Upsurge In Violent Extremisim Across Africa And Capacity Building Deficits To Addressing Radicalization

Brig (Rtd) Dr Robert Kabage

Peace and Conflict Management Consultant

Ochieng' Mark Oduor

Diplomacy and International Relations Scholar
Zetech University,
P.O Box 2768-00200, Nairobi

Abstract: The global community is tormented by terrorism and violent extremism. Africa, in particular, has become a de facto inter-continental convergence zone for terrorist, violent extremist, and transnational organized criminal groups that incubate in, enter, traverse, and/or exit Africa depending on geo-political and strategic operational developments. Such movements and operational dynamism have been enabled by vibrant and ever evolving terrorist financing (TF) methods and techniques coupled with challenges and critical capacity gaps by the respective governments or stakeholders. This has resulted in the rapid rise in TF on the continent which has had deleterious impact on peace, security, human rights, the rule of law, democracy, and development. This paper covers the definition of terrorism financing, its sources and trends in Africa, and the key challenges as well as critical capacity gaps in nipping the phenomenon in the bud.

Keywords: Terrorist financing, drug trafficking, human trafficking, kidnapping for ransom, capacity gaps, Know-Your-Customer (KYC).

Introduction

The end of colonialism in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s was heralded as a move through which Africa regained its dignity. However it triggered a series of other endemic conflicts, either caused by ethnicity, religious differences, fight over boundaries and lately by violent extremism from radicalized elements. Terrorism has ravaged the width and breadth of the continent; with AlQaida terror group actively operating in the Islamic Magreb in the North,the Movement for Unity and Jihad(MUJ) having a credible presence in West Africa, the Boko-haram operating in Nigeria and Cameroon and the entire lake Chad basin and Al Shabaab operating in the Eastern Africa region. This has led Africa unfortunately to be classified as the new battleground of violent extremism with the threat even spreading further to other areas, like the Great Lakes region, southern Africa region and to countries such as Mozambique.

 According to a 2017 UNDP report on violent extremism titled; "*Journey to extremism in Africa"*, between   2011 and 2016, over 33,300 fatalities are estimated to have been caused by violent extremism attacks in the continent. This came with related displacements and economic devastation, contributing to among the worst humanitarian catastrophes ever seen in the continent.

Today, many countries in Africa continue to experience manifestations of this threat in the form of radicalized elements within the society. Such elements are easily willing to condone, support, facilitate and use violence to further their political, ideological, religious or other goals. With this phenomenon on the rise, the terrain of violent extremism and radicalized groups active in Africa continues to soar. This is occasioned by the fact that radicalization in Africa is shaped by a mix of factors.They include

civil wars, cross border conflicts, insurgencies, criminal networks, ungoverned spaces, and grievances relating to under development, poverty, joblessness, exclusion, injustice and repression.

1.1 Background

Political violence declined globally in 2020, except in Africa, where the continent continued to come under immense pressure from intensified political violence occasioned by violent extremism and internal conflicts. According to the Global Peace Index 2020, a total of 97 countries recorded an upsurge in terrorist activity, while only 47 had lower levels of terrorism globally. In Africa, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region remained the least peaceful as it was home to 4 of the 10 least peaceful countries in the world. In addition, 3 of the 10 conflicts to worry about in the world as from 2020 are located in Africa; Ethiopia, Mozambique and the Sahel.

In response, frameworks to address violent extremism abound especially in the defence and security training institutions across Africa.However, while training and capacity building programmes conducted at the national military and police academies, staff and defence colleges; peace and security training institutions have proliferated across Africa, political violence continues to increase. This paper seeks to examine contribution of radicalization to the upsurge of violent extremism in Africa and identify training capacity deficits to address the threat in the continent.

