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AFRICAN UNION INITIATIVES TO COUNTER TERRORISM AND DEVELOP DERADICALISATION STRATEGIES

Anneli Botha

Violent extremism leading to acts of terrorism is not new to Africa, requiring the focus of countermeasures to change throughout the years. Initially, the focus has been on actively addressing the direct threat, calling for political, legislative and physical measures, in line with United Nations (UN) directions. Since the introduction of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy – based on four pillars, namely measures to address the conditions conducive to terrorism; measures to prevent and combat terrorism; measures to build states’ capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the UN system in this regard; and measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism – countries on the continent again followed the lead by introducing measures and strategies to (in addition to the direct threat) address the conditions conducive to radicalisation and terrorism (the manifestation of violent extremism). However, instead of the African Union (AU) introducing similar steps as when it introduced the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism and subsequent Protocol and Plan of Action, countries most directly affected by terrorism and its aftermath took the lead in developing regional strategies through Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Starting initially with counter-terrorism strategies, RECs more recently introduced strategies to counter and prevent radicalisation. For example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) took the lead, introducing specific strategies against terrorism and radicalisation into violent extremist organisations. These strategies – in addition to measures to address the immediate threat of terrorism – also made provision to curb the growing threat of radicalisation by introducing initiatives to address the underlying reasons for radicalisation. From a pure counter-terrorism perspective, deradicalisation is however still very new to the agenda of many countries, especially those not directly affected.

When deradicalisation efforts in Europe are being compared to that of Africa, the initial assumption is that the continent is light-years behind. However, it is easy to forget that Africa
is the size of the United States, Eastern and Western Europe, China and India combined and similar to the diverse nature of these areas are the different regions on the African continent. Furthermore, the manifestation of radicalisation in acts of terrorism in Africa is completely different to the experiences in Europe. Although both Europe and Africa are being confronted with foreign fighters, the manifestation of the associated threat is different: Europe is confronted with radicalisation and recruitment of its nationals into Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, to be used to commit acts of terrorism at home and/or participate in the then conflict in Syria and Iraq. As a result, returning foreign fighters are considered to be one of the most prominent security challenges to countries in Western Europe and Scandinavia. Africa, on the other hand, has been the recipient of foreign fighters to especially Somalia and Libya, but its nationals have also been recruited to Afghanistan and later Iraq and Syria. That being said, the manifestation and level of recruitment of foreign fighters in southern Africa cannot even be compared to the situation in northern Africa. Preventing and countering terrorism – as well as radicalisation – through a one-size-fits-all approach will not be effective as long as the respective counter-strategies are not developed after understanding the local threat and associated challenges and acknowledging the different nature of the threat in Africa in the form of insurgencies versus radicalisation into terrorist organisations in Europe.

One can identify three hotspots in Africa: Eastern Africa, with Somalia as the epicentre; Western Africa, with Nigeria as the centre of gravity; and Northern Africa (Algeria, Libya and Egypt spreading to Mali, Niger and Mauritania). Unlike in Europe, radicalisation in Eastern, Western and North Africa manifested first in insurgencies, driven by domestic circumstances and local frustration. Not being able to bring these conflicts under control the initial national crisis became increasingly transnational. As a result, the reasons for and manifestation of radicalisation and associated terrorism under al-Shabaab are different in Somalia (predominantly an insurgency where control of territory is important) and Kenya (where al-Shabaab manifests itself as a purely terrorist organisation). Practically, the counter and deradicalisation strategies also need to be different to speak to the realities in each of these countries, despite being in the same region. Therefore, although direction from the AU may add some guidance to countries not experiencing the same level of radicalisation to initiate preventative measures, initiatives taken by RECs addressing similar challenges and realities will be far more effective.

The following chapter will start with providing a brief introduction to AU initiatives to prevent and counter terrorism and institutions within the AU to take the lead in developing relevant strategies. As an example of where the AU took the lead in developing a dedicated strategy, reference will be made to the AU strategy for the Sahel region. In the absence of a specific AU deradicalisation strategy for the continent the AU, as part of its conflict and mitigation strategies, instead focused on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) efforts. In contrast to the driving factors of radicalisation in Europe, where ideology play a more prominent role, radicalisation into violent extremist movements is caused by an array of factors that also include governance, ethnic and religious marginalisation, need for revenge and financial incentives. As a result, peacekeeping and DDR are often more relevant to address the broader manifestation of violent extremism in Africa.

