ACSRT / CAERT

African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism

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Europe and Africa benefit when they work together

APRIL 08 2016

SA's welfare system is culturally flawed, it has introduced a sense of 'victimhood' instead of support for communities. Picture: REUTERS

AS WE face the challenges of the 21st century, there is more that unites Africa and Europe than divides us. We share a common history of thousands of years. Today more than ever, we need to work together to build our common future and to work jointly on the defining global issues of our age.

We have a shared view of the benefits of co-operation on our continents. Europe's journey from the devastation of 1945 to a union of more than half-a-billion citizens based on shared values and designed to create peace and prosperity, is well-known. So too is Africa's liberation from colonial rule to independence and greater integration through the creation of the African Union (AU).

Our journeys towards integration are far from over, but by working together, we can help each other by forging stronger ties, learning the lessons from each other's experiences and building sustainable growth that will benefit our citizens. Our two institutions, the African Union Commission and the European Commission, work together to help drive this process forward.

Sustainable and inclusive growth and development for both Africa and Europe must benefit us all. This was well-recognised by the leaders of the two continents at the last European Union (EU)-Africa Summit, when they put human development at the heart of our co-operation.

Africa's population is growing fast. By 2035, the number of young African men and

women entering the job market will exceed that of the rest of the world.

The full and equal participation of women is essential. As the AU's Agenda 2063 recognises, no society can reach its full potential unless it empowers women and removes all obstacles to women's full participation in all areas of human endeavour. To fully benefit from the demographic dividend, Africa needs to implement the policies spelt out in Agenda 2063 and these need to be implemented fast.

We know sustainable development can only occur in stable and secure societies. We know, too, that security will be undermined if equal access to the benefits of sustainable development is not assured. This is becoming even more evident in times when terrorist groups are targeting disenchanted and often unemployed youth groups to spread violent sectarian ideologies to destroy the pluralism of our societies. We must guarantee that all citizens, particularly the youth, can find a place in society and are empowered to reach their potential.

Security cannot exist without justice, democracy, the rule of law, good governance and respect for the human rights of all individuals and communities. This is the African Year of Human Rights, with particular focus on the rights of women. The EU has also designated 2016 as a year of human rights activism and global campaigning. This is an opportunity to team up and strengthen our work together in support of the African governance architecture, as well as in support of universally agreed human rights. Africa can be proud of having one of the strongest human rights frameworks in the world; by the end of this year, we should ensure that all our member states have ratified all human rights treaties.

The African peace and security architecture is designed to enable the continent to manage its own peace and security. This is in our common interest, and the EU is ready to continue supporting this goal. The work that has been done in countries such as Somalia, the Central African Republic and Mali bears testimony to this.

The African Peace Facility has pioneered a shared EU-Africa commitment by giving Africa the means to develop and use its own capacity to carry out essential mediation work, to prevent conflicts and to secure peace. In light of the connectivity of global threats and major regional crises, a strong and resilient AU is essential.

Today's migration crisis, partly rooted in violent conflicts, also makes a compelling case for closer co-operation. Europe is confronted by an unprecedented flow of refugees and asylum seekers. In Africa, too, people are on the move — from villages to cities, to neighbouring countries, and sometimes towards Europe.

Those moves are mainly motivated by fear and hope. Fear of conflict and poverty, hope for peace, security and opportunities. We must tackle both the fears and the hopes. If we want to ensure integration, we must manage human mobility.

Our two commissions will continue to work together on migration and mobility. We will work together to attend to the root causes of illegal migration, support mobility and labour migration, reduce the cost of sending remittances home, strengthen international protection, facilitate return and combat human trafficking.

There is optimism about Africa's future, and rightly so. For more than a decade, Africa has enjoyed sustained economic growth. Africa is an increasingly attractive

place to do business. Trade with the EU has increased by 50% since 2007. Around 40% of Africa's exports are made up of processed products, with a consistent trade surplus in Africa's favour. The EU remains Africa's main trading partner.

Investments by European companies and their subsidiaries in Africa total more than €200bn annually, which makes the EU Africa's leading investment partner.
Trade and investment relations between Africa and the EU can be improved further through closer co-operation, co-ordination of policies and the conclusion of World Trade Organisation negotiations. Europe also remains Africa's main development partner, with more than €20bn worth of official development assistance per year.
But continued growth cannot be taken for granted. The decreasing price of oil and other commodities as well as reduced demand from China and other emerging economies will have negative effects.
The continent's reliance on raw material exports makes it vulnerable to downturns in demand in overseas markets, hence the need for value-addition to exports through industrialisation.

Our two commissions are working together to promote industrialisation and diversification and to increase the value added. We are working together to promote investments in African infrastructure, facilitate technology transfer and intensify joint research and development. Last but not least, we are working together to boost agriculture to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth. This is why creating a continental free-trade area that promotes free and fair trade is so important.

Our unions, our two continents, face common challenges. From climate change, migration and ensuring sustainable economic growth to the fight against terrorism and violent extremism; these are challenges we have to face together.

We know well that we are stronger when we are working together. We are starting preparations for the fifth EU-Africa Summit to be held in Africa next year with these objectives well in mind.

• The European and AU commissions held their annual college-to-college meeting in Addis Ababa yesterday. This is the biggest EU-Africa political meeting of the year. Discussions focused on key themes such as migration, peace, security and sustainable growth, as well as other policy areas enshrined in the EU-Africa Strategy.

Juncker is the president of the European Commission and Dlamini-Zuma is the chairwoman of the African Union Commission

http://www.bdlive.co.za/

Africa outstrips US and UK in using Twitter for political conversations

7th April 2016

Analysis by Portland found that almost 1 in 10 of the most popular African hashtags in 2015 related to political issues and politicians, compared to 2 per cent of hashtags in the US and UK.
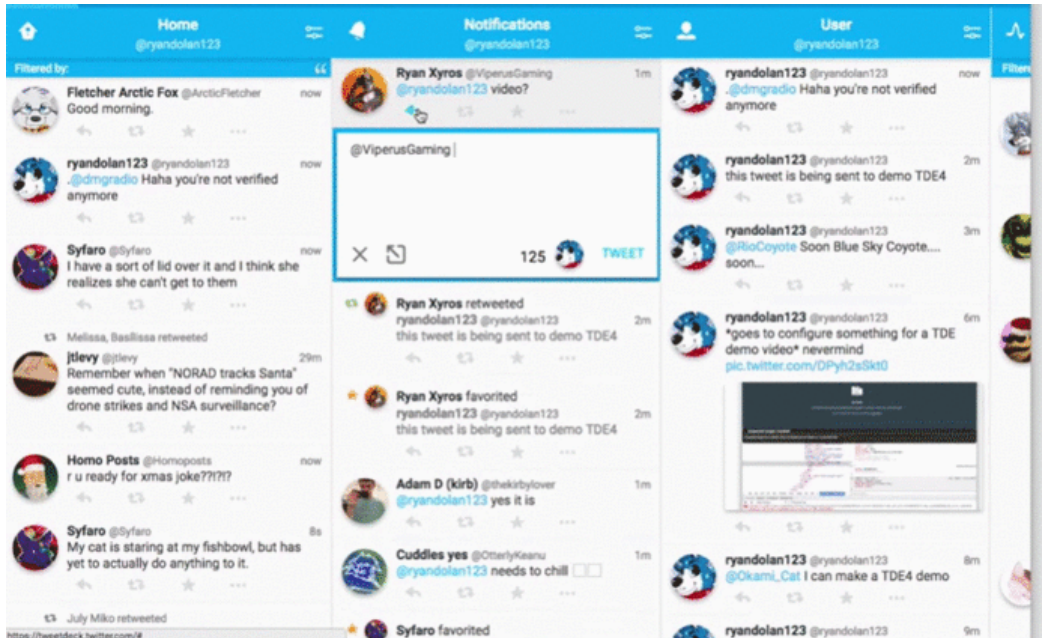
Twitter is 'coming of age' in Africa with the platform being widely used for political debate.

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The top political hashtag in Africa was focused on the highest profile election on the continent last year - #NigeriaDecides.

Portland, a London-based integrated communications agency, analysed 1.6 billion geo-located tweets and the top 5,000 hashtags on the continent, as part of our third "How Africa Tweets" report. The main findings of the report are:

Although tweets about showbiz and entertainment dominated the conversation last year, representing over 20 per cent of all hashtags, discussion around politics has grown to 10 per cent. Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia, Burundi and Egypt were the most active in these political conversations. The report also found that interest in politics transcends national borders. For example, hashtags about the Nigerian Presidential Elections and strife in Burundi were among some of the most popular and widespread hashtags across Africa.

English is by far the most dominant language on Twitter in Africa. This lingua franca has helped bridge national and cultural barriers across the continent, providing Twitter conversations with a wider reach than those using conventional media. Of the top 5,000 hashtags that we analysed, 77% were tweeted in English. Other top languages like Arabic and French were tweeted significantly less – only 7% and 4% respectively.

In Uganda our research found that Twitter is being used for important political conversations as 19 out of the top 100 hashtags were political in nature. Twitter may be a new and ideal platform for these political conversations to take place.

Egypt tweets the most out of any country in Africa, with 28% of all geolocated Twitter volume (amounting to about 450 million tweets). Nigeria (350 million geolocated tweets), South Africa (325 million geolocated tweets), Kenya (76 million geolocated tweets) and Ghana (65 million geolocated tweets) round out the top five tweeting African countries. Overall, there were 1.6 billion geolocated tweets in Africa in 2015 – a 34-fold increase from our initial research in 2012.

"Our previous studies showed that Twitter in Africa was much more of a space for social interaction or frivolous banter. This study, our third, demonstrates that the platform is coming of age with the prevalence of serious debate about politics and government," says Mark Flanagan, Portland's Senior Partner for Content and Digital Strategy.

"Excitingly, our report also hints at the coming together of Africans across boundaries to comment on and discuss common issues. How to successfully engage with these emerging pan-African online communities represents a challenge for all brands and organisations seeking to build their presence in this space," added Allan Kamau, who leads Portland's Nairobi office.

On top of this data, the report consists of 12 case studies, which explore diverse topics such as how Twitter relates to terrorism in Africa, the Ebola response, economic development and more. To explore these case studies and our interactive infographic please visit www.HowAfricaTweets.com
Source: portland-communications.com

www.newvision.co.ug/

Jihadisme africain et wahhabisme : l'analyse de Bernard Lugan

5 AVRIL 2016 AT 11 H 52 MIN /

Fin connaisseur de l'Afrique, Bernard Lugan observe qui sont les jihadistes africains.

Le jihadisme contemporain est l'héritier politique, doctrinal et spirituel, à la fois des Frères musulmans et du wahhabisme. Les premiers sont au pouvoir en Turquie, le second l'est en Arabie saoudite et au Qatar. Depuis qu'ils ont été renversés par l'armée égyptienne, les Frères musulmans ne contrôlent plus en Afrique du Nord que la ville libyenne de Misrata d'où ils entretiennent le chaos avec l'appui de la Turquie. Quant aux wahhabites, ils sont à la manœuvre au sud du Sahara.