1.2 The Radicalization Concept

There are varying governmental and non-governmental definitional approaches to the concept of radicalization. However, they all underscore that radicalization refers to a process by which an individual or a group of people comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice. They denounce principles and values that underpin a peaceful orderly and non-violent society. They instead espouse violence, terror and coercion as a pathway to change and realizing specific beliefs and vision of society. Such individuals then move further and support terrorism and other extremist activities that are associated with terrorist groups. Though everyone is a victim of radicalization, it has been established that it is children and the youth that are most vulnerable to the vice.

1.3 Drivers of Radicalization

This section seeks to answer the question; what pushes a handful of individuals to join radical and violent organizations and groups?. This is not a simple question to answer since the drivers of radicalization are multiple, complex and context specific and hence defy easy analysis of the phenomenon. They however can be addressed in the context of religious extremism, deprivation of education, lack of faith in political systems, economic marginalization and youth unemployment, Political marginalization, protection of religion, Lack of parental involvement in the early child's life and local community social networks among others.

1.3.1 Religious extremism

Religious extremism is about religious commitment that is expressed through deep loyalty to a belief system. Some of its characteristic features are isolation, criminalization and elimination of persons considered to be enemies of the religion. In the 2017 UNDP study on extremism in Africa, 51% of the respondents cited religious grounds as a reason for their joining radicalized groups. Lack of faith in political systems is another factor to radicalization. This was identified by Alleni Botha, in a 2015 study titled *"Radicalization to terrorism in Kenya and Uganda; a political socialization perspective".* He observed that this comes about when individual's anger is directed to agents of state, due to their role in protecting the incumbent regime.This leads them to mete injustices; deprivation and desperation among the citizens. Such citizens are hence forced to revert to radical ideologies that present themselves as a challenge to the status quo and a form of escape.

1.3.2 Deprivation

 Deprivation in educational terms is also another factor that contributes to radicalization, especially among individuals living in environments where literacy and education levels are low. Such people are susceptible to join radicalized groups. UNDP in their study in 2017 observed that 57% of the respondents admitted that radicalization was contributed by limited or lack of understanding of religious texts due to low educational levels. This forces them to depend on intermediaries for interpretation, which is at times misleading.

1.3.3 Economic marginalization and Youth unemployment

Individuals growing up in environments where poverty is high with lived reality of unemployment and under-employment are prone to radicalization. Difficult economic factors lead to frustration especially among the young people. This becomes a key dimension of individual's vulnerability to narratives that invite them to channel such grievances and associated desperation into the cause of radicalized organizations. This is attributed to failure by governments to ensure that the pace and benefits of growth keep up with economic development and expansion of the population, especially for the youth. When youth's future seems to promise no path for advancement, they become attractive targets of radical groups.

1.3.4 Political marginalization

Political marginalization also leads to rise in radicalization. It has been observed that most radicalized individuals have grievances and limited confidence in governments due to being marginalized. They accuse them of neglect leading to disaffection. They believe that governments only looks at the interests of a few people in society while neglecting the majority. They are then willing and ready to join other groups that might offer them with alternative governance systems. This was the case with the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in Somalia in the 1990s following the fall of the Siad Barre regime.

1.3.5 Lack of parental involvement in the early child's life

  Lack of parental involvement in the early child's life is also identified as a key factor to rise of radicalization. This leads to child neglect when they are growing up. This makes them to become more vulnerable to radicalization influences as they grow up. Protection of religion is also another contributing factor. This is when a segment of society feels that their religion is under threat. For Muslims, this is occasioned by the constant Islamophobic rhetoric in response to violent extremism. Radical groups therefore feel they are duty bound to defend their religion. Local community social networks also contributes to rise in radicalization since recruitment to radicalization in Africa has been observed to be largely and highly localized. This is unlike in other regions where Internet is associated with recruitment into radical groups. In Africa, local networks within the community have been observed to be the most effective platforms of mobilization to radicalization.

