



**AFRICA CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**

National Counterterrorism Strategies in Africa

SYLLABUS

Kampala, Uganda

August 21-24, 2017



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NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGIES IN AFRICA

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Overview

The past few years have witnessed a rapid rise in terrorism across Africa, which has generated threats and problems of considerable cost, scale, gravity, and complexity. Africa is also experiencing a rise in violent extremism, that is, the political, ideological, social, and economic forces that support and sustain terrorism, including by justifying terrorist acts and glorifying terrorist actors. African nations have addressed these ills head on, responding at the regional, subregional, and national level to mounting challenges. Yet Africans' responses have not stemmed the terrorist tide, and these reactions to terrorist attacks and crises may not have a lasting positive impact, if they are not well organized, clearly framed, and demonstrate respect for human rights and the rule of law. African nations – both those currently affected by terrorism and those that might face a terrorist challenge in the coming years – would benefit from establishing national counterterrorism (CT) strategies that orient their actions toward identifiable long-term objectives, enjoy legitimacy within the entire government and all of society, and harmonize with (sub)regional and international approaches.

Just as the threat differs country to country, so African nations have different types of, and are at different stages in, their strategy development. For simplicity's sake, this course discusses terrorism and CT strategies, and many African countries are developing CT strategies, although others are creating Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) or Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) strategies, and still others are developing (separate or combined) CT and P/CVE strategies. While assembling a comprehensive list is difficult, it is clear that countries range in their experience and investment in CT strategy development. This program convenes governmental and non-governmental defense/security and civilian leaders from more than a dozen African nations, along with representatives from (sub)regional bodies, multilateral actors, and external partners, in order to share experiences, insights, practices, and lessons, among countries and across regions. For African nations at early stages, this program aims to raise awareness about the benefits of national CT strategies, offer examples of such strategies, and provide inputs for shaping and enhancing emerging CT strategies; for African nations at later stages or with completed CT strategies, the program aims to encourage reflection on existing strategy, raise awareness of its value, and help to refine and revise existing CT strategies.

In this exchange, African nations have an opportunity to hone their national CT strategies, to make them more effective in securing their nations, cooperating with their neighbors, and engaging external partners.

Anticipated Outcomes

1. Participants will have a greater understanding of and appreciation for national CT strategies.
2. Participants will be empowered to advocate for national CT strategy processes that enhance their national security, facilitate (sub)regional cooperation, and improve international CT partnerships.
3. Participants will join a network and community of interest/practice of like-minded security professionals that will strengthen, sustain, and enrich their respective national CT strategy processes.

Preparation, Delivery, and Resources

The workshop will feature presentations by an array of voices – from policy-makers, practitioners, and academics. Interactive question-and-answer sessions will follow the presentations in each plenary session. Participants will be divided into working groups, where facilitators with relevant expertise and background will lead the interaction toward concrete deliverables. As is customary, all activities will be conducted under a policy of strict non-attribution. This policy allows for candid and productive deliberations during the workshop.

Participants are provided with this syllabus, which discusses pertinent aspects of the various sessions and includes references to relevant publications. The syllabus serves to outline the flow of the workshop and set the stage for working group interactions. Neither the syllabus nor the readings represent the policy position of any government or institution. Rather, these documents serve as academic input for critical thinking and deliberation. The workshop will be conducted in English and French.

Session 1: Principles of Strategy

Objectives

- Identify and explain the principles of strategic thinking;
- Outline strategy development, particularly national security strategy development;
- Articulate how terrorism and violent extremism present an obstacle to strategic values, visions, interests, and ends;
- Explain the value of applying strategic thinking and strategy development to Africa's terrorism and violent extremism challenges.

