

War Ravaged Africa and the Myth of Africa Rising

By

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*According to Africa Development Bank, Africa as a whole maintained its position as the world's second-fastest growing economies in 2016, behind South Asia. It is repeatedly being told that Africa is rising. The spin in the global narrative about Africa, previously deemed as the Dark Continent may be soothing to some minds, but it is simply not true on a human level. **

"The war is headed to Africa", Senator Lindsay Graham said. "It's beginning to morph. As we suppress the enemy in the Mideast, they're going to move, they're not going to quit."¹

He said this after the death of four US special forces soldiers in Western Niger on October 4, in an ambush in the area where over 46 conflicts has taken place in the last 20 months, including a February attack that killed 15 Nigerian soldiers and a year ago killed 22 Nigerien forces at a refugee camp. After this incident in western Niger, "attention was suddenly focused on one of the most remote and chaotic war zones on the planet."²

The war of terror has been in Africa since the 1998 bombing of the US Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. Since then Africa has been fighting terror on all fronts, West, East, Central and Northern Africa. If this scale of destruction had taken place in any other continent it would have been called World War III. And now various sources indicate that there is more insecurity headed towards Africa.

* Namibia and Botswana are one of the very few countries which can pride themselves on governance, democracy, and rule of law and stable society.

¹ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-10-20/senator-graham-says-terrorism-war-expanding-citing-africa-clash>

² www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/15/sahel-niger-us-special-forces-islamism

At the end of 2016, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), announced that the group had “*expanded and shifted some of our command, media, and wealth to Africa.*”

*ISIS’s Dabiq magazine referred to the regions of Africa that were part of its “caliphate”: “the region that includes Sudan, Chad, and Egypt has been named the caliphate province of Alkinaana; the region that includes Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, and Uganda as the province of Habasha; the North African region encompassing Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Nigeria, Niger, and Mauritania as Maghreb, the province of the caliphate.” Leaving aside the mismatched ethno-linguistic groupings included in each of these “provinces,” ISIS’s interest in establishing a presence in Africa has long been a part of its vision for a global caliphate.*³

In an exclusive interview, Faraj, a 30-year-old veteran fighter from north east Syria, says that “when we say that the Islamic State [Isis] is everlasting and expanding, it is not a mere poetic or propaganda phrase”. He says the group intends to rebuild its strength in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, adding that “Isis has sleeper agents all over the world and their numbers are increasing”.

In August 2015, when ISIS controlled much of Iraq and Syria and later captured Ramadi in Iraq and Palmyra in Syria in May, it had already prepared for defeat. Faraj says that the world powers underestimate its resilience because they do not understand the attractiveness of ISIS.⁴ As frightening as it may seem it can be prevented if Africa rejects the creation of the conditions that make people vulnerable to radicalization.

West Africa

The attack on American troops in Niger was part of a routine pattern of ISIS and other extremists in West Africa in the **Lake Chad region (Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Mali, Burkina Faso)**

³ <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/islamic-state-isis-africa-implications-syria-iraq-boko-haram-aqim-shabaab/>

⁴ [//www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-to-rebuild-in-africa-if-defeated-in-syria-and-iraq-a7234456.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-to-rebuild-in-africa-if-defeated-in-syria-and-iraq-a7234456.html)

Reuter's news agency reported that the attackers were from al-Sahraoui's group, which calls itself the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara. Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui, the leader of an extremist group that has formally pledged allegiance to the ISIS in May 2015. He established his extremist group in 2012.

There are about 800 US troops in Niger and the US military has maintained a presence in the Northwest African country for five years, as they battle terrorist groups, including ISIS in the Greater Sahara. The United States has operations in Niger in recent years, including surveillance drone flights piloted from Niamey. The United States is also finishing construction of a 100 million dollar base at Agadez in Niger on the borders of Mali and Libya where militants freely operate.⁵

On October 20 the same terrorist group, which killed 4 American soldiers and 5 Nigerian also killed 13 Niger gendarmes and wounded five more in an attack on their base in western Niger close to where the October 4 incident took place.