Quatre mouvements jihadistes mènent des actions terroristes sur le continent africain. Il s'agit des Shabaab en Somalie, de Boko Haram dans le nord du Nigeria, de Daech-État islamique (EI) dans une partie de la Libye et d'Al-Qaïda qui fédère plusieurs groupes opérant au Maghreb, au Sahara, au Sahel et jusqu'en Côte d'Ivoire.
Les Shabaab somaliens et Boko Haram sont ancrés sur des revendications locales ou régionales. Leurs possibilités d'extension sont donc limitées. Il n'en est pas de même d'Al-Qaïda (Aqmi), et de Daech qui ont montré de remarquables facultés d'adaptation à divers terrains.

Daech qui, il y a quelques mois a semblé menaçant en Libye, n'a guère progressé depuis. Sa puissance en Irak et en Syrie reposait sur une opposition chiites-sunnites qui n'existe pas en Libye où l'organisation se heurte aux profondes identités tribales. Pendant que Daech occupait l'avant-scène, Al-Qaïda-Aqmi refaisait ses forces et redéfinissait sa stratégie en s'efforçant de ne pas trop s'en prendre directement aux membres de la Umma, tout en se greffant avec opportunisme sur des revendications locales. Si le mouvement a un objectif mondial, il tient en effet compte des aspira-

tions des populations qu'il tente de rallier, qu'il s'agisse des Touareg ou de certaines fractions du monde peul.

Sur le terrain, face à cette entreprise de subversion à grande échelle, la France est militairement seule. Le dispositif Barkhane ayant rendu les espaces nordistes du Mali et du Niger de plus en plus hostiles aux terroristes , ces derniers ont décidé d'opérer plus au sud, à l'abri de la toile wahhabite tissée par l'Arabie saoudite et par le Qatar. La tentation est donc grande chez certains décideurs civils français, de redéployer Barkhane vers le sud.

L'erreur serait grande car, détourner nos forces en les faisant basculer sur des positions plus sudistes ferait le jeu des jihadistes qui attendent de nous voir relâcher notre étau sur les zones limitrophes de la Libye et de l'Algérie. De plus, cette bascule d'effort ne serait pas suffisamment significative pour interdire des actions terroristes ponctuelles par des groupes jihadistes au sein desquels les Peul semblent jouer un rôle croissant.

Enfin, comment prétendre lutter contre le jihadisme menaçant les équilibres africains sans dénoncer son support idéologique qui est le wahhabisme, la religion d'État de l'Arabie saoudite et du Qatar ? Or, la France socialiste est de plus en plus liée à ces deux monarchies…

Bernard Lugan

https://www.medias-presse.info/

Terroristes : pourquoi autant de frères chez les djihadistes ?

12/04/2016

La liste des fratries parties rejoindre les rangs des combattants de l'État islamique est longue, le phénomène se compte vraisemblablement par dizaines. L'analyse d'un chercheur

La fratrie comme arme de combat

Les actes de terreur djihadiste qui ensanglantent les grandes villes occidentales comptent de plus en plus souvent des fratries. Merah, Kouachi, Abaaoud, Abdeslam, Belhoucine en France, El Bakraoui en Belgique, Tsarnaev aux Etats-Unis : le phénomène devient suffisamment récurrent pour que l'on n'y prête une plus grande attention. Si l'on ajoute à ces quelques exemples la longue liste des frères partis rejoindre les rangs des *foreign fighters* de l'État islamique, le phénomène se compte vraisemblablement par dizaines.

Publicité

Les études de sociologie militaire s'avèrent heuristiquement pertinentes pour décrypter l'importance et la plus-value des liens fraternels dans l'accomplissement de missions qui s'apparentent de plus en plus à de véritables actions de guerre. Les solidarités affectives représentent en effet un vecteur idéal pour la cohésion des groupes face à l'adversité. Loin d'être originales, les vertus de ces liens comme élément cohésif ont été instrumentalisées dès l'Antiquité comme ressource pour le combat.

Camaraderie et confiance mutuelle

À l'époque de la Grèce antique le [Bataillon sacré (ou Bataillon thébain)](#) qui fédérait exclusivement des couples d'hommes représentait une troupe d'élite se démarquant par son ardeur au combat. Au XXe siècle, des sociologues américains tels que [Morris Janowitz](#) et [Edward Shils](#) ont mis en lumière l'importance primordiale de la camaraderie et de la fraternité dans la cohésion interne des groupes. Ces auteurs ont notamment théorisé l'idée selon laquelle, plus que le partage d'une idéologie commune, c'est la camaraderie et la confiance mutuelle qui constituent le principal ressort des groupes de combat.

Aujourd'hui encore, une bonne partie des programmes d'instruction militaire vise à générer ce sentiment de camaraderie et de solidarité parmi les soldats. Une fois ces derniers enrégimentés, la vie communautaire à l'intérieur des bases, le partage de rites communs (fêtes, popotes…) parachèvent cette socialisation professionnelle et participent d'une sociabilité destinée à produire un sentiment d'appartenance collectif quasi familial (frères d'armes).

Ces dynamiques ne sont pas sans rappeler la notion wébérienne de « communalisation », à savoir un processus donnant le sentiment à des groupes d'individus d'appartenir solidairement à la même communauté. Dans ces conditions, et comme l'a bien montré [Farhad Khosrokavar](#) à travers ses travaux sur la radicalisation, la complicité fraternelle apparaît comme une condition de résilience face à l'adversité. Elle représente une ressource opérationnelle d'autant plus stratégique que le maillage des services de renseignement se fait de plus en plus intense.

Du point de vue sociologique, les fratries du djihad ont souvent fait leurs gammes au fil de parcours sociaux [marqués par des activités délinquantes](#). Celles-ci représentent autant d'occasions de tester la résistance de ces liens. Ne pas « balancer »son acolyte lors des gardes à vue policières, résister à toutes les formes de stress et de pression, tout cela constitue autant de preuves et de certifications d'une confiance absolue qui sera nécessairement mobilisée pour commettre l'acte ultime.

Engagement militaire et engagement djihadiste

Mais si la fratrie apparaît bien comme un support évident pour le combat, on pourrait inverser la proposition et se demander si certains djihadistes n'ont pas recherché dans le métier du combat une forme de fratrie. Peu relevé par les spécialistes, le nombre de djihadistes ayant approché ou embrassé le métier des armes est pourtant frappant.

Les parallèles et les porosités entre parcours d'engagement militaire et engagement djihadiste ont en effet trouvé à s'incarner à travers de multiples exemples. Ainsi, avant de commettre ses attaques à Toulouse en juillet 2010, Mohamed Merah avait tenté de s'engager au sein de la Légion étrangère. De même, les témoignages relatifs au parcours d'Hasna Ait Boulahcen, proche des terroristes des attentats du 13 novembre dernier, rapportent qu'elle souhaitait vivement s'enrôler au sein des armées françaises.

D'autres ont franchi le cap. Ainsi [Lionel Dumont](#), ex-membre du gang de Roubaix (1996), avait effectué son service militaire au 4e Régiment d'infanterie marine de Fréjus. Il partit par la suite à Djibouti avec le 5e Régiment interarmes d'outre-mer

pour participer à l'intervention multinationale de l'ONU en Somalie dans le cadre de l'opération humanitaire française Oryx (1992-1993).

D'autres exemples puisés à l'étranger pourraient être cités. Ainsi le converti Abdul Shakur (né Steven Vikash Chand) s'est engagé durant quatre années au sein du Régiment Royal du Canada de (2000-2004) avant de se livrer à des activités terroristes lors du complot déjoué à Toronto en juin 2006. Daech compterait dans ses rangs plusieurs ex-soldats issus d'armées occidentales (France, Pays-Bas, Belgique).

Bifurcations biographiques

L'ambivalence de ces trajectoires sociales déstabilise quelque peu tant les valeurs associées aux logiques d'engagement djihadiste et militaire paraissent diamétralement opposées dans les imaginaires collectifs. Elle nous amène également à repenser les motivations profondes de ces acteurs et les facteurs qui infléchissent, d'un côté ou l'autre, leurs itinéraires sociaux.

Qu'est-ce qui détourne un Merah du passage des derniers tests de recrutement militaire ? Qu'est-ce qui fait qu'Hasna Ait Boulahcen rêve des armées françaises sans franchir le cap de l'enrôlement ? Pourquoi des soldats socialisés et formés dans des nations occidentales décident un jour de rejoindre les rangs de l'État islamique ?

Rendre compte de ces bifurcations biographiques n'est pas chose aisée. Cela nécessite de s'immerger dans les détails et les singularités des parcours de vie. Pour cette raison l'adoption d'une focale microsociologique paraît particulièrement appropriée dans la mesure où elle permettrait de mettre en lumière les incidences des micro-évènements sur les itinéraires individuels et de mieux penser une complexité sociale qui se laisse difficilement enfermer dans la simplicité des visions manichéennes du type engagement militaire versus engagement djihadiste.

http://www.sudouest.fr/

L'Afrique réelle n°76 : Le jihadisme en Afrique.

9 Avril 2016

Le 76ème numéro de l'Afrique réelle, la revue dirigée par Bernard Lugan, vient de paraitre ; elle est consacrée ce mois-ci, dans le cadre d'un numéro spécial, au ji-hadisme en Afrique.

Numéro spécial : Le jihadisme en Afrique

– Les fronts du jihad africain

– Afrique de l'Ouest : islam arabo oriental contre islam africain

– Pourquoi le royaume saoudien soutient-il les fondamentalistes musulmans en Afrique comme ailleurs ?

– La subversion saoudo-wahhabite bute sur l'Algérie

– L'Algérie, cible principale d'Aqmi

– Le Maroc est-il menacé par l'islamisme ?

A travers la presse

Les Saoudiens vont-ils détruire le mausolée du prophète Mohamed ?

Editorial de Bernard Lugan :

Connaître le jihadisme africain pour mieux le combattre

Le jihadisme contemporain est l'héritier politique, doctrinal et spirituel, à la fois des Frères musulmans et du wahhabisme. Les premiers sont au pouvoir en Turquie, le second l'est en Arabie saoudite et au Qatar.

Depuis qu'ils ont été renversés par l'armée égyptienne, les Frères musulmans ne contrôlent plus en Afrique du Nord que la ville libyenne de Misrata d'où ils entretiennent le chaos avec l'appui de la Turquie. Quant aux wahhabites, ils sont à la manœuvre au sud du Sahara.

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Pendant que Daesh occupait l'avant-scène, Al-Qaïda-Aqmi refaisait ses forces et redéfinissait sa stratégie en s'efforçant de ne pas trop s'en prendre directement aux membres de la Umma, tout en se greffant avec opportunisme sur des revendications locales. Si le mouvement a un objectif mondial, il tient en effet compte des aspirations des populations qu'il tente de rallier, qu'il s'agisse des Touareg ou de certaines fractions du monde peul.

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Enfin, comment prétendre lutter contre le jihadisme menaçant les équilibres africains sans dénoncer son support idéologique qui est le wahhabisme, la religion d'Etat de l'Arabie saoudite et du Qatar ? Or, la France socialiste est de plus en plus liée à ces deux monarchies…

[1] Voir mon communiqué en date du 20 janvier 2016 intitulé « La critique de Barkhane procède d'une erreur d'analyse ».

