TERRORISM AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN AFRICA – THE FAILURE OF AFRICA’S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT
In recent times, a number of African countries have experienced high levels of terrorism, as well as other forms of armed insurgencies. To these attacks, the affected African governments have responded by unleashing their own forms of terrorism on both the insurgency groups and unsuspecting innocent citizens. More often than not, governments have disguised and glorified their own forms of violence with innocent terms such as counter-insurgency or armed response. In this presentation, I argue that the failure of African leaders to adhere to principles and practices of good governance and their inability to navigate and mitigate the adverse effects of global forces – such as colonialism (both political and religious), world economic trade and fluctuations in environmental conditions, are the two main contributors to the reported upsurge in anti-government disenchantment and armed insurgency, which in some cases assumes the character of terrorism. In these situations, poor leadership has fertilised the African soil for easy recruitment of its youth into militia groups or regional terrorist cells. For many of them, the alternative is to flee from the continent. In the meantime, the damage done to the communities displaced by acts of terrorism, whether perpetrated by insurgency groups or the state is immeasurable.

KEYWORDS: Terrorism, Counter-insurgency, Sub-Saharan Africa, emergence, religion, poor leadership, partitioning of Africa.

INTRODUCTION
My dear wife, my love for you is like corruption in Africa, it shall never end – Anonymous

This presentation examines the very important and urgent matter of terrorism, with a special emphasis on Sub-Saharan Africa. In doing so, I start by looking at the operational meanings of key terms so as to establish a common understanding of what they mean within the context of this presentation. This is followed by a look at how acts of terrorism have affected the world, generally, and Africa, in particular. Having looked at the profile of acts of terrorism around the world and Africa, the question that naturally arises is why these things are happening. I’ll therefore look into this question, through a brief review of literature. The final section of the presentation examines how African countries respond to acts of terrorism, seen against the UN and AU resolutions, and other treaties which attempt to both guide and regulate counter-insurgency responses. Beyond this, the presentation ends with an opinion on what Africa really needs to do to stem the incidence of terrorism.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS
Currently, literature on terrorism is inconclusive on what constitutes terrorism and what constitutes other forms of violence which do not amount to acts of terrorism. Nonetheless, it is important that we establish some understanding of the concept so that we can proceed with this conference – which presupposes that we all know what terrorism means.

The operational term in the word terrorism is terror. The Thesaurus gives some of the synonyms of ‘terror’ as fear, horror, dread, fright, alarm, trepidation, shock, and panic. The antonym of terror is given as security, which is defined as a state of being free from danger, fear or anxiety (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Deriving from the above synonyms of terror it may then be
justified to construe terrorism as pertaining to an event or situation that would induce fear, horror, dread, fright, alarm, trepidation, shock and panic. For its part, the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines terrorism as “the use of violent acts to frighten the people in an area as a way of trying to achieve a political goal.” The Dictionary goes further and gives a legal definition of terrorism as “the unlawful use or threat of violence especially against the state or the public as a politically motivated means of attack or coercion.”

Maogoto (2003: 1) opines that “the term ‘terrorism’ is of French origin and was first coined in connection with the Jacobin ‘Reign of Terror’, a period of the bloody French Revolution in which the French State asserted its authority by knitting a fabric of fear over the populace through the summary executions of thousands.” What makes this definition important is that it acknowledges that terrorism originated from the State, and not from a rebel movement. According to Perry (2004: 250) there are “numerous definitions of terrorism in the scholarship on the topic.” Netanyahu (1986) sees terrorism as “the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends.” The two aspects of this definition are (a) unleashing terror or violence on innocent people, and (b) having political ends for perpetrating the terror. Hoffman (1998: 42) adds another dimension to the definition by stating that “to qualify as terrorism, violence must be perpetrated by some organizational entity with at least some conspiratorial structure and identifiable chain of command beyond a single individual acting on his or her own.” [Emphasis added].

A number of other people have attempted to define terrorism:

“the use of terrorizing methods of governing or resisting a government” (Ahmed, 1998:5).

“an act or threat or violence against noncombatants with the objective of exacting revenge, intimidating, or otherwise influencing an audience” (Stern, 2003: 20).

“the use of covert violence by a group for political ends” (Laqueur, 2001:79).

According to Oche (2014: 2) terrorism “fluctuates according to religion, geography and culture and so cannot be rigidly defined.”

These definitions do not discriminate between terrorism which is sponsored or perpetrated by the State and terrorism attributed to groups and individuals wanting to unseat a government, or realign/rearrange a country’s political composition. This matter is resolved by Alexander (2000) who contends that terrorism is “the calculated employment of the threat of violence by individuals, subnational groups, and state actors to attain political, social, and economic objectives in the violation of law, intended to create an overwhelming fear in a target area larger than the victims attacked or threatened.” In terms of this definition, both the State and individuals / groups outside the State can be perpetrators of terrorism – as Harzenski (2003: 147) avers, “terrorism can emanate from state action” and that it actually often does. It is for this reason that she concludes that “we cannot understand terrorism without paying careful attention to the terroristic capacity of establishing and established governments.” Nonetheless, whatever the definition and whoever perpetrates it, terrorism is associated with widespread human rights violations, including murder, abductions, mutilations, child-sex slavery, and forcing children to participate in hostilities.
One main area of disagreement relates to “whether to treat terrorism as a crime or as an act of war” (Harzenski, 2003: 145). Explaining this point further, Herzenski (2003: 141, in footnotes) opines that the main conceptual difficulty in defining terrorism lies in the contestation between those who believe that “politically motivated violence should not automatically be labelled terrorism and those who believe that the unlawful use of violence to further political or social objectives and/or to intimidate or coerce governments into changing policies is exactly what terrorism is.” As Oche (2014: 2) opines, “understanding terrorism depends greatly on the perspective of the beholder” and that “while a terrorist act, past or present would be seen by one as an act of revolution and ideological freedom, it would be seen by another as a cruel senseless act of ideological violence.” For instance, Third World countries have preferred a definition “which shelters from the label of terrorism the use of violence for self-determination and independence while attaching the label to the use of violence by colonial racist regimes who seek to repress a people’s struggle for freedom; and State assistance offered to fascist or mercenary groups whose terrorist activities are directed against other sovereign nations” (Herzenski (2003: 141, in footnotes).

Indeed, whether to treat terrorism as a crime or as an act of war is one of the debates pervading the literature of definition. The proponents of criminal treatment hold that war is a condition between States; that, with the exception of qualified guerrillas, war is not available to private parties or non-State collectives. Thus, those who favour criminalization of terrorism often desire to “de-legitimize terrorists, revealing them to society as the criminals they really are” (Holmes, 2015). Others favour this approach because it could empower international court action against people understood to have committed acts of terrorism. On the other hand, those who view terrorism as a species of war speak avoid using the word terrorism to characterise groups and persons whom they believe are pursuing legitimate avenues for emancipation or secure well-deserved self-determination, or basic human freedoms which are being denied. Instead, they characterise such military action as campaigns of violence, global battlegrounds, low-level armed conflict and nothing less than warfare (Holmes, 2015).

Perry (2004: 254) surmises that a “review of the terrorism scholarship shows that the lack of definitional consensus can be explained through several different possibilities, including the changing nature of terrorism, sloppy use of the term, and, most importantly, the pejorative and subjective nature of the term terrorism.” For these and other reasons, there is presently no universally acceptable definition of the terrorism. However, this notwithstanding, everyone appears to know what the term means:

With terrorism ... everyone means the same thing. What changes is not the meaning of the word, but rather the groups and activities each person would include or exclude from the list. Everyone uses the word 'terrorism' to mean a kind of violence of which he or she does not approve, and about which he or she wants something done. (Porras, as quoted by Perry, 2004: 253).

