

An Approach to Regional Counterterrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa

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ABSTRACT

Terrorist attacks have increased in frequency in recent years; in 2015, almost 80% of attacks occurred in Africa. The nations of Somalia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya are among the "hot spots" of international terrorism. This is because terrorist organisations have ties to one or more of these nations, even if they are not headquartered in Africa. Since 2002, an Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa has been carried out by the African Union. This action plan was designed to show how committed African leaders are to stopping and eliminating terrorism on the continent. However, incidents and deaths linked to terrorism have continued across Africa. While some academics have questioned the political will of African leaders, others blame the continent's rising terrorism on problems like poverty, poor governance, violations of human rights, underdevelopment, and low levels of democratic involvement. This essay shows that a thorough counterterrorism framework already exists by analysing the African Union's Counterterrorism Plan of Action. But in order to retain the regional collaboration required to fight terrorism on the continent, the AU has failed to maintain the political unity and cohesion required. With major ramifications for the execution of the counterterrorism framework, it argues that the difficulties of regional cooperation in the economic, political, and security spheres have hindered the AU's attempts to fight terrorism across the continent.

KEYWORDS

African Union, Terrorism, Counterterrorism, Regional Cooperation and Constructivism

I. INTRODUCTION

Terrorist strikes have become far more frequent in recent years; in 2015, more than 80% of these incidents took place in Africa. Somalia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya are among the nations that have been identified as "hot spots" for international terrorism. This is due to the fact that terrorist groups have ties to one or more of these countries, regardless of where they are located in Africa. The African Union's Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa has been in effect since 2002. This action plan's goal was to demonstrate African leaders' dedication to stopping and eliminating terrorism on the continent. However, incidents and deaths linked to terrorism have persisted across Africa. Some scholars have questioned the political will of African leaders, while others blame poverty, violations of human rights, underdevelopment, and a

lack of democratic engagement for the growth in terrorism on the continent. In order to demonstrate that a thorough counterterrorism framework has already been built, this study analyses the African Union's Counterterrorism Plan of Action. However, a lack of political unity and cohesiveness has prevented the African Union from maintaining the regional cooperation necessary to fight terrorism across the continent. It contends that the difficulties of regional collaboration in the political, economic, and security spheres have hindered the AU's efforts to fight terrorism across the continent, which has significant ramifications for the counterterrorism framework's implementation.

A. *Regional Cooperation in Africa*

Economic interdependence is generally recognised by mainstream ideas as a key factor driving regional cooperation. They do concede, nevertheless, that more economic interdependence does not always translate into greater regional integration or collaboration. Some argue that the material benefits that states expect from trade with one another have been the main drivers of regional cooperation and integration, despite some disagreement about where these forces are located—within or outside the region. These advantages include "reduced transaction costs, policy externalities, economies of scale, technological innovation as a result of increased competition, more foreign investments, and direct economic and political weight in international markets and institutions".

Regional cooperation and integration have given international relations new dimensions, especially after the end of the Cold War. Regional integration promotes growth and development through investment and trade. The fulfilment of supply conditions, which include circumstances where political leaders are dedicated to meeting demands from regional institutions at every stage of the integration process, strong economic gains from market exchange within the region, and a benevolent leading country within the region that is seeking integration and can manage regional interaction and coordinate rules, regulations, and policies are all necessary for a region to successfully integrate. States sometimes lack the resources needed to deal with the increasingly complex global environment. As a result, they need to create an economic network or alliance based on cooperation, adaptability, and common goals and interests.

Most people agree that regional integration could help Africa's development and progress. However, because the continent has been so dependent on industrial states for development money, basic commodities, and technology, its vulnerability to outside economic pressures has hindered regional cooperation. The intellectual underpinning of African integration is pan-Africanism, a political and cultural phenomenon that views Africa, Africans, and African descendants globally as a single entity. The notion of African unity has its roots in the centuries-old idea of pan-Africanism.

According to pan-Africanists, economic progress, poverty alleviation, and peace and security among African nations are all enhanced by the integration of African regions. Nevertheless, despite previous and ongoing attempts to accomplish integration, the political elites' incapacity to do so is the reason why the integration agenda has failed to be linked to the broader problem of the "African Renaissance". Sub-regional, regional, and continental experiences all demonstrate this. Because policy rhetoric and program implementation

appear to be at odds, regional cooperation among African states has been more theoretical than practical. As a result, the evidence contradicts the policy language about the counterterrorism framework of the African Union (Taylor, 2015:332). All African states have shown interest in regional cooperation, but their commitment has not been strong enough. Instead, they have put their narrow national interests ahead of the AU's overall interests.

