Introduction

In 1994, Martha Crenshaw’s edited volume *Terrorism in Africa* made clear how terrorism – generally defined as a tactic that uses violence or the threat of violence as a coercive strategy to cause fear and political intimidation – was a feature within resistance movements, military coups, political assassinations, and various intra- and inter-state wars that have affected most African states at some point during the continent’s transition to independence and subsequent post-colonial period. Crenshaw further noted that terrorism was not “an isolated phenomenon” for African states or the region more broadly [1]. This description remains salient today: terrorism has been a global phenomenon for many decades, and Africa has not been unscathed by it. Terrorism is just one of several types of political violence that states and their citizens, in Africa and elsewhere, have had to grapple with. In fact, from a macro perspective, terrorism may not be universally seen as the most important security challenge faced by African states and their citizens. Famine, drought, endemic poverty, diseases and other natural and man-made disasters that undermine human security have also been at the forefront of recent policy discussions on Africa among Western governments and international aid organizations. It is thus necessary to place terrorism within the broader terrain of Africa’s security challenges, before examining the historical trends and specific examples discussed in this Special Issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism*.

To be sure, Africa has its own peculiar domestic collection of ideologically-inspired violent non-state groups that are responsible for periodic bouts of murderous mayhem. Some of these, like the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda, al-Shabaab in Somalia or Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in North Africa, have attracted ample media attention. Yet in addition to terrorist groups, there are also irresponsible governments that have employed the tactics of terrorism in (for example) a brutal crackdown against opposition leaders in Zimbabwe, or the Eritrean government’s support (according to a recent UN report) for terrorist plots against African leaders gathering in Ethiopia. President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan is the first sitting head of state to be indicted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity, while in the newly independent South Sudan, locals are calling for a war crimes investigation. In Senegal, riots erupted in the streets to protest President Abdoulaye Wade’s attempt to change the constitution in...
an effort to be elected to another term in office. Add to that the tragic episodes of genocide in places like Rwanda and the Darfur region of Sudan and you have a first glimpse of the atrocities that the present African generation has witnessed.

With this caveat in mind, our intention in assembling this Special Issue of Perspectives on Terrorism has been to draw attention to contemporary issues and trends in order to promote further research and policy interest in the terrorism challenges faced by Africa today. In addition, we recognize that this publication comes at time when the world looks back on the 9/11 attacks and reflects not only on the impact of this event but also looks at the current state of the terrorist threat. Without question, the future of Africa’s security and the role that terrorism will play in particular is especially pertinent given the combination of the unfolding revolutions and political transformations in North Africa and what appears to be a transforming, if not growing, Islamist terrorism threat in sub-Saharan Africa’s largest country, Nigeria. Against this backdrop, this introductory essay will review a handful of important themes related to political violence and terrorism in Africa, including domestic and international trends, and the ways in which politically violent and terrorist groups finance themselves, organize and operate, and communicate (both internally as well as externally). We conclude with some brief observations regarding the challenges and opportunities for countering the terrorist threat in Africa, and then introduce the remaining articles in this Special Issue of Perspectives on Terrorism.

**Indigenous and Foreign Dimensions of Terrorism in Africa**

Contemporary and historical scholarship on terrorism in Africa, particularly since the early post-colonial years, has highlighted themes of international terrorism (which emerged most prominently during the 1970s) as well as domestic incidents where terrorism was employed. In terms of the former, Africa has played a role in several high profile terrorist events and movements that originated in other parts of the world. For example, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was felt in East Africa when in June 1976 Palestinian terrorists hijacked a commercial Air France plane carrying 248 passengers and took it to Entebbe, Uganda. While this event was quickly resolved through a raid carried out by the Israeli Defense Forces, it nevertheless illustrated the intersection of transnational terrorism and the African continent. It bears mentioning that four years later, in apparent retaliation for Israeli troops being permitted to refuel in Nairobi during the Entebbe raid, the Jewish-owned Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi was bombed by terrorists linked to the Palestinian Liberation Organization, killing at least 15 people and injuring 80. Meanwhile, in North Africa, Libyan ruler Muammar Gaddafi was well-known for his support of anti-Western terrorist organizations – providing support in one form or another to the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Red Army Faction, the Red Brigades [2] as well as groups in Africa and other regions. His connection to the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 (otherwise known as the Lockerbie bombing) resulted in broad UN sanctions. These lasted until 2003/2004 when
Libya agreed to pay £2.5 million to the family of each victim in exchange for ending the UN arms and air embargo. [3] And, lastly, we should not forget the role that the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood (MB) played in the Islamist ideology that has come to inspire many neo-jihadist groups today. In the 1960s, MB theologian Sayyid Qutb laid the foundation for the religiously justified violence that has repeatedly expressed itself today in various terrorist movements, Al-Qaeda being but one example.