**Historical overview of African initiatives to prevent and combat terrorism**

Efforts to improve African regional cooperation in countering terrorism predate the 9/11 attacks and even the 1998 bombings of the United States’ embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. As early as July 1992, the OAU Heads of State and Government meeting in Dakar adopted
Resolution 213. The objective of this resolution was to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the African states, to enhance the effectiveness of its initiatives against the first real manifestations of extremism. According to the Resolution, Member States committed themselves

not to allow any movement using religion, ethnic or other social or cultural differences to indulge in hostile activities against Member States as well as to refrain from lending any support to any group that could disrupt the stability and the territorial integrity of Member States by violent means, and to strengthen cooperation and coordination among the African countries in order to circumvent the phenomenon of extremism and terrorism.

(Organization of African Unity, 1992, p. 1)

The Member States furthermore agreed not to allow any movement using religion, ethnic or other social or cultural differences to incite and justify hostile activities against the Member States.

In June 1994, during its session in Tunis, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted a “Declaration on the Code of Conduct for Inter-African Relations”. In that Declaration, the Summit rejected fanaticism and extremism, whatever their nature, origin and form, particularly those based on religion as unacceptable and detrimental to the promotion of peace and security on the continent. The Summit unreservedly condemned the terrorist acts, methods and practices and expressed its determination to strengthen cooperation between Member States (African Heads of State and Government, 1994, pp. 9–10).

Although the rest of the world refers to 9/11 as the watershed in the emergence of major international terrorism, African countries were abruptly awakened to the dangers of transnational terrorism when terrorists bombed the US embassies in Dar-es-Salaam and Nairobi in 1998. The vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) caused a large number of casualties among residents as well as US officials. In reaction to these attacks, African countries in July 1999 adopted the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (Algiers Convention) during the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. The Convention called on the Member States not to justify terrorism under any circumstances, origin, causes and objectives. Article I included a lengthy definition of a terrorist act. However, the OAU Convention also stipulated that “armed struggle against colonialism, occupation, aggression and domination by foreign forces shall not be considered as terrorist acts” (Organization of African Unity, 1999, p. 208). This provision reflects the African historical context in which liberation movements were labelled terrorist organisations. During this period, the focus of African leaders has been on developing the capacity to implement practical counter-terrorism measures, such as enhanced border control and surveillance, information-sharing and financial controls. Following the introduction of the OAU Convention, most notably defining a terrorist act, countries domesticated the Convention through counter-terrorism legislation. The example set by the AU further facilitated cooperation between countries – especially amongst those directly confronted by terrorism.

As a sign of greater awareness by the AU Member States to the terrorist threat posed to the stability and security of Member States, the Constitutive Act of the African Union listed among its principles the rejection of acts of terrorism (Article 4 (o)) (African Union, 2000,
In addition, the Solemn Declaration on the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) was adopted by the Lome Summit in July 2000. Further reference was made to condemn terrorism and for countries on the continent to cooperate.

To build momentum towards ratification, the AU convened an “Inter-Governmental High-Level Meeting” during September 2002 in Algiers where the Action Plan to implement the Convention was designed (African Union, 2002b). Largely at the insistence of Algeria (also the host of the meeting), the meeting also recommended that the AU started work on an implementation and monitoring mechanism (to be reflected in a Protocol). Furthermore, the AU proposed the establishment of the African Centre for the Study and Research of Terrorism (ACSRT), that will be referred to below, to be based in Algeria.

The Convention was the first concrete regional step to address and deal with the devastating impact of terrorism on the African continent. It was however only after 9/11 – on 6 December 2002 – that the Convention came into force. Illustrating the impact of 9/11, only six countries ratified the convention before those attacks, while 28 ratified the convention soon after 9/11. Furthermore, in the aftermath of 9/11, African countries felt that the Algiers Convention was not sufficient to develop a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy and suggested an additional Protocol and Plan of Action. Furthermore, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) was formed to work towards a stable and conflict-free Africa, to be discussed below.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union provides a sound basis for the prevention and combating of terrorism. Article 4(o) calls for “respect for the sanctity of human life, condemnation and rejection of impunity and political assassination, acts of terrorism and subversive activities” (African Union, 2000, p. 7). The Preamble also underscores the need to promote peace, security and stability as a prerequisite for the implementation of Africa’s development agenda.

