

# African insurgency groups: causes and responses



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- Daniel Silberstein

In response to a spate of violent attacks from the Kenyan capital to the coast President Uhuru Kenyatta has decreed that they “ will not flinch in war against terrorists”, specifically against the Al-Shabaab militant group headquartered in Somalia. His publicly declared position of a robust, aggressive, and continued response against what he refers to as an, “ extremist caliphate” intent on asserting dominance in the region, is certain to be met with both solidarity and criticism amongst Kenyans, Africans, and the global community. Nigeria, home to Africa’s largest economy (according to an April BBC report) also finds itself on the brink of a larger conflict. Flanked by militant insurgency, attributed mostly to the Boko Haram, in the north and the new capital of piracy on its southern shores. The reverberations of these conflicts are uncertain. But, in order to foresee, and perhaps assuage, the consequences of this campaign, and to limit the devastation we are likely to witness, it is paramount that international interventions adapt and correlations be drawn between this rising contention and contemporary conflicts that define modern warfare.

Firstly, this should not be perceived as merely a symptom of the popularized narrative of another African affliction. This is to say that, historically, aggressions were relatively limited in regional scope. This does not downplay the reprehensible past conflicts in Africa: the horrors of genocide – such as Rwanda, Darfur, etc. – and entrenched prolonged warfare – such as Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, etc. This is simply, and necessarily, to illustrate that the ramifications of warfare in Africa is quickly becoming a global hazard.

The overwhelming contribution to this crises so far? Money, and quite literally tons of it. A 2009 WSJ article by Dambisa Moyo estimated over \$1 trillion in fact. So, while the hopes of assisting in curtailing violence and degradation in the region have existed for decades, through foreign aid and, military and political partnerships, it is apparent that the structures in place for facilitation and management have failed to meet expectations. The current system of aid in Africa has become almost farcical. Broad strokes of assistance have missed the mark at best and have been actively harmful at worst. Much of the governmental fixtures that have grown from the influx of poorly distributed aid have actually stifled the genuine progress of their respective constituencies. Political institutions have propagated mostly as middle-men, profiteering from the flow of aid. In 2013, Transparency International placed all but five Sub-Saharan nations on the bottom half of its corruption rankings list. A new course of action is imperative to foster safety and augment economic growth. A discourse about the patronage of wealthy nations in intelligent intervention and investment is becoming more and more vital.

That being said, undeterred by turmoil Africa is on the verge of a new day. Racked between geo-political vestiges of imperialism and vulnerable as potential prey to an aloof globalized economy, the region has desperately been seeking for a foothold of stability since the end of WW2. Despite a gridlock of corruption, sectarian violence, and humanitarian disasters, this century is poised to see African nations propelled into an elevated global status, both politically and economically. Countries like Botswana, Angola, and many others are experiencing an enormous growth in their middle-class

sectors, which according to “ The Economist” is projected to equal India’s middle-class sometime in 2015. While not the equivalent of the Western standard for middle-class this, consumer base will exponentially increase the marketability and influence of Africa’s economic bids. The consequences of increased economic pertinence is apparent throughout. A budding group of billionaires speckle the continent, twenty-nine in fact according to Forbes in March. This is up from twenty only one year earlier. Granted, many are South African or hail from Northern Africa, countries not normally framed with Sub-Saharan Africa, but the proximity itself imparts salience. While functional and profitable large businesses develop, along with a stable middle-class, many African nations’ governments are beginning to politically mature. Even pockets of success from more circumspect aid programs exist, especially with micro-grants and loans to ground-level African entrepreneurs, demining initiatives, and the proliferation of educational opportunities.

Considering Africa’s historical failures, and a perhaps tenuous grip upon a wave of rapid development, what are the right answers to best facilitate peace and stability? The necessity of foreign aid and intervention still exists. Reevaluating the distribution and access of aid, and developing prudent intervention strategies to comply with measurable outcomes is the only hope for these nations to surmount the magnitude of adversity that haunts the continent.