Background

The word *strategy* can refer to a document, a process, an outlook, and more. In simplest terms, strategy means taking an 'ends, ways, and means' approach to human activity. Strategy implies articulating explicitly a set of values, setting a vision, and deriving corresponding interests, and then identifying and prioritizing threats or challenges to these desired ends. It means going on to determine the ways by which these threats and challenges will be addressed and overcome in order to achieve the ends. Finally, strategy explains the alignment of means, or resources, in order to enable the ways to the ends.

Strategic thinking can be applied to virtually any area of human activity, but strategy retains particular importance in its domain of origin – namely the military sphere, and by extension, the defense and security spheres. Governments in Africa and elsewhere vary in their approaches to developing, publicizing, and implementing national defense and security strategies. Some generate open, official, overarching frameworks that guide the provision of security to the citizenry, while others do not.

Many African nations stand to benefit from developing robust and distinct national CT strategies, even where a national defense and security strategy is lacking. In recent years, terrorism and violent extremism have come to present an increasing threat and challenge to African national goals. Strategies can facilitate unusual requirements typical of counterterrorism, such as mobilizing whole-of-society responses, blending defense/security frames, and so on. An intense increase in security cooperation on counterterrorism, from (sub)regional and especially external partners, must also be handled well in order for it to be useful and not detrimental to African nations. Finally, national CT strategies should help African nations achieve the support and sustainability necessary to overcome terrorist and violent extremist threats.

Reflection Questions

1. What are the national ends threatened by terrorism in your country, and in neighboring countries?
2. Does your country have a CT strategy (and/or national defense and security strategy)? If so, what are its major features, how was it developed, how is it shared/publicized, and how/when will it be reviewed?

Further Reading

- Gray, Robert C. "Chapter 3: The Study of Strategy: A Civilian Academic Perspective." *Teaching Strategy: Challenges and Responses*. Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, 2010. 47-77.
<https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdffiles/PUB976.pdf>.
- Cronin, Audrey Kurth. "The 'War on Terrorism': What Does It Mean to Win?" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37.2 (2013): 174-97.
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2013.850423>

Session 2: Terrorism in Africa

Objectives

- Examine the nature, scope, and impact of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa;
- Review CT and related security strategy efforts underway to address these threats;
- Forecast likely trends in terrorism and violent extremism in Africa.
- Consider terrorism and violent extremism through the strategic lens of ‘threat assessment’

Background

In recent years, Africa has witnessed the growth and expansion of terrorism and violent extremism, which have unleashed unprecedented levels of death, destruction, and disruption on the continent. The challenge has come from groups across different regions, from Al-Shabaab in the Horn and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the Sahel to Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin and the Islamic State in Libya in the Maghreb, with many splinter and rival groups in between. Small cell and so-called lone wolf terrorists operating a distance from organizations and their leaders have exacerbated the challenge. Recently, first-time attacks have taken place in several countries, and recruitment into the Islamic State (IS) has extended into new regions.

Responses have taken many forms, and Africans have been remarkably committed to (sub)regional action, especially establishing peace support operations (PSOs) and joint task forces in contexts of terrorism, such as Somalia, Mali, and the Lake Chad basin. This international cooperation has occasionally outpaced interagency and whole-of-society approaches *within* individual African nations, at a time when national responses are ever more important. Terrorism increasingly sparks a wide set of concerns, because today’s terrorism is shaking the stability of African governments, radicalizing vulnerable youths, exacerbating religious and communitarian tensions, fueling large-scale migration, undermining economic and development plans, affecting diplomatic commitments, and more. Responses therefore implicate a diverse set of policies and actors, from ministries of finance to civil society organizations working with young people.

In such circumstances, citizens of African nation-states have an interest in clearly identifying the terrorist threat facing their own country (as separate from, but related to, terrorist threats facing their neighbors and their [sub]region). African governments would also benefit from analyzing terrorism through a ‘threat assessment,’ as part of a strategy process, in order to determine to what extent and in which ways terrorism poses a challenge or threat to desired national defense and security ends.