The emergence of a new peace and security architecture on the continent, particularly the PSC in the AU, introduced a new chapter in addressing increasing threats the continent faces (to be discussed below).

**Protocol to the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism**

The primary focus of the Protocol was to enhance the effective implementation of the Convention (African Union, 2002a). The Protocol also acknowledged new developments in the threat of terrorism, such as the growing interest of terrorists in weapons of mass destruction as well as the use of sophisticated and electronic technology to plan, organise and commit terrorist activities.

In addition to the above-mentioned role of the AU in developing a regional counter-terrorism strategy, the AU has also facilitated technical assistance delivery to its Member States. Despite a Convention, Protocol and a Plan of Action, AU Member States requested the Commission of the AU to draw up a roadmap indicating timelines and priorities in the implementation of the Plan of Action (African Union, 2004, p. 4). This illustrates a real problem, namely a lack of capacity among Member States and the AU’s inability to provide the necessary guidelines and resolve to implement existing UN and AU instruments.
Plan of Action of the African Union High-Level Inter-Governmental Meeting on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa

The primary aim of the Plan of Action as presented in its Preamble is:

to give concrete expression to commitments and obligations (presented in the Algiers Convention and UN Resolution 1373 adopted in the immediate aftermath of 9/11), to enhance and promote African countries’ access to appropriate counter-terrorism resources through a range of measures establishing a counter-terrorism cooperation framework in Africa.

(African Union, 2002b, p. 1)

The Plan of Action sets out a series of measures and actions it requires Member States to comply with, including the structuring of two inter-related structures that would enable better cooperation between the Member States on security-related issues:

- the PSC; and
- the ACSRT that was established under the authority of the PSC.

Peace and Security Council

The PSC succeeded the OAU Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. The Central Organ was the OAU’s operational body mandated to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts on the continent. Under Article 7 of the Protocol, the PSC’s key powers, according to the AU website, include: To anticipate and prevent disputes and conflicts, as well as policies, which may lead to genocide and crimes against humanity. Undertake peace-making, peace-building and peace-support missions and recommend intervention in a Member State in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity and institute sanctions where necessary. Implement the AU’s common defence policy, ensure implementation of key conventions and instruments to combat international terrorism; promote coordination between regional mechanisms and the AU regarding peace, security and stability in Africa (Africa Union, 2002c, p. 9).

In line with measures to address the conditions conducive to terrorism, the PSC calls for the promotion of democratic practices, good governance, the rule of law, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the sanctity of human life and international humanitarian law. Furthermore, the PSC promotes and encourages the implementation of conventions and treaties on arms control and disarmament; examines and takes action in situations where the national independence and sovereignty of a Member State are threatened by acts of aggression, including by mercenaries; and supports and facilitates humanitarian action in situations of armed conflict or major natural disasters.

The PSC is therefore primarily responsible and tasked to prevent and combat terrorism in Africa. Under Article 3(d) the PSC is tasked with coordinating and harmonising continental efforts in the prevention and combating of terrorism in all its aspects, as well as the implementation of other relevant international instruments (African Union, 2002b, p. 3). Furthermore, under Article 7(i) the PSC gives the Organ the power to “ensure the
implementation of the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism and other relevant international, continental and regional conventions and instruments and harmonize and coordinate efforts at the regional and continental levels to combat international terrorism” (African Union, 2002b, p. 9).

Paragraph 16 of the Plan of Action and Article 4 of the Protocol further provide for a detailed role of the PSC, including, among others, the following (African Union, 2002b, p. 9). Firstly, prepare, publicise and regularly review a list of persons, groups and entities involved in terrorist acts (related to UN Security Council Resolution 1267). Secondly, establish mechanisms to facilitate the exchange of information among State Parties on the patterns and trends in terrorist acts, the activities of terrorist groups and on successful practices in combating terrorism (UN Security Council Resolution 1373). Thirdly, request all Member States on an annual basis to report on the steps taken to prevent and combat terrorism and, where appropriate, on the implementation of the Algiers Convention (Counter-Terrorism Committee established under UN Security Council Resolution 1373 and UN Resolution 1624). Lastly, monitor, evaluate and make recommendations on the implementation of the Convention and the Plan of Action.

