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Transnational Terrorism, Armed Conflict and Fragility in African States

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This is a working paper based on theoretically-informed empirical research on transnational terrorism, armed conflict and the fragility of African states, affecting the peace and stability of Africa and its populace. Comments and responses are welcomed by the author in contributing to ongoing research in this area.

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Abstract

Terrorism has grown and its tentacles extended along various border lines in African national territories affecting the peace and stability of Africa and its populace. Equally, it has led to the proliferation of weaponry and trade in arms with profiteers now finding grounds in many African states. Viewed from this perspective, this paper sets out to examine the evil troika of transnational terrorism, armed conflict and fragility in African states. It argues that while attention is being paid analytically to the opportunistic environment that armed conflict and fragility create for transnational terrorism, this is not translating into effective response strategies. In order for that to happen, experts need to better understand the dynamics between these forces, and space must be provided within the policy debate to consider the interrelationships and how to address them.

Introduction

Transnational terrorism is now a challenge posing serious threats to the collective peace and security of the African region. But in armed conflict-affected and fragile states the threats of transnational terrorism present particular and insidious challenges requiring new and innovative responses. Not only does transnational terrorism undermine the strength of the state, it further affects the critical and often contested relationship between the state and society. Regional efforts in preventing and combating transnational terrorism have a long history. These efforts culminated in the 1999 AU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Transnational Terrorism adopted by the 35th Ordinary Session of the AU Summit, held in Algiers, Algeria, in July 1999, which rejected all forms of extremism and terrorism, whether under the pretext of sectarianism, tribalism, ethnicity or religion. The Convention requires that States Parties criminalize terrorist acts under their national laws as defined in the Convention. It defines areas of cooperation among states, establishes state jurisdiction over terrorist acts, and provides a legal framework for extradition as well as extra-territorial investigations and mutual legal assistance. The Convention entered into force in December 2002 and 40 Member States have ratified it. In order to give concrete expression to the commitments and obligations of Member States under the 1999 Convention and the other international CT instruments, the AU High-Level Inter-Governmental Meeting on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in African states, held in Algiers in September 2002, adopted the AU Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Transnational Terrorism.

While there is now an established correlation between armed conflict and state fragility, much less is understood about the link between transnational terrorism, armed conflict, and fragility. This paper examines the dynamics between armed conflict, state fragility, and transnational terrorism, demonstrating how the three fit together in an uneasy triumvirate, and it presents ideas for a more effective response. Roughly half of all illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons transactions in African states are taking place in states experiencing a range of weak enforcement mechanisms, low levels of economic well-being, insufficient government capacity, and significant societal divisions.

In these contexts, Transnational Terrorist Networks [TTNs] further erode state legitimacy by incentivizing corruption, infiltrating state structures, and competing with the state in the provision of services. Yet the prevalent approach to tackling transnational terrorism, which can be termed a “law-and-order” strategy,

frequently fails to account for the complex dynamics associated with terrorist networks in fragile and armed conflict-affected contexts. This strategy, which is primarily focused on security, sanctions, and the rule of law, is rarely tailored to the needs of African states suffering from severe governance deficits or those with a history of armed conflict. On the contrary, it has the potential to reinforce historical enmities between the state and its citizens, and notions of state power as coercive control rather than legitimate representation. In African states with a history of weak or predatory states, or where faith in "the system" is lacking due to societal divisions and armed conflict, citizens often rely instead on religious, tribal, and many other kinds of networks to fulfil their economic and social needs.

