



African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism

**PEACEBUILDING TOWARDS PREVENTING AND
COMBATING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN AFRICA**

ACSRT Twitter Conversation (#AUTerrorTrend)

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ABOUT ACSRT

The African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) was established as a structure of the African Union in 2004. The decision to establish the Centre was taken in 2002 as part of the AU Plan of Action to Prevent and Combat of Terrorism. Its primary role is to assist AU member States build their Counter-Terrorism capacities. Its mandate includes the conduct of research, analysis and studies on the terrorism situation and terrorist groups in Africa, maintaining a terrorism database, centralizing information on terrorism and sharing this with AU Member States. The Centre conducts assessment missions to various AU Member States in order to ascertain their Counter-Terrorism capability and compliance with International Legal instruments and then provide advice on what needs to be done. In its capacity building effort, the Centre conducts seminars, workshops and training sessions in various aspects of Counter-terrorism for Member States and facilitates the drafting of their Counter-Terrorism legislation, strategies and Plans of Action in accordance with human rights requirements.

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INTRODUCTION

This question and answer session was carried out on the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism's (ACSRT) twitter page, hosted by the ACSRT Social Media Team with Ms. Emmaculate Asige Liaga, Doctoral Candidate at the Pretoria University, South Africa as the Guest. The chat took place on the Monday, 8th October 2018 at 1000GMT. The questions from ACSRT and the corresponding answers from the Guest are produced below.

ACSRT: In your opinion, what are the push and pull factors of violent extremism in Africa? What could be the similarities and differences with other geographical areas?

GUEST'S RESPONSE:

- 1.** To begin with, violent extremism in Africa is met by a combination of structural push factors, which indirectly fuel radicalization, and individual pull factors, that directly impact radicalization, and create an appeal for violent extremism.
- 2.** The push factors in African countries, especially in the West, North and East Africa region, are socio-economic, political and cultural in nature including cases of social marginalization (by religion in west and commonly by class in North and East Africa. In addition, push factors also include poorly governed areas such as the Sahel regions, poor human rights and cultural perception in Somalia and Libya and endemic corruption and elitism such as Nigerian.
- 3.** Pull factors have worked on an individual level. This includes individual values placed on them, the respect they or their community have been afforded, relationships, self-esteem and the prospect of achieving self-sufficiency and elevation.
- 4.** In other geographical areas like the Middle East and South East Asia, share more or less the same factors with differences in context. For instance, while both ISIS and Al-Qaeda in the Middle East, Syrian and Iran region, and Afghanistan and Iraq region are fighting for an Islamic caliphate, in a region already largely under sharia law.

5. Thus, the push and pull factors in VE differ in context and time. Example, Mercy Corps a global humanitarian organization conducted a study of former Boko Haram combatants and found that while societal-level pull factors played a role in recruitment, individuals were recruited for a wide range of reasons
6. Example, women wanted to be close to their husbands or perhaps out of a desire to learn the Qur'an, while men, many hoped that joining would give them access to business credit or they joined out of fear for their own survival.

ACSRT: What could be the influence of violent extremism in other geographical areas on the evolution of violent extremism in Africa?

GUEST'S RESPONSE:

1. Islamic militant groups in Africa are inspired, financially supported and mimic other terrorist groups outside of Africa. Majority of the Islamic militants especially in West Africa and in Somali (East African region) claim to be affiliated of ISIS or Al Qaeda
2. This has led to groups such as Boko Haram to grow and manage to control substantial areas of northern Nigeria despite the Nigerian government cracked down. Its affiliation to ISIS in 2015 strengthened its position, as ISIS grew Boko Haram grew.
3. Given the training and support from terrorist groups in the Middle East, Boko Haram is on track to becoming the most violent group in Africa, transcending their borders into the Sahel region, despite the CVE intervention of US, UK, France.
4. The style and structure used by ISIS has also inspired most terrorist groups. Example faction of Boko Haram, ISIS-West Africa provides a level of alternative governance in the Lake Chad region by offering protection to villages; provide stability, water, and food.

5. Terrorizing and exploiting locals in areas where governments are not adequately providing for the locals has been a strategy borrowed from the Middle East and is now a successful strategy used by terrorist all over Africa in exchange for recruits.
6. From existing terrorist groups, the need to pledge allegiance to Al-Qaeda or ISIS has also caused the growth and proliferation in terms of numbers and confidence of terrorist groups due to factions that breakaway in support of the two groups.
7. In northern Mali, Islamic militant group that was an affiliate of Al-Qaeda, a group known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara broke away pledging allegiance to ISIS. Also, IS-Somalia, an ISIS-affiliated group split from the Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab group.

ACSRT: How have Africa countries and various stakeholders dealt with violent extremism in their respective spheres? How effective have the interventions been?