Even the reluctant US president has confirmed the fact that the war in Africa is expanding since he came to office. In a letter to Congress in June, President Trump notified lawmakers that U.S. military personnel in the Lake Chad Basin "continue to provide a wide variety of support to African partners conducting counterterrorism operations in the region." While President Trump has on several occasions demonstrated his lack of interest in Africa, it is very clear that the Pentagon does not agree with him.

The largest number of U.S. military personnel in Africa is deployed in Niger, with roughly 800, according to AFRICOM. Next comes Somalia, Djibouti's neighbor, with roughly 400 U.S. military personnel. The fourth nation in terms of U.S. military personnel is Cameroon, with more than 100. The U.S. does have some military presence in virtually every African nation, even if it's small. Most nations, according to June figures from the Pentagon, have at least a handful of active-duty personnel temporarily deployed there.⁶

⁵ [//www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/10/us-niger-green-berets/542190/](http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/10/us-niger-green-berets/542190/)

⁶ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/where-does-the-u-s-have-troops-in-africa-and-why/>

The UN has also been involved since Al Quida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other extremist groups unleashed terror in Mali and across the Sahel, since 2013. Ansar Dine, al-Mourabitoun and al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb have now made official declaration in March of 2017 that they have merged and are now called "Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen," which in English translates to "Support of Islam and Muslims," In July 2017 JNIM claimed its first major attacks on Burkinabe and Nigerien forces in Burkina Faso and Niger respectively. ⁷

In September of this year the members of the Security Council expressed their concern about the security situation in Mali and the transnational dimension of the threat posed by terrorism and transnational organized crimes (including arms and drug trafficking, the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons) in the Sahel region. ⁸

In early 2015, attacks in Chad by the Nigerian jihadist group Boko Haram which has declared allegiance to ISIS, has killed hundreds, displaced more than 100,000, caused 700 refugees on Chadian territory. Chad hosts over 300, 000 thousand Sudanese refugees and an equal number of Nigerian refugees. These camps are known to be recruiting grounds of fighters for the various factions. Chadian troops have been in the forefront of the fight against terrorism including sending troops to Mali under the auspices of the UN. Yet the US administration inexplicably added Chad to the countries whose citizens would be included in the latest statement of the president's travel ban. Chad and its leaders were utterly blindsided as there was no sense whatsoever that this nation has harbored list of or even encouraged terrorists “ ⁹

Perhaps even more mystifying, Chad has proved to be one of the United States' most willing counterterrorism partners in the region. In March of this year about 2,000 U.S. troops staged a military exercise in Chad. In

⁷ <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/03/02/3-mali-islamic-extremist-groups-merge-pledge-to-al-qaida.html>

⁸ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc13006.doc.htm>

⁹ <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/21/opinions/niger-chad-travel-ban-trump-andelman->

recent years, Air Force personnel have used the country as a staging ground for Boko Haram surveillance missions.¹⁰

Chad's capital, Ndjamena, is also used as the headquarters for France's 4,000-person regional counterterrorism mission, called Operation Barkhane. Chad's own military has intervened across borders, in the Central African Republic, Mali and Nigeria. In 2013, forces reportedly killed an al-Qaeda commander in Mali. In 2014 and 2015, during major battles against Boko Haram, Chadian troops were considered by many to be more effective than Nigerian soldiers, even though Chad is a much poorer nation.¹¹ When the US decided to include Chad in the travel ban list the Chadian government suddenly began pulling out its troops from Niger making the country more vulnerable to further attacks.

Boko Haram has lost territory but it has still the capacity to operate in **Northern Nigera, Cameroon, Chad and Niger**. It was reported in September of this year that a surge in attacks by **Boko Haram** fighters has claimed nearly 400 lives since April in **Nigeria** and Cameroon, double the figure of the previous five months, according to a human rights group.

