

Background Guide

UNSC

HIGH SCHOOL MODEL UNITED NATION



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Arise and Shine

CONTENTS

Committee Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	1
History Discussion	
■ Definition of Terrorism	2
■ The Rise of African Terrorism	3
■ Case Study of Boko Haram and Al Shabaab	4
Past UN actions	8
Questions to Consider	9
Suggestion for Further Research	9
Endnotes	10

Committee Introduction

General Introduction

The United Nations was established by the international community as a result of the traumatizing World Wars. The Security Council, in specific, was established as one of the six main organs¹ of the United Nations, with the primary goal of maintaining international peace and security².

Membership and Mandates

The five permanent members, which are China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as the ten non-permanent members that are elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly³, are involved in multiple discussions regarding global security issues. In 1945, the Charter of the United Nations established that the Security Council must take the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among states, cooperating to solve international problems, and promoting human rights⁴. The Council is given multiple options, including actions such as financial and economic sanctions, arms embargoes, and collective military actions, to fulfill the duties stated in the charter⁵.

Between 1945 and 1978 during the Cold War, the Security Council had authorized 13 peacekeeping operations⁶ and successfully fulfilled its primary duty to sustain international peace. However, for the modern Security Council, humanitarian aspects of security issues have gradually become the main focus of its mission, as the Council was called by Kofi Annan to improve peace-building efforts as well as prevent further conflicts⁷. The Security Council is indeed a major force in the international community that promotes positive change and guarantees peace and security for all mankind.

Statement of the Problem

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon. The “terrorism” we commonly refer to today, especially after the September 11th attacks, is mostly religiously or ideologically inspired terrorism. In fact, politically driven actions that incites fear, which have been systematically practiced by nationalistic groups, revolutionaries, and even ruling governments, have long predated religious terrorism.

Terrorism, in the African region, has its distinguish features that differentiates it from terrorism in any other region. For one, Africa's adoption of world religions, when compared to the Middle East, is comparably more peaceful and without conflict. This is mainly due to the intensive colonization process in the 19th century and the dependency on the West, which also led to the absence of anti-Westernism that are prevalent in the Middle East⁸. Besides the ideologically-inspired attacks most people are more familiar with, African terrorist attacks also occurred in the two following forms – as a tactic for organized crime activities, and as a breach of humanitarian law, being perpetrated by different regimes to advance their political cause or campaign⁹.

African Terrorism is not just a regional security issue. The region is easily susceptible to transnational terrorism because of some fundamental problems, such as the conducive conditions for radicalization and spread of international terrorism, the uncontrolled borders and lawless areas within the region, and the lack of political will to implement and enforce counter terrorism measures¹⁰. African countries' inability to exercise control over territory or the absence of central government make the region a perfect safe haven for transnational crime organizations and revolution forces. Furthermore, domestic terrorist groups, such as Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, have adopted transnational objectives to gain foreign support and influence within the region. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Security Council to prevent terrorist groups from conducting terrorist acts both within borders and across regions.

History and Discussion

Definition of Terrorism

The usage of the term “Terrorism” can be traced back to 1793, when the French Revolutionaries had just abolished the French monarchy; the Maximilien Robespierre regime inflicted a set of strict policies against anti-revolutionaries and condemned thousands of people to death by the guillotine. Back then, terrorism was used to describe the usage of terror as a strategy to strengthen their political control.

As terrorism evolves, scholars have started to develop distinct theoretical frameworks on terrorism, which express their own interpretation on the nature, causes, and remedies of terrorism. Realists believe that terrorist groups are an irresponsible use of force and should be countered by military power, while liberals see terrorism as a deviation from acceptable norms and can only be remedied through the elimination of its underlying causes, such as social injustice and poverty.

Constructivists believe that terrorists are purposive social agents that are constituted by ideas, namely their norms beliefs and identities.

Therefore, there is no universal definition for terrorism. Each country has its own definition of terrorism. The main obstacle to formulating a definition, particularly relevant to Africa, is the right to self-determination⁹. The most commonly known definition of "International terrorism", which is defined by the F.B.I., considers activities with the following three characteristics as acts of terrorism¹¹:

- Involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that violate federal or state law;
- Appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping;
- Occur primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S., or transcend national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear intended to intimidate or coerce, or the locale in which their perpetrators operate or seek asylum.

The Rise of African Terrorism

The historical roots of African Terrorism can be traced back to the 1884 Berlin Conference and its subsequent scramble for Africa. Eastern European countries, namely Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Spain, and Great Britain, colonized 90% of the continent. Various social, cultural, and political problems surfaced after World War II, and people's pursuit for decolonization gave birth to terrorism, which continues to influence Africa greatly to this day.