In their efforts to tackle transnational terrorism, regional governments and the African Union should reach out to and engage with these social and economic networks rather than sidelining them and potentially driving them further underground. For example, by expanding the options for legitimate, regulated work and employment, domestic governments can reduce incentives for citizens to engage in the informal economy, increase economic viability, and strengthen resistance to incursions by transnational terrorists. And by strengthening collaboration between state bodies and social networks at the local level, domestic governments and regional organisations can more effectively gather information on shifting terrorism patterns, understand vulnerability, and identify opportunities for building resilience to transnational terrorism threats. Given the scope of the problem and its implications for peace and security, a more sophisticated strategy is needed in contexts where transnational terrorism, armed conflict, and fragility intersect. Regional cooperation and law-and-order interventions must be part of a larger strategy that takes into account the political, economic, and social realities in each context. In the long run, building and reinforcing the connections between state and society in fragile and armed conflict-affected contexts will be essential to undermining TTNs and ensuring lasting peace and development.

Transnational Terrorism, Armed Conflict and African States Fragility

The events of September 11 2001 and the 'Middle East and North African Revolutions' from 2010-12have shaped much of the African regional community's focus in the years that followed. More recently, that attention has begun to shift away from a near-singular focus on armed conflict and violent extremism to other security threats, some of which have been left to linger and even prosper while attention was diverted. Top among these is the impact of transnational terrorism on African peace and security (Bapat, 2011). Expanding illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons transaction routes are threatening African states in new ways, re-invigorating existing networks and creating new ones. Illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons venders are forging alliances with terrorist groups and providing new sources of financing. Transnational terrorists are also expanding intersection lines to include, for example, illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, forged documents, and more (Kwaja, 2012). While violent death from armed conflict has been steadily decreasing since the end of the Cold War, in some African states death rates due to transnational terrorist activity are higher than those experienced during armed conflict (HRW, 2003). Transnational terrorism affects nearly two-thirds of African states in the region today. Yet much remains unknown about the triangular relationship between transnational terrorism and states considered to be fragile or having experienced recent, current, or recurrent violent armed conflict ("armed conflict-affected" states). African fragile states tend to exhibit high capacity deficits, weak

government institutions, and a substantial reliance on nongovernmental and traditional support structures and processes; while armed conflict-affected states tend to have significant internal divisions, depleted infrastructure, high poverty rates, and subgroup hostility toward the state.

These conditions not only create ideal environments for transnational terrorism, but the presence of transnational terrorists also threatens the very process of peacebuilding needed to address armed conflict and fragility (Stewart, 2011). Just as there is an established correlation between armed conflict and fragility (Tull and Mehler, 2005), this paper aims to demonstrate similar correlations between transnational terrorism and armed conflict on one hand and between transnational terrorism and fragility on the other hand, and to show how they all fit together in an uneasy and potentially deadly triumvirate. Similar to the convergence of fragility and armed conflict, there has long been a connection between armed conflict and acts of transnational terrorism. North Africa, Sahel-Sahara and sub-Saharan African regions are now home to the highest number of violent death rates per capita of anywhere in the world. The states with the highest rates are those that have a history of armed conflict that was brought to an end through some type of negotiated solution, including Somalia, Chad, Central African Republic, Algeria, Lybia, Mali, Egypt, Kenya and Nigeria etc (Luttwak, 1999). While the increase in violence has multiple reasons, the end of active violent conflict also fostered environments in which the state was weakened, economic opportunities were few, and societal divisions were paramount.

The process of building citizen confidence in the state is a long one and one that, in some places, is being regionally undermined by actors who have an incentive to maintain weak state functions. The implications of the presence of TTNs is almost as broad as the range of activities they can be involved in: from killing of people to illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Transnational terrorism can undermine governments in a variety of ways, from fuelling political violence to the terrorist infiltration of state structures. In all instances, transnational terrorism strategies affect not only the strength of the state but also the critical and often contested relationship between the state and society. In armed conflict-affected and fragile states in Africa, this poses a real threat to the long-term prospects of peaceful development. Transnational-driven terrorists often operate with ingenuity and speed, taking advantage of any opportunity to pursue their goals. Exploiting societal divisions and forming relationships with actors hostile to the state can be a rational strategy. Similarly, transnational terrorists will seek to exploit opportunities where state structures can be easily co-opted for political gain, which is often where the rule of law is weakest and citizens cannot hold their government accountable.

