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National Submissions to the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee as Constructions of National Identity: Cameroon, Kenya and Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the construction of national identity in the context of the post-9/11 counter-terrorism sanctions regime established by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373. The study focuses on the written reports of three member states – Cameroon, Kenya, and Nigeria – arguing that these documents not only serve as inventories of national capacity but also as performances of national identity within a specific historical moment. Two overarching arguments are made. First, constructions of terrorism play a crucial discursive role in demarcating self from other in these reports, consistently portraying terrorism as an external and morally reprehensible threat to national security. Second, despite this relatively consistent framing of terrorist otherness, the reports contain creative and diverse reflections on, or articulations of, national identity and its associated characteristics. In making these arguments, the article contributes to existing literature on the post-9/11 UN counter-terrorism regime by offering an original reading of national submissions to the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee, focusing on relatively neglected states from the global South, and develops new conceptual insight into the plasticity of terrorism as a form of discursive otherness capable of sustaining diverse representations of national self-identity

Introduction

National identity is not given, but made. It is created, perceived, and projected in the work of, amongst others, state representatives. In discursive and performative acts – the writing of constitutions, the signing of trade agreements, declarations of war, and so forth – political elites both draw on and reproduce an evolving "story" of the nation, its characteristics and interests. Such imaginations of national identity are integral to the construction of political community.[1] They are also, crucially, contingent and contestable, in that

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they selectively *include* shared myths and memories, while *excluding* alternative ways of imagining collective identity. As Wodak et al argue,[2] discourse is central to this imaginative work, with social, historical, political and institutional frames all playing important roles in shaping how national identity is portrayed, and the persuasiveness of such representations to others.

The specific context of national identity construction on which we focus in this article is the post-9/11 counter-terrorism sanctions regime established by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373. As detailed below, this resolution – which was unanimously adopted less than three weeks after 9/11 – instituted a new UN Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), and imposed new obligations upon member states concerning the prevention and suppression of terrorism. Amongst these obligations, importantly, was a new requirement to report to the CTC on issues of implementation and resolution. The written reports of three member states – Cameroon, Kenya, and Nigeria – are our focus herein. As demonstrated below, we approach these reports not (only) as externally-mandated inventories of national capacity and action relating to counter-terrorism. But, rather (or, perhaps, also), as contingent and contestable *performances* of national identity situated within a specific and significant historical moment.

Our article makes two overarching arguments. First, constructions of terrorism perform an important discursive role in demarcating self from other in these reports.[3] Indeed, despite different experiences and histories of political violence, we encounter a relatively consistent production of terrorism therein as an external, and morally reprehensible, threat to national security with connections to other risks such as organized crime. Depicted thus, terrorism emerges as the antithesis of the Cameroonian, Kenyan and Nigerian selves as depicted to the international community via the United Nations CTC. Second, despite this relatively consistent framing of terrorist otherness, and, indeed, despite a relatively circumscribed set of expectations regarding the content of these national submissions, the reports contain creative and diverse reflections on, or representations of, national identity and its associated characteristics. Thus, although they ostensibly share a "terrorist other," the Cameroonian self as written here differs markedly from the Kenyan and Nigerian selves. Exploring differences between national submissions, then, not only sheds important light on the self-image or portrayal of these three states in the context of counter-terrorism discourse in this historical moment. It also enables reflection on the plasticity *of* terrorism as a form of discursive otherness capable of sustaining very different selves.[4]

To make these arguments, the article begins with a brief introduction to UN Security Council Resolution 1373 and its importance for the post-9/11 global counter-terrorism regime. We demonstrate that existing scholarship has tended to focus on a relatively narrow set of questions regarding the resolution's (i) exceptionality, (ii) ethical implications, and (iii) effectiveness. This

focus points to a dominant, narrow, concern with 1373's *causal* implications for the United Nations as an international organization, for global human rights, and for the threat of terrorism, respectively. Although undoubtedly important, this causal paradigm risks marginalizing important *constitutive* questions of what is rendered possible by the resolution and ensuing regime. Such questions, we note, have begun to emerge in a small body of very recent critical scholarship.

A second section builds on this critical scholarship by situating our discussion within three theoretical literatures. The first is discourse theoretic work on identity formation, including in relation to foreign and security policy. This enables us to approach the 1373 reports as generative, rather than outcome, of national identity and interests. Second, is feminist scholarship within International Relations and Security Studies that highlights the gendering of identity constructions, and the importance thereof for political possibility and action. The third is postcolonial literature emphasizing the agency of states in the Global South within security contexts such as this international counter-terrorism regime. Such work grounds our framing of these states as subjects – rather than objects – of security, supporting our focus on the *responses of* Cameroon, Kenya and Nigeria rather than the obligations imposed *upon* them by the international community and its major powers. The article's third section then introduces our methodological framework, following which we analyze our empirical findings, exploring constructions of self and otherness in our three cases.

