

# Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in South Africa: National Security and Regional Strategy

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Accepted Apr 09, 2021

Published Apr 12, 2021

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DOI :<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4733125>

Funding: None

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**How to cite this article**  
(APA): Kgomo, L.I.P. (2021).  
South Africa's National and  
Regional Counter-Terrorism  
Strategy. *North American  
Academic Research*, 4(4), 110-  
119. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4733125>

## Conflicts of Interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

## ABSTRACT

The South African government's Counter-Terrorism legislation emerged to answer the growing threat of terrorism both domestically and beyond its borders. Through multilateral platforms like the Southern African Development Community and African Union, South Africa has been involved in contributing to the formulation of counter-terrorism measures as well as update previous counter-terrorism strategies in an attempt to create the most effective system against those who are indiscriminately terrorising and murdering innocent African women and children. Furthermore, the South African government aims to deal with terrorist threats from groups like ISIL, becoming ever more daring and deadly in the Southern African region with its counter-terrorism system. A successful counter-terrorism strategy is expected to restore peace, stability, economic growth, and a much-needed sense of security in the affected areas. This paper, therefore, focused on South Africa's counter-terrorism strategy at the national and regional levels. It explored South Africa's institutional Approach to Domestic and Regional Security and Counter-Terrorism.

Keywords: SADC, SOUTH AFRICA, TERRORISM, ISIL

## Introduction

There are different definitions and types of terrorism. However, in this paper, the researcher explores the threat of domestic and international terrorism in South Africa and the SADC region in light of the emergence of the growing insurgency in northern Mozambique carried out by militants with links to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). With an established history of terrorism from right-wing extremist groups like the Boeremag and PAGAD (People against gangsterism and Drugs), an extremist vigilante organisation accused of bombings in and around Cape Town in the 1990s and 2000s, post-apartheid South Africa is no stranger to domestic terrorism. Although there is currently debate in some quarters about the degree to which domestic and international terrorism is a severe threat in South Africa, some high-ranking government officials have raised concern that South Africa could be vulnerable to transnational terrorist attacks within its territory. In the year 2007, the head of the National Intelligence Coordinating Committee at the time, Barry Gilder, claimed that there could be terrorist training Camps. <sup>(1)</sup> In the year, 2016 the United States government warned about possible terror attacks by Islamic militants on American Citizens in South Africa. <sup>(1)</sup> Although

South Africa has primarily maintained peace and security in the country, the ever-evolving threat of terrorism remains. Porous borders and corrupt immigration officials could turn the country into an attractive haven for domestic and international terrorism. The proximity to the terrorist activities of ISIL in Mozambique could make the country and the SADC region at large all the more vulnerable to attack. Most recently, in its newsletter, "Al-Naba", ISIL threatened to open a fighting front within South Africa's borders if it intervened in Northern Mozambique. The ISIL linked militants group has killed more than a thousand people in Mozambique, including a South African national. . This study examines the legal frameworks that the South African government and SADC region have to counter terrorism in the region?

Defining terrorism is a challenging task as there is no universal agreement amongst scholars regarding what exactly defines terrorism. However, most scholars generally agree that terrorism is a type of asymmetrical warfare characterised by violence against civilians to achieve a political or ideological objective by non-state actors. A UN panel on March 17, 2005, described terrorism as any act "intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or international organisation to do or abstain from doing any act".<sup>(3)</sup>

Turning to international terrorism, most people think of Southern Africa as a place where there is relative peace and stability. However, from DRC to South Africa, the growing body of evidence contradicts this perception that terrorism is not an issue in Southern Africa.<sup>(3)</sup> Within the region, some SADC states are attacked and embroiled over links to terrorist financing and funding. Terrorists like KhalfanKhamis Mohamed trained in Afghanistan to use explosives and travelled between three SADC states, namely Tanzania, Mozambique, and South Africa.<sup>(4)</sup> In the year 2008, the village of Nathuko and the administrative post of Quiterajo, Macomia District, Cabo Delgado Province of Mozambique, was attacked by terrorists.<sup>(5)</sup> Houses were burned down, an older man hanged, and life stock was killed. According to the Mozambican authorities, the terrorists also carried out raids on police stations and destroyed several churches.<sup>(6)</sup> On 7 April 2020, an Islamist group killed 50 people in Xitaxi village in Mozambique's Maidumbe district.<sup>(7)</sup>After armed militants killed more civilians, the Mozambican government claimed that ISIL-affiliated fighters were in the gas-rich Cabo Delgado Northern Province.<sup>(8)</sup> According to Theo Neething, the militant group "appears to be socio-economically marginalised young people without proper education and formal employment. Young immigrants in a similar marginalised position have joined them."<sup>(9)</sup>