[2] L'attaque de Ouagadougou le 16 janvier 2016 a été menée par le FLM (Front de libération du Macina), un mouvement peul. Sur les trois terroristes identifiés de Grand Bassam, deux étaient Peul d'après leurs noms, Hamza al-Fulani et Rahman al-Fulani.

http://www.breizh-info.com/

Sur le qui-vive

04 avril 2016

Face aux attentats terroristes qui meurtrissent l'Afrique, comment les entreprises s'organisent-elles pour protéger leurs sites, leurs employés et leurs clients ?

La multiplication des attentats en Afrique ravive les inquiétudes des entreprises au-delà de la bande sahélo-saharienne, de la Libye et de la Somalie. Après les attaques terroristes à Grand-Bassam (Côte d'Ivoire, le 13 mars), contre les champs gaziers de Statoil et BP à In Salah (Algérie, le 18 mars) puis à Bamako (Mali, le 21 mars), le sentiment d'insécurité grandit. « Plus aucune entreprise en Afrique n'élude le risque terroriste, notamment les groupes français, particulièrement visés du fait de l'opération Barkhane menée contre Aqmi », assure Bertrand Monnet, titulaire de la chaire « management des risques criminels » à l'Edhec Business School à Lille (France).

« Alors qu'Aqmi et Boko Haram ont perdu militairement du terrain et que les rares entreprises encore présentes dans leurs zones de prédilection sont protégées comme des forteresses, les terroristes préfèrent frapper derrière les lignes de front, dans une capitale comme Bamako ou Ouagadougou, et même désormais dans un pays plus éloigné comme la Côte d'Ivoire, poursuit le spécialiste. Et ils privilégient des cibles symboliques : les groupes occidentaux et leurs expatriés. »

Bien sûr, les accidents de la route, le paludisme ou la criminalité classique font au sein des multinationales plus de victimes que le terrorisme. « Mais son impact psychologique est plus fort sur leurs employés, en particulier les expatriés, ainsi que sur leurs partenaires, financiers comme opérationnels », complète John Seddon, directeur associé du groupe britannique Control Risks, l'un des leaders de l'analyse des risques pour les entreprises. « Depuis l'attentat de Grand-Bassam, nous avons eu de nombreuses demandes concernant le Sénégal, un pays jugé semblable à la Côte d'Ivoire par les investisseurs », note l'expert, dont l'entreprise n'a pourtant pas classé le pays dans les régions « rouges » les plus exposées.

http://www.jeuneafrique.com/

Ben Laden: chronique d'une mort annoncée

12/04/2016

Oussama Ben Laden

Ponte du journalisme d'investigation américain, Seymour Hersh livre son réquisitoire contre la machination de haut niveau qui entourerait la mort du chef d'al-Qaïda au printemps 2011.

« La Maison-Blanche maintient que cette mission a été exclusivement menée par les Américains, et que les généraux de l'armée pakistanaise (…) n'ont pas été informés à l'avance du raid. Or cela est faux ». Reporter spécialisé dans les affaires d'Etat américaines et les services secrets, récompensé du prix Pulitzer en 1970 pour avoir révélé le massacre de My Laï en pleine guerre du Vietnam, Seymour Hersh tente de démontrer que la mort de l'ennemi public numéro 1 ne s'est absolument pas passée comme les autorités l'ont laissé croire. Sa chronique d'une mort annoncée – où la cible est abattue au milieu de l'ouvrage – part d'un constat étrange, et qui ne cesse de déranger. A savoir que deux alliés cruciaux des Etats Unis dans leur lutte contre le terrorisme, l'Arabie Saoudite et le Pakistan, comptent aussi parmi les principaux sponsors idéologiques et financiers du djihad. Grand vétéran de la presse d'investigation, Hersh fait l'hypothèse que Ben Laden n'a pu être consigné à Abbottabad sans l'assentiment de l'armée pakistanaise. Dès lors, qu'est-ce qui aurait finalement fait pencher la balance pour que les deux pays coopèrent afin de rendre le raid possible ?

Hersh entreprend donc d'analyser les raisons propres aux deux parties. Son livre devient captivant lorsqu'il décrit les modalités concrètes de l'accord supposément conclu. Du côté pakistanais, les autorités veulent se couvrir en évitant de s'aliéner la population, qui considère Ben Laden comme un héros, tout en bénéficiant de l'aide américaine. Du côté de Washington, le Pentagone a besoin de la coopération du Pa-

kistan pour s'assurer que le chef terroriste ne s'échappe pas. S'il était averti et que l'opération tournait au fiasco, Obama passerait pour un « looser» et risquerait de ne pas être réélu. Selon Hersh, les deux puissances se sont donc mis d'accord sur une version officielle pour décrire l'élimination du chef d'al-Qaïda. Mais la chute d'un hélicoptère Black-Hawk dans la cour de sa maison, dont l'incendie est perçu à des kilomètres à la ronde, va forcer le destin, obligeant le Président américain à annoncer la mort de Ben Laden le 3 mai 2011 au matin, heure de Washington. Selon l'auteur, Obama livre alors une version de l'opération qui diffère de celle convenue entre les deux bords.

S'ouvre alors la seconde partie de l'ouvrage, où Seymour Hersh prétend délier tous les arrangements avec la réalité auxquels les services de communications de la Maison-Blanche se seraient prêtés. Tout tendrait donc à souligner les efforts des communicants de Washington pour masquer le pacte avec les Pakistanais. Oussama Ben Laden était armé ? Bien sûr, car dans le cas contraire cela aurait signifié que le Pakistan savait. Ils étaient plusieurs ? Evidemment, car sinon il n'y aurait pas eu ce fameux échange de tirs. Peut-on voir le corps ? C'est impossible, il a été jeté en mer. Conformément à la loi islamique ? En bonne et due forme. Chaque mensonge entraînant un autre pour former un maillage serré autour des faits.

Une politique du mensonge à hauts niveaux

L'auteur s'acharne ensuite à dénoncer les complices de ce « mensonge officiel » : le secrétaire d'Etat à la Défense Robert Gates qui voulait rester sur la version élaborée avec les Pakistanais, le conseiller d'Obama pour la lutte antiterroriste, John Brennan, qui maintient, envers et contre tous, la version sur l'échange de tirs, et les agents « retraités » de la CIA à qui l'on conseille de révéler leurs méthodes sinistres « d'interrogatoires poussés » pour donner le change. Les autorités peuvent compter aussi sur deux membres des Seals qui témoignent dans des termes proches de ceux de la propagande officielle, tout en en profitant pour restaurer l'honneur de leurs frères d'armes. La presse, notamment le "Washington Post", aurait servilement relayé la version officielle. Notamment en décrivant la résidence d'Abbottabad comme un « un centre de commandement » où les militaires auraient trouvé « une mine de renseignements », laissant croire qu'Oussama Ben Laden était encore actif à la tête d'Al-Qaïda.

En soulevant les incohérences des propos tenus dans la presse, les contradictions des témoignages et la fragilité des alibis, Seymour Hersh livre donc un beau réquisitoire contre la politique américaine et ce qu'il dénomme son « modus operandi » : une politique du mensonge à hauts niveaux ».

http://www.parismatch.com/

Kenya: Development, County Governments and the Risk of 2017 Election Violence

A Turkana woman walks past a road construction project near Isiolo town, about 320 km (200 miles) north from the capital Nairobi, on 7 July 2008. REUTERS/Antony Njuguna

ISIOLO, Kenya. Until a decade ago, few ventured beyond Isiolo without armed police escort. A dusty frontier garrison town in central Kenya, it was the gateway into the badlands of Kenya's former Northern Frontier District.

In the last two decades, as Kenya's economy and politics have liberalised, Isiolo has transformed into a vibrant commercial hub owing much to its strategic location. It straddles the recently upgraded (paved) Pan-Africa highway that links the Horn (especially Ethiopia's huge and relatively untapped markets) to central Kenya and beyond to Central and Southern Africa.

Isiolo is also an important node of Kenya's LAPSSET (Lamu Port, South Sudan and Ethiopia) planned infrastructure project. This seeks to develop a new "northern" transport corridor between Kenya and Uganda and to better integrate Ethiopia and South Sudan into East Africa, and will include a new port being built near Lamu, oil pipelines and a refinery.

LAPSETT's prospects have declined with the global price of oil, the rising terrorist threat in the North East, South Sudan's civil war, and with Uganda now looking at an alternative pipeline route via Tanzania. Isiolo, however, will continue to play a central role in Kenya's ambition to exploit its vast northern rangelands. 6,500 acres have been set aside for a new "Isiolo Resort City", construction for a large dam on the Ewaso Nyiro River to serve it is already underway; a new airport, and a modern abattoir to process 400 cattle daily from the region's large livestock population are also planned.

[Click to enlarge] Map of Kenya's counties. Source: https://www.opendata.go.ke/facet/counties
Yet Isiolo is one of a number of 47 new counties that face risks of conflict ahead of and during the 2017 polls. Not only has the national problem of an ethnic winner-takes-all politics devolved to the counties' internal electoral competition, but local actors are making exclusive claims over potentially lucrative resources and infrastructure that fall in their boundaries, increasing conflict over internal administrative borders – which are often badly demarcated and therefore disputed. While

these conflicts are found throughout Kenya, they have particularly affected counties in the pastoral areas of northern and southern Kenya, including the Rift Valley.

Devolving authority to county government in 2013 was one of the principal innovations of the 2010 constitution.

Devolving authority to county government in 2013 was one of the principal innovations of the 2010 constitution, and a response to the 2007-2008 post-election violence. The goal was to enhance local communities' participation in development with the expectation that it would reduce competition over national resources, which had often taken on ethnic overtones and fuelled violence, especially at election time. It was also hoped county government would enable marginalised regions to catch up with the more developed areas, again addressing and reducing historic regional grievances.

Undoubtedly there has been a surge in county-based development especially in infrastructure, but these gains (and devolved funds that finance them) are connected to a rise in localised conflicts and insecurity in three aspects:

• The heightened stakes of county power, controlled by the governor and other elected officers, have often reproduced national ethnic competition at county level.

• The creation of new minorities within counties including in urban settings is generating new tensions, particularly where their economic activities are now seen as outsider competition by the new county elites.

• Inter-county competition is growing over the ownership and control of big national or regional development projects where they traverse county boundaries, making these borders prone to violent dispute and rendering residents belonging to minorities from rival counties vulnerable to reprisals.

While Isiolo's potential should bring development dividends – 63 per cent of its population live below the poverty line – its prospects are already blighted by a sharp rise in communal conflict. This is partly because control of national-regional development projects is contested by the new county elite as exclusively "theirs".

The Isiolo county population (estimated at over 150,000) is diverse. Most are herders from tribes like the Boran, Somali, Samburu and Turkana in the northern "rangelands" (desert in the eyes of many), but a minority are farmers, because the county straddles the line of "sown" lands of the central highlands, settled by Meru agriculturalists and traders.