So, the problem appears to be that “the very use of the word not only describes an event but also assigns a moral judgment to the act and the actor, a moral judgment, which is nearly universally negative” (Perry, 2004: 252). As such, what one finds is that there is a natural reluctance “to use the term terrorism to describe one's own actions or even actions of those one approves, since terrorism is what the bad guys do’ (Perry, 2004: 253). Accordingly, it is this pejorative connotation
that makes it very difficult for people having different moral affiliations and points of view to agree specifically on who must be included or who should be left out of the definition. As Hoffman (as quoted by Perry, 2004: 253) avers:

On one point, at least, everyone agrees: terrorism is a pejorative term. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotations that is generally applied to one's enemies and opponent's, or to those with whom one disagrees and would otherwise prefer to ignore.

Jenkins agrees, that the use of the term “implies a moral judgment; and if one party can successfully attach the label terrorist to its opponent, then it has indirectly persuaded others to adopt its moral viewpoint” (quoted by Perry, 2004: 253). Furthermore, because of the pejorative connotations which the term carries, the integrity, reputation or social standing of the person who is labelled terrorist is degraded. However, because the labelling of individuals and organisations as terrorists is a subjective matter, the label sometimes comes off – and the affected people’s reputations can swing all the way from being perceived as villains to hero or heroine. As Schmid (2004, in Oche, 2014: 2) states, “the definition of terrorism from a fanatical religious leader will differ from a law enforcement agent.” Perry (2004: 254) sums up these contradictions as follows:

A person or group is politically and socially degraded when described as terrorist, and governments have labeled opponents “terrorists” in order to maintain power. The degradation of the label is, however, not always permanent; at least three former or current leaders of groups once widely considered terrorist organizations have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize: Menachem Begin of the Irgun, Nelson Mandela of the African National Congress, and Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

After considering a number of definitions, Maogota (2003: 6) surmises that terrorism is “the use or threatened use of violence for political ends, or any use or threatened use of violence for the purpose of putting the public or any section of the public in fear, such force being distinguished by its unlawfulness under domestic and/or international law.” This looks like a good definition insofar as it does not exclude any perpetrators of acts of terrorism. For this reason, the current author does not favour the following definition by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) which construes terrorism as “illegal violence by non-state actors designed to intimidate or coerce others, or in pursuit of a political, economic, religious or social goal” (as quoted by Dudley, 2016: 1). In similar vein, the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism (CPPT) defines terrorism as “criminal acts directed against a State and intended or calculated to create a State of terror in the minds of particular persons, or a group of persons or the general public” (Maogota, 2003: 1-2). These definitions fail to hold nation states to account for acts of terror which they may commit. As we have already seen, the word terrorism originated from state-sponsored acts of fear, horror, dread, fright, alarm, trepidation, shock, and panic. So, we cannot suddenly absolve nation states from accountability, insofar as their acts against citizens or insurgent groups could also induce terror, fear, horror, dread, fright, alarm, trepidation, shock, and panic in the minds and hearts of people.

**Insurgency**

The Merriam-Webster dictionary construes an *insurgency* as a rebellion or movement to overthrow a government and, in similar vein, the Cambridge Dictionary defines it as “an occasion
when a group of people attempt to take control of their country by force.” It is not clear from these definitions whether the words ‘rebellion’, ‘movement’ and ‘force’ bear any relation to ‘terror’ or ‘terrorism’.

**Counter-Insurgency**

The Merriam-Webster dictionary construes counter-insurgency as an “organized military activity designed to combat insurgency.” Likewise, the Cambridge dictionary sees counter-insurgency as “military action taken by government to prevent attacks by small groups of soldiers or fighters that are opposed to it.” This definition restricts counter-insurgency to military action only, and sees insurgencies as an act carried out by small groups of people. The Free Dictionary sees insurgency as “political and military strategy or action intended to oppose and forcefully suppress insurgency.” The introduction of the word ‘political’ in this definition suggests that there are other strategies, and not only military, that could be applied to counter-insurgency. In the same light, Wikipedia defines counter-insurgency as “comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes.” So, in terms of this definition, counter-insurgency takes the forms of both civil and military actions.

**Counter-Terrorism**

The theme of this conference revolves around two main terms, namely Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency. This theme gives the impression that counter-insurgency is a way of countering terrorism. As such, it is necessary to also define counter-terrorism. The subtext of this coinage of terms is that terrorism takes place within the context of insurgency – or, even that the two terms are conceptual synonyms. Perhaps the theme of the conference could have read, “Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism” or “Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency.” Most likely, this coinage would have eliminated the current speculation.

The above definition of terrorism states that acts of terrorism can be committed by both State agents and individuals or groups wanting to unseat the State. Logically, this means that counter-terrorism can be carried out both by the State, to neutralize the violence perpetrated by individuals or groups against it – and equally so, by individuals or groups against the violence perpetrated by the State against such individuals or groups. This explains why some people see acts of terrorism as amounting to war. War is a state of conflict between States. In this case, there are two States – the de facto one (the one which is presently in charge of the disputed territory) and the imagined one (the one perceived by the individual or group seeking to unseat the de facto one).

**Extremism**

Most terrorist activities are often reported to be perpetrated by extremists, so it appears important to define extremism. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, extremism refers to “holding of extreme political or religious views; fanaticism” or alternatively, “having beliefs that most people think are unreasonable and unacceptable.”

**THE EMERGENCE OF TERRORISM IN AFRICA**

World-wide, acts of terrorism have become widespread, and Africa has not been spared. As Elu and Price (2015: 1) observe, “African countries have experienced relatively high levels of terrorism.” Figure 1 presents a global picture of how acts of terrorism have affected the world:
Figure 1: The Geography of Terrorism

According to the Institute for Economics and Peace, the five countries which suffer the highest impact from terrorism, as measured by the Global Terrorism Index, are Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan and Syria – accounting for 72 per cent of all deaths from terrorism in 2015. This is what Figure 1 shows. It is clear from this Figure that Africa and the Middle East monopolise the lion’s share insofar as acts of terrorism are concerned. This is worrying, and reasons for this ought to be found – and fast.

Table 1 profiles the top ten most affected countries by acts of terrorism in 2015.

Table 1: Top ten countries most affected by acts of terrorism (2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of Attacks</th>
<th>Main Perpetrator</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Injuries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>2415</td>
<td>ISIS / Al-Qaeda</td>
<td>6960</td>
<td>11900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>1715</td>
<td>Taliban</td>
<td>5312</td>
<td>6249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>Boko Haram</td>
<td>4950</td>
<td>2786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td>Tehrik-i-Taliban</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td>1337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>ISIS/Govt</td>
<td>2761</td>
<td>2830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>Houthi Rebels /Arab States Coalition</td>
<td>1519</td>
<td>2599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>Maoist</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>Al-Shabaab</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>ISIS</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>ISIS</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Source: Dudley, 2016]
From the information in Table 1, one is justified to say that without the 8540 terrorist attacks the world would have had 24,574 fewer deaths and 19,450 fewer injuries in 2015. From Table 1, it is only India and Pakistan which are not part of the Africa-Middle East block of countries. This observation reinforces the point made above, identifying Africa and the Middle East as bearing the brunt of acts of terrorism. Indeed, focusing on the African countries, there were 6725 deaths and 4744 injuries from the highlighted African countries in 2015 alone. With regards to the main vectors of terrorism, the IEP (2016: 1) reports that only four groups were responsible for 74 per cent of all terrorist-related deaths in 2015 around the world, that is, ISIL, Boko Haram, the Taliban and al-Qa’ida. Table 1 carries a similar message.

Figure 2 illustrates the above information, focusing only on the number of deaths resulting from acts of terrorism in 2015.