Bishop Luiz Fernando Lisboa of Pemba, in the Cabo Delgado region, is noted to have said, "Unfortunately, this whole climate of terror has ended up generating insecurity and increasing crime. The people are so weary and very anxious after what happened".<sup>(10)</sup> The Islamic State linked terror group has claimed responsibility for nearly two dozen of the 189 attacks by a number of the shady extremist group last year in Cabo Delgado, a rural resource-rich area of Mozambique bordering Tanzania.<sup>(11)</sup> Mozambique, itself a post-war state, appears ill-equipped to deal with the insurgency.<sup>(11)</sup> Furthermore, ISIL, through its newsletter, Al-Naba threatened that if South Africa intervenes in Northern Mozambique, it will carry out military attacks within the borders

of South Africa. <sup>(12)</sup> According to the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Naledi Pando, South Africa is engaged in ongoing talks with Mozambique about how South Africa can help fight the Islamic State-linked insurgency. <sup>(13)</sup>

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) - the central regional multilateral organisation in the region – has yet to outline how it might deal with a jihadist threat in the region, as claimed by Opperman. <sup>(11)</sup> The Islamic State also has a foothold in other SADC states like the Democratic Republic of Congo. The incumbent Congolese President, Felix Tshisekedi, expressed his concern that the Islamic State, once defeated in the Middle East, could refocus its activities in the Central African Region. <sup>(14)</sup> The Congolese president has been lobbying the United States for military assistance to counter the growing threat of Jihadists in the Congo and cited recent military intelligence that he said "point to an Islamic threat" stemming from the ADF; a Ugandan led militant group based in the DRC. <sup>(14)</sup> It is clear that militant groups with links to international terrorism like ISIL and Al-Qaeda are active in the region and have killed hundreds of Africans. This terrorism phenomenon has created an atmosphere of heightened uncertainty, fear, and anxiety in some states within the region. Incidents such as these and many others have indicated that the SADC region is not immune but vulnerable to the threat of terrorism, and more should be done to promote peace, security, and development in the region.

### **Background of counter-terrorism legal framework in South Africa**

In the early days of the post-apartheid period in South Africa, the newly and democratically elected government of South Africa saw the need to formulate a new terrorism policy. This resulted in creating the Protection of Constitutional democracy against terrorist-related activities ACT 2004 (act no.33 of 2000). The process took ten years to complete, and it was fraught with political wrangling between policymakers, civil society, and human rights organisations. Eventually, the conflicting parties managed to produce a terrorism policy that, to varying degrees, reflected South African citizens' human rights interest and a rigid approach to ensure that acts of terrorism are adequately addressed.

The then incumbent Minister of Safety and Security Steve Tshwete argued that South Africa needed a counter-terrorism policy because it did not exist, and the country was vulnerable to becoming a "haven" for international terrorists fugitives. <sup>(15)</sup> The government pointed to examples of Domestic and International terrorist attacks and threats to justify a new counter-terrorism policy. Domestically several bombings in Cape Town, allegedly carried out by the extremists PAGAD movement, and the difficulties in solving such cases appear to have prompted the government to consider constitutional changes that could limit the rights of a suspected terrorist. <sup>(16)</sup> Internationally the September 11 terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in the United States, which arguably was the start of the so-called global war on terror, were also used by the minister of Safety and Security to create South Africa's counter-terrorism policy. Also, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373/2001, which is binding on all member states of the United Nations and the

Convention for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism(CPCT), adopted by the then Organisation of African Unity(OAU), added pressure for the minister to act. <sup>(17)</sup>

In November 1995, the Minister of Safety and Security sent a request to the South African Law Commission asking them to consider a review of South Africa's security legislation. <sup>(18)</sup> However, at the time of this request, the South African Police Service (SAPS), which was also under the Safety and Security department, had already developed a highly controversial draft terrorism Bill. <sup>(19)</sup> This controversial bill is referred to as the "original Bill" as it was the SAPS who conducted the initial research and drafted the bill, which ultimately led to the final terrorism policy. <sup>(20)</sup> The initial bill was circulated by the SA Police Service to some Government Departments for their commentary before it was submitted to the project committee. <sup>(20)</sup> The bill received much criticism from civil society organisations and other organisations concerned with human rights issues. The South African law commission responded to the widespread rejection of this bill by producing an amended bill together with the discussion paper 92 to allow public members to participate in the matter. <sup>(19)</sup>

In its review of security legislation, the project 105 committee focused on terrorism and sabotage: South Africa's obligations to the international community; and the protection of classified information in the state's possession. <sup>(19)</sup> It also reviewed the Interception and Monitoring Prohibition Act (1992) to grant the state wider intercepting and monitoring powers. <sup>(19)</sup> The project 105 Committee proposed that the crime of terrorism should be redefined to include international terrorism on a substantive level. <sup>(19)</sup> The amended bill was referred to as the Anti- Terrorism Bill, 2000. Several amendments were made to this bill as human rights organisations complained about the vague definition of terrorism and terrorist activity.

