). These are Nigeria (48%), Somalia (22%), Libya (8%), Kenya (7%) and Cameroon (4%). What is especially startling about these numbers is that 70 per cent of these attacks afflicted merely two countries, namely Nigeria and Somalia.

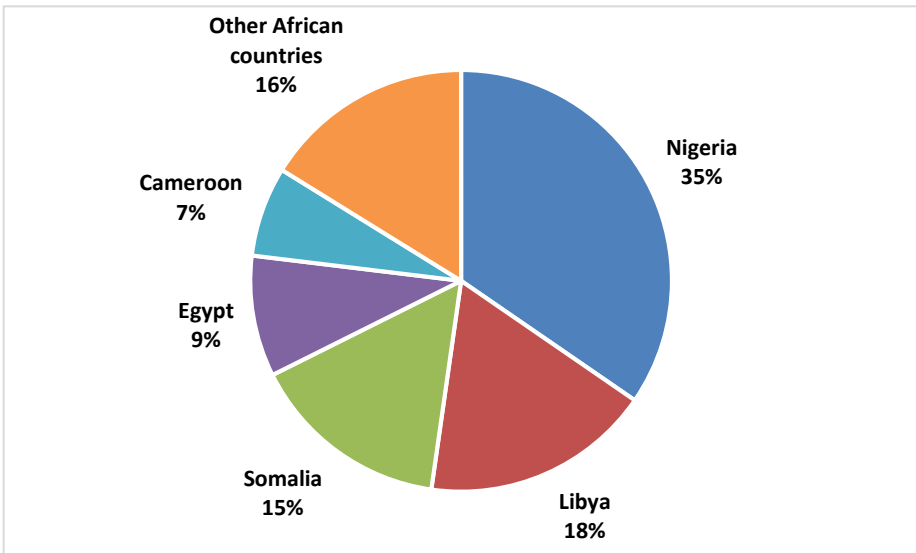
**Figure 20. Countries with most terrorist attacks perpetrated by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh 2010-2015**




**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

Figure 21 shows us which countries were most affected by terrorist attacks committed by organizations known to be associated with Daesh and al-Qaeda in 2015. During that year, 35 per cent of attacks took place in Nigeria, 18 percent of attacks in Libya, 15 per cent of attacks in Somalia, 9 per cent of attacks in Egypt and 7 per cent of attacks in Cameroon. This data demonstrates clearly in which African countries organizations associated to Daesh and al-Qaeda are being most active. Clearly, countries such as Nigeria, Libya, and Somalia are being especially afflicted. Important to bear in mind when looking at the data for 2015 is also that the overall number of attacks committed by this subcategory of organizations was the highest it has been since 1997, which means that the number of attacks these percentages represent are much higher than the equivalent for the other time periods analyzed.

**Figure 21. Countries with most terrorist attacks perpetrated by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh 2015**