By extending literature on UNSCR 1373, identity in foreign/security policy, *and* counter-terrorism discourse, our article offers three significant contributions to knowledge. First, empirically, it offers an original reading of national submissions to the UN CTC as an important, yet surprisingly neglected, site of national security discourse. Second, analytically, it contributes to recent critical analyses of counter-terrorism rhetoric with a specific focus on relatively neglected states from the global South. Though a sizable scholarship now exists on post-9/11 counter-terrorism discourse, that work's continuing concentration on the international system's great powers risks reproducing a Eurocentric bias apparent across terrorism research.[5] By shifting the gaze, here, this article attempts to help circumvent that bias. Third, theoretically, the article offers new reflection on the plasticity of terrorism as a form of discursive otherness, by demonstrating its capacity for oppositional pairing with diverse representations of (national) self-identity.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 and its analysis

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 1373 – Threats to International Peace and Security caused by Terrorist Acts – under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter on 28 September 2001. The

resolution's preamble reaffirms the Security Council's "unequivocal condemnation" of the 9/11 attacks, and its position that, "such acts, like any act of international terrorism, constitute a threat to international peace and security".[6] It calls upon states to "work together urgently to prevent and suppress terrorist acts, including through increased cooperation and full implementation of the relevant international conventions relating to terrorism", and reaffirms the principle set out in Resolution 2626 (XXV) of the UN General Assembly: "that every State has the duty to refrain from organizing, instigating, assisting or participating in terrorist acts in another State or acquiescing in organized activities within its territory directed toward the commission of such acts". Amongst other things, 1373 discusses terrorist financing, the denial of "safe havens", border control, information sharing, and the implementation of existing international conventions and protocols. It was adopted unanimously by the Security Council.[7]

Resolution 1373 contains no explicit definition of terrorism.[8] It does, however, include the three features typical of a resolution intended to contain binding provisions: "[first] a determination of the existence of a threat to international peace, a breach of the peace or an act of aggression in accordance with article 39; [second] the chapeau 'acting under Chapter VII;' and [third,] the verb 'decides' in the resolution's relevant operative paragraphs".[9] The resolution's provisions are exacting, and span "very specific prohibitions regarding the financing of terrorism through the recruitment of terrorists and supplies of weapons to them, to the actual exchange of information in tracking the activities of terrorist groups".[10] As a "very rare instance of the Security Council requiring compliance on the part of all member states to a new rule without them having the opportunity to assist in its drafting directly",[11] the resolution therefore risked conflict with the wider membership of the General Assembly – the traditional site of terrorism-related activity within the UN.[12] Yet, as Laurenti[13] notes, "Only Tanzania expressed concern that the Security Council may have overstepped its bounds with 1373" at a General Assembly special session on terrorism the following month.

So far-reaching was 1373 that *all* member states found they needed to amend their domestic anti-terror laws to comply with the Resolution.[14] Importantly, for this article, the Resolution also established a Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) within the Security Council.[15] The committee, comprising all fifteen members, was "tasked with monitoring implementation of Resolution 1373 (2001), which requested countries to implement multiple measures intended to enhance their legal and institutional ability to counter terrorist activities at home, in their regions and around the world" (United Nations Security Council n.d.). The UN CTC undertook its role with "a non-confrontational, collaborative spirit",[16] and produced a repository of model anti-terrorism laws and "best practices" for member states.[17] And, although initially under-resourced, the "CTC was revitalized by Security Council

Resolution 1535 of March 2004 when it established a Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)".[18]

In practice, the work of the CTC and CTED entailed, "collecting anti-terror plans from each UN member state".[19] Here, its "members generated guidelines for states, established a strict timetable for submission and review, and hired experts to assist in evaluating the plans".[20] This meant that each member was required to submit a report detailing their meeting of the resolution's obligations, which was reviewed by a subcommittee and appointed experts.[21] Member states were then asked to address follow-up questions in subsequent reports, which "varied in both quality and length, largely reflecting the different levels of capacity among states to implement Resolution 1373 and different levels of resources states have to prepare".[22] It is these publicly available reports on which we here focus.

Given its influence on global counter-terrorism activities, Resolution 1373 has generated considerable academic interest. One strand of scholarship has concentrated on questions of continuity and change raised by the resolution, asking whether it represents a fundamental shift in the activity and self-image of the UN and/or Security Council. For some, the resolution evidences the Security Council's post-9/11 determination to take responsibility for combatting international terrorism away from the General Assembly.[23] Others regard it as a more substantive moment for international order, arguing it transformed the Security Council from executive to legislator and, therefore, potentially *ultra vires*. As Happold[24] argues, "Resolution 1373 purports to create a series of general and temporally undefined legal obligations binding the member states. In this it goes beyond the limits of the Security Council's powers".

A second focus of research is on the ethical issues raised by the CTC's impact on human rights.[25] Developing concerns raised by NGOs, scholars such as Rosemary Foot[26] unfavorably contrast 1373's neglect of human rights protections with earlier UN resolutions.[27] This omission is compounded, for Olivier,[28] by the resolution's breadth, its lack of geographical and temporal boundaries, and the absence of any definition of terrorism. Foot[29] casts this omission as a product, effectively, of US hegemony and its demands for a rapid, unbounded response from would-be allies in its "war on terror", while Rosand[30] details the concerns of United Nations High Commissioners for Human Rights in the post-9/11 period. The broad remit granted by the Resolution to domestic legislators, according to Santana,[31] enabled many countries to develop an 'overbroad' definition of terrorism and to use "counter-terrorism to immunize themselves from judicial oversight".[32] In 2019, for instance, the UN Rapporteur found that "the instrumentalization of counter-terrorism [...] and national security is brutal", because "existing matrixes allow States to qualify threats to themselves as terrorism, violent extremism, extremism".[33] This echoes the Rapporteur's earlier 2009 reporting of an

escalating categorization of dissenters as "terrorists," "enemies of the State" or 'political opponents".[34]