Of course, terrorism has also been employed during many domestic state and non-state campaigns within Africa throughout the last half century. Examples of violent non-state actors include the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in Algeria, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in Eritrea, and the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa – to highlight just a few – which incorporated terrorist tactics within their modes of conflict waging. [4] For instance, through its military wing “Umkhonto we Sizwe” (‘Spear of the Nation’), the ANC publicly sought to rationalize its use of terror tactics in its campaign against the Apartheid regime. In 1969, it specifically called for opposing the “political, economic, and social structure of South Africa by means of political subversion and propaganda and sabotage and terrorism.” [5] During the 1980s, the ANC was responsible for several large-scale terrorist attacks, including the May 1983 car bombing that took place on a busy street in Pretoria, near the office block housing South African Air Force personnel. [6] As a result, 19 people were killed and more than 200 injured. Along similar lines, car bombs were used in two attacks carried out in 1984 and 1985 that also resulted in numerous casualties.

At the same time, state-sponsored terrorism was a common feature in the Rhodesian bush war and more recently has been used by Zimbabwe’s President Robert Mugabe to silence dissent and maintain power. In the former, during the 1970s the Selous Scouts emerged as a counter-insurgency unit amidst the domestic Zimbabwean nationalist insurgency that sought the removal of the White minority rule government (3% of the population was European, 1% mixed race, and the remaining roughly 95% were from the Shona or Ndebele tribes). [7] With the Zimbabwean nationalists receiving foreign assistance and the Rhodesian Army lacking domestic support from the population, the Selous Scouts were created as a mixed-race unit to infiltrate insurgent territory and carry out activities that sought “the clandestine elimination of terrorists/terrorism both within and without the country.” [8] To target nationalist fighters, they utilized asymmetric warfare tactics which ranged from bombing civilian homes, raids on insurgent camps, abductions and sabotage of transportation infrastructure. [9] The bush war ended in 1979 with a subsequent transition to majority rule in 1980 whereby Robert Mugabe was elected to power and continues to rule the country (re-named Zimbabwe) up to this day. However, in recent years it appears as though Mugabe, in his quest to maintain a one-party state under his rule, has adopted some of the tactics employed by the Selous Scouts. In fact, his preferred use of violence to maintain power became already clear in 1976 when in a radio broadcast from Mozambique he declared: “Our votes must go together with our guns. After all, any vote we shall have shall have been the product of a gun. The gun which produces the vote should remain its security officer – its guarantor. The people’s votes and the people’s guns are always inseparable twins”. [10]
By 2000, Mugabe had adopted a sustained ‘campaign of terror’ to maintain power – consequently forcing many citizens to flee his oppressive rule and thus systematically destroying what was once considered one of the more prosperous African states. [11] In response to opposition and international criticism, he threatened to heighten his violent campaign and become the “black Hitler” against any opposing forces. [12] Illustrative of this, in 2005 he carried out “Operation Drive out the Rubbish,” which involved raiding Harare’s townships, which coincidently was home to many who supported the opposition Movement for Democratic Change. [13] This raid resulted in the destruction of thousands of homes, clinics, and small businesses. With this broad spectrum of violent non-state actors and state-initiated terrorism in mind, it is useful to briefly review how the history of terrorism in Africa has had many prominent domestic and transnational dimensions.

**Domestic Trends: Terrorism Continues to be Woven into Conflict Systems**

A variety of socio-economic and political conditions in Africa – too many to recount here – produce grievances that have been used by militant groups to justify their recourse to violent actions. While generalizations are risky, some comparisons can be made in the way that physical terrain is used and the violent methods are employed. In terms of terrain, this includes securing a location (typically in the form of a region) that serve as an operational base to host members, plan attacks, receive support (commonly from neighboring countries) and provide a source of recruitment. As for methods, since the mid-1990s the strategic use of terrorism in Africa has been interwoven into broader conflict systems such as insurgencies, civil wars and other forms of political violence.