Ultimately, as transnational terrorism further weakens state-society relations, it undermines stability, legitimate governance, and long-term prospects for peace and development. This paper does not presuppose any causal relationships among transnational terrorism, armed conflict, and fragility. Rather, it argues that while attention is being paid analytically to the opportunistic environment that armed conflict and fragility create for transnational terrorism, this is not translating into effective response strategies. In order for that to happen, experts need to understand better the dynamics between these forces, and space must be provided within the policy debate to consider the interrelationships and how to address them.

The prevailing strategy to date has very much focused on security, sanctions, and the rule of law, including anti-transnational terrorism measures, all of which are broadly defined here as “law-and-order”

interventions. There is no question that these areas require greater investment. However, as transnational terrorism becomes more pervasive in African states with severe governance deficits and contested political settlements, too narrow a focus on law-and-order assistance is not only insufficient, it may actually be counterproductive. In these environments, justice systems are often utterly ineffective, while security forces often have a history of predatory and abusive behavior. Further increasing the strength of systems that are already oriented against equitable, fair, or legitimate treatment for the majority of the citizens could provide fodder for renewed violence or the backlash of a population that may perceive state actions to be biased and crackdowns on transnational terrorists to be a smokescreen for further marginalization of specific groups. If these dimensions of state-society relations are not factored into current discussions on transnational terrorism, overly heavy-handed approaches in these contexts may ultimately do more harm than good. Domestic governments should complement any efforts at fighting transnational terrorism with community engagement and reform efforts that underscore accountability loops to ensure they are not undermining longer-term peacebuilding, and regional actors should encourage this among their partners.

Transnational Terrorist Groups in Africa

"Since the Middle East and North African revolution in 2011, the African regional security organisations have seen a surge in the number of transnational terrorism groups emerging in safe havens of weak, armed conflict-prone states" (Howard, 2010). While one should be cautious about asserting connections between different terrorist organizations and other militant sects in the absence of credible evidence, one should also be wary of arbitrary distinctions and classifications that do little justice to more fluid realities. That being said, there are some linkages between Boko Haram in Nigeria and other terrorists' movements (Albert, 2005). The former has clearly adopted signature tactics of some of the latter: the use of vehicle-borne IEDs in repeated attacks against high-profile public targets, resulting in a spectacular increase in casualties, especially in cases where the bombs are deployed in near-simultaneous or otherwise coordinated attacks. At the very least, the existence of suicide attacks indicates some level of foreign influence since such episodes had been practically unknown in Africa until recent years, when this group became a part of Al Qaeda in the Islam Maghreb's (AQIM) repertoire (Zenn, 2013).

AQIM itself has had a number of Nigerian recruits since the Algerian Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat [GSPC, or the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat] was rebranded as al Qaeda's franchise in the region. This is a fact Abdelmalek Droukdel acknowledged in 2008 when he gave an extensive interview to the New York Times. The group has never hidden its ambition to bring in African Islamists in order to exploit tensions in Africa (Albert, 2005). It is noteworthy, in fact, that both AQIM and Boko Haram leaders (such as Abubakar Bin Shekau) have issued statements complimenting each other and pledging mutual support (Zenn, 2013). AQIM has permitted the militant Islamist groups to employ its media operation, al Andalus (Zenn, 2013).

Furthermore, there is the question of the role currently being played within Boko Haram by the Chadian-born Mamman Nur, formerly third highest-ranking figure in Boko Haram's leadership after Mohammed Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau. In the aftermath of the government's crackdown in 2009, Nur was believed to have gone to Somalia, where he and his followers trained in al Shabaab camps in Somalia and forged links

with TTNs. He returned to Nigeria in early 2011 and was alleged by Nigerian authorities, who placed a 25 million naira [$175,000] bounty on him, to have masterminded the attack on the United Nations building in Abuja. Certainly, Boko Haram spokesmen in Nigeria boasted of their ties with militants in Somalia. These links have been confirmed by African Union Standby forces (ASF) in that country (Interview: Mogadishu, 2011).