A third focus is on the 1373 regime's efficacy, amidst patchy levels of national compliance. Bianchi, here, suggests that the "lack of uniform legislative solutions at the domestic level may prejudice the overall effectiveness of the international regime".[35] Stines and Thane, meanwhile, find that likely explanations of (non-)compliance are the "unique cultural and political features of various regional blocs and their separate experiences with terrorism, rather than relations with great powers, economic capacity and state governance structures".[36] In one indictment, the CTC, "never managed to fulfill convincingly its mandate under Resolution 1373" and "proved unable to name and shame countries in noncompliance with Resolution 1373 and degenerated into a largely process-oriented body".[37]

Approached collectively, the above scholarship reveals some of the key institutional, political, and ethical consequences of 1373. In so doing, it tends to coalesce around a series of overtly causal questions on 1373's *impact*: on international organization; on human rights; and on the terrorism threat. Recent critical theorizations of 1373 as global assemblage[38] or dispositive,[39] however, have begun to question this emphasis, shifting analytical focus from the causal to the constitutive, and enquiring into the regime's productivity for, amongst other things, the politics of (national) identity. Constitutive thinking of this sort typically involves asking "how possible" rather than "why" questions.[40] Such questions are important, because they focus attention on the construction of meaning and interpretive dispositions that contribute to the feasibility of specific outcomes.[41] In Wendt's framing,[42] this involves looking at the instantiation of phenomena – such as identity – *within* a (dynamic, fluid) system of relationships, rather than isolating "variables" in order to explore change in a particular unit or system under analysis.

Our focus in this article on constructions of terrorism as a means of demarcating self from other shares this constitutive emphasis by asking how the reporting requirements of the 1373 regime *made possible* particular articulations of national identity. Thus, rather than asking *why* member states responded to the CTC as they did, we ask *how* representations of threat within responses to the CTC worked to (re)produce (the identity of) member states as bearing specific characteristics. As demonstrated below, this requires situating national identity constructions within historical and political relationships such as those occasioned by the new 1373 requirements. It also involves conceptualizing power as a relational dynamic:

> Power is not analysed in terms of a resource or capacity one can possess, store, or retrieve, or as a relation of domination. Power is conceived in terms of the political acts

of inclusion and exclusion of identity that shape social meanings and identities and condition the construction of social antagonisms and political frontiers.[43]

Foreign policy, national identity and the state

Developing the emphasis on constitutive theorizing discussed above, the remainder of our article approaches the national reports submitted to the CTC as articulations of national identity rather than responses to external threats or obligations. As a starting point, this involves conceptualizing identity as, "relationalist, contextual and ultimately historicist"[44]; as something that emerges in relation to other meanings, within specific contexts, and that is always subject to contestation and change.[45] Investigating identity *construction* therefore involves analyzing claims to, or representations of, identity and its characteristics, and the role thereof in (re)producing the world's components and possibilities:

> Identities (both of self and of others) and insecurities, rather than being given, emerge out of a process of representation through which individuals – whether state officials, leaders or members of nationalist movements, journal editors, or users of the Internet, for example – describe to themselves and others the world in which they live. These representations – narratives, collective memories, and the imaginaries that make them possible – define, and so constitute, the world. They populate it with objects and subjects, endow those subjects with interests, and define the relations among those objects and subjects. In so doing, they create insecurities, which . . . are threats to the identities, and thus to the interests, of those socially constructed subjects.[46]

Where such questions of identity construction remain relatively neglected in work on Resolution 1373, there is an important wider literature on the constructed nature of national identity.[47] States, in such work, do not have inherent characteristics that determine their identity, much less their interests or behaviors. The state is an *outcome* rather than cause of actions – from the signing of treaties to declarations of war – through which representatives purport to speak on its behalf.

Although "everyday" or "vernacular" constructions of (national) identity are important in the (re)production of national identity,[48] the articulations of structurally privileged actors – political executives, diplomats, and so forth – take on especial importance in the international arena. As Doty[49] puts it: "The state, as an international subject, is constructed by the discursive practices of those who speak about, write about, and act on its behalf". National identity, then, is storied or narrated through linguistic and other practices that imply its prior existence. And, as David Campbell[50] argues: "Foreign policy shifts *from* a concern of relations *between* states that take place *across* ahistorical, frozen, and pregiven boundaries, *to* a concern with the *establishment of the boundaries*

that constitute, at one and the same time, the 'state' and 'the international system'" (original emphasis).

The national reports submitted to the UNSC CTC should therefore be approached as creative *articulations*, rather than reflections, of national identity and associated interests. Although "Foreign policies are legitimized as necessary, as in the national interest, or in the defense of human rights, through reference to identities ... identities are simultaneously constituted and reproduced through formulations of foreign policy".[51] Such formulations, crucially, are contingent upon constructions of difference, which "presupposes the existence of 'others'".[52] Thus, efforts to story the (national) self in such reports become meaningful only within wider discourses on the threat posed (here) by terrorist others.