The amendments led to the eventual formulation of the Protection of Constitutional Democracy against Terrorists and other related Activities. The Protection of Constitutional Democracy against Terrorist and Related Activities Act (POCDATARA) criminalises terrorism and the financing of terrorism and sets out specific obligations related to international cooperation. <sup>(21)</sup> Write How POCDATARA was used.

## Counter-Terrorism Financing

Terrorist financing is the process by which terrorists support their operations to perform terrorist acts. <sup>(22)</sup> In today's world, many terrorist organisations, for instance, Al-Qaeda and Islamic State, operate like any other well-established governmental or non-governmental organisation. For the terrorist organisations to accomplish their set objectives, they may need to recruit, travel, marketing their ideology, train militants, illegally buy arms, obtain bomb-making materials. All of these activities will require funding, and therefore finance is a critical component for most if not all terrorist organisations to function. The UN Security Council, Resolution 1456(2a) called upon states to: become a party, as a matter of necessity, to all relevant international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, in particular, the 1999 international convention for the suppression of the financing of terrorism and to support all global initiatives taken to that aim, and to make full use of the sources of assistance and guidance which are available. <sup>(23)</sup> According to Article 3(C) of the Protocol to the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, all the African Union

member states are required to: identify, detect, confiscate and freeze or seize any funds and any other assets used or allocated to commit a terrorist act and to establish a mechanism to use such funds to compensate victims of terrorist acts or their families. <sup>(24)</sup> Therefore, a state like South Africa or a regional block like SADC needs to find ways of disrupting and eliminating any form of terrorism financing by developing effective terrorism financing legislation.

Research indicates that there are at least four primary types of terrorist financing, such as drug trafficking, smuggling, extortion, state sponsorship, and popular support such as donations. <sup>(25)</sup> Therefore, terrorism financing legislation must address this crime in whatever shape or form it may take. South Africa is the leading financial centre; its comparatively sophisticated banking and financial sector and its sizeable cash-based market all make it a desirable target for transnational and domestic crime syndicates. <sup>(26)</sup>

The South African government is currently combating Terrorist Financing through the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC). The FIC is responsible for the gathering, analysis, and distribution of financial intelligence. <sup>(27)</sup> FIC's role in disrupting terrorist activities is essential and includes identifying proceeds of crime, combating money laundering, and the financing of terrorism and, in so doing, has primary responsibility in protecting the integrity of South Africa's financial system. <sup>(27)</sup> The organisation was established by the FIC Act 38 of 2001 and reports to the Minister of Finance and Parliament. <sup>(27)</sup> The FIC leads the South African delegation of various government departments to the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group, aiming to support countries implementing the global anti-money laundering standards. <sup>(27)</sup>

The FIC is a member and current chair of the Egmont Group, which comprises financial intelligence units from 147 countries worldwide. <sup>(27)</sup> The organisation's primary aim is to facilitate cooperation and sharing of financial intelligence information among its members. <sup>(27)</sup>

South Africa is one of the 30 founding members of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF). The United Nations (UN) is a close partner of and participant in the GCTF and its activities. <sup>(28)</sup> This forum serves as a mechanism for furthering the universally agreed UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and, more broadly, complements and reinforces existing multilateral CT efforts, starting with those of the UN. <sup>(28)</sup> The GCTF also works extensively with non-GCTF members, including state; international, regional and sub-regional bodies; and other stakeholders and experts. <sup>(28)</sup>

Firstly, for South Africa to strengthen the financial sector and ensure that terrorists' vulnerabilities are limited, there needs to be a strong will to fight terrorism. Secondly, cooperation with the international partners must be enhanced and prioritised as the threat of international terrorism in the region will require a united and international front as a prerequisite for any counter-terrorism strategy to work effectively. Working with international partners will help to reinforce financial intelligence bodies. Applicable policies that will keep up with the ever-evolving threat of terrorism financing should be developed and updated regularly.