Reflection Questions

1. How does terrorism and violent extremism endanger your nation's values and goals?
2. How is terrorism and violent extremism affecting your nation, your neighbors, and your (sub)region?
3. What the top three threats to your national defense and security objectives? Do terrorism and violent extremism figure among them?

Further Reading

- Cilliers, Jakkie. "Violent Islamist Extremism and Terror in Africa." Institute for Security Studies Paper 286 (2015).
<https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/Paper286-1.pdf>.
- Warner, Jason. "Sub-Saharan Africa's Three 'New' Islamic State Affiliates." Combating Terrorism Center Sentinel 10.1 (2017): 28-32.
https://ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CTC-Sentinel_Vol9Iss1119.pdf.

Session 3: Counterterrorism Strategy Formation

Objectives

- Outline how security strategies are initiated and the steps by which they are formulated and adopted;
- Identify key stakeholders critical for CT strategy formation;
- Provide lessons learned and sound practices in strategy formation from different contexts and experiences.

Background

Once an African government determines that it needs a CT strategy, it must determine how to go about developing one. Unfortunately, the pathway is not always clear, but getting the formation of a national CT strategy right is critically important, because in the long run the strategy *process* can be as valuable as the *product*. The drafting of a national CT strategy can ultimately be as important for successful counterterrorism as the final document itself.

Some individual or agency must initiate the national CT strategy process. While many can lobby and advocate for such a strategy and process, usually the government, especially the executive branch, is best positioned to launch the process, because it has political capital: it can demonstrate political will, rally disparate actors, and muster the necessary resources for a weighty strategy investment. Once launched, some individual or agency must oversee the strategy formation process. This lead body must make several practical but very significant decisions. It determines which stakeholders will be included (and which excluded), and how all stakeholders will be integrated into a working process. It finds ways to solicit and nurture support and commitment from many players. The lead body sets the agenda and timeline, structures the interactions, sets the tasks, and keeps the entire process on track and on time. In addition to being the steward of the process and shepherd of the stakeholders, this lead body must also retain, throughout the process, the confidence of policymakers who will ultimately endorse and apply the strategy.

Drafting a national CT strategy requires taking into consideration several issues. There must be a threat evaluation, an identifying (and assessing) of current responses, a self-assessment of means available, a recognition of international and (sub)regional CT commitments, and so on. This process can build the awareness, unity, and focus necessary for a successful national CT strategy.

Reflection Questions

1. Which stakeholders should be involved in the formulation of a national CT strategy in your country? Why?
2. Which agency is best placed to lead a national CT strategy in your nation?

3. What steps would be necessary to successfully develop a national CT strategy in your nation?

Further Reading

- "Violence Jihadiste En Tunisie : L'urgence D'une Stratégie Nationale." Briefing Moyen-Orient Et Afrique Du Nord 50 (2016): n. pag. International Crisis Group. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/fr/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/tunisia/jihadist-violence-tunisia-urgent-need-national-strategy>.

Session 4: Counterterrorism Strategy Implementation

Objectives

- Outline how security strategies are translated into specific action plans and operations, and then executed;
- Consider mechanisms for interagency coordination in CT strategy implementation;
- Describe monitoring and evaluation techniques for assessing and improving implementation and informing strategic reviews.

Background

After an African government has created a CT strategy, it must determine how to go about implementing it. A common lament about strategies is that they only exist ‘on paper’ and do not have practical effect on the ground. Not only the preceding process, then, but also the succeeding *plans* can ultimately be as valuable as any *product* for a national CT strategy. Executing the national strategy is ultimately more important for successful counterterrorism than any final document.

Implementation usually involves dissemination and delegation. The national strategy defines roles and responsibilities and sets top-line objectives, and various stakeholders and actors must figure out their own ways of meeting these strategic expectations – through policies, plans, and processes that best fit their organizations. Yet no national CT strategy will succeed without concentrated leadership. Some individual or agency (not necessarily the one that launches and oversees the strategy formation process) must oversee or at least track the strategy’s implementation. New structures, such as a national counterterrorism center, might be necessary in order to facilitate coordination and ensure prolonged focus on the strategy and its achievement.