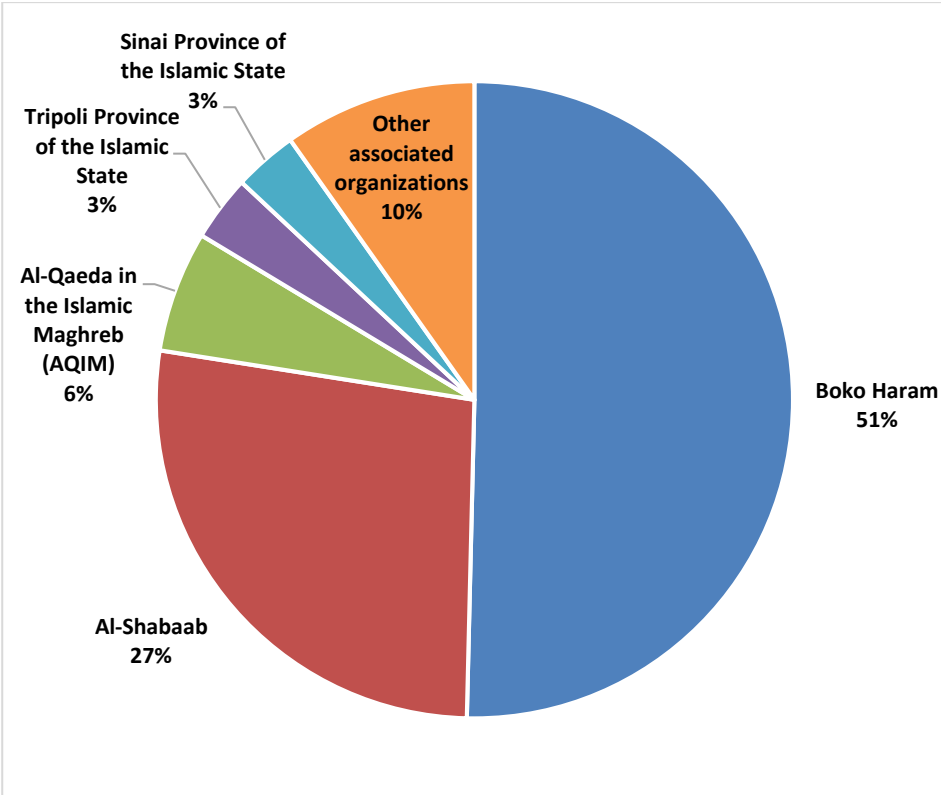

**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

Having analyzed where organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh have been most active over different periods of time, one must now learn exactly to what extent the data is driven by some organizations' being particularly active. This information will in turn be useful to better understand what one should really make of generalized claims about Africa becoming the 'new frontier' for jihadist organizations, particularly al-Qaeda and Daesh.

### 5.2.4 Organizations Attributed Most Attacks

Out of a total of 19 organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh in the 2005-2015 period, 90 per cent of attacks were perpetrated by no more than five organizations, as can be seen in figure 22. These are Boko Haram (51%), al-Shabaab (27%), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (6%), Tripoli Province of the Islamic State (3%), and Sinai Province of the Islamic State (3%). (For a full list of organizations known to be associated with Daesh and al-Qaeda see appendix). What is especially telling about this data is that during this period, two organizations committed close to 80 per cent of all attacks by this subcategory of organizations, namely Boko Haram and al-Shabaab, with the former being by far most active.

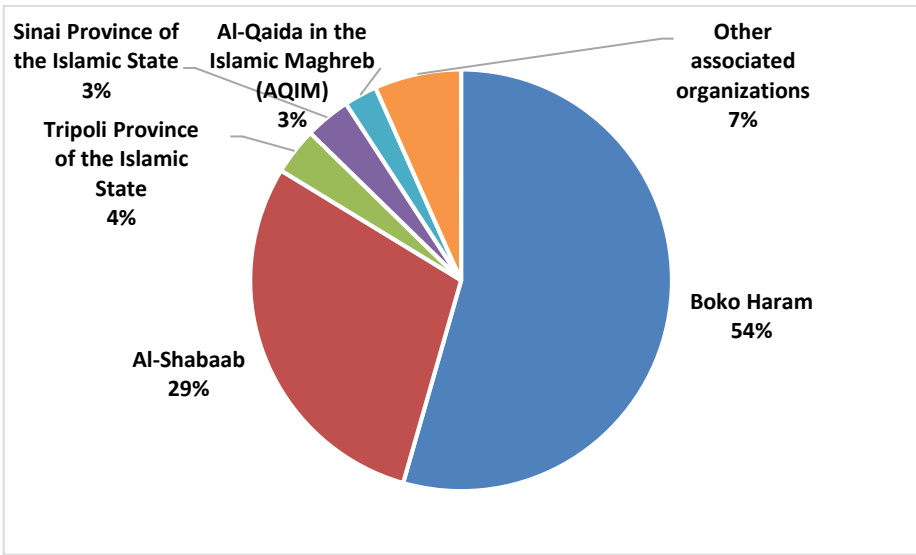
**Figure 22. Organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh that committed most terrorist attacks in Africa 2005-2010**