The production of such boundaries in specific historical contexts is a contingent and therefore undetermined process. And yet, as feminist scholarship has demonstrated, such processes are often explicitly and predictably gendered: "Political arenas are saturated with gendered meaning, with states and associated state actors cast as variously 'masculine' or 'feminine' through a system of symbolic meaning that creates social hierarchies."[53] States and regions might be feminized in discourse through the attribution of values such as irrationality, weakness and emotionality.[54] Other actors, in contrast, may be coded masculine through their association with characteristics such as reason and strength.[55] While these tropes are, of course, essentialist, stereotypical, and sexist, feminist scholarship shows that they nonetheless continue as powerful hierarchies of meaning embedded in the international system:

> The gender hierarchy that privileges subjects that accord with masculine, competitive, rational, and autonomous attributes over feminine, caring, emotional, and relational attributes is manifest in the relations between states within international relations.[56]

Gendered bordering practices that differentiate self from other, to be clear, do not reflect any essential or ontologically stable national identity: they are productions, performances, or creative acts that may be textual or embodied.[57] And the widespread contemporary association of specific attributes with masculinity and femininity is itself, of course, contingent and subject to contestation and challenge. Recognising this, then, means taking seriously the gendering of actors through discursive practices, and how this *renders things possible* through shaping understanding of threats and their severity, and through (de)legitimizing security responses.[58]

All 192 member states of the United Nations submitted an initial report to the CTC pursuant to Resolution 1373. However, by 2006 – the last year for which the reports were made public – only thirteen member states offered submissions. Our focus on the reports of three African states – Cameroon, Kenya and Nigeria – is a deliberate attempt to shift focus away from the UNSC and the United States as the key instigators of the 1373 regime. This is

important because African states, as Baaz and Verweijen[59] argue, "are rarely conceptualized *as the subjects of security*; instead, they tend to emerge as props on a stage where the security politics affecting other subjects (e.g. 'Europe') play out". The tendency to diminish the discursive and political activity of non-Western states not only "risks inflating the power and influence of external actors, whose governing technologies are portrayed as inherently pervasive powerful and effective".[60] It also reproduces longstanding (Western-centric) constructions of African states as a site of threat and insecurity,[61] and/or as politically passive and lacking in meaningful agency.[62] As Bilgin[63] observes of Security Studies scholarship, there exists a longstanding tendency to "view the developing world as an object of security, not a subject – something that needs to be secured to serve the purposes of outsiders".

To summarize, our article progresses literature on the post-9/11 UN counter-terrorism regime in three ways. First, it highlights the regime's constitutive importance for articulations of national identity, demonstrating how its reporting requirements helped make possible the (gendered) production of specific selves and others. This, we suggest moves debate on the regime further away from the causal questions around its political and strategic impacts that have dominated discussion to date. Second, it shifts the gaze of much existing work on the regime by focusing on the *responses* of member states, rather than the instructions or interests of the Security Council and its ostensibly powerful permanent members.[64] And, third, by focusing on Cameroon, Kenya and Nigeria, the article has a pluralizing ambition to emphasize the role of traditionally neglected non-Western powers in this context.[65] In this, it contributes to contemporary work on decolonizing disciplines such as IR by highlighting the agency of non-Western powers,[66] and – in turn – the interconnectedness of global North and South in the international system[67] through interrogating "the multiple and integral relations between the weak and strong."[68]

Context and sources

This article emerges from a wider project exploring the colonial heritage of contemporary counter-terrorism powers in Cameroon, Kenya and Nigeria. This heritage matters, we argue, because of its influence upon today's counter-terrorism architecture in these states, each of which has received significant international criticism for the enthusiastic wielding of counterterrorism powers against internal "threats".

In Cameroon, a former UK and French colonial administration, the "Ambazonia War" represents an ongoing conflict between Anglophone separatist groups and the Cameroonian government. Within this, the government has liberally applied its counter-terrorism powers, including through the proscription of pro-separatist political movements. Human rights abuses have been recorded since 2003 by Amnesty International[69]

and the US State Department,[70] including unlawful killings, the excessive use of force by security forces, and arbitrary detentions. In Nigeria, the government has been in conflict with the proscribed Boko Haram since 2009, but human rights abuses were commonplace before then. Human Rights Watch[71] have reported "extra-judicial killings, torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and extortion" at the hands of Nigeria's security forces, and Nigeria's Muslim Shia minority is under particular threat from the government's Joint Military Task Force and a civilian militia, who have been further accused of "disappearances and arbitrary detentions [and] torture, particularly in detention facilities, including sexual exploitation and abuse."[72] Kenya, finally, has perhaps the lengthiest connection to non-state "terrorist" violence, with Al Qaeda's 1998 bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi prefacing many attacks subsequently attributed to Al Shabaab and connected groups. Many have been killed in the violence, and the security response of the Kenyan government's Anti-Terrorism Police Unit, especially since 2007, has been severe with accusations of arbitrary detention, mass arrests, extra-judicial killings and disappearances.[73]

The reports on which this article draws were accessed directly via the UN CTC website. Each of the three states submitted three reports to the CTC, providing a corpus of text totaling 118 pages. With one exception, the reports are organized around direct responses to explicit questions from the UN CTC. The language is typically technical and legalistic, providing detailed information on legal provisions, domestic institutional architectures, and international arrangements relevant to counter-terrorism. The significant stylistic exception is the Nigerian report of 2007 which follows a more narrative structure containing considerable contextual detail on the history and geography of Nigeria, along with reflection on "the Nigerian psyche."