Monitoring and evaluating is another essential element of a national CT strategy. In order to assess the effects of a strategy, nations need built-in assessments conducted at regular intervals, both on discrete sections of the strategy and on the strategy as a whole. Along with this intermittent evaluation, a regular pattern of review can ensure that the strategy remains up-to-date, while avoiding hasty change motivated by one attack or the latest political row.

Reflection Questions

1. Which agency or individual is best positioned to oversee or track national CT strategy implementation in your country?
2. How should national CT strategies be monitored, evaluated, and reviewed?

Further Reading

- Boeke, Sergei. "Combining Exit with Strategy: Transitioning from Short-term Military Interventions to a Long-term Counter-terrorism Policy." International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague (2014).
<https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Boeke-Transitioning-from-Short-Term-Military-Intervention-to-CT-Policy-August2014.pdf>.
- Davis, Lyn E., and Melanie Sisson. "A Strategic Planning Approach: Defining Alternative Counterterrorism Strategies as an Illustration." RAND Occasional Paper (2009).
http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2009/RAND_OP242.pdf.

Session 5: Domestic Aspects of Counterterrorism Strategies

Objectives

- Outline the challenges and opportunities associated with security strategy development within a national context;
- Examine challenges and tradeoffs related to citizens' rights, resource allocations, and confidentiality in creating CT strategies.

Background

Formulating and implementing a national CT strategy involves several key steps. It involves formulating the strategy, by initiating the process; convening stakeholders; conducting a threat assessment; determining objectives and risk; drafting the strategy; and adopting the final product (i.e., the written strategy). It also involves implementing the strategy, by disseminating the product; translating it into sectoral plans; supervising and harmonizing those parts; monitoring their execution; evaluating their effect; and reviewing and updating the written strategy through another iteration of the formulation process.

Conducting the national CT strategy process provides many benefits. It is also bound to present challenges, raise questions, and require tradeoffs. As with any cross-cutting effort, such strategies risk provoking clashes over budgets/resources and turf wars over areas of responsibility within the government bureaucracy. They also are likely to create some tensions in the relationship between government and civil society, given the need for whole-of-society responses.

National CT strategies have their peculiar difficulties as well. Terrorists often try to leverage the real grievances of, find recruits and support (willing or coerced) within, and claim to be the true representatives of, a specific community within the nation – one that is identifiable by race, religion, region, language, ethnicity, social status, etc. Responses therefore require nuance and sophistication: they must operate at several levels, in order to counter hardened terrorist elements, protect and alleviate grievances within the beset community, and reaffirm the government's legitimacy and sovereignty over the entire nation-state. National CT strategies must contribute to, rather than undermine, these policy objectives.

National CT strategies must also set the tone regarding citizens' rights and the government's prerogatives. Specific decisions about rules of engagement might be determined by law enforcement and defense officials, political rights regarding privacy might be updated and spelled out in law by parliamentarians, and so on, but the national CT strategy establishes, especially through its determination of ends (and to a lesser extent, ways), the parameters of action supported by the government. The national CT

strategy lays out how a nation intends to overcome the terrorist threat without distorting its own national values and vision.

Deciding how open or confidential the national CT strategy will be is another key domestic dynamic that can cause controversy. While certain elements of CT activity must undoubtedly remain classified, publicizing and sharing the nation's CT strategy process, product, and plans helps in rallying society behind the effort. It demonstrates political concern about terrorism, garners support and time from citizens expecting leadership from elected officials, and opens a debate on difficult aspects of strategy in ways that ultimately increase a government's legitimacy and strengthen democracy. As anti-terrorism legislation shows, however, public dialogue about counterterrorism can also politicize government responses, which can twist or foreshorten a strategy's implementation.