Invariably, it seems to me, certain criteria must be met before a nation can hope to flourish: security and stability, transparency and accountability, and the development of business and infrastructure. While these guidelines are by no means exclusive of one another, nor strictly chronological in

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implementation. However, some semblance of this order is necessary, especially considering the familiar detachment of government policies to the populations they manage. The regression of the security situation, particularly Nigeria and Kenya the rising stars of self-reliance, threatens to derail these upwardly mobile countries by the very real potential of a conflict whose scope can easily exceed any in African history. The most significant distinction of this rising conflict are the links to a well-funded and ambitious international terrorist culture. Though intelligence is inherently faulty when evaluating extremist groups, links between African insurgency groups and organizations like Al Qaeda and (if not already, certainly soon) ISIS are all but assured.

In light of emerging conflicts with borderless extremist organizations, and new found wealth, African defense budgets have soared 65% since 2004, according to The Economist, greater than any other region in that time frame. Almost without fail, since the onset of the Cold War era, ballooning defense budgets are often indicative of impending crises, not only in terms of violence but in the cessation of civil liberties and international instability. To ameliorate this the sale of materiel must follow a strict and discriminatory guideline. This is why the international community must be cohesive and cognizant, even apprehensive, as Kenya and Nigeria embark on their very own " War on Terror". Unfortunately, the profit margin for manufacturing in the lucrative arms market is quickly establishing a place in Africa. The same Economist article divulged that " four major European arms manufacturers have set up African subsidiaries this year". These will no doubt become economic boons but they carry with them the latency of war.

One of McNamara's lessons becomes relevant, "Proportionality should be a guideline in war", indeed both in the manner in which it is waged and in the prevention of needless aggression. Problems arise with inflated military spending, the accessibility of war and the justification of expenditures compels nations to treat every problem like a nail with the hammers of automatic rifles. This is the often overlooked criticism of drone warfare. They are often more precise, accurate, and less apt to error than manned machines. A drone pilot in Nevada, overseen by hordes of high-ranking officials and lawyers, is less vulnerable to primal survival instincts and rash decisions. However, accessibility draws us into conflict. When the fear of casualty counts are not smeared on news broadcasts, a sense of invulnerability obfuscates wisdom. In the face of a ravenous enemy it is understandable, though undesirable, that one seeks safety behind the acquisition of arms and muzzle flashes.

Some strides have been made in anticipation of incautious military action. The U. N.'s Forward Intervention Brigade and African Union Peacekeepers have had success in presenting a unified front; the term coalition should be avoided these days to avoid negative connotations. These organizations also lend some transparency to unilateral operations and a more honest assessment of the aftermath of military operations. Obviously these methods of waging war are by no means faultless, it is a step in the right direction. Mutual policing will be fundamental in preventing atrocity.

Andrew Muzonzini, the lead for Zimbabwe's external intelligence agency offers a precocious insight in a Business Insider Article that is in line with the appropriate approach, "Ahead of time, we should seek to understand (the <https://assignbuster.com/african-insurgency-groups-causes-and-responses/>

Islamic State) modus operandi if we are to anticipate and predict challenges ahead". This conclusion, hopefully shared amongst the milieu of African politics, will (hopefully) be indicative of a circumspect and deliberate course of action to repel extremist behavior. A strong internal defense approach combined with precisely defined and rigidly tailored tactical excursions, targeting only locally substantiated objectives, should be the tenets of this nascent conflict. The global community needs to facilitate such equitable actions. More valuable than financial support, more accurate than high-tech weaponry, we must impart the lessons of an ineffective and prolonged conflict. The manner in which we defend ourselves should not be so broad as to alienate us from the world at large. Africa's Muslim population's safety must be assured. Sovereign nations must not be disaffected. And perhaps in the end Africa may edify the global community on how to maintain morality when confronting monsters.