



CENTRE FOR SECURITY, INTELLIGENCE AND DEFENCE STUDIES



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The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs



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ACSRT/CAERT

African Centre for the Study & Research on Terrorism



POLICY BRIEF

VIRTUAL COLLOQUIUM ON PREVENTING, DETERRING AND DEFEATING INSURGENCY IN AFRICA 27-29TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

Executive Summary

This policy brief shares findings from a colloquium convened by PANAFSTRAG Lagos and the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University in Canada in collaboration with the African Union ECOSOC Cluster on Peace and Security, Addis Ababa, the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, and the Centre for Security, Intelligence and Defence Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa. The colloquium was attended by representatives of regional organisations, research centres and think tanks, academics and retired military officers.

The keynote presentation was given by the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, who spoke on the Geography of Terrorism and Insurgency in Africa: Regional Hotspots and Early Response. This keynote address set the tone for the colloquium. In it, the AU Commissioner drew the attention of the participants to the “Globalisation of Violence expressed in Terrorism and Violent Extremism” which he said is a real, resilient, persistent and expanding threat. This threat is now a phenomenon that has taken over governed and ungoverned spaces in the 5 regions of our Continent including the regional hotspots. In addition to occupying villages and forests, these terrorists and insurgents are now potent threats in cyberspace teaching and preaching the ideology and doctrine of hate and violence and articulating grievances in the quest for community support. This is a worrying trend, that facilitates recruitment of youths.

He highlighted the international ideological and doctrinal role of Al Quaida and Daesh through their affiliates in the Continent. In addition, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, explosives, with its linkages to transnational crime on the Continent is of great concern for national, regional and continental organizations and member states of the AU. Of even greater concern, is the failure of States to effectively counter the past and current efforts of these elements, especially to degrade their will, cohesion, and capacity.

His recommendations were underpinned by two key pillars viz., effective counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategy and post-insurgency reconstruction and stabilization strategy. Along this line, AUC through the PAPS Department and its units especially The African Centre for the Study & Research on Terrorism (ACSRT/CAERT) and AFRIPOL will:

- Prioritize Stabilisation Dialogue



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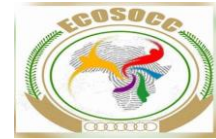


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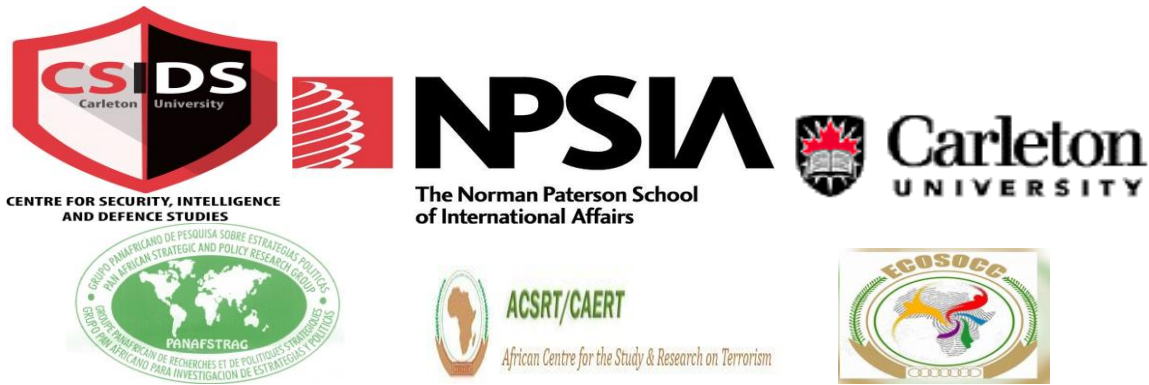


- Strengthen the Early Warning Systems and carry out important innovations in the Early Response System.
- Strengthen Strategies, Communication and Intelligence sharing among Military and Security/Safety Agencies.
- Explore the nexus between Peace (Stability) Security (Safety) and development as central to global Counter-Terrorism Strategies.

He ended his address to all participants by enjoining them to take seriously, and participate actively in preventing, deterring and defeating insurgency and terrorism in Africa.