1.4 De-radicalization Initiatives

While there is no scholarly consensus on the definition of de-radicalization, most are of the view that it refers to the process of relative change, in which radical groups reverses their ideology and delegitimizes the use of violent methods to achieve their goals. It involves approaches employed to bring radicalized individuals back to non-violent life by addressing issues that spark and sustain radicalization. Such approaches could include building resilience among the population, promoting religious moderation, economic empowerment, counter-messaging to radicalized individuals, religious quick Impact projects, inmate visits, reforming the security Sector, promoting national reconciliation, robust ideological push back and encouraging good parenting.

1.4.1 Building resilience among the population involves adopting a holistic approach to prepare population against radicalization

This may include through expansion of educational programs that promote critical thinking so that citizens are equipped with ability to question negative religious teachings. Additionally, mainstream development projects designed to reduce perceptions of marginalization among individuals and communities could also be used. Promotion of religious moderation is another effective approach. This will involve undertaking efforts, including by use of radio, television and other on-line and off-line platforms of communication to transmit moderate religious teachings. It could further also involve review of religious texts and syllabi to remove existing radical exhortations to violence and through upgrade of school curricula that promotes civic engagement of values adopted from childhood.

1.4.2 Economic empowerment

Government and other stakeholders to invest in economic development activities and other incentives that provides immediate and long-term empowerment opportunities and job creation, especially for the youth. This will provide them with hope for the future.

1.4.3 Counter-messaging to radicalized individuals.

Initiate a strategy of counter messaging for those already radicalized. This will help to undermine the appeal of violent extremist by making use of counter narratives provided by former terrorists. In Somalia, AMISOM and the Somali government are using *Imams* and religious scholars to sensitize local communities and to provide counter narratives against the violent rhetoric usually propagated by the Al Shabaab extremists.

1.4.4 Religious Quick Impact projects

Use religious focused QIPs to benefit the local population that are otherwise perceived as marginalized. This could involve rehabilitation of mosques, Islamic schools and *Madrassas* to provide a platform for community mobilization, reconciliation and peace building.

1.4.5 Inmate religious visits

This is carried out by moderate religious authorities in the community, who visit radicalized inmates, and lead prison-based prayers in an effort to get radicalized recruits to change and denounce violence. This is effectively practised in Morrocco.

1.4.6 Reform of the security Sector

This is intended to address injustices, human rights violations and authoritarianism associated with security actors as they fight radicalization activities in society. This could be achieved through enhancing oversight and accountability by elected and judicial institutions. This helps to build bridges between security actors and communities, thereby reducing distrust and mutual suspicion, which encourages radicalization.

1.4.7 Promote national reconciliation.

Governments to support national reconciliation, compromise and inclusion of the population that perceive social and sectarian polarization. Further efforts to deepen patriotism and sense of belonging as away of countering external forces and influences of radicalization to violent extremism is encouraged. There is also need to develop initiatives that enhance national identities, social cohesion and citizenship. Provision of community led mentoring and trauma counselling services for the de-radicalized individuals is also recommended.

1.4.8 **Robust ideological push back**

Use both on-line and off-line media platforms to reclaim, take charge and control information asymmetrics where radical groups have gained ground. Further re-invigorate, re-engineer Muslims and Islamic institutions to position them to better and more effectively respond to increasing radicalization advances into violent extremism of Muslims in the continent.

1.4.9 **Encourage good parenting**

Support community led outreach on good parenting and ensure provision of education for all from early age.

Radicalization/De-radicalization Training Capacity Deficts

In Africa, the African Standby Force (ASF) training architecture assigns training to three levels; to include the African Union Commission (AUC), the REC/RMs and member states. The AUC, being the headquarters of the ASF is mandated to provide strategic guidance for ASF training while the RECs/RMs provide operational guidance and training with support of Training Centres of Excellence (TCE) and other training, research and academic institutions in the regions. AU Member states are responsible for providing tactical level training in the form of pre-deployment training.

ASF training is guided by periodical Training Directives developed during training implementation workshops (TIWs), which are held annually and attended by all ASF training stakeholders. They review implementation of previous directives and identify future ASF training needs and capability development requirements.