## Regional counter-terrorism legislation from 2001 to 2020

The year 2001 on 9 March marked the day SADC member states convened a summit where the SADC Declaration Concerning Firearms, Ammunition and other related materials was signed, which later that year on 1 August, led to the adoption of the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition, and Other Materials. <sup>(29)</sup> This protocol was intended, amongst other objectives, to prevent the region from becoming unstable ultimately. Before the adoption of the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition, and other materials, the SADC region relied on the Southern Africa Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (SARP), which was created in the year 1998 to enhance police cooperation among member countries, especially in the fight against regional and trans-national organised crimes. Two decades after the signing of this declaration, there are still questions if the region is free of illicit arms and the amassing of other related materials that could expose the region to the global threat of terrorism in all its forms, threatening stability and peace on the region. At the SADC level, there are counter-terrorism-related measures in place which are at the disposal of SADC member states.

Before the year 2000, the SADC Heads of State have established terrorism-related protocols like the SADC Protocol against corruption, Defence and Security Cooperation, and more which are still in place. However, although I will be referring to some previous protocols in this section, my focus will be on the Southern African Development Community's counter-terrorism activities from 2000 and South Africa's role.

### 1) *Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Materials (2001)*

The Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition, and Other Related Material in the Southern African Development Community Region (SADC Protocol) was adopted on 14 August 2001 and entered into force on 8 November 2004.

In response to the growing threat of terrorism in the region, the Southern African Development Community member states have developed a counter-terrorism legal framework over the years. For example, SADC member states have created a set of official procedures intended to manage the proliferation of weapons and other potentially dangerous materials, which non-state actors could use to threaten peace and security in the region. These procedures are embodied in the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition, and Other Materials. The aims to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the illicit manufacturing of firearms, ammunition and their excessive and destabilising accumulation in the SADC region. <sup>(29)</sup>

The Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and other Materials includes counter-terrorism measures that have been taken globally, legislative efforts, the matters related to operational capacity, control over civil possession of firearms, control of weapons, Public Education and Awareness Programmes, cooperation among law enforcement agencies of member states, transparency and information exchange and the settlement of disputes. <sup>(29)</sup>

## 2) *The Protocol on Extradition (2002)*

The Protocol on Extradition in the Southern African Development Community Region (SADC Protocol) was adopted on 3 October 2002 and entered into force on 1 September 2006. The SADC Protocol on Extradition was signed to reduce crime levels by enabling Southern African states to hand over any person within its territory who is wanted for trial or to serve a sentence in the requesting Member State. <sup>(30)</sup> This was followed by the Protocol on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal matters (2002) in the Southern African Development Community Region (SADC Protocol) was adopted on 3 October 2002 and entered into force on 1 March 2007. In the quest to achieve regional integration regarding social welfare, peace, and security, SADC offers state members the broadest possible mutual legal assistance within the limits of their respective jurisdiction laws. <sup>(31)</sup>

To afford this mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, SADC has adopted standard rules concerning aid in criminal cases. <sup>(31)</sup> SADC member states signed this protocol to establish to assist each other with investigations, prosecutions, dealings regarding criminal matter without considering if the act committed would be a criminal matter or not in the state being requested to comply. <sup>(32)</sup> Beyond the Southern African Community region, South Africa, in keeping with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373/2001, which require member states to become a party to instruments dealing with terrorist and related activities, also signed a treaty on Mutual Legal assistance at Washington, 16 September 1999, with the US government. <sup>(33)</sup> On 18 August 2005, the Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in the Southern African Development Community Region (SADC Protocol) was adopted and had not yet entered into force. This protocol came as an answer to the SADC Treaty's objectives, which require the SADC to put a policy aimed at the progressive eradication of obstacles to the free movement of capital and labour, goods and services, and the region's people generally amongst the Member States. <sup>(34)</sup>

## Conclusion

The South African government, member states of the Southern African Development Community, have placed a legal framework to fight the scourge of terrorism. The various legal instruments touch on many issues, such as fostering cooperation and coordination amongst SADC member states in the fight against terrorism, rejecting extremism, promoting human and moral values, and prohibiting ransoms to terrorists. However, despite the many decisions, resolutions, and declarations in fighting terrorism, some states in the region continue to be vulnerable to the threat of terrorism. The SADC has an excellent counter-terrorism strategy on paper. However, we continue to see groups like the Islamic State killing innocent people in Northern Mozambique. On paper, the challenge is that the counter-terrorism strategies appear robust, but they are ineffectual and unable to stand the severe threat of terrorism in reality. Therefore, the researcher concludes that the South African government, SADC member states should avoid the trap of formulating paper tigers that achieve very little and instead develop more action-centred, practical counter-terrorism strategies that will

prevent terrorism in the SADC region and Africa at large. Building Security and Curbing terrorism in the SADC through institutional frameworks is not enough, and more needs to be done. In Hobbes' words, “contracts are mere words without the sword to compel men to observe them. In times of crisis, as we see in Northern Mozambique, the SADC member states appear slow in taking concrete action to secure the region’s security fully is concerning.

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