First and foremost, the territorial boundaries created by past imperialist governments don't directly correspond to geographical boundaries and the distribution of different ethnic groups. Moreover, colonial power often evokes ethnic rivalry through separating the same ethnic group into different multiethnic regions, or by favoring one ethnic, religion, race, over others in the colonial society. These kinds of favoritism were meant to cause distrust between colonials in order to increase the control of colonial power to rule within the region. However, favoritism often leads to an unequal distribution of resources and a hostile, discriminative society¹².

On the other hand, colonial governments were mostly repressive and undemocratic in nature. In pursuit of their greatest economic benefit, policies and development were made in response to the demand of colonial powers. Consequently, a newly-established post-colonial government not only lacks the ability and

knowledge to create an comprehensive governmental system, but it will also be encountered with a society that contains a high level of domestic rivalry and a general lack of development. It can be easily understood why most governments in Africa are deemed immature, corrupted, unreliable, and are not recognized as the “rightful decision-makers” in certain region¹².

During the early post-colonial period, terrorism has been used as a tactic to liberate the people from colonial governments and locally based settler regimes¹⁰. People perceived terrorism as a way to stand up against governments or regimes they refused to recognize. However, it wasn't long before Warsaw Pact states and NATO member states started competing over decolonized states in Africa and other regions. The two sides allegedly supported terrorist groups with weapons, training and/or financial aid, which led to a significant rise of terrorism in various regions around the world¹⁰.

The end of the Cold War signified the loss of foreign support for opposing insurgent forces and a proliferation of firearms. The lack of financial aid forced terrorist groups to explore other opportunities to sustain their operations, and trafficking illicit small arms, light weapons, narcotics and raw materials became a common method for them to earn money. Moreover, the proliferation of firearms enables the rise of a new generation of terrorism¹⁰.

The new generation of terrorism possesses characteristics of both politically-driven terrorism and ideologically-inspired terrorism. Terrorist groups are able to readily spread their propaganda towards people of certain ethnicities and beliefs because of the existing unbalanced development between ethnic groups and the discriminative society. Governments in Africa, not being trusted by its citizens, are not capable of enforcing rule of law and initiate development programs effectively. The inability of governments to provide healthcare, education, self-determination, democratic governance, human rights, emancipation, empowerment, and human dignity directly contributes to the rise of terrorism as an ideology and as a political agenda.

The obstacles anti-terrorism efforts face in Africa can be generalized into the four following aspects:

1. The existence of conditions conducive to the radicalization of civilians and the spread of international terrorism, such as poverty and unemployment.

2. The inability to exercise control over vast areas of territory, either by having “ungoverned/lawless areas”, or by lacking a central government, as in the case of Somalia.
3. The lack of governmental capitals to implement counter-terrorism measures and to eliminate the threat posed by the linkage of terrorism and transnational organized crimes, which provides sources of funding and firearms.
4. The lack of political will to enforce anti-terrorism legislation, which can be attributed to the previous misuse of the term “terrorism” by the apartheid government in its suppression of political oppositions¹³.

Case Study of Boko Haram and Al Shabaab

Boko Haram

Boko Haram is an extreme Sunni Islamic group that emerged in 2002 in northern Nigeria. The group regards the government as a morally corrupted bureaucracy, and only enforces the Sharia Law for its own gain. Its ultimate goal is to overthrow the Nigerian government, impose an extreme interpretation of Islamic law, and abolish what they regard as "Western-style education"¹⁴. Its organization is predominantly composed of unemployed, poorly educated young Muslim men of the northeast¹⁵. The group may be receiving support from northern Nigerian politicians.

In 2009, the Nigerian government arrested many of its members, including their leader Mohammad Yusuf, and killed Yusuf in police custody. However, after the death of Yusuf, Boko Haram has reemerged, and has become better armed and utterly ruthless. In 2010, the group planned a massive prison breakout followed by several suicide bombings and assassinations. In 2011, Boko Haram staged a brutal suicide attack on a UN building in Abuja, killing 34 people. The targets of the organization include police stations, government buildings, churches, politicians, newspapers, banks, and schools throughout northern Nigeria. In 2014, the group abducted over 200 schoolgirls. In addition to attacks on state institutions, they have targeted the northern Christian population, threatening Christians to leave northern Nigeria. In 2012, they attacked over 25 churches, causing hundreds of casualties.

Since 2009, more than 10,000 people have been killed in Boko Haram-related violence, and 1.5 million have been displaced due to the insurgency¹⁶.