While this crossroads of livelihoods brings exchange and a dynamic local economy, it has also driven conflict: in the 1990s most of the ethnic violence was between the Boran and Somali, but since then ethnic conflict has diversified and evolved. In late October 2015 deadly clashes pitted Somali, Boran and Samburu herders against Meru farmers along the disputed county border resulting in six deaths. A few days later, riots erupted in Isiolo town following the death of a Meru *boda boda* (motorbike-taxi) operator; Boran, Somali and Turkana then looted Meru shops and blocked the Isiolo-Nanyuki highway; the situation was only brought under control by the deployment of soldiers from the 78th Tank Battalion, based in the town's outskirts.

The Isiolo-Meru tension is just one example of inter-county disputes that now affect more than half the counties.

Because of the way Kenya's new counties were often hastily drawn up (some see deliberate ethnic "gerrymandering"), formerly cosmopolitan regional capitals have become administrative centres for smaller counties dominated by one or two ethnic groups, and smaller communities neighbouring counties or further afield living in these cities have become "minorities". In Isiolo's case, Meru communities are now a minority, dominant in trade and in some urban wards, but frozen out of the big county executive seats, like those for the governor, senators and members of the national assembly. They are caught up in the increasingly bitter and violent conflict over the poorly-defined border between Isiolo and Meru counties.

The Isiolo-Meru tension is just one example of inter-county disputes that now affect more than half the counties, with growing calls for a new county border demarcation exercise. The Commission on Administrative Justice (a statutory body to address administrative and governance disputes) has called for the creation of a County Boundaries Commission, with a mandate to conduct a new survey and clearly mark out borders with visible markers. However, any new commissions or actions are unlikely to have an impact on contested boundaries before the 2017 elections.

Inaction is not an option since contested boundaries and the ethnic interests competing over them will aggravate hotly disputed county elections in 2017. The counties and the national government need to consider a sequence of high-impact policy interventions to mitigate the risk of county-based conflict, now and in the run-up to 2017. These could include:

- a moratorium on all land sales in disputed country border areas, pending the outcome of a credible adjudication of contested lands and county border demarcation (properly marked with high-visibility markers);

- a clear national government policy statement that borders will be reviewed after the 2017 polls by an independent technical commission and its decisions will be final and binding;

- the creation of a new "County Inclusion Index" by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission to identify counties that are failing to meet the constitutional requirements of inclusive government (the commission is already doing this but on an ad hoc basis);

new high-level inter-county talks, involving elected officials and a broad cross-section of credible civil society leaders, to ease tensions and create sustained peace-building and reconciliation.

http://blog.crisisgroup.org/
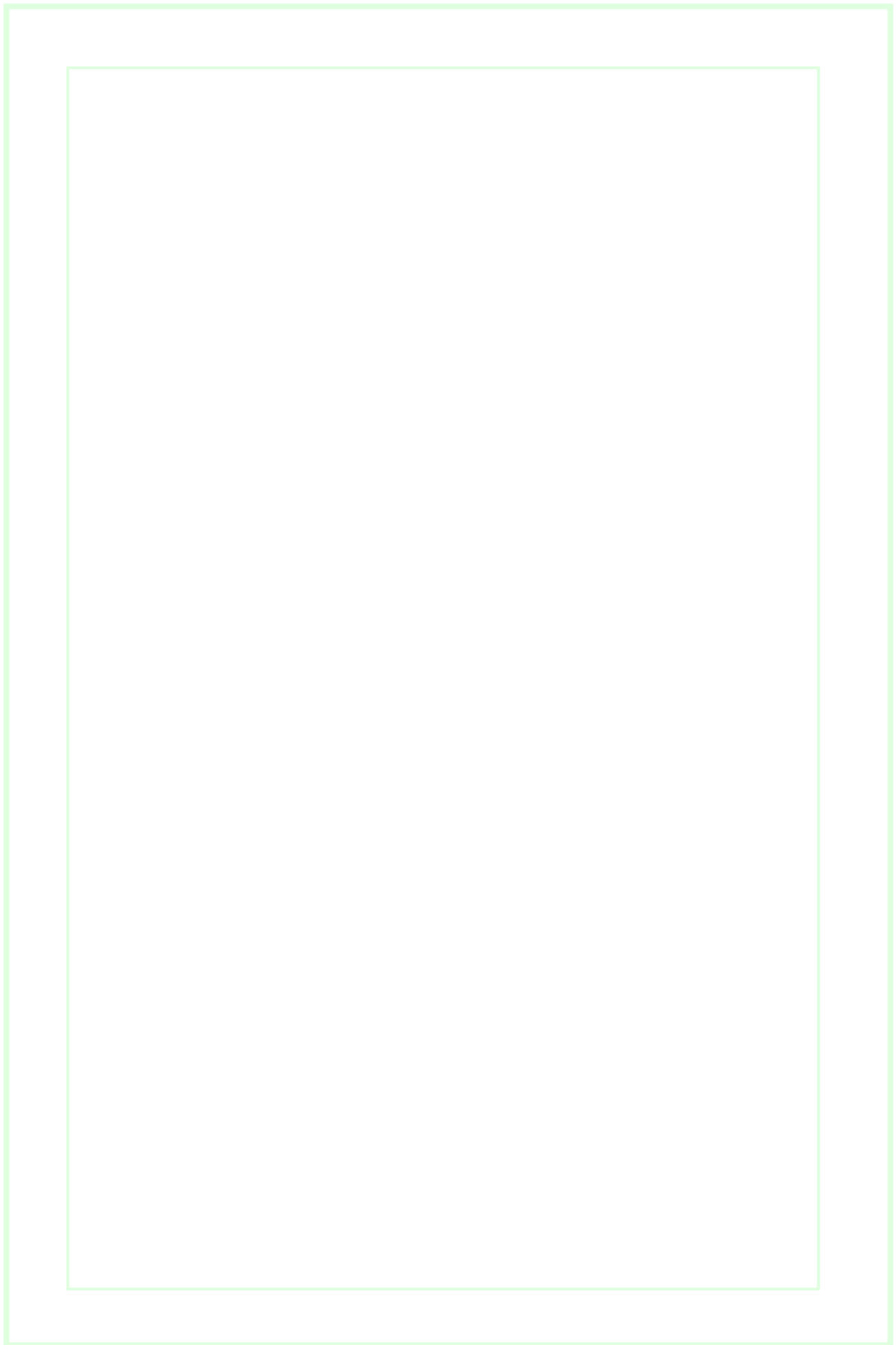
Mali : Sahel : ENSEMBLE CONTRE LE TERRORISME

5 avril 2016

La lutte contre ce fléau nécessite le renforcement de la coopération sécuritaire entre les pays africains,estime le chef de l'Etat du Niger appuyé par ses pairs

« Le terrorisme, c'est le mal absolu, mais ce mal doit être l'occasion pour les pays de notre sous-région et du continent de construire des États démocratiques forts et stables, dotés d'armées performantes », a analysé samedi Mahamadou Issoufi, dans son discours d'investiture pour son deuxième mandat à la présidence du Niger. La lutte contre ce fléau nécessite le renforcement de la coopération sécuritaire entre les pays africains, estime-t-il. « Avec le Tchad, nous avions apporté notre concours au Nigéria en montant une opération pour y libérer des villes occupées par Boko-Haram. Avec le Bénin, le Cameroun, le Nigéria et le Tchad nous avons mis en place une force mixte multinationale pour juguler la menace de cette organisation dont la barbarie est bien connue », a précisé Mahamadou Issoufou. Au Mali, en Côte d'Ivoire, en République démocratique du Congo, le Niger est présent dans les missions des Nations-Unies pour contribuer à la sécurité de ces pays frères. Ainsi notre pays a non seulement maintenu la sécurité et la paix à l'intérieur de ses frontières mais aussi a contribué à la sécurité et à la paix dans la région, s'est félicité le président Issoufou.

Face au danger commun, nos États doivent, selon le chef de l'Etat du Niger, organiser une riposte commune et concertée contre ce fléau qui a effacé nos frontières géographiques. « On voit bien, par exemple, comment la situation sécuritaire au Nord Mali et le chaos libyen expliquent les attentats de Bamako, de Ouagadougou et d'Abidjan. C'est dire que tant qu'on n'aura pas éradiqué le terrorisme au Nord

Mali, tant qu'on n'y aura pas restauré le monopole de la violence de l'Etat malien sur l'ensemble de son territoire et tant qu'on n'aura pas stabilisé la Libye, il est vain de penser pouvoir dormir en paix à Abidjan ou Abuja, à Accra ou Bamako, à Conakry ou Cotonou, à Dakar ou Lomé, à Nouakchott ou N'Djamena, à Niamey ou Ouagadougou. Restaurer la souveraineté de l'Etat malien sur l'ensemble du territoire et éteindre le chaudron libyen constituent des tâches urgentes. C'est pour quoi je salue la décision des pays du « G5-Sahel » de mettre en place une force mixte multinationale sur le modèle de celle mise en place par les pays du bassin du lac Tchad. Cette force doit être déployée, en priorité, au Nord Mali », a déclaré Mahamadou Issoufou.

Le renforcement de la coopération sécuritaire entre pays africains qu'exige la lutte commune contre le terrorisme doit, de son point de vue, s'accompagner d'une accélération du processus d'intégration économique entre ces pays. Ce combat pourrait être ainsi un catalyseur de l'intégration économique.

« Par exemple, dans le cadre de la lutte contre Boko-Haram dans le bassin du lac Tchad, nous avons senti le besoin de construire un pont sur la rivière Komadougou Yobé, entre la ville de Bosso au Niger et celle de Mallamfatori au Nigéria. Nous avons décidé de construire ce pont qui, une fois la sécurité restaurée, facilitera les échanges entre le Niger et le Nigéria. Ce petit exemple montre l'importance des infrastructures à la fois pour la sécurité et pour l'économie », a souligné le président nigérien.

La réalisation d'infrastructures routières, ferroviaires, énergétiques, parmi tant d'autres, a un intérêt à la fois sécuritaire et économique. Des projets comme celui de la boucle ferroviaire Lomé-Cotonou-Niamey-Ouagadougou-Abidjan ou comme celui de la route Kidal-Ménaka au Mali ; Banibangou-Balléyara-Harkanassou-Margou-Falmèye-Gaya (au Niger)-frontières avec le Nigéria et le Bénin, comportent ce double intérêt.

LE TEMPS DE L'UNITE NATIONALE. Les dirigeants africains présents à l'investiture, dont le président Ibrahim Boubacar Kéïta, ont apprécié le message de Mahamadou Issoufou.

