

AFRICA NEEDS A PLAN TO COMBAT TERRORISM

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HOW can we stop Boko Haram, al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups like them?

The mayhem wrought by Boko Haram in Nigeria should cause sleepless nights for African leaders.

The recent siege of Garissa University college in Kenya where more than a hundred students were massacred also calls for a systemic response.

Widespread condemnation, though crucial, does not constitute a plan.

The Islamic extremists are posing a serious threat to the very existence of the modern state.

In Africa, where the modern democratic state is fairly new, weak and relatively easy to sabotage, the spread of terrorist groups could spell disaster.

So daring are terrorist groups that their caliphate endeavours in some parts of the world have earned them the undesired title "Islamic states".

The sociologist Marx Weber defined the state as a having the monopoly over the legitimate use of violence within a territory.

The "Islamic states" have no source of legitimacy for their force. They are not recognised legal entities.

The so-called Islamic states seek to introduce a dictatorship, based on the misguided interpretation of religion.

Their aim is to overthrow the modern and largely secular democratic state.

It took centuries – and blood of millions of people – for the democratic state as we know it in many parts of the world today to emerge as an almost universally acceptable authority.

Here in South Africa yesterday, we celebrated 21 years of the democratic state's existence.

No country is immune from terrorist attacks. But there are basics that can be done to mini-



MAYHEM: The stronger the state, the better it is equipped to deal with terrorist attacks such as the one by gunmen linked to al-Shabbab on a university campus in Garissa, Kenya

PHOTO: TONY KARUMBA/AFP

Weak state institutions compromise security

mise possible attacks, mitigate the consequences or help the modern state to fight back in the event of an attack.

First, a state with strong institutions is likely to succeed in preventing or fighting internal and external threats.

A strong state, or a capable state, to use the language of the National Development Plan, is one that is competently responsive to the needs of citizens.

Those who seek to strengthen state institutions in South Africa, for example, are helping to build a strong shield. Citizens and politicians who seek to weaken or destroy such institutions for selfish, short-term reasons pose a security threat. Politicians can

weaken state capacity through among other things corruption.

Second, well-resourced state security apparatus must be protected from corrupt influences.

Have we ever wondered what if the Gupta wedding plane had carried terrorists who would have gone on to take over the Waterkloof Airforce base because someone within the state was said to have authorised its landing through informal networks?

Strong states can also be victims of terrorist attacks. The attacks on the US on September 2011 proved that terrorists can strike at the heart of the most sophisticated modern state.

But a modern state is more likely to recover and fight back

than a weak state. The US through its powerful and expansive military killed Osama bin Laden, suspected of being the mastermind of the attacks.

Nigeria is an example of a weak state that is failing to thwart Boko Haram within its own territory.

Thirdly, social cohesion should be instrumental in beefing up the security of the state.

Many countries, including South Africa boast diverse cultures, races and religions.

It is important that these are used as a strength in line with the preamble of our constitution.

Strong national cohesion means differences are celebrated but are not overemphasised at the expense of nationhood.

The failure of our government to craft migration policies that foster social cohesion is not only a cause of xenophobic attacks, it also makes the country vulnerable to attacks because the borders are porous. The government must overhaul all policies that relate to migration and restructure the immigration branch at home affairs.

The importance of social cohesion and loyalty to the democratic state was demonstrated when Afrikaans-speaking officers infiltrated the Boeremag and destroyed it. For the uninitiated, the Boeremag wanted to overthrow the government, remove all blacks and drive them through the N1 to Zimbabwe.

Today the Boeremag leaders are languishing in jail.

The moral of the story is that we must guard against the alienation of some racial groups – and foreigners.

Fourth, there must be religious education in schools to expose all pupils to widely practised religions. It does not have to be for exam purposes.

But it can arm pupils with the tools to resist attempts to manipulate them to join wars based on wrong religious teachings.

Good religious education would make it difficult for the terrorists to recruit young volunteers through supposedly religious messages.

Fifth, there is a need to give young people hope and a meaningful say in matters political.

For years child soldiers have been a common denominator in wars across Africa. Now some have become walking suicide bombers.

In South Africa, young people are the face of xenophobic attacks and violent protests.

Young people with a stake in the political system through legitimate means are less likely to be vulnerable to the lure of a political order that can only be established if they became killers.

The voting age must be reduced from 18 to 14. Nelson Mandela campaigned for this. It's about time we revived it.

SA should not separate its freedoms from those of Swazis

Klaus Kristensen

WHILE South Africans are demonstrating against imperialist statues and the leftovers of apartheid institutions, across the border in Swaziland the masses are protesting against living relics of royal authority. Sunday, April 12, marked the 42nd anniversary of authoritarianism in Swaziland. On April 12 1973, King Sobhuza II banned political parties, removed the bill of rights and declared himself head of state.

This came in response to the 1972 election in which three members of progressive political party Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC) were elected into parliament.

Since 1973 Swaziland has been ruled by absolute monarchs, first by Sobhuza II and by King Mswati III since 1986.

Despite democratic provi-

sions in the 2005 constitution, it is inherently contradictory and the king remains absolute. Since 2005 new anti-democratic and repressive legislation has passed through parliament.

The 2008 Suppression of Terrorism Act is arguably the most damaging.

It proscribed a number of political organisations including the main opposition, the People's United Democratic Movement (Pudemo) and its youth wing, the Swaziland Youth Congress (Swayoco).

A number of political prisoners are serving time. The president of Pudemo, Mario Masuku, and Swayoco leader Maxwell Dlamini are still awaiting trial after close to a year of incarceration.

South African-born dissident Amos Mbedzi is currently serving an 85-year sentence for high treason

and plotting terrorism in the kingdom.

It has become increasingly dangerous to organise both labour unions and church groups in the country. The Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (Tucoswa) was deregistered in 2013 and its leaders have been threatened repeatedly and its meetings violently interrupted.

Authorities continuously interrupt prayer meetings. Priests around the country have been threatened by the police since church groups released a report on the country's political situation.

In addition, the general population is facing high poverty and high unemployment rates.

Reacting to the situation in the country, the first week of September every year is the Swazi Global Week of Action with mass demonstrations on the

streets of Mbabane and Manzini.

The international community has also responded. The Congress of SA Trade Unions has both held border blockages and condemned the Swazi government on numerous occasions.

The International Trade Union Congress continues to critique the repression of Swazi labour unions. The European Parliament has discussed actions on Swaziland.

The US Department of State expressed its deep dismay with the politically motivated conviction of human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko and magazine editor Bheki Makhubu, and consequently withdrew its free trade agreement with Swaziland.

International campaigns have been initiated for the release of political prisoners.

South Africans should be concerned with Swaziland, not only by the potential instability a kingdom in crisis might cause, but by the fundamentally repressive conditions faced by Swazis.

During the Struggle, members of the anti-

“ How can we aid Swaziland in their struggle? ”

apartheid movement used Swaziland as a refuge from the apartheid regime, and many in the ranks of the Swazi democracy movement fought with uMkhonto we Sizwe.

Given Swaziland's economic dependence, the South African government can influence the country's monarch.

In his famous "I'm an African" speech, former president Thabo Mbeki said: "The dismal shame of poverty, suffering and human degradation of my continent is a blight that we share."

If we are to take Mbeki's words seriously, South Africans should not separate their freedoms from those of the Swazis.

It is clear that Swaziland's current repression does not stem directly from its colonial past, but from a ruling absolute statue cemented to his throne.

He is not a ghost from the past but continues to actively interfere with the everyday life of the Swazis.

We need to ask: How can we aid the Swazis in their struggle and are we willing to?

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