Reflection Questions

1. What are the most challenging domestic dynamics shaping the prospects of a national CT strategy in your country?
2. When were anti-terrorism laws last updated in your nation? How were the legal changes debated and discussed by the public in your country?

Further Reading

- Field, Antony. "The Dynamics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding the Domestic Security Dilemma." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40.6 (2016): 470-83. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1221253>.
- Sampson, I.T. "Between Boko Haram and the Joint Task Force: Assessing the Dilemma of Counter-terrorism and Human Rights in Northern Nigeria." *Journal of African Law* 59.1 (2015): 25-63.

Session 6: (Sub)Regional Aspects of Counterterrorism Strategies

Objectives

- Outline the challenges and opportunities associated with (sub)regional partnerships in security strategy development;
- Examine challenges and tradeoffs related to (sub)regional standards, cross-border cooperation, and Africa's Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in national CT strategy development.

Background

CT strategies create a basic tension: nation-states are fundamentally responsible for the security of their citizens, but the terrorist threat often transcends the national frame and requires cooperation with other countries. National CT strategies must therefore be tailored to national needs, yet positioned and aligned within supra-national contexts.

In Africa, the transnational nature of terrorism is critically important. While terrorist organizations often emerge from internal dynamics, they soon impact neighbors. Boko Haram began in Nigeria but has since spread its area of operations, launching attacks in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. AQIM developed out of Algeria's civil conflict, but its southern battalions have long exploited open borders, moving into Mauritania, Mali, and Niger. More recently, AQIM and its offshoots have made incursions into Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire. At times terrorist groups manipulate and exacerbate inter-state rivalries. Operating within Uganda's civil war, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) eventually managed to obtain backing from Khartoum to challenge authorities in Kampala. African terrorists also work to exploit cross-border communities. When an organization emerges within a distinct ethnic and religious border community, it often moves across national lines in hopes of finding safe haven, support, recruits, etc. Al-Shabaab has taken this route in its approach toward the Muslim Somali borderlands of Kenya and Ethiopia.

In response, African nations have entered into many bilateral and multilateral agreements to respond to terrorism, and these established commitments must figure into any national policy reflection. Leaders entrusted with drafting a national CT strategy should bear in mind their nation's position on strategies, protocols, and treaties of the African Union (AU) and relevant Regional Economic Communities (RECs), for example. Those forming national CT strategies must also factor into deliberations their country's ongoing commitments to PSOs and joint task forces, some of which – like the African Union's Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) – relate directly to terrorism and as such bear on any comprehensive national CT strategy. Overall, a national CT strategy should help each nation ensure greater coherence in collaboration with neighbors in areas like military interoperability, legal coherence, and so on.

CT commitments to neighbors should also be couched within wider strategic, security, and political objectives desired by African nations. A key feature of African terrorism today is its *cross-subregional* nature. Rather than falling neatly into Northern, Western, Southern, Eastern, or Central Africa, most terrorist group sit astride traditional subregional lines, in zones like the Lake Chad basin or the Sahel-Sahara, thereby challenging long-standing efforts to build cooperative defense/security structures and to enact security cooperation at a suitable level and scale. The AU has tried to accommodate this reality, by empowering entities to take on new security roles, like the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) as an authority over the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF); by honing its own existing structures through new initiatives, like the Nouakchott process aimed at accelerating cooperation among Sahel countries; by establishing ad hoc new responses, such as the regional task force (AU RTF) to fight the LRA; and so on. But the challenge remains. Finding the right balance between empowering novel (sub)regional efforts to fight today's terrorism, like the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC), and investing in long-standing (sub)regional structures aimed at lasting defense/security cooperation, like the African Standby Force (ASF), is a critical task for those drafting national CT strategies.