Under Article 10(e) of the Plan of Action, Member States undertake to “promote policies aimed at addressing the causes of terrorism, in particular, poverty, deprivation and marginalisation”.

In addition to coordinating initiatives on the continent to address the threat of terrorism (listed as number 6 under Article 7 – see above), the PSC undertakes peace-making, peace-building and peace-support missions (listed as number 2) and promotes coordination between regional mechanisms and the AU regarding peace, security and stability in Africa (listed as number 7). The PSC is, therefore, the best placed to propose initiatives and strategies on deradicalisation. As will be discussed below, the PSC under its mandate to undertake peacekeeping and peace-building initiatives, especially DDR, plays an increasingly relevant role in deradicalisation through reintegration as part of DDR.

African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism

The Centre was launched during the Second High-Level Inter-Governmental Meeting on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa held in Algiers, Algeria on 13–14 October 2004. The Centre was established under paragraphs 19–21 of the AU Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, based in Algiers and serves as a structure of the Commission of the AU and the PSC. The Centre performs, among others, the following functions (ACSRT, n.d., pp. 3–4): assists Member States of the AU in developing strategies for the prevention and combating of terrorism; establishes operating procedures for information gathering, processing and dissemination; and provides technical and expert advice on the implementation of the AU counter-terrorism instruments. The Centre also updates and strengthens policies and programmes of the Union relating to counter-terrorism; and develops and maintains a database on a range of issues relating to the prevention and combating of terrorism, particularly on terrorist groups and their activities in Africa. This database, as well as other analyses, will be accessible by all Member States. The Centre further promotes the coordination and standardisation of efforts aimed at enhancing the capacity of Member States to prevent and combat terrorism; and initiates and disseminates research studies and policy analyses periodically, through an African Journal for the
Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. It also develops training programmes with the assistance of individual countries and organisations.

Since its inception, ACSRT through Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with RECs, the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) and national security institutions established relationships to enhance the effectiveness of counter-terrorism efforts (Peace and Security Council, 2012, p. 6).

In its report, the Chairperson of the Commission on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa stipulated that:

Countering radicalization and extremism lies at the heart of the efforts to address the conditions that are conducive to the spread of terrorism. It is a long-term process that requires the development of sound national policies and programs based on a thorough understanding of the radicalization threat. Terrorist acts cannot be justified under any circumstances. However, the fact that some segments of society may have sympathy for extremist and terrorist groups warrants a closer look at domestic grievances, ideological tendencies and trust gap between Government and population. Hence the need for Member States to adopt counter-radicalization and de-radicalization policies and programs that encompass engaging and working with civil society, including community leaders and religious authorities, formal and informal educational institutes. Furthermore, addressing socio-economic problems to reduce vulnerability to extremist ideology, legislation reform, prison rehabilitation programs and building national capacities, to ensure effective implementation and sustainability of related measures.

(Peace and Security Council, 2012, p. 11)

In April 2012, the ACSRT organised a seminar to examine and evaluate national experiences, establish broad guidelines of analysis for radical discourse and design a common methodology for the African states for developing and implementing counter-radicalization and deradicalisation programmes, as well as effective legal and administrative measures. The seminar was attended by 40 government officials, members of the religious organisations and representatives from civil society (Peace and Security Council, 2012, p. 6).

African Union strategy for the Sahel region

Although the AU assists and work with RECs in developing regional strategies through the PSC and ACSRT, the AU took the lead (with the UN) in developing an AU strategy for the Sahel. Dealing with the instability in Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, resulting from trafficking and terrorism through groups – such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Ansar Dine – the AU associated with the UN proposed a strategy for the Sahel region. This strategy consists of elements of preventative and counter (including deradicalisation) initiatives.

This strategy is centred on three main pillars: (1) governance; (2) security; and (3) development under the AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL) that will be responsible for the effective implementation of this strategy. Following the Libyan crisis of 2011, the AU and UN conducted a fact-finding mission to the region. Based on the “United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel” the PSC of the AU endorsed the conclusions of this joint AU–UN experts meeting at a ministerial-level meeting in Bamako on 20 March 2012. Additionally, the March 2012 military coup in Mali and intensification of the crisis in the north
of Mali (emergence of armed terrorist groups) called for action against the causes of recurring insecurity in the region (Peace and Security Council, 2014, p. 2).