**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN**

The five most active organizations with known association to al-Qaeda and Daesh are the same if we look exclusively at the 2010-2015 period (figure 23). Two things are striking about this figure. First, no more than five organizations of those known to have an association with Daesh and al-Qaeda are perpetrating 93 per cent of all attacks by this subcategory of actors. Second, the proportion of attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram has increased compared to the 2005-2015 period, with the organization accounting for 54 per cent of all terrorist attacks perpetrated by organizations known to have this particular association during 2010-2015.

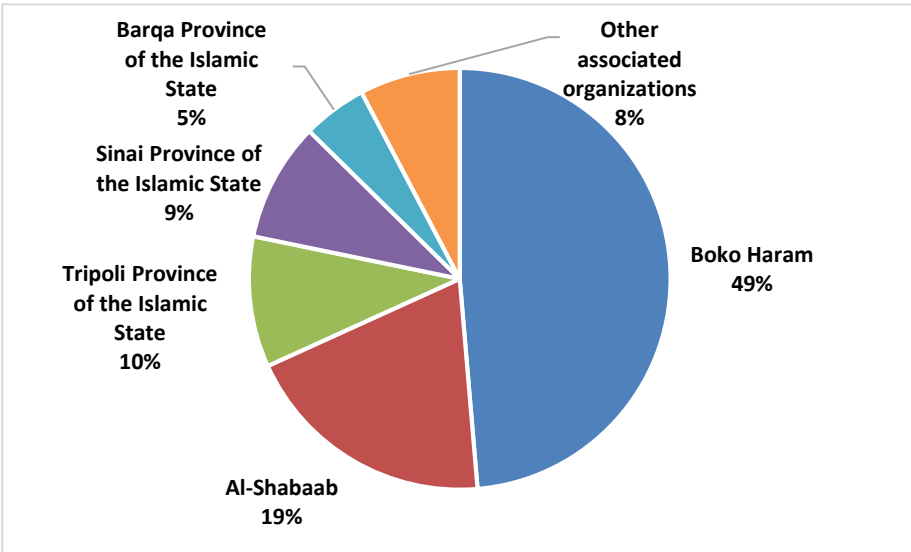
**Figure 23. Organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh that committed most terrorist attacks in Africa 2010-2015**




**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

As shown in figure 24, looking only at the last year for which we have data, 2015, we can see that five organizations – Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, Tripoli Provice of the Islamic State, Sinai Province of the Islamic State, and Barqa Province of the Islamic State – perpetrated more than 90 per cent of all attacks organizations known to be al-Qaeda- and Daesh-associated. Again, Boko Haram was the main perpetrator that year, accounting for the majority (49%) of attacks committed by this subcategory of actors.

**Figure 24. Organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh that committed most terrorist attacks in Africa 2015**