Challenges of Regional Cooperation and Implications for AU's Counterterrorism Framework
The challenges of regional cooperation highlighted in the previous section affect counterterrorism efforts on the continent in significant ways. These include, but are not limited to:

B. Adequate Funding for Counterterrorism Efforts

Funding plays a crucial role in the fight against terrorism at the national, regional, and international levels, especially when it comes to police training, intelligence collection, research, joint military operations, peacekeeping, peace-building, monitoring terrorist finance, or passing legislation related to terrorism. Without financial commitments that show cooperation, the AU will not be able to carry out its counterterrorism strategy. For example, the ACSRT needs money from "the regular budget and extra budgetary funding sources mobilised by the commission" in order to carry out its important duty of conducting critical terrorism research on the continent (ACSRT/CAERT Report, 2017). An essential component of the strategy for combating the threat of terrorism in Africa is the ACSRT. It is anticipated that AU member states will be able to relate to this research organisation and hire staff for capacity building, research, and training. In addition to harmonising sub-regional practices that may obstruct cooperative and collective security efforts in the domains of terrorism and peace building, this is meant to increase the uniformity of expectations and information.

However, several AU member states argue that they lack the financial means to achieve their national goals. Usually, national priorities come first, then sub-regional, and finally regional. The AU's financial contributions are not given priority right once, which leads to an over-reliance on outside funding sources. This makes it more difficult to adopt policies and decisions quickly. Since combating terrorism necessitates substantial financial resources, the AU will undoubtedly suffer if governments are not financially committed to the cause. The counterterrorism framework may be great, but timely and efficient implementation will never happen.

C. Norm Compliance

When analysing the levels of compliance with the counterterrorism regime in Africa, Whitaker (2010:639) and other scholars have accurately noted that some African governments have embraced the anti-terrorism rhetoric despite international pressure, while others have either been reluctant or have resisted the imposition of the regime. The lack of political collaboration among AU member states affects the degree of norm adherence with anti-terrorism laws. By ensuring that members are financially committed to providing funding, reducing the influence of competing domestic constituencies, strengthening domestic political institutions, and harmonising the government's perception of the terrorist threat, political cooperation is expected to improve norm compliance. When states don't

behave as planned, the AU can't carry out its counterterrorism policies. Sasikumar (2010) asserts that countries must alter their foreign and internal policies in order to comply with the international counterterrorism system. Only if all states have done so will the AU be able to engage with the RECs to successfully implement the counterterrorism framework.

D. Border Policing

According to Spencer (2007), a state's frontier serves as both its first line of defence against terrorism and its last line of defence for maintaining its territorial integrity. While some academics have argued that colonialism plays a major role in the difficulties African states face at their borders, others maintain that colonial cartography has little to do with the high level of insecurity on African borders and that it is largely caused by border management. Although many AU member states recognise the need of border security in the battle against terrorism, they are not adequately monitoring their borders. Small arms and light weapons are more likely to cross national borders unmonitored as a result of this circumstance. The government's weakness and the corruption that afflicts security services make it easier for terrorists to cross borders, traffic drugs and sophisticated weaponry, and propagate extremist ideologies. The incapacity of member states to carry out their obligation to border monitoring hinders the effectiveness of the AU counterterrorism framework. The Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) initiative was started by the United States in 2002 to help nations like Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad put policies in place to protect their borders, fight terrorism, and enhance regional stability. But coordination and collaboration have been slow. Under the direction of the United States, the Trans Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCI) or Partnership (TSCP) aims to strengthen regional counterterrorism capabilities, promote democratic governance and human rights, combat smuggling and trafficking, and facilitate information sharing and institutionalise cooperation among the region's actors (Pope, 2005). Because member nations don't cooperate, the AU is seen as incompetent despite its many internal and external activities.