"This wave of shocking Boko Haram violence, propelled by a sharp rise in suicide bombings, highlights the urgent need for protection and assistance for millions of civilians ... Governments in Nigeria, Cameroon and beyond must take swift action to protect them from this campaign of terror."¹²

¹⁰ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/246-fighting-boko-haram-chad-beyond-military-measures>

¹¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/09/25/why-did-the-u-s-travel-ban-add-counterterrorism->

¹² [http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/09/boko-haram-attacks-killed-400-april-amnesty-](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/09/boko-haram-attacks-killed-400-april-amnesty-170905045757581.html)

[170905045757581.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/09/boko-haram-attacks-killed-400-april-amnesty-170905045757581.html)

The sudden rise of a group called, Ansaroul Islam, or "Combat for Islam", has sparked fears that Burkina Faso is following Mali, as a country on the brink of collapse since militants overran the North in 2012. The 2016 massacre that killed 30 people had shocked many in Ouagadougou. The capital is home to many foreigners working with the United Nations and international aid organizations in this desperately poor country on the edge of the Sahara. In August of same year terrorists arrived at a Turkish restaurant in the capital Ogasdugu on motorcycles and began shooting randomly at the crowds dining Sunday evening. Eighteen people were killed and many more wounded. Burkina Faso is under siege by the threats of terrorists from many fronts.

Senegal Many local experts say that the tradition of large Sufi brotherhoods in Senegal (refer my research on Sufism in Senegal) means extremists have difficulty-taking root there. In recent months, Senegalese authorities have arrested several individuals suspected of having ties to ISIS. Among those detained were two Moroccans who were remanded into custody in Dakar on 29 March. A Nigerian national was similarly arrested in the capital on 1 April. While details were not readily provided on the detention of the former, the Nigerian national was described as being a member of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) – aka Boko Haram –, which was purportedly recruiting for the Islamist sect among Senegalese youth.

Boko Haram has been accused of recruiting terrorists in Senegal. The first of these connections was publicized in 2012 when the Grand Imam of Bignona confirmed that Boko Haram had actively been recruiting in the town. Claims of the sect's Senegalese connections were further bolstered in February 2016, when four imams were arrested in Kaolack on suspicion of proselytization and recruiting on behalf of the group. Senegal remains to be on the radar.¹³

The stretch of coastline spanning from **Gabon to Liberia that includes 15 states** which have huge economic importance to the United States and the West. 70 percent of Africa's oil production comes from the **Gulf of Guinea**. And with the recent discovery of offshore hydrocarbon deposits,

¹³ <https://institute.global/insight/co-existence/senegal-isis-and-al-qaeda-terrorism-trifecta>

these numbers are only going to rise. The Gulf of Guinea has now become the key route to drugs and human trafficking. The Gulf of Guinea is the most dangerous maritime zone according to International Crisis Group, next to the Gulf of Aden and Guinea, the world's **fifth poorest nation** has been targeted by **Colombian drug cartels, turning it into a transit hub for the cocaine trade out of Latin America and into Europe to be the world's first narco state.** ¹⁴

The Gulf of Guinea is also a key route for arms and drug smuggling to Northern and Western Africa. There have been reports that terrorist groups like Boko Haram of Nigeria, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al Shabab of Somalia have used this route for their nefarious activities.

East Africa

In the same month of October of 2017, **Al Shabab** killed over 358 in **Somalia**, Mogadishu in the most devastating attack. In the same week a certain guy massacred 57 Americans in Las Vegas, in the worst domestic terror. The headlines in the mainstream media across the globe were zoomed to the Las Vegas incident. It was headiness in the mainstream media across the globe and little was told about the 358 massacred in Mogadishu. The mainstream media and policy makers and western elites hardly know that war of terror ravaging Africa. That was why the death of four American soldiers, as covered by the American media, gave the impression that war was just starting in Africa.

The Horn of Africa was the most complex security zone in the world prior to Al Shabab.. With the coming of Al Shabab and the booming of criminal gangs it has become even more complex.

In the same month when over 300 people were massacred the foreign secretary of the UK, Boris Johnson, called the war torn capital city where terrorists attacks and massacres take place routinely a “thriving international city.” How misguided he was! He would have probably not said this if there were British citizens among the 358 killed in the one-day attack. Al Shabab has endured the enormous counter attack from Africa

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/mar/09/drugstrade>

Union Forces (AMISOM) American drone attacks and the forces of the Somali government and still remains to be a potent force in East Africa.