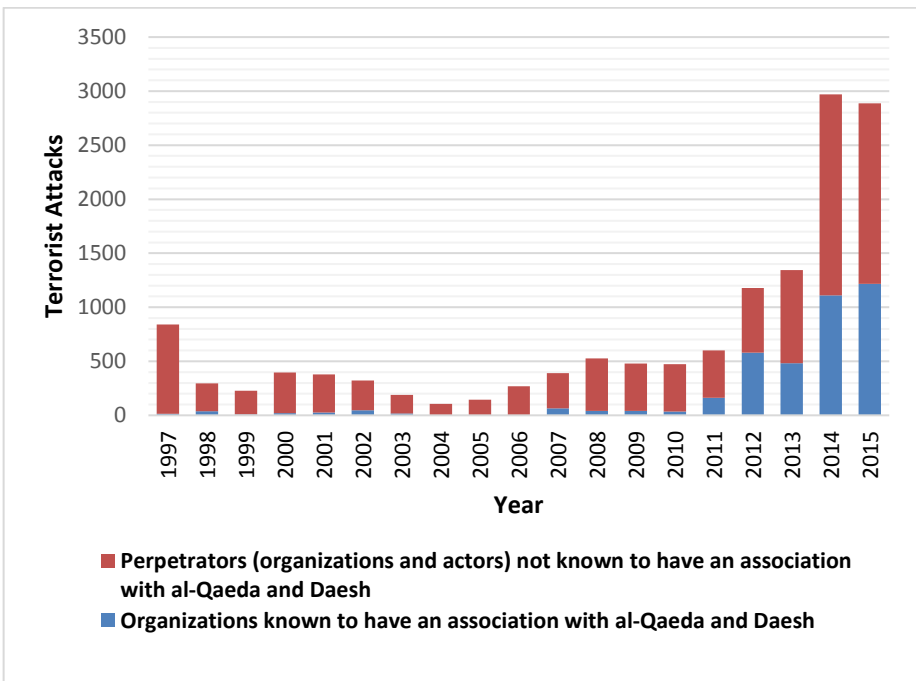



**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

### 5.2.5 Attacks perpetrated by Organizations Known to be Associated with Al-Qaeda and Daesh Compared to Total

Having analyzed data on terrorist attacks perpetrated in Africa since 1997 by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh, it is now important to put these figures in proportion to terrorist attacks committed by perpetrators (organizations and actors) not known to be associated with these Salafi-jihadist organizations. As illustrated in figure 25, terrorist attacks perpetrated by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh constituted a minute sliver of all terrorist attacks perpetrated in Africa from 1997-2010. Yet, starting in 2011, the proportion has steadily increased over time, with a signifiant peak in the last two years for which we have data, when attacks by this category of organizations accounted for approximately 37 per cent (2014) and 42 per cent (2015) of the total number of attacks.

**Figure 25.Terrorist attacks perpetrated by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh, compared to attacks perpetrated by actors (Islamic and others) without known association with al-Qaeda and Daesh**




**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

## 5.3 Summary

The analysis presented in this chapter demonstrates several things that are important to bear in mind for readers interested in understanding to what extent organizations known to be associated with Daesh and al-Qaeda pose a particular security threat in Africa.

First, organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh have been perpetrating increasingly more attacks starting in 2003. Indeed, from 2012-2015 organizations known to have this association perpetrated roughly 90% of all attacks perpetrated by organizations known to have an Islamist affiliation. In addition, the overall number of attacks committed annually 2012-2015 were significantly higher than in any year since 1997. Indeed, we see a particular spike in the number of attacks perpetrated by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh during 2014 and 2015.

Second, organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh have committed attacks in particular regions to a varied extent. Whereas attacks tended to focus more or less exclusively on North Africa from 1997-2009, since then these organizations have increasingly committed attacks in other regions, especially in West and East Africa. More specifically, Nigeria, Somalia, and Libya appear to be the sites most prone to attacks by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh during the time period studied.

Third, a handful of organizations can be attributed to the vast majority of attacks perpetrated by known al-Qaeda- and Daesh-associated organizations. Whereas Boko Haram and al-Shabaab tend to be the organization responsible for the vast majority of these attacks, other less-known organizations, such as the Tripoli Province of the Islamic State and the Sinai Province of the Islamic State have also been among the top five most active organizations.

# 6 Conclusion

This study has found the following answers to the research questions it set out to address:

***Has terrorism become more common in Africa over time?***

Terrorist attacks have become more common on the continent, particularly in the last two years for which there is available data, 2014 and 2015. It is also clear that certain parts of the continent – North, East and West Africa – are more frequent locations of terrorist attacks than others. Finally, when breaking down the data further, to a country level, it is evident that the vast majority of terrorist attacks occurred in a handful of countries – especially Nigeria and Somalia – and that these countries have remained largely the same across the three overlapping time periods analysed (1997-2015, 2005-2015, and 2010-2015).