![Figure 2: Deaths resulting from acts of terrorism (2015)](image)

Beyond the statistics reported in Table 1 and Figure 2, Kenya witnessed attacks by al-Shabaab, which led to the massacre of over 600 people between 2012 and April 2015; the Westgate shopping mall killings of 21 September 2013 which left 65 people dead being one of the worst attacks (Bremmer, 2015). The Garissa University attacks alone, on 2 April 2015, claimed at least 148 deaths and more than 97 injured. In Uganda, in 1997, the Allied Democratic Front threw bombs into taxis and public buildings, killing more than 50 people and injuring more than 160; on 11 July 2010, suicide bombings were carried out against crowds watching a screening of the 2010 FIFA World Cup final match at two locations in Kampala, leaving 74 dead and 70 injured; and on 5 July 2014, several gunmen armed with machetes and spears attacked people in Kasese, Ntoroko and Bundibugyo districts killing 93 and causing destruction of property worth millions of shillings. Still, continuing with a focus on African countries, Wimvincken (2015) presents somewhat different, but equally worrying, statistics about the victims of terrorism in Africa (see Figure 3).
The information presented in Figure 3 shows lower death toll figures than those reported in Table 1 and Figure 2. This is so because the information in Figure 3 was compiled in the middle of November 2015, and did not cover the death toll for the whole year. It is clear, however, that Nigeria is by far the most affected country by acts of terrorism.

Miller reports that the “bourgeoning terrorist organizations operating in these regions include al-Shabaab, which has built up its capacity in the past several years to execute attacks beyond its base in Somalia and into Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, while also signalling threats to Djibouti and Burundi.” (Miller, 2014:1). Miller goes further and states that “Al-Shabaab demonstrated its capabilities after orchestrating an attack on the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi on September 21, 2013, which left 65 people dead.” In the same vein, Solomon (2015) identifies Al Shabaab, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram as being the unmistakable perpetrators of terrorism across Africa. In North Africa, the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), “Al-Qaeda continues to compromise regional security along Algeria’s Mediterranean coast to the Sahel region, which encompasses Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Niger, Senegal, and Burkina Faso.” (Miller, 2014).

Going a little back in history, Miller (2014:1) reports that before 2001, there were no designated foreign terrorist organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa, but that “there has been a resurgence of terrorism not only in Nigeria, but also in Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and a host of other countries on the continent.” The word ‘resurgence’ in this quotation could be misleading insofar as it suggests a rebirth, renaissance, revival or resurrection. To my mind, there was no earlier time when Africa experienced acts of terrorism as currently being witnessed. The African countries currently being affected by acts of terrorism are shown is Figures 4 and 5.
The Janjaweed, Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) are rebel groups that operate in East Africa in Sudan’s Darfur region and coordinate attacks against the Sudanese government and its forces. Joseph Kony and his Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) are still at large in Northern Uganda. Christian militias have organized in the Central African Republic and Nigeria, and several groups have taken up arms against the Ethiopian government. The kidnapping of nearly 300 schoolgirls by Boko Haram on 14 April 2014 in Nigeria epitomised the anguish and horror of terrorism. The event attracted front page headlines and the world’s attention. However, in the case of Nigeria, Miller (2014) points out that “Boko Haram has not been the only terrorist group in the country – having splintered in 2012, forming Ansaru, a militant organization that also fights for the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria. The Ansaru sees itself as the vanguard for the protection of Muslims in Black Lands beyond the Sahel. The group is an Islamist jihadist militant organisation based in northeast Nigeria.
According to Busher (2014: 1) “one of the most striking features of the way terrorism and counter-terrorism have evolved in Sub-Saharan Africa during the last 3–5 years has been the apparent resilience of terrorist groups to increasingly large-scale national and international responses.” Accordingly, despite government counter-insurgency measures, “several of Sub-Saharan Africa’s most prominent terrorist groups have thrived, with Boko Haram resurgent even after a large-scale assault on the group by Nigerian security forces succeeded in killing its leader and around 800 Boko Haram members in 2009, and with the attack on the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi illustrating only too well that Al Shabaab still has the capability to strike beyond the borders of Somalia” (Busher, 2014: 1).

Apart from its resilience, the second attribute of terrorism has been its internationalization character, whereby some national terrorist groups have become incorporated into “regional and even global networks of terrorists and insurgents, and with this an apparent convergence of collective action frames and strategic goals” (Busher, 2014: 3). In this regard, it is said that Al Shabaab integrated into the Al Qaeda network in 2008, and that Boko Haram’s splinter group, Ansaru, is cooperating and comprises, at least, militants trained by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) ((Busher, 2014). Thus, “international terrorism has grown in the region as a result of globalization, the Internet, the rise of new technologies and complex financial networks” (Miller, 2014).

Other international dimensions of terrorism in this region include the enactment of attacks beyond the boundaries of the countries in which they are based; the specific targeting of foreign (and in particular European or North American) nationals; recruitment among diaspora communities by groups like Al Shabaab, a process linked in no small part with the expansion of the online presence of Sub-Saharan African terrorist groups; the various international flows of financial resources that have supported and sustained these groups; and the spread of violence in the Sahel region through processes of international ‘contagion’ and ‘diffusion’ (Busher, 2014: 3).

However, the spectre of internationalisation associated with terrorist groups has been equally matched by counter-terrorist responses of governments. As Busher (2014: 4) points out, “it is not just terrorism activity that has internationalised, but also the counter-terrorism response. Within the international community, the view that has emerged has very much been that ‘this is a global threat and it will require a global response’.” Nonetheless, the apparent homogenising tendencies of these terrorist movements is undermined by “competing interests, ideas, strategic priorities and tactical tastes” as a result of being founded on very broadly conceived ideological parameters. Thus, “while there may be forms of association and collaboration between groups such as AQIM, Ansar Dine, Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa and the Islamic Movement for the Azawad, these groups have articulated different strategic priorities and have adopted subtly different tactical repertoires” (Busher, 2014: 4).

THE UNDERLYING ROOT CAUSES OF TERRORISM IN AFRICA

Many reasons have been advanced by scholars regarding the root causes of terrorist movements and organisations in Africa (Miller, 2014; Harzenski, 2003; Solomon, 2015; Emerson, 2016). Crenshaw (1998, in Oche, 2014: 4) advances six reasons why ‘revolutionaries’ commit acts of terrorism, namely that they want to (a) seize political power in a country or region; (b) influence public opinion and thereby control the media; (c) maintain discipline within the terrorist organization and enforce obedience and conformity; (d) discredit and disrupt the everyday
operations of the government they are opposing; (e) win new recruits; and (f) project an image of greater strength that would be consistent with their numbers. In this section, I argue that there are three fundamental underlying root causes of these so-called terrorist movements and organisations in Africa. The first one goes back to Europe’s partitioning of Africa which was undertaken in such a haphazard manner that free-standing indigenous nations were spliced and merged into untenable new nation states, most of which have failed to coalesce into coherent national and unified identities going deeper than the precolonial identities. The second one is that colonialism has left Africa deeply divided on religious grounds, making it rather difficult, particularly, for Christians and Muslims to see each other as having much in common to develop a unifying and common national identity, beyond these religious affiliations. In particular, the common thread that runs through the agendas of all Islamic jihadist groups is the quest to establish some form of a caliphate or other. This appears to have been occasioned by the collapse of the Ottoman empire, and subsequently the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The end of the cold war that followed the collapse of the USSR ushered in the United States as the undisputed world power – thereby threatening the survival of Islam.

The third underlying root cause of discord instability has been Africa’s curse of poor political leadership; a leadership that can rise above the difficulties of leading several or many previously independent indigenous nations, which were collapsed into one nation state by the imperialists, to have one common and unified future / identity, as well as navigate the usually much deeper divisions caused by different religious affiliations and find common ground for everyone to move forward as one powerful political entity with roots deeper than religious affiliations; a leadership which can lead its nation into economic and social wellness and prosperity which can withstand external manipulations as well as being able to protect the citizenry from adverse effects caused by extreme environmental conditions – such as drought, floods, and others. I shall now proceed to look at these three conditions briefly.