Applying this terrain-method approach provides us with insights into some of the more prominent rebel movements that emerged during the 1990s. For example, in the mid-1990s the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) – a rebel group in Uganda comprised of self-identified “religious crusaders” from the Muslim Tabliq sect opposing the government – carried out terrorist attacks against local civilians and internally displaced persons in particular. According to an IRIN special report, the ADF were based in western Uganda, along the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. Here they took advantage of the terrain and local context by “setting up rear bases in neighboring Congo where they began recruiting and training fighters with the promise of money and education.” [14] This location enabled them to operate and move fluidly between Uganda and the DRC, the latter of which was suspected of providing support. Attacks varied from the use of brute force and assaults to kidnapping and hostage-taking of youths who would then be forced to assist the ADF. In the case of abductions, two notable attacks took place in 1998 - one involving the kidnapping of 30 students from the Mitandi Seventh Day Adventist College in Kasese, the other involving the abduction of more than 100 school children from Hoima district. In another, more brutal, display of terror, ADF rebels killed
80 students of the Kichwamba Technical College in the Kabarole district by setting locked dormitories on fire. [15] In all, as South African terrorism expert Anneli Botha reports, ADF’s violent campaign peaked between 1997 and 2001 with “48 explosive devices detonated in and around Kampala, killing approximately 50 and injuring an estimated 200 people.” [16] Thankfully, the government was finally able to defeat and disband the group in 2004.

In another example in Uganda, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) – which dates back to 1987 – has carried out numerous atrocities directed at civilians in its nearly 25-year campaign in the northern region. Operating as an ideologically apocalyptic Christian group opposing the central government, its modus operandi has been to use violence or the threat of violence to intimidate and instill fear in the Ugandan people and, more specifically, the Acholi tribe. Though its objectives are not always clear, the decades of indiscriminate violence with political undertones have made this group one of the more well-known rebel groups using terrorism as a method in their campaign. [17] Furthermore, it has used the structural weaknesses of its host environment to diffuse across multiple borders, namely the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Southern Sudan and the Central African Republic (CAR). [18] Overall, the ADF and LRA are examples of two non-state, religiously and politically motivated groups that have caused at least 10,000 deaths in their respective campaigns. [19]

Similarly, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which operated throughout much of the 1990s, was a rebel group based in Sierra Leone that sought to overthrow the government. Its membership pool and financial support blurred the boundaries between the country and Liberia, while its activities included politically motivated attacks on local communities in an effort to induce widespread fear and submission. Its decade-long policy of youth abductions to build ranks and attacks that involved cutting off hands, arms, and legs of civilians and government troops resulted in thousands of child soldiers and amputees by 2002. [20]

More recent cases of domestic terrorism have been seen in Nigeria, where political violence in the north carried out by Boko Haram (BH) has claimed hundreds of lives, while in the non-Muslim south militant gangs carried out near daily attacks on oil infrastructure and public targets until 2009, wreaking havoc on the country’s economy and making life miserable for thousands of locals. On the other side of the continent, Somalia’s situation is looking ever-more grim, with daily violence a tragically consistent part of life. Furthermore, South Africa continues to experience some periodic episodes of political violence from both domestic and regional groups. For instance, in the mid-1990s Cape Town experienced a number of bombings and attacks on popular tourist spots that local officials attributed to the organization “People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD).” Another group, Die Boeremag, claimed responsibility for a series of bombings in 2002 on transportation infrastructure and religious temples in Soweto. More recently, in the run up to the 2010 World Cup, authorities foiled a plot by extremists linked to Somalia and Mozambique to attack the event. Shortly after, AQIM issued a threat in April
2010 to target the major international soccer event. [21] However, fortunately such threats and/or plots never materialized. Pooled together, such incidents reveal some similarities to what Crenshaw observed in 1994, that terrorism in Africa is interwoven into the fabric of various forms of conflict. However, today we must also account for the increasing transnational features of terrorist activity on the continent.

Transnational Dimensions

In the last 15 years, African countries have not only struggled against domestic terrorism, they have also been challenged by the emergence of transnational terrorist groups that have used Africa as a theatre to carry out attacks against both domestic and international targets as well as to develop and maintain operations. The 1998 US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, the 2002 bombing of an Israeli-owned hotel and airplane, and attacks against UN buildings in Algeria and Nigeria offer just a few examples of terrorist attacks carried out on African soil with a distinct international dimension. In such cases, terrorists groups use the ‘softness’ of African-based targets to attack Western – primarily European and US – and international interests. According to one report, during the first decade after the end of the Cold War (between 1990 and 2002), “Africa recorded 6,177 casualties from 296 acts of [international] terrorism” on the continent. [22]