E. Intelligence Sharing

In general, breaking down institutional (or state) barriers to allow information to freely flow throughout the intelligence community is necessary for the creation of a successful counterterrorism network (Field, 2009). Since terrorist attacks usually involve numerous governments, intelligence cooperation between regional security agencies is crucial to the fight against terrorism on the continent. Groups are also able to organise and carry out actions in one state while staying hidden in another. As acknowledged by Cline (2016), the need for far more intelligence collaboration inside and across African nations cannot be overstated. However, the lack of political cooperation hinders the effectiveness of intelligence sharing. The ease with which weapons are transported over state boundaries and the abduction and trafficking of human beings by terrorist organisations are examples of the poor intelligence sharing among African security agencies. This lack of collaboration causes security forces to rely on outside information instead of real intelligence. When countries put their own narrow national goals ahead of the region's interests, terrorism will continue to spread and grow. Nevertheless, when states cooperate and share intelligence, terrorists will not be able to operate freely on the continent.

F. *Tracking Terrorist Finance and Coordination*

To combat the financing of terrorism, counterterrorism requires real bilateral and international cooperation in the fields of police, judicial, and information sharing, not just rhetorical cooperation. Again, because terrorism in Africa is international, funding must come from a range of sources, including transnational finance. It will need a great deal of political and economic cooperation to identify companies that act as fronts for financing terrorism. Common operating standards are expected to be established under the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Financing, as well as other conventions and treaties. Notwithstanding the international community's implementation of the strategy of monitoring and cutting off funding to terrorist organisations, the Council on Foreign Relations (2013) correctly notes that the political will and governance capabilities of some nations, particularly with regard to non-state actors, make it impossible to adequately monitor and enforce commitments. In addition to outlawing the transfer of funds, assets, or financial services to terrorists, the 1999 UN Convention for the Suppression of Financing of Terrorism seeks to criminalise the provision or collection of funds for terrorists and to set up suitable identification and reporting protocols for financial institutions (Phillips, 2004). Accordingly, the AU plan of action forbids the use of anonymous accounts, establishes the need for financial intelligence, requires the confiscation of movable and immovable assets meant to finance terrorism, and requires training for those in charge of stopping and combating money laundering (Le Sage, 2007). However, despite the complex rules, the effectiveness of the AU framework is hindered by the fact that very few AU member states have modified their domestic laws to include these counterterrorism elements.

G. *Engaging the continents Regional Economic Communities (REC's):*

In order to achieve its goals on the continent, the AU depends on eight (8) RECs in the current integration landscape of Africa (UNECA, 2017). The existence of overlapping memberships and functions is the biggest barrier to coordination and collaboration. This is because, as the ECA (2004) points out, the diversity of REC memberships may be warranted by political and strategic factors, but it frequently obfuscates the goals of integration and fosters unhelpful competition between member states and institutions. Alves et al. (2007) describe it as a spaghetti dish that prevents integration and creates a complicated mash-up of political and institutional commitments. Even while sub-regional organisations' efforts are crucial for regional cooperation and integration, RECs' programs, goals, and objectives should be tailored to the overall well-being of the region to maximise efficiency and impact. Only then will the AU be able to coordinate and implement its counterterrorism framework in a coherent manner, overcoming the challenges posed by overlapping memberships. Furthermore, the differences in histories, cultures, dialects, and developmental stages across Africa's sub-regions complicate the AU's overarching goals and make regional collaboration and integration more difficult.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The main philosophical traditions of international relations, realism, liberalism, and constructivism all confront the security conundrum in the global system. The creation of security communities is emphasised by liberalism and constructivism in particular as a means of addressing the security challenge. Thiam (2008). Within these traditions, we have constructivism's knowledge-based theories, liberalism's interest-based theories, and realism's power-based theories. Power-based theories argue that the distribution of power and the existence of anarchy—the lack of a mechanism to enforce contractual obligations—are crucial because they highlight the importance of relative gains and security concerns to rational agents. Interest-based theories of international cooperation, which highlight the ability of self-interested rational actors to overcome collective action difficulties, primarily concentrate on the role of regimes/institutions in influencing preferences and promoting cooperation. Last but not least, knowledge-based theories of constructivism place a strong emphasis on the function of identity, which shapes the normative patterns of international politics and helps utility-maximizing agents make logical decisions.

"Ideas, norms, identities, and discourses as ideational drivers of regionalism" are identified by constructivist theories of cooperation and integration. According to them, a security community is made up of a number of nations that no longer view using force to resolve disputes as a practical option and acknowledge the importance of regionally shared norms, values, and meaning structures in creating a sense of mutual trust that makes armed conflict unimaginable (Acharya, 2001). They contend that the international system is a collection of ideas and standards that were created by a particular group for a certain objective. These ideas are not static; rather, they can evolve. Constructivism examines international relations from the perspective of personal beliefs, values, and concepts in a larger framework.