In the subsequent presentations and discussions, Participants explored the roots and development of insurgency and terrorism in Africa, responses by governments, communities and international agencies, and strategies for preventing and defeating insurgency and violent conflict on the continent. Key recommendations made were for fundamental changes in the structure and mode of governance to guarantee more equitable access to resources, livelihoods, food security, basic education and health facilities in communities; a wholistic and integrated approach to security and law enforcement adopting bottom-up processes that fully involve local communities; and controlling international flow of finances and weapons to insurgents. Concrete suggestions made by participants included:

- Promotion of national and regional strategies and learning about what works and what doesn't by properly funded research centres and Think Tanks such as the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism in close collaboration with Regional Economic Communities (RECs)
- Promoting local African solutions and curbing foreign intervention especially links to international organised crime and hiring of mercenaries.
- Actively strengthening the resilience of citizens and local communities by involving them in all processes of delegitimising war, early prevention of conflict, mediation, dialogue and peacebuilding. AU's Femwise and Youthwise initiatives should be strengthened through active national level organisations and activities.
- Promotion and popularisation of an African Agenda for Peace developed through collaborations between communities, civil society organisations and security forces to encourage citizens to take full ownership of the process of peacebuilding.
- Promotion of research and knowledge sharing on climate change and its impacts on communities and livelihoods to facilitate appropriate policy responses that prevent conflict, including land use reform.



Discussions

Participants agreed on the need to move beyond military approaches and strategies to integrated and community-based approaches to preventing and defeating insurgency and terrorism in Africa. Hard core military responses, whilst initially important to securing or taking back territory, cannot solve the problem. There is a need to invest much more in strengthening civilian prevention and peacebuilding initiatives. They pointed out that the problem of insurgency and terrorism in Africa is rooted in decades of bad governance and impunity which have left the majority of Africans impoverished and hopeless and willing or easily coerced into adopting violence as a means of livelihood and addressing grievances. The key drivers of conflict including perceived socio-economic and political marginalisation, endemic unemployment and the failure of the State in the area of social development thus need to be urgently addressed.

Some participants raised the issue of the impact of environmental degradation and climate change on armed conflict in Africa taking as an example the violent conflicts erupting between farmers and so-called herdsmen in Nigeria. Environmental degradation caused by oil exploration led to a loss of livelihoods by fisher people in areas such as the Niger Delta. In the same way, desertification is leading to a loss of livelihoods by farmers and fisher people in the Lake Chad Basin and changing age old cattle routes going south from the savannah in West Africa. These problems need to be taken seriously and addressed early enough before they lead to violent and avoidable conflict.

The complexity of the situations on the ground were acknowledged with participants pointing out the problem of the pervasiveness of a culture of authoritarianism and impunity both among State actors, insurgents and active community members who usurp and eventually misuse power. Several examples of this were given.

Policy Insights and Recommendations

A hardcore military response to insurgency and terrorism, should focus on stopping the proliferation of arms, taking back territory occupied by insurgents and working with other security agencies, local think tanks and communities to re-establish effective and peaceful control of those areas.

African States need to define their national interests more clearly and create an enabling environment for local military forces to do the work for which they are often well trained. Foreign military support should never replace local responsibility for nation building and regional security and should be restricted to training, logistical and intelligence support as well as monitored sales of modern weapons. African governments also need to fund local Think Tanks and fully utilise the knowledge they produce. Strengthening of strategic communication and Intelligence sharing should be an ongoing effort and priority.



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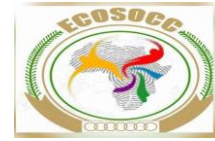


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The root causes or underlying drivers of insurgency including poverty, discrimination and socio-economic marginalisation must be addressed urgently in public policy formulation and implementation. Civil society organisations are an important part of these processes and should be supported to work within and across communities to promote decentralisation of government, entrenching democracy and holding governments accountable. The active involvement of local communities including women and youth in promoting security, mediation and peacebuilding is key to success.

Climate change, its impacts on livelihoods and role in fuelling conflict and insurgency need to be more thoroughly researched and addressed in Africa at the national and sub-regional levels. We need evidence-based interventions to reverse environmental damage and prioritise alternative income streams.

Cutting off financial flows to insurgent groups is an important part of preventing and defeating their operations. There is an urgent need for ECOWAS/Club De Sahel/OECD to prioritise intelligence with all stakeholders to enhance early warning and early response.

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The activities and experiences of cross border traders and communities, in particular, once recognised and strengthened under programs such as AU’s “Pays Frontiers” should be revived to promote collective security and peacebuilding. Their effort can be enhanced with a strategy and practice of establishing a nexus between stability, safety, security and development.

International advocacy efforts should be focused on preventing the creation of a political economy dependent on insecurity and conflict. Delegitimizing war and the globalisation of a culture of peace is a necessary response to the globalisation of violence. Governments, intergovernmental agencies and non-governmental organisations and their representatives should be held accountable for trading in arms and local resources that contribute to the destabilisation of communities, ostensibly in the process of humanitarian support and peacekeeping. This requires breaking up linkages of criminal economies in symbiotic relationship with transnational organised crimes.

National and regional organisations such as the AU and RECs need to promote and celebrate the culture of peace through well planned and articulated programs at all levels, right from primary schools.

Ilumoka.

Dr Adetoun Ilumoka
Rapporteur.