One should also keep it in mind that the successful establishment or acquisition of an active affiliate in Africa has been a goal of al Qaeda for some time (Pham, 2007). In June 12, 2006, for example, *Sada al-Jihad* [*Echo of Jihad*], the magazine published by the group that was then al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia, published a lengthy article by Abu Azzam al-Ansari entitled 'Al-Qaeda is Moving to Africa' (Abu, 2011). The author was quite upfront about the jihadist agenda for Africa: 'There is no doubt that al-Qaeda and the holy warriors appreciate the significance of the African regions for the military campaigns against the Crusaders. Many people sense that this continent has not yet found its proper and expected role and the next stage of the conflict will see Africa as the battlefield' (Alli, 2012).

As important as the operational links between Boko Haram in Nigeria and Islamist militant groups outside Nigeria are, so are the rhetorical connections (Zenn, 2013). Abubakar Bin Shekau increasingly draws on narratives used by other violent Islamist movements. In fact, the conflation of local and global grievances has been an important milestone in the evolution of other militant groups – including the GSPC before it was transformed into AQIM – providing the organizations' leaders with a platform whereupon to seek support and legitimacy above and beyond the confines of the struggle they had hitherto been engaged (Marret, 2008). Transnational terrorism interacts with governments in fragile and armed conflict-affected states in a variety of different ways, catalogued here as corrupting, infiltrating, and competing (Goïta, 2011).

In the first case, TTNs buy off government officials to give them the space or consent to carry out their operations. Corruption is part and parcel of many fragile and armed conflict-affected settings, in part because lack of economic opportunities and stable environment provide incentives for short-term decision making and risk taking. A recent study by Annan and Danso (2013) suggests that individuals change their behaviour depending upon their expectations of the future. "When the future is expected to be worse than the present, the incentives move towards living in the present: profligate consumption and reduced infrastructure investment" (Annan and Danso, 2013). For individuals who have lived through armed conflict or domestic violence and other forms of hardship, imagining a future they can invest in can be a real challenge. This has very real implications for both small-scale players in the TTNs and higher level networking agents.

In the context of Africa, Pitcher, Moran and Johnston (2009) argued that patrimonial conceptions of the state, in which public benefits are believed to accrue to individual leaders, reinforce environments dismissive of the rule of law and institutional resiliency. When combined with the incentives offered by transnational terrorist groups, the benefits may be too great to resist. As Witting (2011) will puts it, "They [the terror militias] have millions of dollars and you need to be a saint to reject that." The challenge lies in maintaining the long-term outlook required to shift views and practices while also addressing the immediate need to mitigate the insidious impacts of transnational terrorism infiltration.

The second way in which transnational terrorism interacts with the state is infiltration. Infiltration takes corruption to the next level by capturing state leadership while ensuring the maintenance of the basic state apparatus. Enders & Sandler (2000) describe this scenario as a "criminalized state" in which the leaders of the state are themselves part of the initiative and devote state assets to terrorism. This can also be described as a symbiotic relationship in which state authorities are the initiators of acts of terror in or relationships with terror groups rather than being persuaded, or threatened by terror groups to consent to their activities. In other words, states are not always the victim of a group of criminal outsiders but can be criminal instigators themselves (Enders and Sandler, 2000).

In one version of such a pattern, the state essentially leases out or franchises part of its territory to terrorist groups for production, processing, or shipment. According to Bueno de Mesquita (2005) this type of pattern is on the rise in sub-Saharan and Sahel-Saharan Africa. Whether territory is being franchised or not, a state complicit in terrorist activity essentially makes accomplices of the entire population, individuals negatively impacted by illicit activity have no form of redress in a state where the government not only allows, but promotes the same unlawful behaviour. For the individual, therefore, there is an increased incentive to join the ranks rather than fight a battle that could prompt a government backlash. In this type of scenario the regional community's engagement, whether with state governments or local populations, will be challenging.