In addition, the past decade has witnessed the transformation of some domestic groups, some of whom have adopted transnational objectives. Most notably, the 2007 merger of Algeria’s Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat, or GSPC) with Al-Qaeda resulted in the formation of the Organization of Al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). More recently, the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram, based in Northern Nigeria, has been increasing its rate of domestic attacks against civilians and government targets and has also targeted the United Nations in Abuja, communicating that it is not only concerned with domestic developments but also has a broader transnational agenda. In fact, The Economist recently observed that the growth of Islamist extremist activity in sub-Saharan Africa, and Nigeria specifically, is beginning to “sound” like the Middle East. [23] According to several experts, BH associations with the broader Al-Qaeda movement seem to be strengthening, reflected by its use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide bombings - both hallmarks of attacks by Al-Qaeda affiliates.

Beyond transnational mergers and ideologies, the context for terrorism in Africa has also been affected by global geopolitical and economic forces. Three intersecting trends can be seen as particularly salient for understanding how the contextual aspect of the terrorism threat in Africa has evolved: financing of violent movements, actor/conflict characteristics, and the media/information sharing environment. First, while the early post-colonial period can be characterized
as terrorism in the background, the Cold War marked a turning point in Africa’s conflict terrain in that the use of terrorism moved increasingly to the forefront of violent campaigns – particularly for groups who received some level of support from either the United States or the Soviet Union. The end of the Cold War not only resulted in the loss of foreign backing for opposing insurgent forces (Angola being a prominent example) [24], it also led to large caches of Soviet-produced arms proliferating in the region, able to supply a new generation of armed groups. What’s more, the loss of external financial backing forced armed groups to explore other opportunities to sustain and expand their operations. This included the trafficking and illicit trade of small arms as well as other materials such as narcotics and raw materials. Over the years, this domain of activity has matured into a robust and vibrant criminal trafficking network that has increasingly deepened its reach throughout Africa, fueling rebel movements and terrorist groups. [25]

Second, armed conflict has changed from being primarily inter (between) to intra (within) states, where it is not only dominated by small, diffuse rebel movements and criminal networks (Somali piracy being an example) but also by terrorist networks that exploit the weaknesses of many African states to carry out attacks that have domestic and international resonance. Increasingly, such armed non-state actors are not bounded by their terrain – indeed, their adaptability is showcased by their ability to shift, move, and, at times, change form. In addition, armed groups in Africa can avail themselves of an increasingly global network of strategic and tactical knowledge sharing among terrorists and insurgents. Innovations in terrorist weapons or attacks in one region of the world are monitored and emulated in other regions, including Africa. [26]

Third, the global media environment has undergone significant shifts in the last two decades. Information communication technologies, such as the mobile phone, have now become ubiquitous features in African society, and once out-of-reach resources (like access to the Internet) are becoming more accessible. This has implications for the external observer as well as the internal perpetrator. For the ‘outsider,’ as Joshua S. Goldstein aptly noted, “once remote battles and war crimes now regularly make it onto our TV and computer screens, and in more or less real time. Cell phone cameras have turned citizens in reporters in many war zones.” [27] For the ‘insider,’ access to technology can help with communicating between members to maintain operations and coordinate attacks. Furthermore, it allows today’s violent non-state actor to operate within and between the virtual and physical realm. Groups of all kinds are taking advantage of this globally connected media environment for their communications and strategic influence efforts. For example, according to one recent report, Boko Haram “has been waging a propaganda campaign that includes conference calls with reporters.” [28] This growing role of the media environment is also seen in the activities of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), an umbrella militant movement in the oil and gas fields abundant in the Niger Delta. During the height of its activities, between 2006 and 2009, when it carried out regular attacks on energy infrastructure, it maintained a close relationship with various media
outlets – oftentimes claiming responsibility immediately following attacks. It also used its access to strategic oil and gas resources, and the Nigerian government’s inability to protect them, as a platform to air its grievances and communicate demands.

These are just some of the many transnational dimensions which have influenced the evolution of terrorism in Africa. They will no doubt be familiar to many readers of Perspectives on Terrorism, as the same dimensions are intertwined with terrorism threats in other parts of the world. In sum, terrorism in Africa must be understood as both a domestic and transnational phenomenon. It follows that the response to terrorism in Africa must involve a combination of both domestic and international efforts.