The Partitioning of Africa and Formation of New Nation States

In order to understand the African context and meaning of terrorism, it is important to reflect on the circumstances that have historically led to the formation of nation states. The notion of nation-state revolves around the concept of power which, according to Holmes (2015: 18) is best defined as “a nation’s possession of control of its sovereignty and destiny,” and implies some degree of control of the extent to which outside forces can be prevented from harming the country. Holmes further goes ahead and distinguishes between hard and soft power – where the former refers largely to a country’s military capabilities, while the latter is concerned mainly about “influence—trying to persuade others, using methods short of war, to do something” (Holmes, 2015: 18). In short, Holmes opines that “power is about control.” In this respect, a nation state possesses certain ‘instruments of power’, lying along a continuum / spectrum “from using force on one end to diplomatic means of persuasion on the other.” Thus, a nation state is typified by the country’s “armed forces; law enforcement and intelligence agencies; and various governmental agencies dedicated to bilateral and public diplomacy, foreign aid, and international financial controls” (Holmes, 2015: 18). As such, the notion of variable of power would refer to a country’s “military strength, economic capacity, the will of the government and people to use power, and the degree to which legitimacy – either in the eyes of the people or in the eyes of other nations or international organizations – affects how power is wielded” (Holmes, 2015: 18). Typically, therefore, the
measure of power will depend not only on “hard facts, but also on perceptions of will and reputation.”

Put bluntly, most established nation states, if not all, are children of violence – born of war or some form of armed struggle, or other. Terrorism, as an aspect of war, armed struggle and/or resistance, is nothing other than a weapon in the hands of those who desire power and seek to establish their own state, or those who work to protect and preserve the established state over which they exercise power. As Spencer (quoted in Deflem, 1999: 375), points out, state formation is “a process of political differentiation and integration” involving military action. Indeed, throughout history, military action and conquest have been a common way of establishing nations and sovereignty. All great empires and kingdoms around the world came about as a result of military action and the right of conquest (Balmer, 2009).

In Africa, the origins of the formation of nation states goes back to institutions presently referred to as traditional leadership. Khunou (2012: 294) reports that the origins of traditional leadership in the whole of Africa were almost invariably linked with God. Accordingly, the hereditary chief was believed to be the link between the living and the dead. As such, the traditional leader was “a high priest, and with certain tribes, he may become a god during his lifetime (quoted from Koyana, 2004: 1, by Khunou, 2012: 295). Another view is that “traditional leaders did not come into existence as Rulers”; that they “emerged as leaders, often during crisis such as war or natural disaster”; that “they earned their leadership positions by some distinctive and unique participation and service in the community: that in return, “communities appreciated and acknowledged their efforts by accepting them as their leaders”; and that “it was this type of traditional leadership that became titled offices of headmen, chiefs, and kings.” (Khunou, 2012: 296). Once established, these chieftdoms and kingdoms became very strong rallying and identity-reference points for the people who created and lived in them.

In a kingdom, the leader’s personal power became institutionalised, involving a hierarchy of subsidiary offices; the kingdom hierarchy of authority served to redistribute goods and services to the community, thus reducing the political significance of the kinship; the king commanded labour and decided how and to whom goods were allocated; leadership was more established; mediation was assigned to the hereditary kingly aristocracy, leading to the kinship-based status of the elders being gradually devalued. So, Africa’s socio-political evolution took it to where it was patterned around indigenous nation states, albeit with different levels of organisational hierarchies and sophistication in relation to present-day models of power structuring. In the case of some indigenous nations the attainment of centralized governments under the power of the king or queen became associated with “the legitimised monopoly of the use or threat of force” whenever this was warranted in order to defend and protect the sovereignty of the kingdom (Deflem, 1999: 372). As an example, the development of the Zulu Kingdom in South Africa, was one of the most remarkable and extensively documented case studies in the history of state formation. As Deflem (1999: 371) explains, “the rise of the Zulu empire over a relatively short period of time, its powerful expansion over a wide territory, the overwhelming violence and terror involved, and the brutal European overthrow of the regime have long attracted scholarly attention from historians, anthropologists, and sociologists of African political systems.” Thus, both in the formation of the Zulu empire as well as in its overthrow, the common denominator was the use of violence, or force – which should have terrified many people. Thus, one could say that there was a lot of terror and brutality associated with the formation of the Zulu empire, as well as its overthrow. Therefore,
the application of terrorism is not a new phenomenon, and it is associated with both the nation builders and their detractors. This Zulu example typifies much of what happened in Africa, and the world, generally. What we characterise as terrorism presently must, therefore, be seen in the light of a continued re-alignment of forces, leading to the formation of new nation states, based on people identities.

However, the natural course of evolution of African nation states was rudely interrupted by colonialism. The African continent was sliced into geo-political colonies resulting in nation states put together by the greed which accompanied Europe’s scramble for Africa’s wealth, resulting in the map appearing as Figure 6.

![African Colonies after the Berlin Conference of 1884](image)

**Figure 6: Colonial map of Africa**

By the time the colonial project was concluded the African continent was partitioned into nation states, created in the image, and as an extension, of Europe and bearing European identities (as Figure 6 shows). However, as African fate would have it, these new African nation states were
constituted haphazardly according to the outcome of the European war-mongering and other forms of coercion waged on the African soil, resulting in the conglomeration of previously independent **indigenous nations** (referred to as tribes by the Europeans) into new clusters of nation states that only served the interests of the imperialists. Some of the **indigenous nations** pulled together into these new European-styled nation states hardly liked each other, some hardly knew each other, and others shared many centuries of animosity. The challenge of forging a truly genuine national identity surfaced, and since then, the emergent forced national identities have remained very weak in the majority of cases. Today Africa looks like Figure 7 which, apart from the cosmetic and superficial changes of European identities – like replacing European names with romantic African names, has largely remained intact, with only a few exceptions. The European concept, content and essence of the constitution of African states have largely been retained.

Currently in Africa, as elsewhere, there are three types of States, namely **monolithic or solitary, unitary and federal** (Liuwa, not dated). As the name implies, monolithic states are made up of a single unit, with the characteristic that they are indivisible – that is, they are inseparable. Some of examples of such countries include Algeria, Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Gabon, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Togo, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Unitary states are made up of more than one unit. They come together as a consequence of rigorous negotiations which usually culminate in administrative arrangements typically enshrined in agreements. Their main characteristic is that they can be deconstructed and are, therefore, divisible or can be separated if the conditions that brought them together are not respected, honoured or do not apply any longer. Examples include the United Republic of Tanzania, which was made up of Tanganyika and Zanzibar with Pemba; the Unitary Republic of Zambia, which was made up of the amalgamation of the two former British protectorates of Barotseland and Northern Rhodesia through the signing of the Barotseland Agreement 1964. Ruanda and Urundi were ruled together by Belgium before the attainment of independence. On the eve of independence, the Unitary arrangements were abandoned and each constituent Unit went to independence separately. Cameroon was made up of the Francophone North and the Anglophone South before the attainment of independence. This arrangement has continued after independence; the United Arab Republic represented the amalgamation of Egypt and Libya, which has since been dissolved due to differences in ideological dispensation; Somalia was an amalgamation of the two components of the Anglophone and Italian speaking Somaliland. The English-speaking sector has since pulled out to revert to the former position of Somaliland while Puntland is frantically doing the same; the Sene-Gambia was made up of the coming together of Senegal and The Gambia, which has since been dissolved due to ideological differences. The main point here is that unitary states are free to live together provided the conditions that brought them together are strictly adhered to. Failure to do so could render the unitary system to crumble and no fuss or commotion should be brought to bear on any of the concerned parties, especially the aggrieved one, wanting to opt out.

Lastly, federal states are countries whose governments have agreed to bring their administrative systems together. In a similar fashion to unitary states, federal states come together through negotiations which culminate into signing agreements to guide them conduct their operations. Examples include, the Federal States of Nigeria and the Federal States of Ethiopia. Beyond Africa, the USSR was constituted by fifteen Soviet Republics, while the United Kingdom is comprises in the nations of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland; the United States of America is made of 50 States.
Federal States are prone to disintegration if the conditions under which they were brought together are not observed. For example, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland which had existed following the amalgamation of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, Barotseland and Nyasaland in 1953. The federation was subsequently dissolved upon attainment of political independence for the nations concerned. However, Barotseland was still twinned with Northern Rhodesia. Elsewhere, the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the USSR stand out as classic examples of how a federal state can fall apart.