The final way that transnational terrorism interacts with the state is through competition. In such cases transnational terrorism networks are directly at odds with the state. Competition can happen in various ways. In some contexts domestic terrorism networks provide services for populations that in other circumstances would be provided by the state. Many groups, from Hezbollah in CAR to the Tuareg in the Sahel-Sahara to the Al-Shabaab of Somalia to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and to the Boko Haram in Nigeria, have competed for popular support in part by providing services to the population. In Africa local "militias" are considered more legitimate than the state in some areas, taking on roles as varied as settling disputes and providing welfare for people (Krueger, 2008). In these contexts the legitimacy of the state is further eroded, particularly if nonstate actors are more effective service providers. When this strategy is being utilized, the state and its regional partners need to work from the ground up to counter the competitive advances. Indeed, attempts to eliminate the competition by focusing exclusively on terrorist leaders and taking a forceful law-and-order approach can do more harm than good. The heavy-handed African Union Counter-Terrorism and AFAMIS-backed raids in pursuit of Al-Shabaab in 2012 did not just result in civilian loss of life – they failed to address the needs of the community that they had controlled. They were not accompanied by attempts to amend the structural inequalities in the society, nor did they help to address allegations of government complicity in illicit transaction (Piazza, 2011). Rather than capitalize on an opportunity to bridge government action with citizen needs and human security, the intervention reinforced the separation between state and society, and may have further weakened prospects for domestic peacebuilding.

Competition can also take the form of direct confrontation between TTNs and the state, as in present-day Somalia and Nigeria. While the terrorism groups' violent methods may do little to inspire citizen support, their overwhelming use of armed force means that they do not need popular backing. This form

of competition undermines the state monopoly on the use of force, and it is likely the most debilitating in terms of citizen security, as people get caught in the cross fire. Egypt, Nigeria, and Mali, for example, are home to a plethora of nonstate armed groups with a complex mix of religious, political, social, and economic interests. Many of these groups are engaged in some type of transactions in unlawful commodities, including small arms and light weapons. Whereas some of these groups have formed alliances with the state, others battle regularly with the state and the African Union Standby force stationed in the different states. The consistency of aggression between these terrorist groups and the state and among the groups themselves for maintenance of control has resulted in an environment that is fundamentally insecure, with devastating impacts on civilian security in particular.

A 2009–2013 mortality survey completed by the International Rescue Committee found an excess of thouasand of civilian deaths since the begining of formal aggressions in 2009 (IRC, 2013). The presence of these transnational terrorist groups has also prolonged grievances and undermined attempts to foster peace and stability while simultaneously diminishing perceptions of state effectiveness. A competitive model often prompts calls from government leaders for additional regional support for their efforts. However, there are trade-offs associated with a strong, regionally supported campaign, both for the national government itself and in terms of how the regional community comes to be perceived by the population. As Bamidele (2013) puts it, “African governments are advancing both repressive and regionalized actions against domestic terrorists in order to avoid taking action on much more tricky issues relating to exclusion, inequality and lack of job creation.” Countries seeking to reinforce their own internal strength by mobilizing external support and using scare tactics risk diminishing broad popular support internally. The way in which the regional community commits to engaging in these contexts can be of paramount importance.