It argues that it must take into account the actors' thoughts and beliefs as well as their interactions, rather than being independently of human consciousness (Barnett, 2011:160). In contrast to the restricted state-to-state relationships of conventional diplomacy, it also makes it possible to take non-state actors into account as participants (Barnett, 2011:160). People believe that regionalism is a concept that is always being rebuilt by human collective effort. The entirety of actors' opinions about each other's rationality is known as common knowledge. Along with particular cultural forms like norms, regulations, institutions, customs, and ideologies, this information forms the basis of what they consider to be truth. In the context of successful regionalism, constructivists emphasise the importance of a shared identity, contending that regionalism may fail if the shared identity is insufficient. Since constructivist theory provides a framework for understanding the true patterns and realities of the nature and state of cooperation among AU member states, it serves as the foundation for the points made in this study. This is done to show that the lack of real regional cooperation among AU member states is what is making the AU framework for counterterrorism difficult to implement, not the lack of an effective framework or a lack of interest in tackling the threat of terrorism.

III. METHODOLOGY

A combination of the 1999 OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, the 2002 African Union (AU) Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, and the 2004 Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, the African Union (AU) framework for counterterrorism is examined in this paper. In order to show that the AU's framework has provisions that are in line with global standards for counterterrorism action, it then assesses the provisions in light of the four pillars of the UN Global Counterterrorism Framework. After that, it discusses the intricate topic of regional cooperation and breaks down its difficulties into three main areas: political, economic, and security. This illustrates how the absence of political unity and coherence among African States within these fundamental areas of cooperation renders the AU framework unworkable. It illustrates how these issues specifically affect fundraising, border enforcement, intelligence sharing, and norm compliance, tracking terrorist financing and coordination, and interacting with the continent's Regional Economic Communities (RECs). All of these concerns are deemed essential to the continent's fight against terrorism. The main sources of information for this paper are the African Union (AU), the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) 1999 Convention, the AU Plan of Action for Counterterrorism, the UN Global Counterterrorism framework, publications from reputable organisations like the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the United Nations (UN), and the African Union (AU), as well as documents from other pertinent sub-regional organisations on the continent.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Sasikumar (2010) asserts that cooperation among member states is the only way to combat terrorism in Africa, which is a transnational danger. The AU has put into practice a comprehensive strategy that is based on a set of treaties intended to combat terrorism. These treaties include the 1999 OAU Convention, the 2002 AU Plan of Action, and the 2004 supplementary Protocol to the Convention. These documents' combined contents are intended to improve cooperation in Africa's war on terrorism. Since regional accords, conventions, or protocols lack strong enforcement mechanisms, member states' political will is crucial for regional groups like the AU to fulfil their goals and mandates. Therefore, without regional cooperation it is impossible to implement the AU counterterrorism framework. Regional integration and collaboration have a great deal of potential to improve national security and stability. Since regional cooperation is very developmental, member states should be committed to putting aside rhetoric and pursuing real cooperation. This is especially true when it comes to managing, preventing, and controlling regional conflicts as well as dealing with non-traditional security threats like terrorism.

The difficulties of regional economic, political, and security cooperation are blamed for the seeming deterioration of the African Union's capacity to combat terrorism across the continent. Many detractors choose to continue focussing on the AU's shortcomings while ignoring the significant role that each member state plays in ensuring the continental organisation runs as efficiently as possible. When governments disregard the AU's good governance requirements, it significantly hinders the execution of the policy framework for terrorism. Lack of regional cooperation affects counterterrorism by affecting intelligence sharing, REC coordination, fundraising, border policing, tracking terrorist funds and coordination, and norm compliance. Even though terrorism may be a major obstacle to

peace and regional integration, as Davis (2013) rightly points out, the war on terror offers Africa the chance to create and preserve a unique global position of strategic importance. However, in the long run, a coordinated effort at the national and regional levels is required to fight terrorism. The AU has created a plan that is in line with international frameworks to combat terrorism. Therefore, a claim that there is no such thing as a comprehensive framework is a limited claim. All that is needed by the African Union is the dedication of each member state to go beyond rhetoric of regional cooperation to more tangible and significant action.

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