Figure 7: Map of Free Africa
However, it appears that in Africa, there is always a resentment against efforts to disentangle Unitary and Federal States, even when it is justified to do so. This is a potentially dangerous situation insofar as the cultivation of fertile land for future conflicts is concerned. Denying people their right to self-determination could force them to resort to acts of terrorism. Somaliland has been peacefully running her own government separately from Somalia for over ten years but the AU has chosen not to recognise the independence of Somaliland. The UN is following the AU’s cue. Presently, there is a big problem in Zambia as a result of a decision taken in March 2012 by Barotseland to pull out of the unitary arrangements with the rest of the country. For a long time, Zambia has used military force to silence the united voice of the people of Barotseland people, wanting to opt out of the disabled unitary state and reconstitute Barotseland as an independent country. This wish has consistently been denied through the use of state terrorism – notwithstanding that Zambia, as a unitary state, was rendered moribund and dead by a unilateral termination of the Barotseland Agreement 1964 by the Zambian government in 1969. Since then, by virtue of the unilateral termination of the Agreement, the people of Barotseland have been denied their political rights under the terms agreed to at the time of the constitution of the Republic of Zambia. Certainly, denying the people of Barotseland their unalienable right to self-determination after terminating the terms under which the people of Barotseland had agreed to become part of the newly formed Republic of Zambia will go down in history as one of the most evil and draconian actions ever taken by a government in modern times. Because Barotseland has chosen a non-violent route in pursuing her quest for self-determination, the whole world has chosen to fall deaf to the loud cries of the Barotse people. Since I have a vested interest in the matter of Barotseland I am hereby presenting a map of the Southern African region which shows the location of Barotseland as a once-upon-a-time sovereign state (see Figure 8).

![Map of Southern African Region](image)

**Figure 8: The Kingdom of Barotseland as a nation state**

**Religious Affiliation**

Indeed, the issue of national identity through religious affiliation is critical. As if the haphazard mapping of the African continent as an extension of European identity was not enough damage, missionaries descended on the continent with the carrot-and-stick matter of religion. However, on the matter of religion, the Europeans were not alone. There was also Islamic influence which came with Arabic forms of ‘civilisation’ and trade, whose colonising effect was the same as European
missionaries. In each case, religion was packaged with very clear incentives, given to those who converted to the new faiths, which soon became powerful rallying points for African people’s identities. Soon, depending on the situation and circumstances, it became fashionable for one to affirm one’s identity by saying, “I am a Christian” or “I am a Muslim.” These new identities became quite significant in allowing one to be admitted or excluded from some social circles – and even from jobs or participation in government. It was not long before Christians became suspicious of Muslims – and in some cases hated them, and vice versa. These religions then became part of a family’s inheritance, which subsequently got transmitted from generation to generation – and people are willing to kill others in order to defend and protect these identities. Thus, religion, despite its professed holiness has become a very powerful reason for hate, destruction and evil-making. Presently, it is not uncommon to hear someone say, “I am a Nigerian but I do not like Yorubas”, or “I am a Nigerian but I do not trust Igbos.” Alternatively, one hears sentiments like, I am a Nigerian but I do not like Muslims”, or “I am a Nigerian but I do not trust these Christians.” So, what are these sentiments saying to us about the Nigerian identity? Is there such a thing as a Nigerian identity, or should be countenance several or many parallel but equally valid and legitimate Nigerian identities? Perhaps an even more embarrassing question is, “Why is this country called Nigeria, and who gave it the name?”

In the Christian world, the trauma and shock waves created and propagated by the bombing of a church are huge and, at first glance, unimaginable. People responsible for such an action would, without second thought, be deemed to be excessively evil. But the same must also be true for Muslims – that is, anyone bombing a mosque would be seen as evil in the extreme, and the act would horrify an average Muslim. Much of the conflicts in the world result from people refusing to see each other’s point of view.

In explaining the origins of contemporary insurgency and terrorist activities Harzenski (2003) reflects, not only on the trauma but “humiliation and disgrace” that must have been experienced by the Muslim world since 1918 when the Ottoman sultanate in Turkey was defeated by Western European forces. This was followed by the abolishment of “the sultanate, the Ottoman sovereign, the caliph, head of all Sunni Islam, the last personality to inherit authority through a lineage directly connected to the Prophet Muhammad” by Turkish nationalists when they regained territorial control of the country from the French and British (Harzenski, 2003: 138). To cap it all, the ‘caliphate’ itself, “a rocky but essentially unbroken tradition, a symbol of Muslim unity and identity for thirteen centuries, was eradicated” (Harzenski, 2003: 138). For the Muslims, therefore, the fall of the caliphate is directly linked to foreign imperialists and domestic modernists. Harzenski goes further and makes the observation that, essentially, the world is unified along religious affiliations, and that the notion of ‘nation state’ is relatively new – and is unable to command the same unifying power and strength as religious affiliations. She makes this point by stating that “nation-states and the form of nationalism associated with them are relatively new inhabitants of the world community”, and therefore that “it would be foolhardy to look upon a community united through religion and anticipate an equivalent regard for political affiliations” (Harzenski, 2003: 139).

Harzenski identifies a further issue aligned to the issue of religion, which she sees as being at the centre of current terrorism and insurgency is that, following the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the United States of America (USA) has emerged as “a threatening
monolithic empire.” The view is that the stand-off between the USA and USSR held ‘the balance of power’ in such a way that despite Islam’s diminished influence that accompanied the demise of the caliphate, “a degree of safety” for Islam still obtained. However, the failure of the Soviet system has resulted in the singular and unrivalled power held by the USA, with no compensating patron for Islamic interests. As Lewis puts it, “Middle Easterners found themselves obliged to mobilize their own forces of resistance” (cited by Harzenski, 2003: 139).

In addition, for the Middle Easterners, the resentment against the USA has also been fuelled by other factors, notable among which have been “the international and unwelcomed imposition of Israel; the support by the United States of tyrannical governments; the poverty of many in the Middle East along with the extravagant wealth of others in the same community; the role of jihad in Islamic tradition; the unbridgeable distinctions between strict Islamic and hedonistic Western lifestyles; and the modern history of terrorism” (Harzenski, 2003: 139-140).

Solomon (2015), one of the foremost ‘terrorism experts’, posits that the combination of three main critical independent factors: separatist nationalism, religion and identity are responsible for much of the terrorism the world is currently witnessing. However, there is a different view that the issue of identity encompasses the notions of separatist nationalism (which is an aspect of restoring the pre-partitioned African indigenous national identities) and the formation of new nation states based on religious and political affiliations.

However, not everyone places a high premium on religion as being a significant reason for much of acts of terror in Africa. For example, Isaacs-Martin (2017: 133) argues that, contrary to media reporting, religion and ethnicity play a minor role in the ongoing violence in the Central African Republic (CAR); that, rather, the burden lies squarely “on the government’s shoulders: a succession of questionable presidents who have clung to power by manipulating existing ethnic and religious affiliations and by creating military alliances with a variety of militias that target civilians hostile to the government.” According to Isaacs-Martin, the maladministration and abuse of power have also been characterised by the exclusion of certain groups from political power and the high levels of poverty which have created a perfect storm for rebel groups to prosper, whereas the use of religious discourse has lent a veil of legitimacy to their actions. As such, rebel groups in the country have tended to coalesce through convenience rather than purposeful affiliation. Thus, Isaacs-Martin (2017: 133) contends that the “problem lies with media’s portrayal of the as being fuelled by in the, rather than being fuelled by In this chapter on Séléka and anti-Balaka rebel movements, Isaacs-Martin argues that despite the media’s portrayal of the conflict, religion and ethnicity play a minor role in the ongoing violence in Central African Republic (CAR).”