Al Shabab is not affiliated to ISIS and has refused to pay allegiance to it. It remains to be largely focused on Somali issues in East Africa. “It seems that the foreign fighters, even from the Somali diaspora, are more enamored with ISIS,” says Meleagrou-Hitchens. “In the end, most people in Shabab are interested in Somalia. The leadership that is allied with Al-Qaeda clearly sees itself as part of the global jihadi struggle, but that’s not what gets them local recruits. It’s more dealing with local issues and claiming to fight for Somali pride.”¹⁵

Despite the loss of territory, the terror group has kept itself financially afloat by taxing the lucrative sugar and charcoal trades. Al Shabab overran a **Kenyan** military base in January 2017, killing 57 soldiers a year after another base attack left 180-200 Kenyan troops dead. In June, militants stormed a government base in Puntland, killing 61.

Al Shabab has launched further attacks outside its borders targeting civilians in countries, which have troops participating in AMISOM. Examples include the Garissa University College attack in Kenya in 2015, where Al Shabab gunmen killed 148 people. Clan members within Somalia who participate in federal elections are targets for assassination. These attacks have increased since the election of Somali Pres. Mohamed Abdullah “Farmajo” Mohamed in February 2017.

Kenya has been a target of domestic extremism as well “in response to calls to target crusader states,” by ISIS ¹⁶ The claim of responsibility by ISIS shows that ISIS has penetrated the Kenyan community in some ways. Kenyan police said in May that they had arrested three members of an extremist network affiliated to ISIS who were planning to carry out a biological attack. Four men were arrested in the city in March on suspicion of attempting to leave Kenya to join ISIS in Libya. ¹⁷

¹⁵ <http://www.newsweek.com/al-shabab-not-joining-isis-418656>

¹⁶ <http://www.newsweek.com/kenya-arrests-four-men-trying-join-isis-libya-434628>

¹⁷ <http://www.newsweek.com/kenya-arrests-four-men-trying-join-isis-libya-434628>

North Africa

In 2017, ISIS has increased its activities in **Libya** and many believe that they are starting to regroup once again. The militants have a “desert army” that was established after being pushed out of Sirte last year by Misratan militias. Libya is importer and exporter of terrorists and the hub for human trafficking and organ trafficking where migrants are routinely tortured and killed in a country where there is no government that is in control. Libya is currently the most critical place in North Africa posing danger to the countries in the Sahel and West Africa with open borders with Chad, Egypt, Niger, Algeria and Tunisia.¹⁸

As the ISIS disintegrates and loses territory in Iraq and Syria, Fox News asserts that the terrorist outfit is increasingly capitalizing on the chaos of Libya, positioning the country as its point of resurgence. The black-clad jihadist outfit is believed to be regrouping and recruiting in the rural regions south of the main east-to-west coastal highway and in the far-west town of Sabratha, which is poised just 60 miles from the Tunisian border, since being run out of its Libyan “caliphate” capital of Sirte late last year.¹⁹

Tunisia has become a frontline in the fight against terrorism in North Africa. It has been repeatedly attacked but has not submitted and still controls the domestic situation though it has lost capacity to control the external elements. “The deadly attack on the Bardot Museum shows why this birthplace of the Arab Spring has exported up to 7,000 fighters to the Islamic State” Tunisia is now threatened by the possible influx of some of these returnees from Iraq and Syria. The determination of the people and the government is however admirable and it is more likely that Tunisia will win this war and its decision to have a secular government survive these hard times if it continues to get the support from the western

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<http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/libya-october-2017-update/>

¹⁹ <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/07/30/isis-squeezed-out-iraq-and-syria-now-regrouping-in-libya-analysts-say.html>

powers. Its economy, which is largely dependent on tourism, has been hit hard and it would need sustained support to confront the continued threats of terrorism.²⁰

Egypt is in turmoil as well, under a heavy-handed military dictatorship. In October of this year 54 police officers were killed by militants according to Associated Press in -Wahat al-Bahriya area in Giza province, about 135km (84 miles) southwest of Cairo.

There have long been a number of Sinai-based violent Islamist groups that have planned and undertaken attacks against Israel and Egyptian government targets. This group Ansari Beit al Maqdis (ABM) has declared allegiance to ISIS in December 2014. It has suffered significant leadership attrition at the hands of the Egyptian military.