GUEST'S RESPONSE:

1. Current programming has a huge focus on push factors. This has resulted to a focus on military action of counter terrorism strategy. The effectiveness of mostly military approaches to violent extremism has been less than effective, especially on recruitment.
2. The terrorist groups like depend on gaining support and also recruitment of soldiers. An effective way to meet this will be through soft power methods that aim to not only stop extremism and radicalization but also to transform and re-integrate formally radicals.
3. This has also been the reaction of most developmental assistance, who at macro-level improves underling conditions for the population at risk of. Little attention often goes to pull factors at a micro-level. Unfortunately, as a result, these responses fall short.
4. There is a need to highlight transformative violent extremism programs that recognize the reasons and motivations leading to individuals being drawn to violent extremist

movements. This is in addition to countering violent extremism which is reactive measure.

ACSRT: Briefly explain Peacebuilding and how it could be used to effectively prevent and combat violent extremism in Africa.

GUEST'S RESPONSE:

- 1.** Peacebuilding values look to provide an alternate, soft power approaches that not only look at the root causes of violent extremism but also aim to prevent future radicalization through various programs that cater and support short-term military responses.
- 2.** Recognizing political and operational space around work of combating violent extremism is a space of complexity, dynamism and, at times, dangerous, this should be met with an equally rigorous measure that does not only focus on military reaction
- 3.** Due to a security threat, it is naturally, yet not exclusively, for the state to respond. But building a sense of shared interest, and a complementary approach among CSOs, media, and the community at large, peacebuilders can empower CVE efforts to be holistic.
- 4.** Peacebuilders possess a unique set of values. This includes their enormous potential to empower different levels of influencers at a macro level to peacefully and proactively respond to the challenge of violent extremism, while also enabling individuals.
- 5.** It is important to understand the tools and frameworks most relevant in understanding the drivers and root causes of violent extremism. In some cases, these frameworks are very similar to the tools peacebuilders have used in social cohesion and resilience
- 6.** VE practitioners can draw various helpful principles from peacebuilders in different ways, determining enablers and blockers in the environment, and the need to understand deeper human needs related to agency, identity, and connection

ACSRT: Describe the best practices in Peacebuilding in Africa or elsewhere and how they could benefit selected African countries in a bid to effectively prevent and combat violent extremism

GUEST'S RESPONSE:

- 1.** Some of the best practices in Africa have engaged both hard and soft power approaches. These measures are aimed at combating, preventing and getting to the root causes of violent extremism. Some of the alternative approaches can be seen from Search4CommonGround and saferworld who collaborate with governments, civil society, media, and the private sector to strengthen the capacity of communities to build lasting peace in Kenya, Tunisia, and Somalia
- 2.** Thus, most peacebuilding practices have involved engaging the local and individual and moving beyond the liberal peacebuilding model that overly highlights the state. Some of the best practices thus have a local focus. Research notes that programs focusing on career training and livelihood opportunities for disenfranchised young people do not correspond to a reduction in violent extremism. This includes programs set up by NGOs like WANEP in countries like Ghana that focus on peace education.
- 3.** In addition, in countering violent extremism (CVE) and preventing violent extremism (PVE), although high priority for government agencies, there has been a shift from an approach that focuses exclusively on presuming that economic factors drive extremism. This is reinforced by the need for effective governance that addresses grievances and good state-society relation as a central pillar.
- 4.** Mediation efforts have also been seen to work, for instance, where the AU and ECOWAS adopted a dual approach of hard power military approach and soft power mediation with the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA).



BRIEF PROFILE OF MS. EMMACULATE ASIGE LIAGA

Ms. Emmaculate Asige Liaga is a Doctoral Candidate at the Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria, South Africa. Her research seeks to investigate the strategies of peacebuilding employed by both the local and the International Organizations of peace operations in post-conflict communities, analyzing the top-down and bottom-up approaches employed by both foreign intervention and the local level organizations. Emmaculate is a holder of a master's degree from the University of Manchester where she majored in International Conflict and Security Studies and received her undergraduate and honors degrees in International Studies and International Relations respectively from the University of Pretoria, South Africa .

Emmaculate is currently a visiting fellow at the German Institute of Area and Global Studies (GIGA), Institute of African Affairs, Germany. She is also a part-time researcher at the Center for the Advancement of Scholarship working on the effects of conflict and unlawful killings on social cohesion in Rwanda and South Sudan. She previously worked at the Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation as a Junior Researcher, Politics Tutor at the Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria and as an Intern at the United Nations Information Centre. Her research background and interest include: Peace and Security from below, Conflict resolution, Agency of communities in policy making, and International Relations theories (Critical theories and marginalized theories).

Ms. Emmaculate Asige Liaga is an awardee of the Social Sciences Research Council Next-Generation Scholars in Africa 2018/2019 cohort. She is also an awardee of the Chevening Scholarship, an honor awarded to outstanding emerging leaders to pursue a one-year master at any UK university. Prior to this, she was a Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding Scholar at the Wilson Center.