Nonetheless, many people will believe that the arbitrary European mapping of the African continent into incoherent political entities continues to be a major source of much of the insurgency and mayhem witnessed on the African continent. Indeed, in Africa, one’s Africanness is first defined in terms of one’s indigenous national identity (‘tribal affiliation’) and secondly by religion. Identity by political affiliation is a relatively new phenomenon, and is quite nebulous as people change political affiliations all the time. As Herzenski (2003: 139) observes, “tribal and religious collectives, loyalties, and identities are far older”, and “their strength draws from the deepest possible affiliations known to humankind.” The European nations, which are responsible for this chaos and crisis, must be laughing ceaselessly as they watch us fight for the control of the territories and remnant resources of these new nation states along ‘tribal’ and religious lines. In my view,
this situation has been exacerbated by the AU’s “the principle of the respect of borders existing on achievement of national independence, as enshrined in the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Resolution AHG/Res.16(I) on Border Disputes between African States adopted in Cairo in July 1964, and the Constitutive Act of the African Union” (African Union, not dated: 3). The only provision that exists for territorial and border disputes is between member states, and most of them feel that it is their duty and obligation to keep these borders intact. Insurgents and other freedom seeking movements, which may be suffocating within these sacrosanct borders are not provided for in the charter of the Union – and they must find other ways to achieve their freedom and restore their fundamental liberties. The principle of respecting colonial borders, when they were constituted for entirely different reasons by agents of greed and plunder, resulting in false and forced national identities, is a bad principle. Evidently, this principle has done nothing to encourage the resolution of intra-state territorial and religious disputes on the continent. Instead, this principle has allowed some ill-spirited African leaders to unleash acts of terrorism on innocent citizens that they perceive to be a threat to their cruel regimes, as they continue to plunder the resources of the countries they govern, while labelling those who are opposed to their plunder as disgruntled enemies of the state who are hell-bent on destabilising their peace-loving countries. They commit terrorism in the name of defending, protecting and preserving their countries’ sovereignty and maintain national security. They label those who are fighting for their freedom as terrorists, and external correction of their misdemeanours by hiding behind the notions of being sovereign countries which should be left alone to address their internal, domestic issues. In the meantime, they continue to slaughter those they see as threats to their rule, citing national security concerns.

**Poor Political Leadership**

Miller surmises that terrorist organisations, as well as civil, religious and ethnic militias that use terrorist tactics, have begun to emerge and thrive in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa because of a) political instability, lack of transparency, corruption and weak political parties and leaders hamper democratic governance and the overall economic development – and that the top economic performers have been backsliding as lack of adherence to rule of law, limited freedom of expression, and gender discrimination remain serious issues in all the forty-eight countries; b) the high rates of unemployment and conditions of desperation and hopelessness, which stem from chronic poverty; c) the region’s vulnerability to shocks, such as extreme weather, drought, and economic crises, which create even more instability – especially the Sahel countries, which continue to face food insecurity and hunger. These conditions result in the youth becoming ripe for recruitment into militia groups or regional terrorist cells, as group leaders can entice those living in poverty with goods and services. Unfortunately, this strategy is also popular with political leaders in the region who often use their private access to public resources to command influence, which weakens the state’s legitimacy; d) politics of exclusion – for instance, the fight to implement sharia rule had led to the marginalization of more than thirty percent of Kenyan Muslims, and their exclusion by the central government has left Muslims in the region without a course of redress, compelling many in the region to join extremist groups.

Indeed, the general view from literature appears to be that the apparent upsurge of insurgencies in many African countries is attributed to many factors, chief among which is poor leadership, which is associated with bad governance and governments. Most governments in Africa are associated with the lack of transparency, rampant corruption and disgustingly excessive levels of self-interest, weak and promiscuous political affiliations, flagrant disregard for the rule of law and the shameless
denial of citizens’ basic human rights and freedoms (such as freedoms of expression and assembly), intolerance of alternative views on matters of national importance, exclusion of targeted groups from participation both in governance structures and governments, brutality meted out to political opponents with impunity, gender-based discrimination. As Miller (2014) explains, “weak governments and political instability, conditions of lawlessness and corruption, high unemployment, and susceptibility to environmental and economic shocks have contributed to structural changes in the region that allow for the rise of terrorist organizations.”

Thus, putting it altogether, one may use the metaphor of the three-legged African pot to illustrate how the three factors discussed above fuel terrorism in Africa:

![Figure 9: Metaphorical depiction of the root causes of Terrorism in Africa](image)

African communities affirm their identities first by their *indigenous national identities* (‘tribes’), which bear permanent markers of who they are – and cannot be erased even by religious affiliations. Secondly by they identify themselves by their religious affiliations. The combination of these two identities has become sufficient reason for people, not only of African descent but the world over, to distinguish, exalt and lionise themselves in ways that make others feel demeaned. Added to these two factors is the issue of bad governance and administration so commonly observed across the African continent. Together, these three variables could be used to explain most insurgencies in Africa. So, if it is not for religious purposes, most “terrorist groups” (or freedom fighters) seek to affirm specific indigenous national identities, with a view to correcting the current borders of the African nation states as appearing in Figure 6. Thus, According to Figure
9, terrorism is a function of the three factors of (a) religious affiliation, (b) badly constituted nation states, and (c) poor political leadership – which form the triad of the African pot. These factors fuel terrorism, which remains secure in the hands of its perpetrators, and is transported across borders as required (giving terrorism its portability / internationalisation character).

**RESPONSE OF GOVERNMENTS TO INSURGENCY**

According to Ahmed (1998, in Oche, 2014: 3) there are five types of terrorism, namely *state, religious, criminal, political* and *oppositional*. However, state, religious and oppositional forms of terrorism are usually driven by political motives. So, one can argue that Ahmed’s five types of terrorism can be collapsed into two – that is, *political and criminal*. In literature, the overwhelming motive behind most, if not all, terrorist or liberation movement activities is state formation, either in the form of a new geo-political entity (e.g. South Sudan), or recasting an existing geo-political space to serve a different socio-political agenda (most post-colonial countries). On the other hand, established States are continually worried and concerned about maintaining national security, and are prepared to go to any lengths to fight to preserve it. In most instances, the preservation of national security is associated with the use of force. However, Holmes (2015: 20) cautions governments, particularly the defence, police and other security forces, that not everything is a matter of national security; that the definition of national security “should be guided not only by a sensible understanding of what is truly vital to the nation’s security, but also by what the nation can practically expect the government to do and not to do.” In attempting to explain **what national security is not**, Holmes (2015: 20) states that national security is not something that merely affects the well-being of people, but rather security must involve “their safety, their security, and their freedoms.” For instance, Holmes (2015: 21) makes the point that “perceptions of social injustice or inequality are domestic concerns, not national security matters.” In the same vein, “a similar distinction holds true for so-called health security” in the sense that while a pandemic disease could endanger the safety and security of thousands of the people in a given country, unless such a pandemic was caused by “an act of biological terrorism, it should be considered a matter of health and domestic safety, not national security.” Thus, Holmes (2015: 23) defines national security as “the safekeeping of the nation as a whole. Its highest order of business is the protection of the nation and its people from attack and other external dangers by maintaining armed forces and guarding state secrets.”

The issue of national security relates to the justification of counter-insurgency on the grounds of self-defence. In this regard, Maogota (2003: 32) explains that although, conceptually, there is little dispute concerning the right to exercise the doctrine of self-defence, “the difficulty lies in the determination of those conditions which justify the use of military power – insofar as this requires “an assessment of whether there is actual necessity, whether there is demonstrable justification, and whether the military instrument can be used in a manner proportionate to the threat.” Thus, Maogota (2003: 32) suggests that self-defence claims must be appraised in the full context in which they occur, taking into consideration the issue of whether force can be considered necessary if peaceful measures are available to lessen the threat; that once a terrorist attack has occurred, any military response contemplated and taken “should meet the legal criteria of necessity and proportionate use of force.” (Maogota, 2003: 33).
With regard to the UN, its primary goal is to prevent war by working with the various political systems of the world to mitigate any conflicts that may arise between or among States. To ensure this, the UN has outlawed a wide range of uses of force – and has defined “permissible and lawful uses of force” (Maogota, 2003: 2). However, the UN has been incapacitated by its inability to conceptualise and coin an operational definition of terrorism which would then enable it to develop mechanisms to deal effectively with incidents of terrorism whenever they rear their ugly heads. As Maogota (2003: 2-3) observes, “to date efforts by the UN to draft a single broad definition of terrorism acceptable to all States, such as that found in the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism, have failed.”