Al Shabaab

Al Shabaab is an extremist Islamic group, which is an armed wing of the Islamic Courts Union, a much broader based Islamist movement that established a modicum

of security in parts of Somalia at the end of 2006. Al Shabaab presented itself as a nationalist force bravely resisting aggression by Somalia's traditional enemy—Ethiopia—and increased its support among Somalis, thus gained control of much of southern Somalia in 2009. Al Shabaab quickly resorted to harsh and intolerant tactics, strictly implementing harsh Sharia Law and failed to respond to the chronic drought in 2011. As a result, the group was pushed back by both domestic backlash and foreign intervention. In October 2011, nearly 2,500 Kenyan troops invaded southern Somalia, eventually forcing Al Shabaab back from the border and ousting the group from its main stronghold, the southern city of Kismayo. Since then, Al Shabaab shifted tactics and retreated into asymmetrical warfare. The Somali-based extremist group is consisted mainly of upcountry youth and recent converts to Islam.

Now based in Kenya and Somalia's rural areas, Al Shabaab is on the run, but still aggressive. The group has exerted temporary and sustained control over strategic locations in those areas by recruiting regional sub-clans and their militias, using guerrilla warfare and terrorist tactics against the Somali Federal Government (SFG), African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeepers, and nongovernmental aid organizations¹⁷.

The group continues to threaten neighboring countries as well as Western interests in Africa. In June 2010, Al-Shabaab staged their first terrorist attack outside of Somalia with several suicide bombings, which killed seventy-four people who had gathered to watch the World Cup in the Ugandan capital of Kampala. Since then, Al-Shabaab has launched high-profile operations in neighboring countries, most notably the September 2013 Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi and the May 2014 attack against a restaurant in Djibouti popular among Westerners¹⁸. The Westgate attack killed 67 people, and a siege continued at the mall for several days. Al-Shabaab attacks in Kenya escalated in 2014, with 173 people killed in Kenya, according to its police force.

Past UN Actions

After the tragic terrorist attack of the September 11th, the Security Council Counter Terrorism Committee was established for the purpose of monitoring the implementation of Resolution 1373¹⁹, which took crucial steps to declare the universal determination to tackle terrorism. In the resolution, member states were called upon to implement legal and institutional measures to counter terrorist activities²⁰.

However, with the controversial nature of Resolution 1373, the Counter Terrorism Committee can only carry out very limited impact on tackling terrorism in the African region. Governments argue that the resolution is a “US-led, western-imposed agenda”¹⁹, which fails to meet the need of the real situation. The absence of legal or institutional framework in the African Nations has created great obstacle in implementing the measures in Resolution 1373, and many countries have failed to address the issue of terrorism successfully regardless of the assistance from the Counter Terrorism Committee and other western nations.

Questions to consider

1. Regarding the situation of rampant terrorist activities in the African nations, what role can the Security Council take within the United Nations? What modification or improvement can be done to the existing anti-terrorism framework to adjust to the conditions in the region?
2. Border security and ungoverned areas have been two of the main problems that weaken many nations’ counter-terrorism efforts. What form of cooperation can nations take to address the issue? Furthermore, what role can the African Union and the Security Council take to enhance the cooperation?
3. Many current anti-terrorism programs or policies in the African nations have been conducted with the assistance of the United States or other western countries. How can these western countries, along with the Security Council, contribute to the political stability and the improvement of the fundamental situations in the African nations without intruding the nations’ sovereignty?
4. Even though most African nations have been increasingly aware of the threat terrorism brings to peace and security, the law enforcement of many anti-terrorism programs or policies is being questioned. What can the Security Council do to enhance the effectiveness of these anti-terrorism efforts?
5. While hard security measures, such as the building of military capacity, can counter the attack of terrorists, these measures do not fundamentally solve the problem of terrorism, and therefore have been widely criticized by many African nations. On the other hand, although soft security measures do not address the urgency of terrorist attacks, these seem to be more viable methods in the long term. Which kind of measure should the Security Council prioritize while tackling terrorism in the African Nations?

Suggestions for Further Research

This background guide is meant to serve the purpose of introducing delegates to

United Nations Security Council and the Terrorism in the African Region. Prior to the research of the topic itself, it is crucial to possess the basic knowledge, such as its geography, religion, ethnicity, cultural background, economy, political situations, and diplomatic relations of the country you are representing. The information can be found in CIA's World Factbook²¹. Further understanding the ideology, purpose and tactics of several other terrorist groups and their correlations will also be beneficial in making your research more comprehensive. Delegates should also keep your awareness on any news or developments regarding the terrorist activities in the African region, through useful resources such as The New York Times, BBC News, and the Diplomat²². These news sources will provide delegates with the information of the ongoing struggles in the region, and also a more diverse perspective to inspect the issue.

The official website of the United Nations, the Security Council, UN Counter-Terrorism Committee also serve as important sources of information, which provide updated meeting agendas, past actions, and resolutions. Delegates should also keep track of any information update on the official HSMUN website (<http://hsmun2015.weebly.com/>) during your preparation.

The dais wishes all delegates the best of luck on the preparation and research for the conference. If there is any question or concern about the committee, topic, or the conference in general, please do not hesitate to reach out to the dais team.

Endnotes

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