Tunisia, the Sinai and Southern Libya seem to be the closest to ISIS in North Africa. With the displacement of many ISIS fighters from Iraq and Syria it is expected there will be an increase in number of ISIS forces in these places

Central Africa

The conflict that started as a power struggle in the **Central African Republic (CAR)** between the Seleca rebels and the government has now turned into a religious war giving opportunity for radicalism to thrive. CAR had never a functioning government since independence. Rather it has been known as a 'phantom state' and has been greatly influenced by the politics of Sudan and Chad. For the past four years, violence between Christian and Muslim militias has plagued the Central African Republic. Now, following a recent escalation in violence, the U.N.'s top humanitarian official is warning the international community to act now, or face another genocide in Africa.

Stephen O'Brien, the outgoing head of the U.N.'s humanitarian office, briefed the U.N. Security Council on the situation in CAR. O'Brien urged member states to support the country's fragile government and

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<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/tunisia/11481150/Terrorism-and-tourism-the-two-faces-of-Tunisia.html>

increase aid to hundreds of thousands of civilians who have been displaced by fighting.

“The early warnings of genocide are there,” O’Brien told AP following the briefing. The escalation is very real,” said O’Brien. “We’re looking at things which we haven’t heard about for a long time. There’s a very deep ethnic-cleansing approach.”²¹

Continued violence in the Central African Republic has brought about new wave of displaced people. In August 2017, the number of Central African refugees in neighboring countries reached the highest number since the start of the crisis in 2013. In addition to the refugees, the number of internally displaced people remained close to 600,000 by the end of August 2017. With more than 1.1 million people displaced inside CAR or as refugees in neighboring countries, the overall population displacement is at its highest level since 2013.

The Democratic Republic of Congo, home to an estimated \$24 trillion in natural wealth, has also been home of armed conflict, political violence, and grand corruption since independence. Since the early 1990s, Eastern Congo has been home to the world’s deadliest war since World War II, with 5.4 million people dead as a result of war-related causes.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has more internally displaced persons than any other country. Almost a million people were forced to flee their homes in 2016 alone. Globally DRC has the largest number of refugees fleeing armed conflict. “DRC’s largely forgotten crisis in central Africa superseded all other crises in terms of the number of people forced to flee their homes,” said Ulrika Blom, the Norwegian Refugee Council’s Country Director in DRC. “Even Syria or Yemen’s brutal wars did not match the number of new people on the move in DRC last year.”²²

In the DRC, the government cannot provide basic services to 8 million people in need, 5 million of who are children. The last year, has been the

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<http://www.newsweek.com/genocide-africentral-african-republic-654609>

²² <https://www.nrc.no/dr-congo-crisis-sees-highest-global-internal-displacement>

worst and the country now has nearly 4 million internally displaced people -- the largest in all of Africa.

South Sudan has been at war for over 60 years and never experienced peace. After independence in 2011 the war has internally displaced 4 million people with over 2 million refugees in neighboring countries. But while the South Sudan government largely claims it doesn't have enough money to fix these problems, the struggling government *was* able to spend \$2.1 million on Washington, DC, lobbying and public relations firms from 2014 through the end of 2015, 'Center for Public Integrity' analysis of federal records reveals.

It is now, by many measures, the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. A third of South Sudan's population is displaced internally or living in refugee camps in neighboring countries. While there have been abuses on both sides, human rights groups have documented many incidents in which government troops from Kiir's Dinka tribe massacred and raped civilians from Machar's Nuer tribe.

"Kiir is the heart of the problem," said Princeton Lyman, a former U.S. envoy to Sudan and South Sudan. Now the promise of South Sudan's hard-fought independence is slipping away.

Returning ISIS Fighters and South Africa

Thousands of foreign fighters who flocked to fight with Islamic State in its Syrian and Iraqi strongholds are returning to their home countries as the terrorist group's territory shrinks, according to an extensive survey from a private security-intelligence firm.

New York-based firm The Soufna Group said "there are now at least 5,600 citizens or residents from 33 countries who returned home" in a situation that "represents a huge challenge for security and law enforcement entities" around the world.²³

²³ <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/oct/24/isis-fighters-return-to-home-countries-by-thousand/>

Despite its losses on the battlefield, Islamic State remains a potent threat, the Soufan Group report said. As ISIS “loses territorial control of its caliphate, there is little doubt that the group or something similar will survive the worldwide campaign against it so long as the conditions that promoted its growth remain,” the report said.