***To what extent is the trend driven by particular organizations perpetrating many of the attacks?***

Perhaps surprisingly, a substantial number of terrorist attacks are perpetrated by actors not known to be affiliated with a particular organization. With regard to actors that are known to be affiliated with an organization, another finding is that the vast majority of attacks (between 70-77 % depending on the time period studied) are committed by no more than ten out of a total of over 200 organizations included in the dataset.

***What share of terrorism in Africa is perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation and how has this changed over time?***

Actors known to have an Islamist affiliation committed a minority of the total number of terrorist attacks in Africa in the period 1997-2010. But the number of attacks perpetrated by this category of actors has been steadily and markedly increasing from 2011 to 2014. Terrorist attacks committed by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation are also overrepresented in particular regions, but appears to have become much more common across the continent starting in 2009 and onwards. Whereas North Africa has historically been the site of most attacks committed by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation 1997-2008, attacks perpetrated by this subcategory of actors have increased markedly in West and East Africa since 2008. Finally, 85 per cent of all terrorist attacks perpetrated 1997-2015 by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation took place in only five countries (Nigeria, Somalia, Algeria, Libya, and Egypt), with more than 50 per cent of all attacks occurring in Nigeria and Somalia. These two countries were also the site of more than 60 per cent of attacks by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation in the 2005-2015 period. The number increases even further in the 2010-2015 period, with 64 per cent of attacks by actors known to have an Islamist

affiliation taking place in Nigeria and Somalia. Looking only at 2015, the five countries most afflicted by terrorist attacks perpetrated by actors known to have an Islamist affiliation are Nigeria (32%), Libya (19%), Somalia (15%), Egypt (11%), and Cameroon (6%), totalling 83% of all attacks by this category of actors.

***To what extent are organizations that are using terrorism in Africa known to be associated with Daesh or al-Qaeda and how has this changed over time?***

Organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh have been perpetrating increasingly more attacks starting in 2003. Indeed, from 2012-2015 organizations known to have this association perpetrated roughly 90% of all attacks perpetrated by organizations known to have an Islamist affiliation. In addition, the overall number of attacks committed annually 2012-2015 were significantly higher than in any year since 1997. Indeed, we see a particular spike in the number of attacks perpetrated by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh during 2014 and 2015.

Organizations known to have this association have committed attacks in particular regions to a varied extent. Whereas attacks tended to focus more or less exclusively on North Africa from 1997-2009, since then these organizations have increasingly committed attacks in other regions, especially in West and East Africa. More specifically, Nigeria, Somalia, and Libya appear to be the sites most prone to attacks by organizations known to be associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh during the time period studied.

A handful of organizations can be attributed the vast majority of attacks perpetrated by known al-Qaeda- and Daesh-associated organizations. Whereas Boko Haram and al-Shabaab tend to be the organization responsible for the vast majority of these attacks, other less-known organizations, such as the Tripoli Province of the Islamic State and the Sinai Province of the Islamic State have also been among the top five most active organizations.

**Avenues of future research**

This study has sought to provide a preliminary mapping of terrorism in Africa 1997-2015. Its purpose is to serve as a foundation for more in-depth future research that seeks to better understand what accounts for employment of this tactic by organizations in Africa, and how the international community can best counter terrorism from both a prevention and management perspective. In doing so, it seeks to give a more nuanced, disaggregated, and quantifiable view of terrorism in Africa, in general, as well as a better understanding of whether Islamist organizations pose a particular challenge, in particular. Given the answers to the research questions listed above, what do we now know and what remains to be determined?