S'agissant du Niger, le président Kéïta a insisté sur la préservation de l'unité nationale et de la coopération entre les pays du Sahel. « Nous allons faire en sorte d'aider à ce que les frères du Niger se retrouvent car c'est le temps de l'unité nationale. C'est le temps du front commun contre le seul ennemi aujourd'hui qui devrait concerner chaque nigérien : le terrorisme et la lutte pour le développement, un développement harmonieux au profit des populations du Niger. C'est cela seul qui doit compter au Niger, comme ailleurs, comme au Mali. Le président Mahamadou Issoufou a eu des propos très forts que nous partageons entièrement. Chacun l'a bien compris. Il a une parfaite connaissance du dossier malien. Ce qu'il a dit correspond à la réalité : tant que le terrorisme ne sera pas extirpé du Mali, du Nord-Mali, aucun de nos voisins n'aura la paix. Il y a Boko Haram qui est dans la zone. Mais si déjà, les efforts conjugués ont eu à nous mettre en possibilité d'affaiblir singulièrement, sinon de vaincre définitivement le terrorisme et de le bouter hors du Nord, du Mali, les pays du Sahel respireront et c'est tout l'objet du G5 Sahel. Je crois que s'il n'existait pas, il fallait le créer. Et la force dont il a parlé, la force commune que nous avons

mis en place et qui, les jours à venir, montrera ses pleins effets, n'a pas d'autre vocation. Je crois qu'il a dit ce que nous pensons tous aujourd'hui », a confirmé Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta.

« Le discours du président a été un discours extrêmement bien articulé autour de grandes priorités, comme il l'a indiqué : la sécurité d'abord, mais aussi le développement et l'Etat de droit. Je pense qu'autour de ce triptyque, on peut bâtir l'avenir de toutes nos nations. Et je crois que les propositions qu'il a faites concernant une force du G5 Sahel devraient pourvoir aider les pays du Sahel à faire face au fléau qui perturbe l'ensemble des pays de la sous-région », a commenté le président du Sénégal et de la CEDEAO, Macky Sall.

De son côté, le président du Burkina Faso, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, a réagi au message de Mahamadou Issoufou en ces termes : « Nous avons toujours pensé que dans notre sous-région, en Afrique de façon générale, nous avons intérêt à fédérer tous nos efforts aussi bien au niveau des renseignements que nous devons nous communiquer mutuellement qu'au niveau de la mutualisation de nos moyens et de nos armées pour lutter contre les terroristes. C'est un combat que nous devons intégrer maintenant dans notre vie de tous les jours et dans l'activité démocratique que nous menons. Et je dois dire qu'en matière de coopération dans notre sous-région, le travail a déjà commencé. Nous avons le G5. Et nous pensons pouvoir contribuer, en tout cas, à faire en sorte que les terroristes reculent un peu plus ».
Envoyé spécial
B. M. SISSOKO

http://maliactu.net/mali-sahel-ensemble-contre-le-terrorisme/

Soumeylou Boubeye Maïga à propos des autorités intérimaires : «Je regrette que le Gouvernement n'ait pas eu une communication très pertinente»

11 Avril 2016

Soumeylou Boubeye Maïga

Dans une interview exclusive, l'ancien ministre de la Défense et des anciens combattants, Soumeylou Boubeye Maïga, président du parti Alliance pour la solidarité au Mali-Convergence des forces patriotiques (ASMA-CFP), aborde ses relations avec le Président de la République, son départ du Gouvernement. Il analyse la situation sociopolitique du pays et se prononce sur l'actualité brûlante. Il regrette notamment le déficit de communication du Gouvernement sur les autorités intérimaires, récemment adoptées par l'Assemblée nationale.

22 Septembre : Peut-on savoir quels sont vos rapports avec le Président de la République?

Soumeylou Boubeye Maïga: Nous avons toujours eu de bonnes relations personnelles et politiques. Bien sûr, comme toutes relations, il y a souvent des périodes délicates. Mais sur le fond, nous n'avons pas de problème. Nous avons des appréciations sur des situations et nous avons chaque fois l'opportunité d'en discuter, de nous éclairer mutuellement. Mais c'est pour pouvoir mieux repartir de l'avant.

Cela veut dire qu'il vous consulte souvent?

Oh! Vous savez, le Président de la République n'a pas le même agenda que nous. Je me force d'apporter ma contribution à la compréhension et à la conduite des affaires

ou des problèmes du pays. Il prend là-dedans ce qui peut lui être plus utile. C'est ça le plus important.

Votre départ du Gouvernement avait laissé penser qu'il y aurait un froid entre vous. Cela s'est dissipé maintenant?

Non! Il n'y avait pas de problèmes. Vous savez, sur le plan politique, dans chaque situation, il faut une décision. C'était peut être la décision la moins mauvaise, c'est cela le plus important. Pour le reste, vous voyez bien que cela n'a rien altéré ni nos relations, ni notre engagement réciproque par rapport aux questions du pays, ni notre détermination à œuvrer ensemble dans le cadre du mandat qui nous a tous été confié et dont le Président est le dépositaire. Nous, nous avons pris la décision de le soutenir, bien avant le premier tour et à un moment où le vent ne lui était pas forcément favorable. C'était un choix de conviction, un choix de responsabilité et un choix de confiance aussi. Toutes choses qui ne sont pas à la merci de perturbations qui peuvent intervenir.

Quel regard portez-vous sur la gouvernance actuelle du pays?

Il y a beaucoup de termes génériques dont je me méfie beaucoup. Ce que je peux dire simplement il y a de très fortes attentes. Nous avons un pays qui a cumulé plusieurs crises et qui est passé d'une crise à une autre sans que la précédente n'ait été résolue. Donc, il y a une implication de plusieurs facteurs. Je me prends à penser toujours que le niveau de confiance dont le Président a bénéficié reflète le niveau des attentes. Et cela suppose, bien sûr, une grande responsabilité, une grande capacité de dépassement aussi. Au-delà de l'appartenance partisane, je pense que c'est aussi une mission pour reconstruire. Et pour reconstruire, il faut pouvoir rassembler et réconcilier par rapport à des objectifs communs et redonner au pays le sens d'un destin commun. Je crois que c'est cela la plus grande mission. Bien sûr, il y a énormément de contingences. Parce que nous avons un pays où l'Etat a pratiquement disparu dans beaucoup d'endroits. Même quand il est présent, la question de son utilité sociale se pose. Donc, nous sommes confrontés à la nécessité de reconstruire l'Etat, c'est-à-dire de renouveler la légitimé de l'Etat vis-à-vis des citoyens. Et cela, c'est par rapport, comme je l'ai dit, à son utilité sociale, à son impartialité (la légalité d'accès de l'ensemble des citoyens à l'action publique sans condition de fortune, de naissance ou de relation dans un pays où les 2/3 n'ont pas 30 ans). C'est-à-dire un pays qui fait face à d'énormes défis culturels, civilisationnels et de génération. Quand on dit que les attentes sont nombreuses, cela veut dire que les frustrations peuvent l'être aussi. Parce que le rythme des solutions ne suit pas toujours le niveau des attentes. Parce que les solutions sont quelques fois plus difficiles à élaborer, à mettre en œuvre, à diffuser, à disséminer. Donc, il peut y avoir de l'impatience, beaucoup de déception. Mais en ce qui nous concerne, cela ne remet aucune de nos options fondamentales en cause. Bien sûr, nous devons, avec les autres camarades, pouvoir faire le point sur la manière de mieux faire. Car, je crois fondamentalement en la notion de légitimité en démocratie. Légitimité par rapport au mandat des citoyens, légitimité technique aussi par rapport à la manière de gérer les problèmes du pays, légitimité par rapport aux perspectives que nous pouvons offrir sur le court terme, en termes de prospectives pour les citoyens.

Est-ce que vous voulez dire qu'il faut remobiliser ou réorienter la majorité présidentielle?

Oui! Vous savez, pour le moment la majorité est plus un fait arithmétique que politique. Nous avons encore des efforts à faire pour que la majorité présidentielle puisse refléter une unité d'action, une unité organique, une unité d'opinion et une unité de doctrine. Donc, là il y a un travail d'unification politique à faire, qui n'est, peut-être, pas encore fait. Mais qui se fait normalement comme dans tous les pays du monde autour de l'exécutif. Parce que c'est l'exécutif qui a la capacité de mettre en mouvement les appareils partisans pour que ceux-ci aussi puissent mettre en mouvement l'ensemble du corps social par une unité de doctrine, par rapport à un objectif commun. Donc, de ce point de vue, nous avons encore des efforts à faire. La mission historique que nous avons c'est de faire en sorte d'arriver à une unité politique très forte. Cela de manière à ce que nous puissions avancer de façon unitaire et que notre action puisse contribuer à clarifier le paysage politique pour éviter cette espèce d'éclectisme qu'on a dans les relations politiques où tout le monde est avec tout le monde. Pour notre part, au niveau de l'ASMA, notre priorité c'est de consolider, d'élargir la base de notre parti. C'est comme cela aussi que nous pouvons contribuer à élargir la base sociale de nos institutions. Chacun doit faire cet effort et puis après avoir une dynamique collective entre les forces qui, malgré tout, ont le même itinéraire. Donc, nous devons essayer d'avoir une unité organique.

Quels sont vos rapports avec le RPM, lesquels étaient exécrables à l'époque?

Nous sommes tous dans la majorité présidentielle. Nos relations avec le RPM, c'est un peu à l'image de nos relations dans la majorité présidentielle. C'est-à-dire que nous n'avons pas de démarche unitaire. Sur les différentes questions, ponctuellement, nous avons les mêmes prises de positions. En référence au soutien commun que nous apportons au Président. L'idéal aurait été que nous puissions avoir des relations politiques beaucoup plus approfondies, qui essaient de mobiliser dans un cadre unitaire dans le respect de l'identité des uns et des autres. Pour que, par exemple, au moment des échéances électorales, qu'on puisse être ensemble de manière à pouvoir transposer cette unité d'action aux niveaux communal, régional et étatique et incarner un projet collectif.

Concernant la situation de Kidal, est-ce que vous pensez que le temps a fini par vous donner raison?

Non! Ce sont des périodes différentes. Je crois qu'il faut analyser la situation de Kidal dans le cadre des problèmes que nous avons dans la gestion de notre pays. Aujourd'hui, les défis collectifs que nous avons à relever, c'est comment préserver l'unité en reconnaissant sa pluralité? Comment faire en sorte que nous puissions donner une base légale, juridique, politique et institutionnelle au pluralisme et à la diversité, non seulement identitaire que nous avons mais aussi à la diversité territoriale? Comment faire en sorte, par exemple, sans remettre en cause, le caractère unitaire de l'Etat que nous puissions faire coexister plusieurs statuts territoriaux, qui reflètent aussi des réalités sociologiques, historiques, géographiques précises. Je pense que tant que cette problématique n'est pas correctement résolue, nous aurons toujours des difficultés d'appréciation et des incompréhensions. Parce qu'on ne peut plus gérer les pays, les territoires, les populations, comme il y a 20 ans. Cela n'est pas possible. D'où aujourd'hui, partout il y a une prise de conscience très nette de l'identité territoriale. Et, on le voit, partout les citoyens aspirent à plus de libertés, à plus de responsabilités, à plus d'autonomie rapport aux problèmes qui les touchent de près. Mais en même temps, ils veulent un Etat qui garantisse à tous les citoyens la

sécurité, la justice et l'impartialité par rapport aux bénéfices de l'action publique. Ce sont les problématiques auxquelles nous avons à faire et qui imposent aux leaders politiques une attitude encore plus forte qu'avant, qu'il y a quelques années. Donc, si l'on veut régler un certain nombre de situations sur des repères du passé, on peut avoir des déconvenues comme celles que nous avons connues à Kidal mais aussi ailleurs. Je crois que ce sont les défis lancés à toutes les générations. Je suis convaincu que cette crise nous donne l'occasion d'approfondir notre démocratie et de consolider le projet démocratique qui, malgré tout, a mobilisé l'ensemble des Maliens. Je pense que, comme je l'ai dit à notre congrès, du chaos peut naitre le renouveau. Mais cela suppose que nous sommes tous mobilisés dans une démarche novatrice, en matière de démocratisation et de gestion du pays, en matière de relation entre l'Etat et les citoyens et d'une grande plus prise de conscience des réalités territoriales. Celles-ci s'imposent aujourd'hui à tout le monde. Comment gérer les situations infra-étatiques en même temps que nous devons gérer des situations qui dépassent le cadre national? Nous devons surtout avoir moins d'émotivité pour faire face à ces types de problèmes et ne pas avoir une approche sentimentale qui nous fait perdre une partie de notre lucidité.