Reflection Questions

1. What are the most challenging (sub)regional dynamics shaping a national CT strategy in your country?
2. Which African countries are important CT partners for your nation?
3. What steps has your nation taken to fit its (sub)regional CT measures into (sub)regional security and defense structures, including APSA?

Further Reading

- Ogbonnaya, Ufiem Maurice. "South African Journal of International Affairs." *Terrorism, Agenda 2063 and the Challenges of Development in Africa* 23.2 (2016): 185-99.
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10220461.2016.1208114>.
- Ford, Jolyon. "African Counter-Terrorism Legal Frameworks a Decade after 2001." Institute for Security Studies (2011).
<https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/Mono177.pdf>.

Session 7: International Aspects of Counterterrorism Strategies

Objectives

- Outline the challenges and opportunities associated with external partnerships in security strategy development;
- Examine challenges and tradeoffs related to international standards, donor demands, and external influence in national CT strategy development.

Background

Countries around the world have found new interest in partnering with African nations to fight the common scourge of terrorism. They have contributed to consolidating CT cooperation among Africans, and they have offered resources, expertise, and assistance, including in CT strategy development. That said, international dynamics parallel and extend the (sub)regional dynamics impacting national CT strategies, and the worldwide context also brings unique opportunities and challenges of its own.

Today's terrorism on the continent, especially groups associated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, do not simply transcend the limits of African nations: they span across regions and indeed the globe, connecting African countries' national security concerns to global trends and policies. To fight these terrorism threats, moreover, African nations regularly rely on external partners for specialized information and intelligence, military capabilities and capacity, financial and material support, diplomatic backing, and more. In some ways, international aspects of counterterrorism mirror (sub)regional ones. Just as terrorists aim to mobilize cross-border communities, they often attempt to mobilize African diaspora populations outside Africa. National CT strategies must take into account commitments made by the nation at the international level, through bodies like the United Nations (UN), the Organization of Islamic Conference, and the Arab League. National CT strategies must also consider ongoing commitments to international PSOs, like the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

But the international context poses some specific questions. Libya today shows how external countries occasionally get involved in Africa's civil conflicts through support of various armed actors, some of whom are labeled terrorists. External countries like France and the United States consider certain terrorist movements in Africa a significant and immediate threat to their *own* national security, and they intervene directly on African soil through military action to fight terrorism and to protect their own interests. At times external CT cooperation can also duplicate African security cooperation efforts, as the G5 Sahel (supported by France, the European Union, and the UN) has done with the AU's Nouakchott process. Counterterrorism has also become a terrain of diplomatic influence as well as security cooperation, with new offers for CT partnership coming to Africa from Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, and others.

A national CT strategy should help an African nation decide how to engage external partners on counterterrorism, how to prioritize and harmonize among many proposals for various forms of cooperation and assistance (such as training, equipment, and exercises) and how to manage pressures and expectations from external actors intent on intervening directly in Africa against terrorists for their *own* national interest. Moreover, given extensive external appetite to partner on counterterrorism, getting the national CT strategy right might help an African nation to leverage external attention for its own long-term welfare. A national CT strategy holds forth the promise that an African nation might fight terrorism with external partners in ways that match and even enhance its own larger defense and security goals, or at least that the country can avoid external influences likely to undermine its citizen security and damage its (sub)regional and external relationships over the long run.

Reflection Questions

4. What are the most challenging international dynamics shaping a national CT strategy in your country?
5. Which external countries are important CT partners for your nation? How does your country balance and harmonize offers and demands from various external partners?
6. What steps has your nation taken to ensure that CT partnerships with external powers contribute to citizen security over the long run?

Further Reading

- "The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review." United Nations General Assembly A/RES/70/291 (2016).
<https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/blog/document/a-res-70-291-the-united-nations-global-counter-terrorism-strategy-review/>.
- Whitaker, Beth Elise. "Exporting the Patriot Act? Democracy and the 'War on Terror' in the Third World." *Third World Quarterly* 28.5 (2007).
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20454977>.