The strategy under governance as the first priority identifies that the lack of respect for principles of good governance and the rule of law and the manipulation of constitutional provisions relating to power alternation play an important role in the occurrence of political crises in the Sahel region and on the continent as a whole.

(Peace and Security Council, 2014, p. 7)

To ensure the implementation of the strategy, it calls for the “close monitoring of political developments in the countries of the region and undertake good offices and structural conflict prevention initiatives” (Peace and Security Council, 2014, p. 7). It further recommends:

support civil society organisations, including women’s associations, parliamentarians, political parties and the media professionals in the region with a view to enabling them to play their role for the effective implementation of these instruments in their respective fields of action.

(Peace and Security Council, 2014, p. 7)

Under paragraph 22, it promotes “a culture of respect for human rights and curb injustices, inequalities and the perceptions of marginalisation”. Specifically recognising the main nomadic populations in the Sahel region, namely the Tuareg (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali and Niger), the Toubus (Chad, Libya and Niger) and, to a lesser degree, the Fulani or Peuls and the role perceptions of marginalisation play in radicalisation and conflict. The AU through this strategy encourages dialogue and development within these communities, but also encourages “the promotion of languages and cultural symbols of the nomadic populations, within a framework of national harmony, in order to enhance their integration into the national community” (Peace and Security Council, 2014, p. 9).

Directly associated with deradicalisation, the “AU proposes to continue its engagement in the dialogue and reconciliation processes, both in Mali and at the regional level”. To ensure its success, the strategy is committed to “mobilize funds to support the field actions of institutions in charge of the dialogue and reconciliation processes in Mali, particularly in relation to the development of programs of activities and the conduct of [its] hearings”. Recognising the role religious and traditional leaders play in the promotion of peace and national cohesion, it specifically recalled the

African Charter for the Cultural Renaissance stressed that elders and traditional leaders are important cultural actors. Their role and importance deserve an official recognition through their integration in the modern mechanisms of conflict resolution and the systems of intercultural dialogue.

(Peace and Security Council, 2014, p. 11)

To ensure the implementation of this approach, the strategy calls for the following four steps (Peace and Security Council, 2014, p. 11). Firstly, facilitate regular exchanges between and with religious and traditional leaders around values of tolerance and strategies to better convey these messages through the media to the young people and in places of worship. Secondly, strengthen the position of religious and traditional leaders to enable them to...
better play their role as actors of peace, and preaches common values and messages of tolerance and harmonious cohabitation. Thirdly, support civil society organisations and youth associations working in the field of the promotion of religious tolerance and sensitisation of young people on the consequences of intolerance and religious extremism. Lastly, promote inter-faith dialogue using the existing cultural mechanisms in the Sahel region to avoid the stigma and violence against other beliefs.

Under the framework, this strategy provided for individual countries to develop tailored initiatives.

**Dealing with radicalisation as part of broader AU conflict mitigation strategies**

Recognising the different realities on the African continent, “traditional” deradicalisation programmes are being developed and implemented in countries directly affected by radicalisation on a national level. However, the AU focuses predominantly on bringing stability to areas affected by conflict. From this perspective initiatives from the AU on “deradicalisation” took the format of DDR processes in the aftermath of insurgencies. Acting as a bridge between immediate security and longer-term recovery priorities, DDR is the first step in peace-building. While the AU is actively developing and guiding policy on the continent on DDR best practices, the ACSRT facilitated discussion groups on radicalisation in the past. Whether DDR can be associated with deradicalisation is up for debate when approached from a Western perspective. However, within the African context, organisations associated with conflicts over the continent and responsible for the worst acts of terrorism were executed by insurgencies. Insurgencies represent the following prominent characteristics: the primary focus of an insurgency is to overthrow the existing government or to obtain a share in government by forcing the existing government to the negotiation table. Secondly, the objective is to gain control over territory by enhancing access to resources, a tax base and recruitment opportunities (Hammes, 2006, p. 24).