Drawing lessons from performance of AU deployments against terrorist activities in Somalia (AMISOM), the Regional Coordination Initiative for Elimination of Lords Resistance Army (RCI-LRA), the Multi National Joint Task Force in the lake Chad Basin (MNJTF), and G5 Sahel operations, it is evident that development of Africa's capacities for countering violent extremism through training is lacking in effectiveness.

It is in this regard that the current 2021-2023 ASF training directives have identified, as one of the key strategic pillars, "*the need for conduct of research on the impact of emerging dynamics to include pandemics, Counter Terrorism and violent extremism on peace and security in Africa and make their training more visible".* APSTA is taking lead in the implementation of this pillar through the roundtable held in June 2021 and this colloquim.

The outcomes of the Roundtable and this colloquim are expected to assist the AUC, RECs/RMs like EASF in eastern Africa and TCEs like IPSTC to address ASF capacity deficits in addressing radicalization and counter terrorism operations in Africa and in the EA sub region. Such deficits include the following:

a**. Inadequate funding support.** This training requires significant resources due to its versatility, intensity and technological dependency. This calls for broad based partnerships involving international partners, governments and non-state actors to finance and support development and implementation of CVE programs to provide skills to security operators to conduct operations with due adherence to IHL and IHRL, uphold human rights, avoid arbitrary arrests and detentions, extra-judicial killings and compliance to Rules of Engagements.

b. **Limited trained professionals in CVE operations**. Africa still has limited counter terrorism professionals who are able to offer such training due to limited exposure in this field. This has led to over- reliance on external technical support from partners who at times are not able to relate to the African context. They over use lessons learnt from other regions in the world that are at times not applicable to the African environment.

c. **Insufficient training infrastructure.** CVE training is infrastructure dependent. It requires unique facilities equipped with modern equipments to support practical lessons and exercises during the training. This is missing in most African TCEs except for IPSTC,Kenya which has a modern and well equipped Amani Village,which is a practical training capability, that supports realistic training, and enables trainees acquire desired skills to counter those being used by terrorists in modern environments.

d. **Limited curriculum development experts**. Africa still suffers deficit of qualified, experienced experts to develop comprehensive CVE curricula and syllabi for use in TCEs. Most TCEs rely on external expertise, which sometimes fails to relate to CVE dynamics in the continent. Such curricula needs to incorporate African Union protection related issues and process as stipulated in the AU compliance and accountability framework that includes protection of civilians, Conduct and Discipline and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

e. **Lack of updated regional CVE guidance frameworks**. These instruments are required to guide future CVE operations and training needs in the continent. The existing ones were developed sometimes back, to include; the 1999 OAU convention on the Prevention and combating Terrorism and the 2002 Plan of action on the prevention and combating terrorism. These instruments require regular review and updating to incorporate contemporary challenges in the fight against terrorism and radicalization in Africa and offer guidance on how to address them.

 Conclusion

Radicalization and violent extremism are among the current threat to peace and security in Africa. It undermines fulfilment of the aspirations of silencing the guns in the continent and the broader development blue print of agenda 2030.Since ASF training is at the centre of addressing this vice, identified training capability deficits impacting on Africa's ability to defeat this phenomenon needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.

References:

Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) 2020: The Year in Review
        Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Peace Index (GPI) 2020: Measuring Peace in a   Complex World, Sydney June 2020. Available from: http//visionofhumanity.org/reports. Accessed 30 April 2021.
 Global Peace Index (GPI), 2020.
Anders, H (2018). Monitoring Illicit Arms Flows. The Role of UN Peacekeeping Operations,   Small Arms Survey, Briefing Paper, June 2018, p.5. Available online at   http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SANA-BP-   Monitoring-Illicit-Arms-Flows-PKOs.pdf. Accessed on 26 May 202.
Caballero. C (2018), El País – El comercio ilegal arruina África, 2018. Available online at: https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/02/25/africa_no_es_un_pais/1519578914_727964.html.   Accessed on 25 May 2021
Financial Action Task Force (2001), FATF IX Special Recommendations. Available online at   https://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/FATF%20Standards%20-   %20IX%20Special%20Recommendations%20and%20IN%20rc.pdf . Accessed on 25   May 2021
FATF-GIABA-GABAC (2016), TF in West and Central Africa, FATF, Paris. Available   online   at   www.fatf-gafi.org/publications/methodsandtrends/documents/terrorist-   financing-west-central-africa.html. Accessed on 24 May 2021
GIABA (2019), Money Laundering and TF linked to the Extractive Industry / Mining Sector   in   West   Africa,   Typology Report, October 2019.   https://www.giaba.org/media/f/1104_pkbat_41745%20ENG-ML%20-   %20TF%20IN%20 EXTRACTIVE.pdf; Sophie Douce, "Au Burkina Faso, les mines   d'or sous la menaces djihadiste," Le Monde, November 21, 2019. https:// www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/11/21/au-burkina-faso-les-mines-d-or-sous-la-   menace-djihadiste_6020049_3212.html; Fages, C. "Or: le Burkina Faso et son industrie minière face au défi du terrorisme," RFI, November 10, 2019. Available   online   at   https://www.rfi.fr/fr/emission/20191111-burkina-faso-terrorisme-industrie-   miniere-or. Accessed on 25 May 2021

Paoli, G. P. and Bellasio, J. (2017), Against the Rising Tide: An Overview of the Growing Criminalisation of the Mediterranean Region, RAND Europe, January 26, 2017.

ICCT Report (March 2021), Cashing in on Guns: Identifying the Nexus between Small Arms, Light Weapons and TF. Available online at https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2021/03/SALW-Report.pdf. Accessed on 26 May 2021

Kukutschka R.M.B. (2018), Illicit financial flows in Mozambique, U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk.

Micallef, M., Farrah, R., Bish, A., and Tanner, V. (2019), After the Storm: Organized crime across the Sahel Sahara following upheaval in Libya and Mali., Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2019, p. 21. Available online at https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/After_the_storm_GI-TOC.pdf. Accessed on 27 May 2021

Natural Resource Governance Institute (2018), "2017 Resource Governance Index – Mozambique".

Napoleoni, L. (2016), Merchants of Men: How Jihadists and ISIS Turned Kidnapping and Refugee Trafficking into a MultiBillion Dollar Business (Kindle Locations 3564- 3570). Seven Stories Press. Kindle Edition.

NÚÑEZ CIFUENTES, A. (2020), The Sahel and TF: diversity and financial system opportunities, Opinion Paper. IEEE 77/2020. Available online at http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2020/DIEEEO77_2020ANANUÑ SahelENG.pdf and/or link bie3. Accessed on 27 May 2021

Shane, S and Becker, J. (2016), "A New Libya, With 'Very Little Time Left'" The New York Times, February 27, 2016. Available online at https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/us/politics/libya-isis-hillary-clinton.html. Accessed on 25 May 2021

UNODC (2009), Chapter II (Review of Literature): Money laundering and financing of terrorism. Available online at https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific/2009/02/TOCAMLO/07-CHAPTER_II.pdf. Accessed on 23 May 2021

Van Offelen, C. (2020), "Le vrai visage du terrorisme Sahélien : le grand banditisme et la criminalité ordinaire." Revue Conflits, July 28, 2020. Available online at https://www.revueconflits.com/le-vrai-visage-du-terrorisme-sahelien-le-grand-banditisme-et-la-criminalite-ordinaire/#_ftnref2. Accessed on 29 May 2021

William, A., Baba, D., Théroux-Bénoni, L., Maïga, I (2019); Violent Extremism, Organised Crime and Local Conflicts in Liptako-Gourma; Institute for Security Studies (ISS), West Africa Report 26, December 2019, p.10. Available online at https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/war-26-eng.pdf. Accessed on 27 May 2021