So, instead of being guided by one clearly accepted definition of terrorism, States have resorted to bilateral agreements as well as Conventions whereby “the most common types of terrorism covered by these conventions include crimes against the safety of civil aviation and maritime navigation, the taking of hostages, the use of nuclear and chemical weapons, and crimes against internationally protected persons” (Maogota, 2003: 3). Maogota further explains that:

… the international community has taken a piecemeal approach and addressed the problem of international terrorism by identifying particular criminal acts inherently terrorist in nature to be prevented and punished by domestic law. The result has been the adoption of a number of global treaties, regional conventions, and bilateral agreements, which are relevant to the suppression of international terrorism, and corresponding domestic laws, which implement those arrangements. (p. 5).

The UN’s difficulty in agreeing on a definition for terrorism has mainly been caused by some of the so-called big nations, which sponsor and/or support terrorism. As such, the UN has chosen “to ignore using the word terrorism choosing instead to classify the activities of States who send, organize, or support ‘armed bands, groups, irregulars, or mercenaries, which carry out acts of armed force against a State . . .’ as engaging in unlawful aggression in direct violation of the UN Charter and not as terrorism” (Maogota, 2003: 3). What has been comforting, however, is the General Assembly Resolution 40/61 of 9 December 1985, which in the first paragraph, calls upon “all States to fulfil their obligations under international law to refrain from organizing, instigating, assisting or participating in terrorist acts in other States, or acquiescing in activities within their territory directed towards the commission of such acts” – and unequivocally condemns, as criminal, all acts, methods and practices of terrorism wherever and by whomever committed (Maogota, 2003: 4). This is a very important resolution insofar as it condemns all forms of ‘criminal’ acts – whether committed by a deranged individual, by a group of individuals or a State. However, the question of what constitutes terrorism, as opposed to mere acts of criminality still lingers. One is left still yearning for a UN definition which will signal unequivocally that terrorism is terrorism, whether committed by an individual, a group of individuals or a State.

In combating insurgency, most governments have committed violent and indiscriminate acts of terrorism, primarily aimed at the insurgents, but in the process resulting in indiscriminate killings of innocent people. Busher (2014: 5-6) makes this observation as follows:

Anxieties about and suspicion of ‘counter-terrorism’ also derive from abuses of power carried out in the name of public order and counter-terrorism within some contemporary regimes. In spite of the criticisms of contemporary domestic counter-terrorism in democratic western states, and there
are plenty of criticisms that can and have been made, these are usually pale in comparison alongside, for example, the excesses reported in Kenya in the aftermath of the Westgate attacks, or with claims about the arrest of the partners and children of Boko Haram members by Nigerian security forces.

In his book review of Solomon’s recent book, Emerson (2016: 3) makes the point that in attempting to counter the terrorism unleashed by various insurgent groups, the State “has actually facilitated the growth of terrorism in each instance.” Emerson (2016: 3) puts this point as follows:

State failure, divisive institutional structures and policies, and endemic corruption have done as much—if not more—to push politically and economically disenfranchised elements of society into the welcoming arms of these organisations as their own recruiting efforts have done. Likewise, ill-advised or poorly implemented government counter-terrorism programs that rely extensively on the military or heavy-handed, repressive tactics only seem to exacerbate the problem of alienation.”

This means that the responses of the various African states have been inappropriate and often misconstrued in their counter-insurgency strategies. However, it is also possible that “since terrorism is ambiguous, it unsettles victim states as they must search for an appropriate means of response, or determine if any response is legitimate.” (Maogota, 2003: 13).

Over the past decades, the United States of America, more so than the UN, has arrogated upon itself the responsibility of quenching terrorism inimical to its interests around the world. In discharging this duty, the USA has attacked many foreign countries, causing terror in the minds, hearts and lives of many people. With the insurgence terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa, the region could become the new battleground for the USA war on terror and for combatting foreign terrorist organizations that are seen to threaten its national security (Miller, 2014). According to Miller (2014), the USA’s counter-terrorist strategy also seeks to promote economic development, strengthen democratic governance and human rights, as well as address extreme poverty. Overall, the USA believes that “ongoing political and economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa could ultimately preclude the rise of terrorist groups in the region and the number of people who are forced to turn to them.” (Miller, 2014). This, notwithstanding, Holmes (2015: 25) advises the USA as follows:

The United States cannot eliminate every bad actor, right every wrong, or correct every perceived injustice in the world. That is impossible. But the United States can contribute to building a world order in which the rule of law, the integrity of national borders, democratic capitalism, freedom of the seas, democratic self-government, human rights, and international trade prevail, not as guaranteed outcomes but as opportunities.

In general, the process of contemplating counter-insurgency measures is based on the notion of national defence or self-defence. This refers to “the ability of the armed forces to defend the sovereignty of the nation and the lives of its people” (Homes, 2015: 18). Thus, counter-terrorism, which forms the main theme of this conference, has been construed to encompass the use of “domestic as well as military instruments to defend the nation from terrorist and other attacks either inside or outside the country” (Holmes, 2015: 18). Oche (2014: 9) concurs with this analysis
and states that “counter-terrorism activities within a nation’s own borders operate in the context of each nation’s laws and policies, history, politics, and culture.”

Within the aegis of counter-terrorism, the notion of international systems of defence has evolved which, in turn, has comprised the concepts of collective defence (an official arrangement among nation-states to offer some defence support to other member states if they are attacked), collective security (various types of arrangements involving mutual commitments of member states, buttressed by concepts of international law and international aid and governance – such as the AU, NATO, UN), global security (a set of ideas, developed largely by the UN since the end of the Cold War, opining that the world’s security is everybody’s business – based on the premise that no single nation is secure unless all are secure). So, with regard to the notion of global security, the far greater focus has been placed on “attempting to eliminate conflict through international law, aid, confidence-building measures, and global governance” (Holmes, 2015: 18-19). The idea is that “the use of force should thus be reserved largely for international peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and the protection of innocent citizens from violence and should be decided upon and organized by the United Nations” (Holmes, 2015: 19).

Counter-terrorism is, itself state-sanctioned terrorism whose purpose is to terrorise the terrorists “forcing them to concentrate on defense and survival.” As Maogota (2003: 13) reports, owing to the absence of any “cohesive enumeration of appropriate responses to terrorist acts in the international system, individual states have developed internal mechanisms for dealing with terrorists through criminal laws” which frequently, “are the result of treaty agreements.” However, Maogota hastens to point out that “the system remains weak owing to the reality that terrorists may evade capture in the same way other criminals do – exploiting faulty extradition treaties and weaknesses in law enforcement” (p. 13). Moreover, where a State is the principal sponsor of the terrorist group, it will typically shelter the group from “immediate coercion and other legal claims offered by victim states” (p. 13). Maogota (2003: 13) poignantly makes this point as follows:

Coupled with the uncertain nature of permissible countermeasures against international terrorism within the international system, the efficacy of domestic criminal laws is weakened in the face of transnational terrorists groups whose membership and conspiracy may spread across many borders. The challenge to states and the international community is compounded when states (actively or passively) support terrorism, thus enhancing the capabilities of terrorist organisations, as well as their ability to avoid both domestic and international enforcement regimes paving the way for impunity.