In response, the UN in partnership with the AU directly receives ex-combatants through its DDR programmes in Somalia, the AU/UN Hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID) as well as the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) mission in the Central African Republic and the AU counter-LRA (Lord’s Resistance Army) mission. The AU (through the UN) enhanced its DDR capacity-building and support infrastructure as an answer to this growing operational need. It is especially in Somalia through the AU mission (AMISOM) that al-Shabaab members are being reintegrated through its DDR project that supports the decision to consider the connection between deradicalisation and DDR. In contrast to the arrest of individuals implicated in acts of terrorism in Europe or who were individually radicalised into violent extremism, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, to name a few, are closely associated with insurgencies, bringing them into the DDR framework. Similarly, only a minority of the individuals who had been part of these organisations were actually radicalised; instead, most joined out of necessity. For example, living in areas controlled by organisations such as al-Shabaab and Boko Haram contributed to the impression that, by not joining, young males especially might be suspected of supporting government forces. Secondly, joining the organisations as a form of employment calls rather for classical DDR-related initiatives to equip the person for better employment opportunities instead of deradicalisation efforts addressing the ideology of the organisation.

Implementing DDR-type of programmes instead of traditional deradicalisation programmes found in Europe was reinforced especially in Somalia, where linkages between...
poverty and radicalisation/recruitment were established when 12% of former al-Shabaab members interviewed in 2017 as part of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study into radicalisation indicated that they had joined al-Shabaab for the employment opportunities it presented after religious/nationalism motivations. Ten per cent of the same sample referred to losing their employment as a catalyst in joining al-Shabaab. Lastly, the majority of al-Shabaab respondents identified employment as the most prominent need. Although defending Somalia against “foreign occupation” in the form of AMISOM played a prominent role in the radicalisation process, economic reasons justifying joining al-Shabaab cannot be ignored. Indicating a lack of ideological commitment to the “cause” of al-Shabaab, deradicalisation and reintegration strategies (currently implemented through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) with the assistance of other partner institutions) need to address these employment challenges through vocational training and the creation of employment opportunities.

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration

Based on the unique manifestation of the threat through well-defined organisations such as al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, whose aim it was to capture territory in Somalia and Nigeria, these organisations in those two countries became a hybrid between an insurgency and a terrorist organisation. In addition to the structuring and overall aim of these organisations – associated with an insurgency – increasing attacks directed at the local population placed the said organisations increasingly in the realm of terrorism. In considering the magnitude of resources required to deal with the threat effectively, the Nigerian government deployed its military, followed by establishing the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) with troop-contributing countries from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria to find a solution to Boko Haram. Faced with state failure in Somalia, the AU through its mission in Somalia (AMISOM) with military support from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and Sierra Leone instituted a peacekeeping mission in Somalia to bring an end to al-Shabaab. Within peacekeeping circles DDR has been well known since March 1990, when the UN Security Council expanded the mandate of the peacekeeping operation known as ONUCA (UN Observer Group in Central America) to demobilise anti-government elements in Nicaragua (United Nations, 2010, p. 3).

Recognising the changing environment in which peacekeeping operations in recent years have been being conducted, the UN introduced “Second Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Practices in Peace Operations: A Contribution to the New Horizon Discussion on Challenges and Opportunities for UN Peacekeeping”. According to this report, whereas “traditional DDR focuses mainly on combatants that are present within military structures, the focus of Second Generation programs shifts away from military structures towards the larger communities that are affected by armed violence” (United Nations, 2010, p. 3).

In February 2012 the AU Commission, through the Peace and Security Department (PSD), initiated the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Capacity Program (DDRCAP) by holding a Consultation Seminar on DDR with the RECs and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RMs). This was conducted within the framework of the 2004 Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP), the 2006 Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) and the 2010...
The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) Roadmap. Each of the AU Member States is a member of at least one of the eight RECs and two RMs:

1. ECOWAS
2. Common Market of East and Southern Africa (COMESA)
3. ECCAS
4. Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)
5. Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)
6. Economic Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)
7. East African Community (EAC)
8. IGAD.

The two RMs refer to the Eastern African Standby Brigade Coordination Mechanism (EAS-BRIGCOM) and North Africa Regional Capability (NARC). Although the AU PCRD Policy Framework of 2006 provides guidance on roles and responsibilities of AU and RECs as well as on mechanisms to be established for the effective implementation of PCRD measures at Member State level, there is still a lack of clear definitions of roles and responsibilities of the AU and the RECs (African Union Commission, 2015, p. 41).

The purpose of the DDRCP is to strengthen capacities within the AU, its Member States and regional partners, namely the RECs and RMs, to support national and regional DDR initiatives on the continent. The Defence and Security Division (DSD) is the office within the PSD responsible for developing policy on emerging issues the CADSP is confronted with (African Union Commission, 2012, p. 7).