The reports were subjected to a discursive analysis via the "framework method."[74] The method has been widely used by qualitative researchers working on a diverse range of topics from psychological distress amongst pregnant women,[75] to food insecurity,[76] and counter-terrorism policy.[77] Our use of the approach proceeded via four stages[78]: familiarization, coding, developing an analytical framework, and applying the analytical framework to the material. Familiarization involved acquainting ourselves with the documents, their style and content. Coding was undertaken via the designation of short sections of text with paraphrased labels – codes – for succinct summary. For illustrative purposes, "the people of Cameroon were horrified"[79] was coded "innocence;" "the position of Kenya on the fight against terrorism has been well elaborated in its Statements during the General Debate of the 56th Session of the UN General Assembly"[80] was coded "clarity." From this coding exercise, an analytical framework was produced around three core categories – (i) Constructing self; (ii) Constructing terrorism; and, (iii) Constructing counter-terrorism – which were used to sort the coded text ahead of writing up. As an

endeavor to theorize the construction of national identity within these documents, this article concentrates on the first and second of these categories.

As Gale et al[81] argue, the framework approach is useful for generating a "set of codes organized into categories [creating] . . . a new structure for the data . . . that is helpful to summarize/reduce the data in a way that can support answering the research questions". Our coding and interpretation of these texts was – as indicated above – an inductive one, with the codes and categories generated by the texts themselves. Accordingly, we make no claim to the replicability of our framework or codes. Nor do we claim a representativeness of our analysis for constructions of national identity across Cameroon, Kenya and Nigeria beyond this context; much less that these articulations conform to any "real" or essential national identity. These caveats aside, the approach *is* a productive one for theorizing and exploring diversity within contextually-specific productions of national identity that emerge in this underexplored series of texts produced dialogically between representatives of an International Governmental Organisation (IGO) and member states. In this sense, our analysis sustains a, "moderatum generalization"[82] – a generalization of moderate scope modestly held – to the effect that post-9/11 exchanges between the UN CTC and its members sustain important and diverse performances of national identity.[83]

Constructing self and other

The remainder of our article proceeds in three stages. First, we detail how the CTC submissions consistently construct terrorism as a significant and morally reprehensible external threat with connections to other forms of criminality and insecurity. Second, we explore constructions of self across our three cases, noting similarities and differences in the writing of national identity in these submissions. Third, we analyze these differences to demonstrate the discursive plasticity of terrorism as a form of otherness capable of sustaining distinct constructions of self.

Constructing terrorism

The construction of terrorism encountered in the submissions of our three case studies is a relatively consistent one, marked by four key characteristics familiar from related analyses of terrorism discourse.[84] First, is a claim to the significance of terrorism as a threat to international security. The 2007 Kenyan report, for instance, concludes by noting that "Kenya looks forward to the international community and its development partners to enhance its capabilities to combat the threats posed by terrorism."[85] Other submissions highlight the importance of 9/11 in bringing this threat into focus by evidencing a "danger, which has taken an unprecedented form and expression,"[86] and

raising "the question of terrorism and terrorist financing to the front burner."[87]

Second, is a strong normative condemnation of terrorism and associated activities. This condemnation is evident in metaphorical claims – "the scourge of terrorist financing"[88] – as well as in descriptive language in which terrorist attacks are described as "horrific"[89] and "hateful"[90]; the "barbarous and unjustifiable acts"[91] of "undesirable elements".[92] The outrage is explicit in the opening paragraph of Kenya's second submission – "Kenya strongly condemns acts of terrorism in all their manifestations",[93] while Nigeria's third submission – the most elaborate of our sample – begins with this discussion of terrorism's psychological consequences: "The idea of terror evoked a strong feeling of extreme fear to make one to be very afraid of a violent action or the threat of violence that is intended to cause fear. To terrorize somebody or some people is often aimed at threatening them so that they will act as they are told".[94]

Third, is a repeated construction of terrorism as an *external* threat that is geographically and politically situated beyond the immediate responsibility of the state in question. Nigeria's 2003 report, for instance, notes "there is no reported case of terrorist organization, operating from Nigeria"[95]; reinforcing a claim to externality within its 2002 submission that: "Terrorism and terrorist groups are prevented entry into Nigeria."[96] In the Cameroonian submissions, similarly, terrorism is positioned outwith the state, such that: "The existence of terrorist groups in Cameroon has not yet been reported,"[97] and:

> there is no special legislation in Cameroon to specifically prevent the acquisition of conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction by Osama bin Laden, members of the Al-Qaida organization and the Taliban and individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with them in places where they are located, *given that they are not in our country* (our emphasis).[98]