“Its appeal will outlast its demise, and while it will be hard to assess the specific threat posed by foreign fighters and returnees, they will present a challenge to many countries for years to come,” said the report.

“Throughout the world, we have seen that desperate situations can lead to dangerous results,”²⁴

‘Between 27,000 and 31,000 people have traveled to Syria and Iraq to join the Islamic State and other violent extremist groups in the region, according to data provided by the Soufan Group²⁵

The Asian continent has seen the most citizens travel to Syria and Iraq, with over 14,000 people estimated to be in the conflict zone with Africa following with an estimated 10,000.

Half came from neighboring countries and North Africa, and a quarter from Europe and Turkey, says the Global Terrorism Index, drawn up by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) think-tank. Some of The foreign fighters and mercenaries that have joined from many parts of the world including Africa are expected to their countries of origin like Tunisia Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, South Africa, Yemen, and Sudan. Let us see one country closely.

South Africa

According to Iraq’s ambassador to **South Africa**, Saad Kindeel, speaking in July 2017, from Pretoria, “fighters originally from South Africa who are now fleeing the Arab region are probably making their way home and

²⁴ <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/oct/24/isis-fighters-return-to-home-countries-by-thousand/>

²⁵ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/03/29/iraq-and-syria-how-many-foreign-fighters-are-fighting-for-isil/>

the government should be looking out for them.²⁶ An investigation by the Guardian found that in recent weeks, dozens of people who travelled to Syria and Iraq to support the ISIS cause have fled the region, fed up with the group's inability to hold on to territory.²⁷ Many have been captured as they try to cross the border into Turkey but many have also managed to go through the border.

Iraqi Ambassador said young South Africans are flocking to the Middle East to join the black-clad terrorist army in Syria and Iraq, mostly using Turkey as a transfer point to the so-called caliphate. "We could say with certainty that 50 to 60 persons, South African citizens, have joined ISIS in Syria, [but] there are some reports suggesting that more than a hundred have done so, and as many as 300 or more," said Al-Alawi.

But Jasmine Opperman, a counter-terrorism expert at the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, believes the returnees don't pose a problem. "South Africans who have returned have willingly agreed to co-operate with law and order departments so the likelihood of those returning to engage in behavior or communication that will expose a continued link to extremism is unlikely," she said.

However, while interviewing ISIS loyalists in South Africa, Opperman discovered that there was a directive instructing them not to make contact with the members returning from Iraq and Syria because it was known some were co-operating with law enforcement.

"We have active recruitment, we have active calls for expansion in South Africa, and that should be an overriding concern," said Opperman. "Are we seeing the initial phases of a jihadist culture evolving in South Africa? Yes."²⁸

²⁶ <https://www.iol.ca/news/south-africa/sa-isis-fighters-coming-home-10535488>

²⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/08/retreating-isis-fighters-prepare-for-last-stand-in-syria>

²⁸ <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/gauteng/isis-jihadists-eye-sa-10645517>

Authoritarian Rule, Poverty and Radicalism

An expert, Dr. Roman Loimeier warned of the potential for Islamic extremist groups to emerge alongside Boko Haram, Ansar Dine or al-Shabab – especially in authoritarian states. "In these countries, Islam has become a symbol of rebellion which is on the side of those who have been oppressed or unjustly treated – an ideal foundation for the beginning of a radical movement."²⁹

He says **Ethiopia** may be one to watch. "The regime has made a few regrettable mistakes in the last few years. Radical groups are ready to emerge and could be given significant support by the population if the situation does not improve." The simmering crisis in Ethiopia has reached a boiling point. It is extremely serious and every person who has watched Ethiopia closely knows that. It is more likely ethnic conflict and less of conflict driven by extremist. The bonding between the Christian and the Muslim communities in Ethiopia is so strong that it will be difficult to be broken so easily like it happened in other places. The relationship has stood the test of times.