If it can be established that certain actions of terrorism have been state-sponsored, the UN allows that the victimized State direct its counter-terrorism measure(s) against such a State. In this regard, UN Resolution 748 of 1992 opines that every State has the duty to refrain from organizing, instigating, assisting or participating in terrorist acts in another State or acquiescing in organized activities within its territory directed towards the commission of such acts, when such acts involve a threat or use of force” (Maogota, 2003: 19). This provision was applied in the imposition of economic sanctions on Libya for its purported connection to terrorist activities and for its refusal to extradite the two Libyan nationals alleged to have participated in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. As Maogota (2003: 19) further explains, this resolution “has been interpreted to constrain states from the maintenance of terrorist training camps in the techniques of assassination, destruction and sabotage; the direct or indirect collection of funds; the
provision of direct financing for training camps and other programs; the purchase of arms, ammunition and explosives; and preparation of foreign propaganda.” So, in cases where a state allows armed groups to mobilise within its territory, with the object of carrying out offensive actions against another state, the victim state could use force to defend itself from such aggression – including making incursions into the state that is harbouring such armed insurgents. Maogota (2003: 19-20) explains this situation as follows:

When the location of a terrorist camp is known and the territorial state refuses to cooperate within the ‘extradite or prosecute’ framework laid down by international conventions, domestic law enforcement is completely ineffective in defending a state and its interests abroad. In this situation where states openly engage in, or support acts of violence and attacks on another state, an appropriate response of the victim state may be the use of armed force.”

According to Maogota (2003: 31) there are three problems which make it difficult to summarily deal with terrorist threats under public international law, namely the identification of terrorists, the inconsistent international legal system which largely fail to deter terrorist operations, and the complicated cross-border nature of terrorist networks. Thus Maogota surmises that in the face of these problems, states that are targeted by terrorists essentially have two options – that if the terrorists are located within the target state’s borders, they may be captured and prosecuted under domestic criminal laws, and that where the terrorists are located outside the target state, as is frequently the case, military strikes against them may be undertaken – which often involves incursions into neutral sovereign states.

Mr. Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the UN, advanced five elements which he termed the five D’s which he saw as key principles which would undergird a comprehensive strategy to counter terrorism in Africa (Oche, 2014: 9-10). The five D’s were:

a. Dissuade disaffected groups from choosing terrorism as a tactic to achieve their goals.
b. Deny terrorists the ability to carry out their attacks.
c. Deter them from supporting terrorists.
d. Develop capacity to prevent terrorism; and
e. Defend human rights in the struggle against terrorism.

However, my view is that measures based on these five D’s alone will not succeed, insofar as bad governance is not fore-grounded. The same applies to the AU’s counter-terrorism protocol based on the following seven principles, which stipulate that each member state:

a. establish operational procedures, for information gathering processing and dissemination;
b. establish mechanisms to facilitate the exchange of information among state parties on patterns and trends in terrorist acts and activities and on successful acts for combating terrorism;
c. present an annual report to the assembly of the union on terrorist activities on the continent
d. monitor, evaluate and make recommendations on the implementation of the Plan of action of the AU High Level Inter-Governmental Meeting on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa.

e. examine all reports submitted by state members on the implementation of the plan of action and programmes adopted by the AU

f. examine all reports submitted by the state members on the implementation of the Protocol; and

g. establish an information network with national, regional, and international focus points on terrorism. (Oche, 2014: 10-11).

African countries need to put a very high premium on good governance, as the main variable which will ensure political, social and cultural cohesion – as well as economic prosperity and stability. Presently, this is where Africa is performing dismally, and this is the main root cause of the turmoil that the continent is currently witnessing; a scourge which has now spilt over into Europe in the form of forced migrations, whereby people have lost hope in their countries and are prepared to risk their lives in pursuance of a brighter future elsewhere. Those not able to make the European excursion are scattering into other African countries – only to find more of the same turmoil. How come that none of the African leaders has been found on any of the boats and dinghies floating in the Mediterranean Sea, escaping hardships at home? The simple answer is that all our leaders are prosperous and live in both comfort and hope. When they want their children to go and study in Europe they do not need to risk their lives on a dinghy; they buy them first class air tickets, with a lot of spending money in their pockets. Such, is the contrast in living standards and styles in Africa. This must change. If we have sufficient resources to fly first class, we should all fly first class – not just a privilege for a few. I flew Economy Class between Johannesburg and Lagos.

Thus, Africa’s salvation as a continent depends on having good political and religious leaders who will rally all of us around identities which are deep-rooted in both the goodness of God and democratic principles, enshrining respect for human rights and good governance. Self-seeking leaders, whose ambition for higher office is based on self-aggrandisement and self-enrichment should never be given an opportunity to ascend to such higher offices. If they do, we should shoulder the blame because we voted for them to be in those positions. Africa needs leaders who shall ensure that state instruments of democratic rule, namely, the legislature, the judiciary – including the prosecution, electoral commissions, the public protector and other ombudsmen/women, the opposition, the police, the army and other security forces – all operate freely and professionally, without interference from the executive. Furthermore, Africa needs leaders who are free from corrupt practices; leaders who treat all persons equally and fairly – regardless of their religious persuasions, indigenous nationalities (so-called ‘tribes’ and ‘ethnicities’); leaders who ensure that a country’s national resources are used to benefit the general populace in a fair and equitable manner; and that people from minority religious groups and indigenous nationalities have a fair and meaningful opportunity to participate meaningfully and effectively in the affairs of their countries – as well as have a turn to ascend to the position of head of state. This requires a national constitution that allows for the rotation of the position of head of state among all the major indigenous nationalities and religions. This is what will bring about unity and a strong sense of belonging – otherwise, what is the point of belonging to a country.
where, by virtue of coming from a minority ‘tribe’, you stand no chance of ever making it to the presidency of that country, while in the meantime you get governed by some lunatics from the majority ‘tribe’? Thus, simple majority to elect heads of State will not work for Africa because indigenous nationalities (‘tribes’) which are in majority will always dominate those who are numerically fewer. Over time, as it has already developed in many African countries, a sense of entitlement germinates whereby people from certain ‘tribal’ groups will always consider themselves to be entitled to rule over all other groups – where the group may be indigenous nationality (‘tribe’) or religion. As already pointed out, the reason for having constitutional safeguards insofar as the rotation of ‘head of State’ is concerned is that political affiliations are weak rallying points for African communities. Africans define themselves first in terms of their indigenous national identity, and then secondly according to religious affiliation. When it comes to political affiliations, they are quite promiscuous – today they belong to this political party and tomorrow to another one, depending on which one offers the best prospects for social upward mobility.

CONCLUSION

As a manifestation of conflict, terrorism is often rooted in both the historical circumstances of the people and their current conditions of living and survival. On the historical side, Africa has never recovered from Europe’s arbitrary partitioning and repackaging of previously independent indigenous nations into nation states bearing European identities to serve European interests. They nicknamed the pre-colonial indigenous nations ‘tribes’. Since then, this arbitrary splicing of Africa into culturally and socially meaningless states has remained one of the major sources of the chaos, mayhem and socio-political crises witnessed on the continent. Equally so, Africa has never recovered from its religious colonisation, which divided its people mainly into Christian and Muslim socio-politico-cultural identities. These religious affiliations have resulted in political, cultural, economic and social differentiations which have amounted to a further layer of disunity among Africa’s peoples. Thus, because the two primary identities of ‘tribe’ (i.e. indigenous national identity) and religion are much more profound and deeper than political affiliations, in characterising the identities of Africans, the desire to re-establish authentic identities by affirming the pre-colonial indigenous national identities, or build new nations based on a particular religious affiliation, are both extremely enticing and romantic. To rub salt into these historical wounds, poor political leadership in the majority of African states since attainment of political independence, has led to backsliding economic developments, high rates of unemployment, disease and conditions of desperation and hopelessness in the wake of chronic poverty. As if these extremely adverse conditions did not result in enough misery, the situation has further been worsened and exacerbated by Africa’s vulnerability to shocks caused by natural disasters, such as extreme weather conditions (drought, floods and others), leading to food insecurity, scarcity and hunger. Accordingly, taking all these circumstances into consideration, the outlook is gloomy. The threat of more calamities and terrorist attacks cannot be ruled out. First, the continent must put its house in order, and factor issues of indigenous national identities and religious affiliations are critical variables in rebuilding their countries. Communities which cannot live happily together in one country must be allowed to set up their own nation states. Perhaps what Africa needs is space and time to reconstitute itself into new nation states, and not rely on the current European-determined national identities which, for the most part, do not seem to work.
REFERENCES