Un moment, on parlait de la fusion entre votre parti et l'ADEMA. Où en est-on avec ce projet?

Peut-être, on n'a pas parlé spécifiquement de fusion. Nous avions toujours dit que nous étions prêts à aller le plus loin possible dans la construction de relation entre notre parti et l'ADEMA. C'est pour cela que nous avons fini par avoir un groupe parlementaire commun à l'Assemblée nationale. Mais aussi avec d'autres forces politiques avec lesquelles nous avons le même itinéraire sur le plan historique, normalement avec la même culture et les objectifs. Maintenant, cette volonté qui correspond à une aspiration largement partagée par nos bases peut se heurter à de l'indécision quelques fois au niveau des sphères dirigeantes, à des hésitations, souvent pour des calculs de positionnement. Mais je suis persuadé que personne ne peut endiguer le processus de recomposition politique, le processus de retrouvaille entre ceux qui partagent les mêmes valeurs. C'est pourquoi, nous nous encourageons nos militants à travailler par le bas, à faire en sorte que nous puissions avancer, dans ce cas comme dans d'autres, dans la perspective d'une unité par le bas qui finira par s'imposer aux instances dirigeantes.

Récemment, vous avez effectué une tournée à l'intérieur de certaines de vos sections, peut-on connaître le degré d'implantation de l'ASMA?

Nous, nous sommes un jeune, même si pour la plupart nous sommes des vieux militants. Donc, nous avons un engagement politique ancien. En tant qu'organisation, nous sommes un jeune parti. Nous allons célébrer notre 3e anniversaire le 19 mai prochain. Nous nous implantons un peu partout à travers le pays. Là également, il faut pouvoir combiner différentes formes d'implantation. C'est-à-dire que pour différentes raisons, nous avons hérité d'une forme d'organisation administrative qui est calquée sur le découpage administratif et géographique. Aujourd'hui, compte tenu de l'évolution de la société, il faut pouvoir donner aux sympathisants la possibilité d'adhérer, sans être directement dans les structures, voire être mobilisables par rapport à des activités du parti. Globalement, je pense que nous évoluons positivement.

Depuis votre départ du Gouvernement, que faites-vous?

Je suis très occupé maintenant. J'ai eu chance d'avoir la confiance de l'Union africaine pour participer à la médiation en Centrafrique, auprès du Président Sassou, et puis avec Abdoulaye Bathily pour le compte des Nations-unies, comme Vice-médiateur. Je pense que nous avons bien travaillé puisque nous avons amené ce pays vers un Forum de réconciliation nationale et puis à des élections qui se sont globalement bien déroulées. Après l'Union africaine m'a chargé de coordonner une équipe d'experts, une équipe consultative. A la demande, nous fournissons, nous travaillons, nous réfléchissons pour l'UA sur la problématique terroriste, sur l'extrémisme, la radicalisation. Et puis moi-même je mène beaucoup de réflexions, d'analyses, de recherches personnelles sur ces questions. J'essaie aussi d'accomplir mes tâches politiques dans le cadre du parti. J'essaie d'apporter ma contribution à la compréhension, à la solution des problèmes du pays et, de temps en temps, à chaque fois que le besoin se fait sentir, de transmettre aux différents niveaux de responsabilités, y compris au Président de la République, ma perception des problèmes. J'ai toujours dit qu'on peut être utile à son pays, sans être dans des postes de responsabilités.

L'Assemblée nationale vient de voter la loi sur les autorités intérimaires, quel commentaire faites-vous de cela?

Je pense que le projet présenté par le Gouvernement prend acte d'une situation de fait. Je regrette que le Gouvernement n'ait pas eu une communication très pertinente. Parce que beaucoup pensent que la loi qui a été votée est celle qui avait fait l'objet de beaucoup de critiques par rapport à la possibilité, dans le projet initial, de remplacer les équipes municipales et régionales qui sont en activité. Je crois que le Gouvernement doit faire un effort d'explications pour que les gens comprennent qu'il s'agit de mettre des autorités administratives dans les collectivités territoriales où il n'y en a pas où il n'y a pas d'équipe fonctionnelle. Donc, ce sont ces zones qui sont concernées, et les nouvelles régions qui viennent d'être créées qui, à l'évidence, doivent être dotées d'organes tenant lieu de conseils communaux, de conseils régionaux. Dans le cadre de la mise en œuvre de l'accord, c'est une des trouvailles pour organiser la représentation des populations et de l'Etat. Je comprends les critiques qui ont été formulées et qui, en partie, ont été entendues. Je pense que maintenant, il faut considérer que la polémique est derrière nous et qu'il faut qu'on avance. Parce qu'un pays ne peut avancer dans la dissension permanente. L'expression de la différence ne peut être synonyme d'expression de la dissension permanente. Il faut bien qu'un moment donné qu'on soit d'accord sur l'essentiel. Après, c'est à la pratique qu'on va juger.

Monsieur le président, 2018 s'approche, au cas où le Président IBK est candidat, est-ce que vous allez vous présenter contre lui ou allez-vous le soutenir?

Pour le moment 2018 est un peu loin. Je pense que nous n'allons pas céder à la tentation de nous laisser entrainer dans un exercice prématuré. Pour le moment, nous sommes engagés avec le Président de la République dans le cadre d'un mandat qui est en train de se dérouler. Notre priorité c'est que les résultats de cette période soient à la hauteur des attentes. Comme je l'ai dit, en dépit des difficultés constatées, ici et là, aucune de nos options fondamentales n'est en cause. Nous allons tenir nos engagement jusqu'au bout. Et puis après, on verra avec le Président de la République, nos partenaires quelle est la meilleure configuration dans laquelle nous devons être pour garantir et consolider les résultats que nous aurons dans cette période

et en faire une plateforme, à partir de laquelle nous devons avancer ensemble.

Interview réalisée par Youssouf Diallo

http://malijet.com/

No tribal war in Nigerian Army – Spokesperson

April 3, 2016

The Nigerian Army has denied reports of a tribal war among soldiers in an Army Barracks in Enugu State.

The spokesperson of Nigerian Army, Sani Usman, said the reports are a "deliberate and calculated campaign of calumny aimed at misleading the public and cause disaffection among troops".

Mr. Usman, a Colonel, also said the reports were circulated in the social media by a "faceless and obviously subversive group named "EASTERN RADIO".

The Army spokesperson said the group created and posted a story titled "Tribal War at Army Barracks, 82 Division Enugu Three Soldiers Feared Dead" on various social media platforms.

In the write up, Mr. Usman said the group alleged that there was an altercation in an unnamed barracks in 82 Division over nomination for "peacekeeping operations" which led to exchange of gunfire among imaginary troops that resulted in loss of lives.

"Apart from obvious flaws and inconsistency in the narration, the Nigerian Army wishes to emphatically state that no such incident occurred anywhere in the Nigerian Army, let alone 82 Division.

"In fact, the alleged reported incident existed only in the obviously negatively

skewed minds of the authors of such fabrication," he said.

Mr. Usman added that the intention of the group is to cause distrust amongst Nigerian troops and the country's populace at large.

He however, said the group will not succeed because "the Nigerian Army is cohesive."

"Their methodology is to employ such campaign of calumny and distortion of an established reign of peaceful, harmonious and esprit-de-corps culture in 82 Division and the entire Nigerian Army.

"However, the campaign is a failed one as the entire Nigerian Army remains indivisible, unprovoked and not gullible to such cheap and heinous insinuations," he said.

Mr. Usman urged Nigerians to disregard the false story from such groups "and their affiliated secessionist groups as there is no iota of truth in the story".

"We would like to inform the public that the 82 Division Nigerian Army is intact in all its locations and deployments, same goes for all the various formations, units, cantonments and barracks of the Nigerian Army.

"Above all, the Nigerian Army remains committed to providing aid to civil authority as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (As Amended) and wishes to assure the public of the Chief of Army Staff's unalloyed commitment to protect lives and property whenever called upon to do so in line with extant provisions of the law.

"We wish to also reassure all well meaning Nigerians that the Nigerian Army remains a national institution which emphasizes peace, unity and mutual co-existence devoid of any sentiments or such variables as ethnic, tribe or religious differences.

"Any attempt by any individual or group of persons to associate the military and indeed the Nigerian Army with such will be a total waste of time, energy and resources. We are proud professionals bound by discipline, unflinching love, loyalty, espirit-de-corps and love for our colleagues and our country. We would remain focussed and would not be distracted by irritating campaigns of calumny or fabricated lies by some unscrupulous elements.

"It is therefore very imperative at this point to warn all those mischief makers to desist from these unpatriotic and obviously subversive acts in any guise," he said

http://www.premiumtimesng.com/

Rwanda : simulacre de justice et véritable attentat terroriste

6 AVR. 2016

Charles ONANA, journaliste d'investigation de grande qualité, auteur de nombreux ouvrages dont certains traitent avec une grande justesse des drames survenus depuis 1990 en Afrique Centrale, rappelle ici quel fût l'attentat du 6 avril 1994, quelles ont été ses conséquences et quelles ont été les diverses opérations de manipulation médiatiques et/ou juridiques qui ont suivi....et se poursuivent.

Rwanda : simulacre de justice et véritable attentat terroriste

 Depuis plus de vingt ans, tout le monde parle du « génocide tutsi » mais personne ne veut parler de l'attentat qui reste, d'après les Nations Unies, l'événement déclencheur de la tragédie du Rwanda. Il faut rappeler que dans cet attentat, survenu le 6 avril 1994, deux chefs d'État africains ont été tués, avec leurs collaborateurs et l'ensemble de l'équipage français. Durant vingt ans, le Tribunal Pénal International pour le Rwanda (TPIR) a refusé d'enquêter sur cet acte terroriste. Le premier procureur de ce tribunal, la Canadienne Louise Arbour, a étouffé ce dossier. Tous les avocats du TPIR qui ont voulu que la justice internationale fasse la lumière sur cet attentat se sont heurtés à une fin de non-recevoir. En revanche, tout ce qui semblait aller dans le sens d'une criminalisation massive des Hutus, justifiée ou non, provoquait l'enthousiasme et le zèle du TPIR.