Finally, it is likely that transnational terrorism groups pursue multiple strategies at once in order to ensure the highest level of risk mitigation. Governments are not monolithic structures, and transnational terrorist groups may choose to use guerrilla warfare with some groups and competition with others. The common thread that runs through all the strategies is their ability to demonstrate the vulnerability and weakness of the state, even in relatively strong states, such as Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt, Mali etc. Leaders who have gone through a rational process of analyzing their ability to withstand transnational terrorism may conclude that collaboration with TTNs is the best way to preserve their position and even maintain some level of peace rather than risk a large and prolonged confrontation with a group that has significant resources. Understanding this negative incentive structure and finding ways to address it will be critical for developing strategies to tackle infiltration. As terrorist groups shift into countries with a history of armed conflict or strong internal divisions between state and society, there are two broad concerns: first, TTNs can further enrich groups with historic animosity toward the state, facilitating a renewal of domestic violence; second, by enriching the state through infiltration, these networks can deepen the divide between state and society, exacerbating state fragility and elevating the associated risk for armed conflict. As Fearon & Laitin (2003) articulated, the overlap between unlawful transactions and social crises is more complex today than it has been since the end of the Atlantic slave trade. The next section details how current responses may be insufficient to address these challenges.

Responding to Transnational Terrorism in Fragile Settings

"Regionally, transnational terrorism activities are transforming the regional system, upending the rules, creating new histories, and reconfiguring power in regional politics and economics" (Enders, Sandler & Gailulleov, 2011). Transnational terrorism has been spoken of as a hierarchical phenomenon structured by militias with identifiable and therefore easily targeted leaders. It was thought that if the leaders of these transnational terrorist organizations were captured or killed, the whole system would crumble in turn. Pinpointing leaders was a simple way to describe a messy operation, thereby helping law enforcement agents to easily document and advertise success stories when targets were apprehended or killed. The problem was that this targeting of leaders did not result in actual reductions in transnational terrorism. Rather, terrorism networks shifted, morphed, and adapted. Instead of conceiving of terrorism groups as snakes that one can decapitate, thinking needed to shift to networks as plants with complex root-and-stem systems. Cut one stem and another will grow in its place.

Interestingly, experts and researchers have become much more sophisticated in their understanding and for the most part have moved beyond the simplified unknown gunmen depiction (Drakos and Gofas 2006). Terms such as wheels, chains, and pipelines have been used to describe the intricate systems of interaction between individuals and groups, ranging from highly embedded structures to those with no social support. Even these models, however, at times fail to capture the significant adaptability of the networks, which is what makes networks so difficult to pin down and so resilient in the face of opposition. As our understanding of the complexity of TTNs is advancing, we must also advance our understanding of the ways by which regional actors, particularly dominant powers such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Algeria, Egypt and so on, influence the incentive structures of regional government in their approach to fighting transnational terrorism. Consider, for example, the support Kenya has provided Mali to battle illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons transaction and transnational terrorism. Although it took many months, this involvement helped to tip the scales in favour of the government in their competition with transnational terrorists.

The challenge is that regional attention to transnational terrorism shifts and evolves according, in large part, to short term threat assessments. Regional attention to illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons transactions in Somalia, for example, grew exponentially after the armed conflict in the light of the threat then posed by that country's harbouring of al-Shabaab. As regional dynamics shift, the regional community revised its threat assessments. As Kenya prepares to withdraw from Somalia in 2014, it will be interesting to see whether efforts to fight illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons transaction and transnational terrorists diminish simultaneously. While shifting priorities are a natural facet of regional relations, the challenges resulting from transnational terrorism require more sophisticated solutions in armed conflict-affected and fragile states. Illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons flows are twice as volatile in armed conflict-affected and fragile states as in stable states (Hehir, 2007). This is mainly because sponsors tend to (over)react negatively to signs of instability as a way to manage the risk to their illegal arm sales business.