**Domestic and International Dimensions of the Response to Terrorism in Africa**

The contexts for combating terrorism in Africa, both in its domestic and transnational forms, have changed in recent decades. Scholars and policy makers have increasingly recognized the limitations of a typical African government’s ability to effectively combat a sophisticated domestic terrorist threat – particularly one with transnational linkages. Scores of books, articles and reports have been published in the last decade, focusing on the theme of security challenges in “weak”, “failing” and “fragile” states - terms meant to reflect the poor capacity of most formal government institutions. Often, these weak states are described as having “ungoverned spaces” or “lawless areas” within their borders. In an extreme case like Somalia, the complete absence of a viable central government suggests that an entire state is “ungoverned.” The US National Intelligence Council has described “failed or failing states” as having “expanses of territory and populations devoid of effective government control.” [29] A recent report by the American Security Project describes how “the challenge of ungoverned spaces remains a core issue in the management of the threat posed by transnational terrorism. A lack of government capacity allows terrorist groups to find sanctuary.” [30] African countries feature prominently in the annual Failed States Index, published jointly by the Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy magazine.

At the same time, however, there is an emerging consensus in the scholarly community that local non-state actors can and often do play a critical role in confronting the efforts of armed groups within their communities. For example, senior leaders of the Sufi Islamic community in Nigeria have roundly condemned the violent actions of Boko Haram. Many kinds of non-governmental entities – informal power structures, such as ethnic groups, clans, religious sects or tribal systems – can provide services, help mitigate grievances, and in some cases, address local threats to human security. [31] Indeed, the sobering reality is that while many military and law enforcement bodies in African communities and urban centers have the potential to strengthen over time, they still have a long ways to go due to institutional constraints and economic limitations. However, this apparent state weakness does not imply that African communities are
without policing. In fact, according to a study carried out by the Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN) Foundation, non-state actors – in the form of bodies such as ethnic associations, religious organizations, neighborhood groups, etc. – undertake local policing duties that embrace and understand cultural factors and traditions. [32] Granted, non-state policing is not without its problems and challenges (due to issues of transparency, occasional abuses, etc.) but such local capacity could be further developed and used to strengthen local police efforts to combat criminal activity in whatever form it comes. In other words, while states in Africa may lack strong formal institutions, if there is a security-conscious and pro-active local community, terrorists will not find operational freedom or safe haven.

In terms of the transnational dimensions of the threat since 9/11, the past decade has shown an increasing willingness by the U.S. and other Western countries to fund joint training exercises and other initiatives meant to foster cross-national collaboration in countering terrorism. Perhaps more importantly, we are also seeing an increasing willingness among African nations to participate in these initiatives. This often includes sending bright and promising young security professionals to Western-sponsored seminars as part of a long-term commitment to improve regional capacity for understanding how to effectively address the threat of terrorism. Of course, building relationships of mutual trust requires time and consistent effort. For this reason, one of the hallmarks of the U.S. Department of Defense’s Counterterrorism Fellowship Program over the past decade is that it has built mutually beneficial relationships with foreign military and intelligence officers, and has provided a technology-aided infrastructure through which these professionals can stay connected and maintain those relationships across the huge African continent.

Confronting the threat of terrorism anywhere requires at least a rudimentary level of local political will and security capacity, particularly in terms of intelligence and law enforcement. In Africa, outside intervention has sometimes been necessary for bolstering a state’s capabilities in these areas. In this respect, the United Nations has made some strides in assisting African states develop the appropriate legal frameworks and institutional capacity to address issues such as terrorist financing and money laundering. However, terrorism (whether of domestic or foreign origin) is a particularly contextual phenomenon, requiring a specific, context-aware response. Understanding the diversity of these contexts, an objective of this Special Issue of Perspectives on Terrorism, is thus a critical asset to formulating effective counterterrorism research and policy agendas for Africa in the 21st century.

The Special Issue of Perspectives on Terrorism

Collectively, the depth and breadth of Africans’ experiences with political violence can be overwhelming to any researcher of security studies. Thus, a considerable challenge in assembling
this special issue has been selecting a handful of representative themes and topics for inclusion. Our task has been further complicated by the fact that incidents of political violence are taking place throughout the continent on a daily basis, in some cases altering the contexts that inform academic analysis and rendering some research perspectives quickly “old news.” We have nonetheless attempted to capture an academic snapshot of the current state of affairs in Africa, with articles that address various kinds of terrorism and political violence in different regions of the continent.