 La communauté internationale soutenait dès 1994, c'est-à-dire avant toute enquête sur les événements du Rwanda, qu'il y avait eu un « génocide contre les Tutsi » et que le TPIR devait arrêter tous ceux que l'on pouvait soupçonner, imaginer ou supposer qu'ils avaient peut-être eu, un jour, une vague pensée contre les rebelles tutsi de l'Armée Patriotique Rwandaise (APR) ou leur action. A partir du moment où ils étaient Hutus, ils devaient être poursuivis car ils étaient nécessairement ou potentiellement suspects. Tous les Hutus, sauf bien entendu ceux qui sont dits « modérés », sont, aux yeux des rebelles de l'APR et de leur chef, de potentiels « génocidaires ». Voilà l'idéologie que la rébellion de l'APR (majoritairement constituée de Tutsis exilés d'Ouganda) et soutenue par les États-Unis et la Grande-Bretagne ou plus vaguement par la Communauté internationale, a imposé aux médias depuis 1994.

 Il n'a plus été possible, depuis cette date, de questionner l'attentat qui a tout déclenché ni la guerre qui a plongé le Rwanda dans l'abîme. L'histoire officielle avait classé les Rwandais en deux camps : les bons (Tutsis- rebelles et non rebelles) d'un côté et les méchants (Hutus responsables politiques ou militaires et miliciens) de l'autre. Pour être audible ou crédible, il faut uniquement parler des Tutsi, de la souffrance des Tutsis, peu importe qu'il y ait parmi eux (les rebelles de l'APR) des responsables de millions de morts au Rwanda et en République Démocratique du Congo. Il n'y a pas de place pour examiner, analyser et observer la complexité de ce qui s'est passé au Rwanda puis au Congo. De toutes les façons, les histoires d'Afrique sont bizarres et trop compliquées. Ne fatiguons pas les lecteurs ou les téléspectateurs à expliquer l'histoire ou la sociologie du Rwanda. Ne cherchons pas à les éclairer sur la guerre et sur les soutiens du gouvernement rwandais et sur celui des rebelles tutsis de l'APR.

Ce n'est pas nécessaire de souligner qu'il y a des victimes chez Hutus comme chez les Tutsi et qu'il y a aussi des auteurs de crimes contre l'Humanité chez les uns et les autres. En effet, il y a eu une guerre entre les troupes gouvernementales hutues et la rébellion tutsie. Si les troupes gouvernementales ont tué des Rwandais, les rebelles ont marché sur un tapis de cadavres et exécuté de nombreux témoins canadiens et espagnols avant de prendre Kigali. Qu'un seul groupe soit jugé, malgré les documents de l'ONU et les rapports d'experts ou ceux des organisations des droits humains, cela disqualifie la justice internationale et les journalistes accrochés à la version officielle. Cet aveuglement et ce parti pris compromet toute possibilité de réconciliation entre Rwandais. C'était pourtant la mission assignée par le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU au TPIR. Il a lamentablement échoué.

Le problème dans cette histoire, c'est que le TPIR a voulu absolument valider l'existence d'un « génocide tutsi» sans enquêter, sans chercher à connaître avec précision sa réalité ni son effectivité. Le TPIR est parti du postulat que la Communauté internationale avait déjà validé, un peu à la hâte, le « génocide tutsi » ou qu'il était de notoriété publique et donc qu'il n'était plus besoin de le prouver. Résultat, le TPIR a été incapable de dire avec précision, en plus de seize années de procédures, qui avait planifié ce fameux génocide », quand et comment ? Pis, plusieurs personnes, évidemment Hutus, ont passé dix, treize, quatorze ou quinze ans de détention à la prison du TPIR à Arusha avant d'être acquittées, de tous les chefs d'accusation. Des ministres ou des officiers, qui avaient été présentés comme étant des « génocidaires », ont ainsi été reconnus, après plus d'une décennie de détention, comme innocents. Évidemment, les médias ont du mal à parler de ces acquittés que tous considéraient comme de présumés coupables. Qui va réparer le mal fait à tous ces gens et à leur famille ?

Aujourd'hui, le vrai problème reste celui de l'attentat terroriste du 6 avril 1994. Comment expliquer que la lumière ne soit toujours pas faite sur « l'événement déclencheur ». Porté devant les tribunaux français en 1997 par les veuves de l'équipage français, les familles des victimes de l'attentat sont épuisées d'attendre les résultats d'une instruction qui n'en finit pas. Plus de vingt ans après, ce dossier est soumis à de vaines polémiques et à des conjectures délirantes pour ne pas désigner juridiquement les vrais coupables. Ceux qui ont prétendu que ce sont les Hutus, toujours les mêmes, les méchants, qui ont non seulement massacrés, « génocidé » mais également commis l'attentat avec l'aide des français n'expliquent pas pourquoi la justice française, qui n'hésite pas à poursuivre les hutus et même les militaires français ou tous ceux qui sont en désaccord profond avec la version politiquement correcte de la tragédie rwandaise, peine à conclure sur les auteurs de l'attentat du 6 avril.

Tous les éléments sont pourtant disponibles et les juges ont tous les moyens pour se faire une idée très précise de ce qui s'est réellement passé dans cette affaire. Nous sommes quelques-uns à avoir accumulé de nombreux éléments sur ce dossier et n'avons plus le moindre doute sur les véritables auteurs et commanditaires de l'attentat. Nous avons publié le premier livre sur cet attentat en 2002 et celui que nous avons identifié comme le responsable numéro un ou le principal suspect et qui a été le bénéficiaire direct de cet attentat est l'actuel chef de l'État rwandais, Paul Kagame. Après avoir déposé deux plaintes contre l'auteur de cet ouvrage et contre l'éditeur, il a choisi de battre en retraite face aux offres de preuves et aux témoins que nous avons produits et qui risquaient de le confondre devant la justice. Désormais, ce sont ses propres collaborateurs qui s'épanchent sur son rôle et sa responsabilité

dans cet attentat. Certains sont assassinés, d'autres sont enlevés et disparaissent. Tout ceci paraît étrange pour un acte terroriste qui aurait été commis, selon l'actuel régime rwandais, par des Hutus soutenus par François Mitterrand.

 Charles ONANA

https://blogs.mediapart.fr/

Terrorism in the World

2015 'most lethal year' for terrorism in Europe

The year 2015 was the deadliest for terrorist violence in Europe in nearly a decade, according to Aon Risk Solutions

12 APRIL 2016

The attacks in Brussels on 22 March took place in public spaces: Zaventem Airport and Maelbeek metro station. © Shutterstock

In its latest report *Terrorism & Political Violence Risk Map*, the firm explained that the West remained the safest in the world but terrorists increasingly targeted civilians and public gatherings in the region.

Since January 2015, 31% of all attacks in the West took place in public spaces such as transportation points, bars, restaurants and hotels.

Scott Bolton, director in crisis management at Aon Risk Solutions, urged business leaders with global footprints to adopt a "more strategic risk management approach" to limit the impact of attacks on their people, operations and assets.

He said: "Understanding how they are exposed to the peril is key to achieving this outcome."

The report, produced with risk consultancy The Risk Advisory Group, highlighted that Islamic State entered a "more aggressive phase" of mounting mass casualty attacks in 2015 and early 2016, with the US, France, Turkey and Belgium all affected.

Islamic State's activities have contributed to risk levels being sustained or increased in more than a dozen countries, the study found.

Based on assessment by Risk advisory and Aon experts, risk ratings increased in 18 nations and reduced in 13.

Countries with increased risk ratings were: Angola, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Ghana, Guyana, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Qatar, South Africa, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Those with lowered ratings were: Belize, Colombia, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Jamaica, Kenya, Myanmar, Norway, the Philippines, Slovenia, Serbia, Thailand and Timor Leste.

Henry Wilkinson, head of intelligence and analysis at The Risk Advisory Group, said: "Businesses need to be flexible and robust in how they anticipate and manage risks in the fluid world the map depicts."

"This requires actionable assessments that take both a strategic and a more detailed operational view of the markets in which they seek to thrive."

http://www.theactuary.com/

Brussels attacks, Russia's withdrawal from Syria and US presidential campaign

Apr 4, 2016

Think tank roundup: In March, Russian experts analyzed the reasons behind the Belgian terror attack, the surprise withdrawal of the Russian military contingent from Syria and the potential implications of the unpredictable U.S. presidential campaign for Russia.

An archivist works at a memorial site for the victims of the Brussels attacks at the Place de la Bourse in Brussels on April 1, 2016. Photo: AP

During the month of March, the leading Russian think tanks focused on three primary issues – the threat of radical Islamist terrorism after the latest Belgian attacks, the withdrawal of Russian military forces from Syria, and the ongoing U.S. presidential campaign.
Terrorist attacks in Brussels

The terrorist attacks in Brussels on Mar. 22 were a real tragedy not only for Belgium, but also for the whole of Europe. This time, the terrorists took aim at the capital of the EU, in the very heart of Europe.
Sergey Veselovsky of MGIMO-University analyzes the reasons that led to this tragedy. The expert explains that, apart from the obvious problems with coordination of anti-terrorism security forces in the European countries, there have been a lot of other failures in both the internal and foreign policies of the EU, which caused the spread of radical Islam across Belgium and into neighboring countries in Europe.

Recommended: "Three imminent impacts of the Brussels terror attacks"

The failures include foreign policy mistakes related to Syria and Libya, as well as the unthinking encouragement of the interests of the migrants making their way to Europe. If allowed to go too far, this could result in the destruction of the centuries-old European values system, which has always provided Europe with orientation and protection. "It is only a united Europe with unshakeable values and principles that is

capable of passing this test for stability and come out a winner from this confrontation," writes Veselovsky.

Veniamin Popov of MGIMO-University is convinced that the terrorist attacks in Brussels, and more generally, the activation of jihad in Europe, are a logical outcome of the EU's ill-conceived policy towards the Muslim countries of the [Middle East](#) and North Africa. According to the expert, the Europeans did the U.S.'s bidding by creating new zones of conflict and a political vacuum in the region of the Middle East and Northern Africa – a political vacuum that was inevitably filled up by radical ideas.

EUROPE MUST UNITE THE EFFORTS NOT ONLY OF ITS MEMBER STATES, BUT ALSO OF THE OTHER MAJOR PLAYERS, INCLUDING RUSSIA.

Europe must unite the efforts not only of its member states, but also of the other major players, including Russia. However, even being aware of this necessity, the Europeans are in no hurry to improve their relations with Moscow, with only the most farsighted of the European politicians speaking of the possibility of restoration of constructive dialogue with the Russian Federation during this period of crisis.

The head of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP), Fyodor Lukyanov, maintains that the Europeans, with their policy of toleration and obsession with preventing a new war in [Europe](#), quite simply are afraid to name aloud their principal enemy as it would lead to undermining the whole of the socio-political construction that has been drawn up with such deliberation since the World War II. This obstacle appears to be practically irremovable, while Europe is turning from a haven of peace into a boiling cauldron whose further development is impossible to predict.
Alexey Malashenko of Carnegie Moscow Center thinks that all contemporary anti[terrorism](#) efforts face one difficult problem — the inability to conceive of effective ways of fighting the ideological facet of terrorism. Malashenko points out that, obviously, this cannot be achieved by air strikes or even joint military efforts by [Russia](#) and the West. This new, complicated phase of history has to be grasped and endured, as humanity has not yet invented any effective methods to deal with it, the expert concludes.
The highly unpredictable U.S. presidential campaign

The ongoing [electoral struggle](#) in the U.S. has again been the center of attention for Russian analysts, who are attempting to predict further developments and forecast a potential winner.