In African states today, the challenge posed by transnational terrorism is increasingly compounded by the terror-merchandising nexus. It is easy to visualize a convergence of threats as TTNs expand at the same

time that groups utilizing terror as a tactic are taking root. At least five groups considered to be terrorist organizations by the US government are demonstrative of this convergence: al-Shabaab, Hezebollah, Ansaru [JAMBS] and Boko Haram in Nigeria (Madu Onuorah et al, 2013). Regionally, the African Union Counter Terrorism Framework has projected that up to 60 percent of terror organizations are also involved in illegal arms business (AUCTF, 2013). The lesson for policymakers from these findings is that not only are acts of transnational terrorism economically and socially devastating, they can also have significant impacts on national and regional peace and security. However, this information does not tell us what percentage of unlawful merchandising is funding TTNs, and regional actors must be careful about any language that conflates these or risks placing all anti-transnational terrorism efforts in the prism of national and regional security threats rather than national and regional economic threats. Overutilization of a national security prism can help to justify heavy-handed responses that do not appropriately capture the socioeconomic dimensions and can reinforce structural marginalization or inequality in armed conflict-affected and fragile states. This can have very real implications for peace, stability, and development. Powerful actors such as Egypt, Algeria, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa etc that demonstrate an overarching paradigm of engagement based on law-and-order approaches will impact the way domestic governments engage domestic terrorists on their own soil (Young and Findley, 2011).

Finally, a key challenge for regional organisations when tackling transnational terrorism in fragile states relates to the very way the regional community is structured. States are the avenue for communication and collaboration. They are also the unit through which geography is ordered and analyzed. However, in many fragile and armed conflict-affected states population groups do not necessarily respect national borders, which they may view as illegitimate or externally imposed. In order for regional governments to have a strong sense of what is happening within these groups and to ensure that they are working with institutions that have the buy-in of the population, they must move beyond a single-actor model of development and engage with a multiplicity of institutions. The African Union Counter Terrorism Framework, established by the African states in 2004, represents the main regional tool for countering transnational terrorism. Although very important, the Africa command fails to adequately capture the dynamics of transnational terrorism because it does not reflect on the fluidity of transnational terrorist structures. The African Union Counter Terrorism Framework remains rigidly state-centric with a law-and-order focus. As IPI (2012) notes, “These groups thrive in the seams of the regional system, while the regional response has been a state-centric strategy that matches the twentieth century, not this one.” This is not only politically challenging, it also poses significant logistical and human resource costs. However, the risk of assuming the legitimacy of the state and therefore working only through state structures is high enough to warrant the additional toll.

Conclusion

The rise of transnational terrorism in armed conflict-affected and fragile African states reflects dynamics of social disorder, economic opportunism, global integration, governance deficiencies, and historic animosities. Although any single intervention need not address all these aspects, all approaches need to be considered in the light of these dynamics. A decade of concerted thinking about counter-terrorism has revealed that regional governments can no longer apply only a militaristic or state-centric strategy. Efforts should be made to better understand the motivations and incentives that feed transnational terrorism and address them.

This may prompt some difficult conversations, for example, about the importance of social networks in environments lacking in state service capacity or in those with historical patterns of marginalization or state predation. However, these conversations are necessary in order to tackle the massive challenge posed by transnational terrorism. The level of pressure transnational terrorism is placing on the African national and regional system is stretching our collective ability to respond. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the problems outlined above.

Indeed, any efforts to impose cookie-cutter solutions will inevitably be as limited in their effectiveness as previous strategies that revolved around cartel leadership. The very social cohesion that makes networks reliable lifelines in armed conflict-affected and fragile African states can also serve as mobilizing forces exploitable by transnational terrorists seeking to capitalize on rifts within society for their own causes. The exploitation of historical grievances is made easier in African states unwilling or unable to face contested pasts and engage in the kind of conversations necessary to build a common future. In the national and regional security organisation's response to transnational terrorism, these sociological factors must be incorporated if effective solutions are to be found. Areas such as terrorist psychology that look into individual and group patterns of acts of transnational terrorism and the motivations behind them warrant closer attention in the struggle against transnational terrorism. Improved knowledge in these areas may help us to better understand why decisions are made, how they are made and how social networks either resist advances by transnational terrorist conversely are attracted to them and absorb them.

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