Fourth, is the discursive equivalencing of terrorism to other threats and forms of criminality, through discussion of connections and parallels. Kenya's 2003 submission, for instance, ties terrorism to refugeeism stating: "Refugees entering the country are documented and fingerprints taken with a view to establishing connections if any to terrorist activities".[99] In Cameroon's third submission, similarly, a list of international conventions connects terrorism to "similar and related problems":

> Cameroon notes with concern the close links between international terrorism and other similar and related problems. For this reason, it has ratified the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation, the

Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft, the Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection, the Palermo Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages. It signed and then ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism on 4 October 2005'.[100]

In Nigeria's 2007 report, finally, "influences of international terrorist groups" are identified in an extensive list of sources of conflict that includes "illegal oil bunkering", and "ethnic militia".[101]

Constructing the national self

In the above discussion we saw how Nigeria, Cameroon and Kenya's UN CTC reports draw upon a consistent construction of terrorism as a significant external threat that is morally reprehensible and connected to other dangers. Highlighting the constructed nature of this threat, importantly, does *not* diminish nor deny the harm experienced by those encountering such violences.[102] Rather, our approach merely seeks to highlight how such harm – past or predicted – is rendered politically meaningful, or even exploited, by elite narratives of terrorism threat. In the following, we build on this analysis by exploring constructions of national identity in these reports (see Table 1), highlighting significant similarities and differences therein. These differences have particular importance, we argue, in shedding light on the plasticity of terrorism noted above.

Nigeria

Of the three cases we explore, Nigeria's reports offer the richest and most evocative construction of national identity. Although the 2007 submission points to Nigeria's regional significance – "With an estimated 150 million people, Nigeria is the biggest country in Africa"[103] – in part through a politically salient body metaphor[104] – "Nigeria is located *at the heart of* Africa overlooking West and Central Africa sub-regions",[105] it is a construction of national vulnerability *to terrorism* that dominates these

Table 1. Constructing national identity in UN CTC submissions.

	Nigeria	Cameroon	Kenya
Predicating the state	• Passive and vulnerable, feminized • Yet also competitive, rational and agential	• Affective, characterised and driven by emotions • Honourable and empathetic	• Vulnerable and feminized • A historical victim of terrorism
External relations	• Rational and purposive. • Diligent regarding external obligations	• Cooperative and amicable. • Deferential to external obligations	• Regional leadership • Ally to major powers
Domestic politics	• Liberal, democratic	• Liberal, democratic.	Liberal, democratic.

reports. This writing is, at times, explicitly gendered through the writing of Nigeria as a feminized subject: "The Federal Republic of Nigeria herein forwards *her* report" (our emphasis).[106] In so doing, it enables a distinction with overtly masculine figures of suspicion and threat, both hypothetical – "Any person who is unable to give reasonable and convincing explanation of the source of any fund over half a million naira *he* intends to transact" (our emphasis)[107] – and concrete: "in July 2001, a suspected terrorist, Hamama Belkacem, an Algerian, was arrested in Katsina State of Nigeria where *he* was being harbored" (our emphasis).[108]

Although engendering practices such as these may be dismissed as trivial or commonplace, their use is important because it not only personifies the state,[109] but also contributes to a constructed sense of vulnerability, given the longstanding – and reductive – association between vulnerability, weakness and femininity[110] discussed above. This sense of vulnerability is compounded, moreover, by detailed reflection on historical violations – "Nigeria's location was also the nucleus of the infamous slave [route]"[111] – and on the enduring legacies thereof for subordinated communities:

> what the British colonial administration handed over to the Nigeria political elites was a product of their colonial policy of association which was implemented through a fractious doctrine of Divide and Rule. The un-elected Governor General, who ran a dictatorship, handed over a power structure that he never shared with anybody, to a group of political elites overseeing vast heterogeneous and un-amalgamated ethnic communities and political societies . . . The ensuing anachronism spelt crises and conflict in the absence of a democratic political culture.[112]

Written thus, Nigeria is positioned as an entity that is acted *upon*, rather than an agent that *acts*. It is an entity whose past experiences of violence both explain and find parallel in contemporary vulnerabilities or the "numerous risks of conflict and crises"[113] that confront Nigeria today from "armed banditry" to "political thuggery", "war-lordism", "cultist groups", "international terrorist groups", "greed and kleptomania".[114] As this excerpt suggests, moreover, reflection on the opportunities such insecurities afford malevolent outsiders reproduces the internal/external construction of vulnerability/danger discussed above:

> The Nigerian psyche is that of a national struggle and a drive to achieve above the others. The above stimuli therefore merely promote the impetus that could be exploited by demagogues. Consequently, delinquent youths and street urchins in the metropolis have become easy tools that could be used to commit acts of terrorism.[115]

This depiction of the "Nigerian psyche" is worthy of attention because it introduces ambiguity into the feminized construction of national identity considered above. It does so by invoking a far more agential writing of the state in its *outward-facing* behavior and relationships. Here, much emphasis is given to concrete examples of purposive counter-terrorism activity, both

multilateral – "Nigeria has signed and/or ratified several of the Conventions and Protocols referred to … "[116] – and bilateral: "Nigeria has entered into bilateral agreements on mutual legal assistance and extradition with a number of countries amongst which are the United Kingdom, South Africa, United States of America, Thailand, Benin, Ghana, Togo, Spain, Ireland and Italy."[117] Nigeria, written thus, plays an important leadership role both regionally and globally, projecting its power outwards such that "Nigeria has also given active encouragement to states in the ECOWAS sub-region, Africa and the world at large."[118]