Although the disaggregated view of terrorism in Africa from 1997 to 2015 presented in this study suggests, as noted above, that a few select organizations are

responsible for the majority of terrorist attacks, it does not provide us with a causal explanation as to why organizations employ terrorist tactics. Indeed, it is imperative that readers remind themselves that correlation between certain variables - be they region, Islamist affiliation, and association with Daesh and al-Qaeda – and terror attacks does not imply causation. In other words, without further study, be it econometric or case studies, one cannot say that any of these factors, although they may be correlated with an increased number of terrorist attacks are causing the trend. Likewise, since this study focuses on a mere snapshot in time, it is impossible to say whether the peak of terror attacks in Africa will continue on an upward trajectory going forward.

The most useful contribution of this study therefore lies in identifying the particular organizations that execute most terrorist attacks in Africa, both those that are known and not known to have an Islamist affiliation and/or being associated with al-Qaeda and Daesh. This information may be useful to policy-makers and scholars interested in understanding what factors influence the overall level of terrorism in Africa in general by suggesting that they would do well to concentrate on understanding the political motivations of these particular organizations, as well as the particular security context in which they operate. Doing so may potentially provide crucial insights into not only the factors that motivate their choice of terrorist tactics and the frequency by which they employ it, but also how best to persuade these organizations, either by diplomacy or force, to abandon this means of political contestation. Although such insights may not be generalizable to a broader population of organizations employing terrorist tactics, such insights may be crucial in developing policy responses to the worst offenders. This would be no small feat considering how few organizations are responsible for such an overwhelming number of terrorist attacks.

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# Appendix

**List 1. Organizations that perpetrated most terrorist attacks 1997-2015**

| Organization | Country of Attacks |
|---|---|
| Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) | Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda |
| Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) | Algeria, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Tunisia |
| Al-Shabaab | Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda |
| Anti-Balaka militia | Cameroon, Central African Republic |
| Armed Islamic Group (GIA) | Algeria |
| Barqa Province of the Islamic State | Libya |
| Boko Haram | Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria |
| Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) | Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda |
| Janjaweed | Sudan |
| Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) | Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda |
| Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) | Cameroon, Equitorial Guinea, Nigeria, |
| National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) | Angola, Namibia, Zambia |
| Salafist Group for Preaching and Fighting (GSPC) | Algeria |
| Sinai Provice of the Islamic State | Egypt |
| Tripoli Province of the Islamic State | Libya |

**Source: GTD**

**List 2. Organizations known to be affiliated to Daesh and al-Qaeda**

| Name | Country of attacks | Al-Qaeda or Daesh |
|---|---|---|
| Algeria Province of the Islamic State | Algeria | Daesh |
| Al-Mua'qi'oon Biddam Brigade /Those who Sign with Blood | Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mali | Al-Qaeda |
| Al-Qaeda | Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, Tunisia | Al-Qaeda |
| Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) | Algeria, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Tunisia | Al-Qaeda |
| Al-Shabaab | Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda | Al-Qaeda |
| Ansar al-Sharia (Libya)/Ansar al-Sharia in Benghazi | Libya | Daesh |
| Ansar al-Sharia (Tunisia) | Tunisia | Daesh |
| Barqa Province of the Islamic State | Libya | Daesh |
| Boko Haram | Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria | Daesh |
| Daesh/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Islamic State (IS) | Egypt, Libya, Somalia, Tunisia, | Daesh |
| Fezzan Province of the Islamic State | Libya | Daesh |
| Free Libya Martyrs Brigade | Libya | Daesh |
| Jund al-Khilafa | Algeria | Daesh |
| Jund al-Khilafah (Tunisia) | Tunisia | Daesh |
| Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) | Algeria, Mali, Niger | Al-Qaeda |
| Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade | Tunisia | Daesh |
| Salafist Group for Preaching and Fighting (GSPC) | Algeria | Al-Qaeda |
| Sinai Province of the Islamic State | Egypt | Daesh |
| Tripoli Province of the Islamic State | Libya, Tunisia | Daesh |

**Source: GTD, BAAD, GTD ISIL Auxiliary Dataset, CRS, UN.**

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