The crisis in Ethiopia is not simply about repression and extrajudicial killings, stifling of freedom of expression, but most of all it is about ethnic politics; a minority government, that is in complete control of the state machinery including the economic political and state apparatus. Northern Ethiopia, Tigray, has been the cradle of Ethiopian civilization and people have lived in harmony with other ethnic groups for centuries. But the policies of current regime have put these people in difficulty by introducing an ethnic politics, which makes them look like they are benefiting from the new dispensation. The majority are hard working peaceful people who want to continue the life they have lived with other ethnic groups for centuries. But this regime is not making that possible. Current Ethiopia is gripped with the Rwandan syndrome before the 1994 genocide. The country is heading to uncharted territory and one scenario

²⁹ <http://www.dw.com/en/is-islamic-extremism-on-the-rise-in-africa/a-39001070>

is civil war and the rise of extremism. The culture of tolerance, shared culture, faith, history and peaceful co existence has been the binding tie until now and it is the hope and prayers of many that it will prevail as it has on many testing times in the country's history.

Burundi is another fragile country in Central Africa. The Security Council, in a presidential statement today, expressed deep concern over the political situation in Burundi — including increasing numbers of refugees and reports of torture, forced disappearances caused by a stubborn dictator who refuses to resign. UN investigators say there is strong evidence that crimes against humanity have been committed in Burundi. Their report details killings, torture and rape, which they say have been committed largely by government forces - but also by opposition groups.

Francoise Hampson, one of the three investigators from the UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, told the BBC that some of the alleged abuses included "arbitrary detention and arbitrary arrest, unlawful killings of various types, torture, cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment, rape and cases of sexual violence".³⁰ Once again the tension between the Hutu majority and the Tutsi minority is changing the peaceful landscape that was there for sometime.²⁹

Conclusion

There are many other hot spots which can easily escalate into major conflicts. *Africa is already the most conflicted continent and contrary to what many may say, it is not the fastest growing economy and it is not prospering but remains to be the poorest continent.*

The UN has warned: "The continent continues to suffer under very rapid urban growth accompanied by massive urban poverty and many other social problems. These seem to indicate that the development trajectories followed by African nations since post-independence may not be able to deliver on the aspirations of broad based human development and prosperity for all."

³⁰ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-41147688>

It is repeatedly being told that Africa is growing and prospering and has become the fastest growing economy. The change in the global narrative about Africa previously deemed as the Dark Continent may be soothing to some minds, but it is simply not true. How can this be true when one in three Africans is destitute according to a new study on poverty in 39 African nations led by development economists at Oxford University in Britain.

The figures for children are even more shocking. In what the study calls "truly staggering" statistics, two of every three African children are living in poverty. That is 300 million African children.³¹ The figures comes from recently released data and reports issued by the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI), drawn from a survey of 103 countries across the world - 39 of them in Africa. The study is unique in that it measures poverty not only by income levels but also by 10 indicators in the areas of health, education and living standards, which are also priorities in the sustainable development goals (National Research Council (NRC)

In 2016, one person every second was forced to flee their home inside their own country. "Internally displaced people now outnumber refugees by two to one." said Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the National Research Council (NRC). Of the 6.9 million new internal displacements caused by conflict in 2016, 2.6 million took place in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to the Global Report on Internal Displacement.³² The World Poverty Clock contrasts the progress made by Africa to the rest of the developing world. As of this writing, 408,213,640 people in Africa live in extreme poverty, with a current escape rate of *negative 11.8 per minute*.³³

³¹ <http://allafrica.com/stories/201707170913.html>

³² <http://internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/>

³³ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2017/05/18/africa-and-the-world-poverty-clock/>

This kind of tragic situation accompanied by oppression injustice and inequality lead people to take extreme measures. African leaders have to understand that an inclusive and transparent system and a fair distribution of resources is the only way to prevent conflict and fight terror of whatever form and allow their countries to prosper in the real sense. Terrorism is a psychological warfare. Terrorists take advantage of prevailing situation in a given country and try to manipulate people and change their behavior by creating fear, uncertainty, division in society and false hope. In fighting terrorism governments have to make sure the violence they use does not become a tool for the terrorists to justify their war.

“If we destroy human rights and rule of law in the response to terrorism, they have won.” Professor Joichi Ito

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