Following an integrated process, the DSD works in partnership with the other sections in the Commission, including the Peace Support Operation Division (PSOD) and the African Standby Force. The World Bank Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program (TDRP), the UN Office at the AU (UNOAU) and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN DPKO) financially support the AU’s DDR capacity-building initiatives.

Following requests made by the Member States, the AU supports national DDR programmes. These include assistance to the Republic of South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Somalia.

**Phases in the DDR process**

Although the focus is on reintegration, disarmament consists of the collection, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons from combatants, as well as in many cases from the civilian population. Secondly, demobilisation is the formal discharging of active combatants. According to the UN, “reinsertion” serves as a step between demobilisation and reintegration. During this step, assistance is being provided to former combatants by supplying the basic needs of former combatants and their families that can include “transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools” (United Nations, 2010, p. 23). Lastly, reintegration is considered the most difficult stage in the DDR process during which former combatants are prepared to be integrated back into their communities. During this process, former combatants are retrained to secure employment, as explained above.

Through demobilising former combatants, equipping them with the necessary skills to provide for themselves and their families and reintegrating them back into society, these initiatives create a platform for long-term stability. In addition to creating employment opportunities for
former combatants, the DDR framework equally emphasises the need for economic, political and social reforms. Consequently, these initiatives include strengthening of governance, the rule of law, gender and youth vulnerability – all elements in the prevention and countering of a violent extremism agenda. That said, DDR does not necessarily focus on the ideological factors influencing radicalisation that deradicalisation programmes would concentrate on. It is, however, important to note that the DDR process in Somalia incorporated religious education as part of the programme.

Facilitating reintegration under DDR, vocational training is being provided in the following basic skills (African Union, 2007, p. 3): functional literacy; hygiene, nutrition, sanitation, and disease prevention, including HIV/AIDS prevention; and family life skills, including parental care and domestic skills. Especially applicable in deradicalisation is the following training recipients receive: namely creative thinking and analysis of information skills; and human relations and interpersonal skills to enable more constructive interaction with others from different ethnic backgrounds. This is further supported by communication and language skills – if necessary learning a second language – in multilingual societies; human rights and good governance practices; politics, culture and history; and lessons on national unity and reconciliation.

Guiding the delivery of vocational training in a post-conflict situation, these projects address skill acquisition, particularly in areas related to infrastructure development, basic socioeconomic activities and local community needs. More specifically, the AU recommends the following types of programme (African Union, 2007, p. 5):

- agriculture, for example, crop and animal production, agro-food processing, irrigation, etc.
- building and construction services, including masonry, carpentry, painting and decorating, interior design, electrical installation, plumbing, etc.
- water and sanitation systems maintenance
- welding and fabrication, including the manufacture of simple agricultural implements and tools
- electrical and electronic equipment repair
- vehicle repair and maintenance
- handicrafts and traditional crafts, for example, carvings, weavings, basketry, leatherwork, etc.
- basic ICT skills, including word processing, data management, internet, etc.
- tourism-related skills, for example, hotel management, tour guides, cooks, waiters, etc.
- business entrepreneurial skills and attitudes, including time management, marketing, basic accounting, microbusiness management, joint ventures.

To ensure the success of the said programmes, those benefiting need to be employed as a measure to prevent these individuals from returning to the conflict. Associated with deradicalisation programmes, the AU recommended psychological trauma counselling, post-training support including follow-up, mentoring of graduates and the initiation of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms with appropriate indicators (African Union, 2007, p. 5).

Although the focus of the reintegration process is the former combatant, the long-term success of the programme is to secure the support of the communities these individuals will be reintegrated into. Without community acceptance, the possibility of returning to the organisation increases substantially.

One of the most challenging parts of the reintegration process is to differentiate between commanders and combatants. In contrast to deradicalisation, under reintegration, the
prosecution of those who committed crimes might be a requirement. Therefore, the classification system to differentiate between high-risk and low-risk individuals is critical in both the deradicalisation and reintegration framework. Furthermore, identification and differentiation between the different reasons and levels of radicalisation are required to implement different reintegration procedures and deradicalisation programmes. Intelligence is therefore critical in differentiating between low- and high-risk and between commanders and combatants to facilitate different reintegration programmes.