This outward commitment to international cooperation and dialogue, finally, mirrors a liberalism ascribed to Nigeria's domestic political arrangements which are depicted as characterized by a clear separation of powers – "The national assembly is still considering the bill on Anti-terrorism, economic and financial crimes act. It is, therefore, premature to report on the provisions"[119] – and embedded checks and balances: "Nigerian courts have no jurisdiction or competence to deal with criminal acts committed outside Nigeria".[120] This adherence to democratic safeguards and external political commitments is, though, recognized as generating complications and tensions, such that: "A balance must therefore be found whereby in pursuit of our obligations to the Security Council, we should not be seen as neglecting our obligations to protect innocent Nigerian citizens".[121]

Cameroon

The construction of terrorism as a marker of otherness, as we have seen, supports and makes possible an articulation of Nigeria as an internally vulnerable, yet externally purposive, subject that is diligent in its international commitments. This construction relates, in some ways, to constructions of Cameroonian national identity in its CTC submissions. Cameroon, in these texts, is also personified, emerging as an affective subject that both experiences *and* acts upon its emotions. The 9/11 attacks, for Cameroon, sparked "horror and fear"[122] within a wider "feeling of global solidarity and compassion",[123] and "repulsion".[124] For these reasons, "Cameroon, through its President, immediately sent a message of sympathy and solidarity to the American people, resolutely condemning those hateful attacks".[125] In so doing, it has acted consistently with its prior behavior: "Cameroon, following the example of the United Nations, has never wavered in its unequivocal condemnation of all terrorist acts"[126]; this predication around traits of honorability and compassion producing Cameroon here as an empathetic, principled subject.[127]

Cameroon's external behavior, in this construction, is also written in an affective register and marked by a commitment to amity. Security measures introduced in the domestic sphere, for instance, are intended to provide protection for external others: "Desiring to have friendly relations of

cooperation and solidarity with other peace-loving States . . . Cameroon could not allow its territory to serve as a 'rear base' for the perpetration of terrorist acts against other States or against the nationals of those States".[128] This (constructed) inclination toward helpfulness, moreover, structures Cameroon's relations with other states: "Cameroon's practice in matters of reciprocity is to follow the form, procedure and requests which the requesting State used in its dealings with Cameroon".[129] As with Nigeria, Cameroon is positioned as a "good" international citizen that is fully committed to the post-9/11 fight against terrorism: "Cameroon fully supports the codification work being carried out by the United Nations and by regional and even subregional bodies to eradicate terrorism".[130] This representation, moreover, is strengthened again through emphasis in these reports on the liberalism of Cameroon's domestic arrangements with their references to "constitutional principle[s]",[131] "conventional norms",[132] and the state's "sovereign mission to protect the integrity of the national territory devolved upon the Cameroonian State under its constitution, the law of nations, and international customs".[133] This respect for the international community, indeed, is repeated throughout Cameroon's CTC reports, which emphasize national deference to international obligations: "In accordance with article 45 of the Constitution of Cameroon, any normally ratified treaty takes precedence over domestic law".[134]

Kenya

Turning to our final case of Kenya, we see yet another construction of national identity emerging in opposition to the relatively consistent production of terrorist otherness with which we began. In the first instance, in contrast to Cameroon's vicarious experience, the 1998 US embassy attacks enable the positioning of Kenya as a *direct* victim of terrorism: "Kenya has herself suffered the direct impact of terrorism having been a victim as recently as August 1998".[135] The November 2002 Mobassa attacks help consolidate this writing in Kenya's second report, with the state now "having suffered [the] direct impact of terrorism on 7th August 1998 and 28th November 2002".[136] As with Nigeria, Kenya is explicitly feminized in its submissions: "Kenya has . . . committed *herself* to facilitating international efforts" (our emphasis).[137] This engendering, however, takes place alongside a more stereotypically masculinized construction of the state as a bearer of interests rather than emotions – "[after 9/11] Kenya realized that the existing legislative framework could not effectively deal with the various aspects of terrorism"[138]; as an agential rather than responsive subject – "Kenya is taking various legislative and executive measures"[139]; and as possessing a history of forthright and forceful action:

> Kenya has on many occasions condemned in the strongest terms the acts of terrorism in all their manifestations and called for intensified and comprehensive international cooperation in the fight against the scourge'.[140]

Read alongside our two earlier cases, we see a much stronger claim to political leadership in the Kenyan reports, with the East African state depicted as a vital player in the regional and global confrontation with terrorism. Thus, we encounter a country that was quick to ally with the United States after 9/11: "Kenya expressed its unequivocal solidarity with the United States of America and generously offered to join in any efforts aimed at bringing to justice the perpetrators of these attacks".[141] We also encounter a country of sufficient international standing to comment on the suitability of global initiatives, such that the "adoption of . . . . a comprehensive attempt to fight terrorism globally is a welcome move for Kenya".[142] Kenya's leadership role is evidenced further through its past efforts to motivate other African states to take action against terrorism: "Kenya is actively participating in anti-terrorism efforts at both regional and international level . . . [and] has often called upon all African states to sign, ratify and implement all anti-terrorism Conventions".[143] Its bilateral relationships with major international powers contribute, too, to this framing:

> The Government of Kenya is committed to continuous cooperation with other states in exchanging vital information regarding terrorist threats, and has extradition arrangements with various countries. For instance, in 1998, Bomb suspects were extradited to the USA to face trial for terrorist related offences'.[144]

Notwithstanding these differences to the characterizations of national identity in the Nigerian and Cameroonian reports, we once more encounter consistency in the framing of Kenya here as, first, a committed international citizen – "Kenya has already ratified the twelve international Counter Terrorism Conventions and has also ratified the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism."[145] And, second, as defender of political liberalism at home: "All legislative and administrative measures taken must not be contrary or ultra vires to the provisions of the Constitution of Kenya which at Chapter V provides for the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual."[146]

1373 and national identity

To summarize the above, our principal claim is that we can read national submissions to the UN CTC as moments in the ongoing articulation of national identity and associated characteristics. Each report does more than document national responses to Resolution 1373 and the threat posed by terrorism. They also actively *story* and make sense of these responses by tying them to particular – contingent and contestable – productions of these

states as particular types of subject with specific attributes, experiences and interests.[147] These claims to national identity should be seen, of course, as active *constructions* rather than reflections of some underlying self. Nigeria is *produced* as a vulnerable, yet instrumentally purposive, actor. Cameroon is *constructed* as an affective subject motivated by a desire for friendship and neighborliness. And Kenya is *created* as a regional leader drawing political and moral capital from its own past experiences of terrorism.

These representations of national identity matter, we argue, for two related reasons. First, they perform important discursive work in constructing the state as a legitimate actor to the UN CTC. Thus, discussions of political leadership and active engagement with the 1373 regime contribute to a construction of national effectiveness in relation to global counter-terrorism priorities. References to liberal, legal and constitutional protections serve as performances of political legitimacy within the emerging common fight against terrorism. Accounts of bilateral and multilateral cooperation perform international solidarity in response to this threat. And, constructions of vulnerability, victimhood and innocence sustain claims for additional support or resources from the UN.

These constructions also contribute to a shared story that is populated not only by various national selves, but also by a consistent construction of "terrorist" otherness that underpins and supports these productions.[148] As Seo[149] has recently argued: "the points of demarcation between the self and the other are exactly where national identities emerge."[150] Although much has been written on the binary pairing of self and other in the post-9/11 era,[151] the analysis of this article is important because it pulls attention to terrorism's malleability as a form of otherness. As we have seen, a shared and relatively consistent construction of terrorism in these reports is capable of sustaining quite different claims to national identity. States are able, put otherwise, to call upon this ostensibly universal threat in to perform position themselves in different ways.

This productivity is a consequence, we suggest, of the post-9/11 power of "terrorism" as shorthand for everything antithetical to the self. Carol Winkler discusses this, in the US context, by conceptualizing "terrorism" as a "negative ideograph"[152]: a recognizable, ordinary language term that is capable of summarizing everything a particular culture is not. The specific contents of the "terrorist" threat, approached thus, matter far less than its structural relationship of opposition to the self. Indeed, the malleability of "terrorism" as a signifier of otherness is vital to its continuing resonance across time and space: "To function as a marker for the culture, a label must be capable of an expansive range of possible applications. . . . Elasticity of the term's meaning allows for renewed and reaffirmed interpretations for a group's identity."[153] The above discussion, we suggest, offers an empirically rich illustration of this in a very specific and important, yet under-researched, context.

Conclusion

The casting or construction of national identity in official policy documents is consequential to our understanding of the operation of power within the state and the international system. In this article, we have attempted to demonstrate how three states – Cameroon, Kenya and Nigeria – constructed self and other to situate their compliance to the provisions of UNSCR 1373 as effective, legitimate, and responsible. In so doing, we showed how specific – and distinct – configurations of national identity emerge in juxtaposition to a relatively coherent "terrorist" other. In making this argument, we offered three contributions to existing work.

First, empirically we presented an original reading of a specific, but neglected, site of counter-terrorism discourse. Second, analytically, we shifted focus away from the counter-terrorism discourse of the international system's "great powers" that has dominated analysis, and concentrated attention on relatively neglected states. In this sense, we have sought to help move discussion beyond the continuing Eurocentric bias within terrorism research. Third, theoretically, we offered new illustration of the plasticity of terrorism as a form of discursive otherness, by demonstrating its oppositional pairing to quite diverse claims to self-identity in these reports.

Future research could profitably build upon that contained in this article by exploring how other states responded to UNSCR1373 in their reports to the CTC and beyond. Such work would shed additional analytical light on the functioning of "terrorism" as discursive construction under this regime, as well as on potentially pertinent similarities and differences in constructions of national identity in this context. There is scope, too, for future work on the reception of these reports within the United Nations and beyond, as well as for greater excavation of potentially significant intertextualities between documentation such as that considered here and texts produced in other discursive sites. Although such work is beyond the scope of this piece, we hope that this article offers a productive starting point for it.

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