In northern Nigeria, Boko Haram (BH) has been ramping up its violent campaign against the local Nigerian state, raising alarm bells in the U.S. and in other Western countries. However, it was not long ago that Nigeria’s woes were mainly in the southern oil-producing region, known as the Niger Delta. Thus, in the first article, Iibaba Samuel Iibaba returns to the evolving nature of political violence in the Niger Delta, with a particular focus on the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). He describes how the history and ideology of militant groups in this region, rooted in legitimate grievances over environmental destruction and governmental neglect, formed the basis for the emergence in 2006 of MEND as an umbrella organization. MEND’s violent tactics – including hostage taking, attacks on oil infrastructure and the placement of bombs and other explosive devices in public places – can clearly be described as terrorism. Nigeria is also the focus of the following article, by Isaac Sampson and Freedom Onuoha, which explores the government’s attempt to enact new anti-terrorism legislation since 2006. In their view, violence caused by militant groups in the Niger Delta and by the northern Islamist group Boko Haram clearly warranted some kind of formal response to the threat of terrorism. However, only international attention resulting from the failed attempt by a Nigerian, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, to bomb a U.S. commercial airliner proved to be the final catalyst for the National Assembly to adopt new legislation that should enable the government to confront more effectively the threat of terrorism.

The next two articles examine Al-Qaeda’s relationship to events and evolving contexts in Africa. First, Alex Wilner examines how the so-called “Arab Spring” impacts on the local resonance of Al-Qaeda’s ideology in North Africa. In his view, Al-Qaeda’s violent narrative has come under immense pressure, following the toppling of Arab regimes by largely secular and peaceful protest movements. Further, the death of Osama bin Laden has diminished Al-Qaeda by eliminating a charismatic and unifying figure who had attracted a small but lethal following in the Muslim world. Yet, the author notes, these events are unlikely to impact the aspirations, tactics, or strategies of Al-Qaeda’s regional affiliate groups, notably Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Somalia’s al-Shabaab.

In his article, James Forest notes that Al-Qaeda faces a variety of steep challenges in its attempt to influence local populations in sub-Saharan Africa. While the historical record suggests that Salafist jihadi terrorists have attempted to establish a foothold in various regions of the
subcontinent, they have largely failed, with the exception of tenuous links in the Horn of Africa. Despite the wealth of conditions that in other parts of the world have sustained the resonance of Al-Qaeda’s ideology, beyond North Africa there is no sub-regional coalescence of jihadists – comparable to AQIM – elsewhere in Africa. Further, while various leaders of the global terrorist network have expressed an interest in West Africa, and particularly Nigeria, there has not yet been much evidence that local Islamist groups are interested in establishing a formal affiliation with Al-Qaeda, which is surely good news for the U.S. and others in their fight to eradicate this pernicious global terror threat. However, ongoing investigations into the recent spate of attacks by Boko Haram suggest that this local Islamist group maybe receiving some tactical or operational expertise from members of the global Salafi-Jihadist movement.

Next, Annette Hübschle examines the critical linkages between organized crime and terrorism in sub-Saharan Africa. She describes how perceived weaknesses in the criminal justice sector, limited law enforcement capacity, political and systemic corruption, poor border patrol and weak anti-terror and organized crime laws are believed to provide an ideal environment for the terror-crime nexus to flourish. However, her research on organized crime in Southern Africa found no strong empirical links between criminal and terrorist organizations, suggesting that these widely-held perceptions are not always supported by facts.

Finally, Victor Ojakorotu explores the kinds of armed conflict and violence that have occurred in the Cabinda region of Angola over the last two decades, with particular focus on the actions of the leading secessionist group, the Liberation Front of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC). As the main oil-producing region in Angola, the Cabinda province is of central importance to the government, and thus demands for independence by FLEC or other local groups are unlikely to bear fruit. Further, he notes, the violent actions of FLEC have threatened the country’s economic security, and have allowed Angola’s government to portray the group as terrorists. As with Professor Ibaba’s article on militant groups in the Niger Delta, this case study offers useful insights on the dynamics of oil-related violence in sub-Saharan Africa.

Together, the articles are meant to whet the reader’s appetite for further study in a continent that is unfortunately rich with topics for security studies research. Eric Price encourages and facilitates this by offering a stellar bibliography of recommended resources on terrorism and political violence in Africa. Our sincere gratitude is extended to all the contributors for their hard work and commitment to this effort. We welcome correspondence from readers of this Special Issue of Perspectives on Terrorism.

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Notes

[12] Ibid, p.646.
[22] Ibid, p. 64
[23] “Sounding Like the Middle East”, The Economist, August 27, 2011.