A similar process will also be applicable in the deradicalisation process. Within the DDR framework, the UN in its “Second Generation Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Practices in Peace Operations” guidelines refers to specific commander incentive programmes (CIPs), to ensure that middle- and high-ranking commanders do not spoil the peace as these individuals may have the means, status and connections to engage in illicit activities, particularly arms and drug trade. Part of this strategy may be to place commanders in positions of authority, including political or administrative positions, or to head reintegration programmes without promoting a culture of impunity. However, identifying “suitable and trustworthy commanders who would be eligible to assume political or administrative authority requires extra training, monitoring and mentoring mechanisms” (United Nations, 2010, pp. 25–26).

**Conclusion**

The primary role of the AU, as with any regional organisation, is inter alia to provide guidance and coordinate efforts to address a common challenge. Terrorism and all the associated themes, including preventing and addressing this threat, regarding counter-terrorism, preventing radicalisation into violent extremist organisations, countering violent extremism and deradicalisation call for coordinated guidance. Although the AU initially provided a counter-terrorism framework, the threat of terrorism and what is required to prevent it changed dramatically over time. Recognising the different manifestations of the threat of terrorism and radicalisation on the continent, the implementation of these counter and preventative measures occurs more effectively in a regional (driven by RECs) and national setting. In other words, although the threats associated with radicalisation and terrorism changed, its manifestation is confined to specific countries and neighbouring countries; for example, al-Shabaab in Somalia as the epicentre that spread to Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Djibouti and to a lesser extent Ethiopia. In another example, Boko Haram in Nigeria expanded to Cameroon, Niger and Mali. Lastly, AQIM with its historical origins in Algeria spread to Mauritania, Mali and Burkina Faso as the most severely affected. It is also for this reason that RECs are particularly active in developing and implementing strategies to address the different manifestations and counter changing trends associated with terrorism. Recognising the different manifestations of radicalisation associated with recruitment to national and/or transnational operations and the different local dynamics, it is to be expected that the type, strategies and role players involved in preventing and countering radicalisation followed by deradicalisation initiatives will take different forms across the continent.

In considering the magnitude of especially al-Shabaab and Boko Haram and the nature of their operations as insurgencies resorting to acts of terrorism as part of its broader strategy, the AU instituted peacekeeping operations in Somalia (AMISOM) and the MNJTF to deal with Boko Haram. Within military circles, DDR has been a well-known concept and integral part of any peacekeeping operation since 1990. It therefore came as no surprise that AMISOM, supported by the UN, introduced rehabilitation centres in Somalia to facilitate...
the reintegration of former al-Shabaab members. Furthermore, the fact that the entire continent doesn’t have to address the same type and level of radicalisation and terrorism means that the urgency for a continental framework and its focus differ. In contrast to the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism that called for efforts to facilitate cooperation through, for example, the introduction of specialised counter-terrorism legislation, to leap to the development of a continental prevention and countering of violent extremism and deradicalisation strategy might be remote and even practically unrealistic. Instead, the AU Commission seems to be more inclined to develop countering violent extremism strategies as part of the DDR framework and as part of regional initiatives driven by RECs. Working on the technical level (peacekeeping), instead of the political (required in introducing a continental framework), means that initiatives could be tailored to the specific needs and realities of the affected areas. The implementation of these strategies and measures can also be monitored and revised when necessary.

Should the AU decide to develop a continental prevention and countering of violent extremism strategy that makes provision for deradicalisation, the PSC and ACSRT will be the two institutions to take the lead in developing and implementing these initiatives. In particular, the ACSRT that is tasked with providing technical assistance and expert advice on counter-terrorism instruments, as well as the updating and strengthening of policies and programmes relating to counter-terrorism, would be best placed to take the lead. However, considering the realities described above, it is to be expected that the ACSRT will continue to provide technical support to RECs for the immediate future and for the latter to develop regional and guide national strategies. That being said, the ultimate test will not be how many meetings and strategies are being developed, but rather how many and to the extent these strategies will be implemented.

Notes
1. ECOWAS developed the Counterterrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan in 2013.
2. Initiatives started focusing on counter-terrorism with the IGAD Capacity Building Programme Against Terrorism (ICPAT) in 2006, to be followed in 2011 by the IGAD Security Sector Programme to restructure the IGAD Capacity-Building Programme Against Terrorism. More recently IGAD launched the Regional Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in the Horn and Eastern Africa Region in 2018.

References