Of the two Democratic contenders (Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders), Mikhail Troitsky of MGIMO-University rates high the chances of Hillary Clinton, whose nomination he considers all but certain. According to Troitsky, the other Democratic candidate, Bernie Sanders, is too much of a radical in the eyes of the Democratic majority, although his campaign has shown that in some demographic segments, there is demand for more "leftist" ideas.
Meanwhile, Troitsky is not quite certain of the nomination chances of the Republican[Donald Trump](#): though currently, he is undoubtedly the most popular candidate, he is not very popular among the party ranks, which will try to minimize the chances of his possible nomination as a Republican candidate. The expert points out that this

campaign is not typical of the U.S.: "The distinctive feature of the current campaign is that both potential candidates have high negative ratings, incurring serious criticism and questions and a high disapproval level. In such a situation, the final results can be totally unexpected."

The head of the CFDP, Fyodor Lukyanov, believes that the Democrats' current campaign provides evidence of some decline in the party: while traditionally aiming at young people and the creative class, the party somehow has not found any young, charismatic new leaders, and is putting forward Clinton and Sanders who are not young and, in the case of Clinton, not very appealing to young millennials. Clinton is likely to surpass Sanders, but among the Democratic Party leaders, the current race should lead to a re-think of the party's image, the expert says.

Things are even bleaker in the Republican Party, where Trump's opponents look weak and are unable to offer any resistance to the billionaire. The campaign is totally unpredictable, proving again that for the American political system, of huge importance is a politician's ability to be an entertainer as much as a statesman.

Vladislav Inozemtsev of CFDP voices an unconventional view of Trump as a candidate and potential president. Quite possibly, the media-manufactured image of a fiery politician known for his political incorrectness and populism is nothing but an image used by Trump to conduct a winning campaign.

THE NOMINATION OF TRUMP AND HIS COMING TO POWER WOULD BE A REAL TEST OF THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM FOR BEING STABLE AND DEMOCRATIC, WHICH MAY TEACH THE U.S. SOME HISTORICAL LESSONS AND INDUCE REFORMING OF THE SYSTEM'S WEAK SPOTS

It may turn out in the future, that the billionaire can act in a more pragmatic and rational way than any other candidate from the Republican Party or Democratic Party. In addition, the analyst points out, the nomination of Trump and his coming to power would be a real test of the American political system for being stable and democratic, which may teach the U.S. some historical lessons and induce reforming of the system's weak spots.

Withdrawal of Russian troops from Syria

On Mar. 15, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the withdrawal of the main part of the Russian military contingent from Syria. The official reason for the withdrawal is that, over the past half year, most of the objectives that were set have been attained. Russian experts are wondering what made the President withdraw the troops at this exact time, while assessing the results of this overseas campaign, Russia's largest in many years.

Gevorg Mirzayan, an expert at the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), assigned high ratings to the results of Russia's military campaign in Syria. The operation helped Russia win several objectives at once: to depart from the burdensome Ukrainian agenda in its relations with the West, gain leverage in the Middle East processes, and make a global show of its ability to solve complicated, large-scale, military-political issues.

Meanwhile, Mirzayan explains, the reasons for the withdrawal are hardly linked to accomplishment of the goals proclaimed by the Kremlin; more probably, the Turkish and Iranian factors have been at play here, as well as possible agreements on mutual concessions between Moscow and Washington (for example, a swap of the Syrian settlement for the Ukrainian one). "The Kremlin continues its victories in Syria, now with much lower expenses and much larger political opportunities than before," the analyst sums up.

"Putin likes to surprise," Carnegie Moscow Center analyst Andrey Kolesnikov remarks. Russia's unexpected withdrawal from Syria could very well be the result of the Kremlin's hurt feelings about the belittling of its role in and contribution to the fight against terrorism in the Middle East on the part of the West. Obama had said recently that Putin was "no player."

The withdrawal from Syria jumbled all the pieces on the board and showed what would happen to Syria if Russia packed up and left. Besides, the Kremlin did not want to get trapped in a long-term conflict, since such adventures bring much more problems than profits, especially under the current economic crisis in Russia.

CFDP analyst Dmitri Oreshkin suggests that there were multiple reasons for the rush withdrawal of the Russian troops. Conspicuous among them were the dwindling of the military and financial resources required for conducting a large operation; the degradation, against the background of the campaign, of relations with Turkey, which may create problems for Russia's oil transport through the Black Sea straits; the lack of approval from Israel, with which Russia has complicated but not adversarial relations; as well as the relations with Iran which really benefited from Russia's aid but did not initiate any friendly actions in return.

At the same time, Oreshkin rates negatively the results of the campaign in Syria, pointing out that as a result, Russia has fallen out even worse with the West, spent huge resources and incurred the Islamists' wrath.

Russia-West relations

This time, the subject of relations between Russia and the West, traditional for Russian analysts, is analyzed against the backdrop of the Syrian crisis. Is the ceasefire agreement on Syria and the withdrawal of the Russian troops capable of reconciling the powers?

Former Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov gives a definite answer: it is not yet time to speak of a stabilization of the relations between Russia and the West, especially Russia and the U.S. The joint effort in the fight against terrorism in the Middle East and progress in the Syrian settlement do not mean that relations between Russia and the U.S. have risen to the pre-crisis level of cooperation.
Moreover, there is still a risk of the political conflict escalating into a military-political one because of the extremely high level of distrust between the parties. "Overcoming the current crisis in Russian-American relations is not a prospect for the near future," Ivanov concludes

Nadezhda Arbatova of CFDP draws attention to the fact that the relations be-

tween Russia and the EU are at an extremely low level although traditionally, Russia's interaction with Europe have been more productive than that with the U.S. The expert points out that in mid-March, the Europeans published "five principles in relations with Russia" from which it is apparent that Ukraine remains the central problem at the heart of any dialogue.

Even the joint constructive work on the most important contemporary problems including terrorism and the nuclear problems of Iran and North Korea do not clear the agenda of the Ukrainian conflict, which still poisons the dialogue between Moscow and Brussels.

Carnegie Moscow Center analyst Alexey Arbatov voices cautious optimism regarding the Russian-American dialogue against the background of the Syrian settlement. "I think that at this point, you can hardly say that we have become friends. But I believe that both Moscow and Washington have come to realize that we can no longer walk the path of escalation, as it can lead to a catastrophe. Besides, some mutual interests have become apparent," Arbatov explains.

The expert points out that even mutual aspiration for improving the relations on the part of the leaders of the countries cannot guarantee a "detente" as, firstly, the accumulated baggage of contradictions is too heavy and, secondly, Russia and the U.S. are experiencing an unprecedented surge of anti-American and anti-Russian public sentiments, respectively. In view of that, the process of restoring the dialogue may take a long time," emphasizes Arbatov.

http://www.russia-direct.org/

MUSLIMS STARTING TO RECOGNIZE SOURCE OF TERRORISM

'Are we simply part of this world, or are we perhaps an explosive charge implanted in [the world's] entrails?'

image: http://www.wnd.com/files/2015/10/ISIS.jpg

ISIS sent out a new video taunting America.

Reports from the Middle East on the aftermath of the deadly terror attacks in Brussels criticize Muslims for fostering an atmosphere and culture in which such violence is birthed.

Stunningly, the criticism is coming from Muslims.

"We say that 'terrorism has no religion and no homeland.' But we must confront the fact that most terrorist attacks in the Arab and Muslim world itself are not carried out by Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Ahmadis, or Bahais – but by Muslims and the sons and daughters of Muslims," wrote Kuwaiti author Khalil 'Ali Haider in the Bahraini daily Al-Ayyam.

His comments and those of others were documented by the Middle East Media Research Institute, which translates and analyzes media in the region.

Haider wrote that some "are not satisfied with carrying out their crimes in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia, but carry them out in Western countries."
"And even if they believe that terrorism in Europe and the U.S. is justified because of [their] 'colonial past' and 'hostile positions' against the Arabs and Muslims – of what crimes are the Egyptians, Iraqis, Afghans and Nigerians guilty?"

MEMRI reported the articles criticized the violence and blamed "the prevailing cul-

tures and perceptions in the Muslim and Arab countries of origin."

"They harshly criticize the Muslims for not standing up against terrorism or doing enough to eliminate it and for justifying or even praising the attacks while disregarding any Muslim responsibility for terrorism," MEMRI said.

Ghassan Charbel, the editor of Saudi daily Al-Hayat, wrote: "Are we simply part of this world, or are we perhaps an explosive charge implanted in [this world's] entrails? Are we a normal neighborhood in the global village, or are we maybe a neighborhood of suicide bombers in [that village]? Are these massacres that move [from place to place] aimed at annexing the Arab and Muslim communities in the West to the lexicon of slaughter and suicide? Are we part of the world's present and future, or are we a dark tempest that seeks to send [the world] back to the caves that it abandoned when it chose the path of progress and human dignity?"

He questioned whether Muslims are defending their identity or trying to impose it on others.

"Is our option for the other essentially that he will either be like us or we will blow him up, so that his body parts mingle with ours?"

Further, he wrote of the issue of accepting help from people, then trying to kill them. "Has a man who came as a refugee or immigrant to a foreign country that took him in and provided him with a roof over his head, an address, social assistance, and medical care the right to blow himself up on its streets because it did not embrace his character, his interpretation, and his mode of thinking and way of life? Does the discourse regarding unemployment and non-integration in Western society detract from [the horror of] the crime? Has a spiteful person the right to kill the other merely because he does not drink with him at the same fount?"

He said the failure has been in trying to build "a normal state – a state that lives within its borders … that strives its utmost to obtain progress and development and provide its citizens with work opportunities and involvement."
From Tareq Masarwa of the Jordanian Al-Rai came criticism of how some Arabs try to justify terrorism by blaming their host countries.
"[According to] some analyses [of the Brussels attacks,] the terrorists grew up in the outskirts of European cities and were angry at being marginalized! We hear these same excuses here. However, other analyses responded with a wise comparison: They [the Muslim terrorists in Europe] chose terrorism. Otherwise, why aren't there millions of [South] American terrorists in Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico, since they too are poor and grew up in the outskirts of big cities?! According to another analysis, Europe does not give immigrants from North Africa, and specifically from Africa itself, the same opportunities that it gives European immigrants. This constitutes a justification of terrorism, since Europe gives the immigrant the opportunity for a free education, and thousands of Jordanians have attended French and German universities for free… and had an easy time becoming citizens of those countries."
He continued: "The sight of people flocking to Europe's borders, including Syrians, Iraqis, Kurds, Afghans, and Iranians, is heartbreaking, especially when they are carrying their children or pushing them in front of them – but all we do is curse the Europeans as racists who hate Muslims and foreigners, and consider it our right to mur-

der them in their airports, trains, and theaters."

Haidar pointed out that the damage soon may fall on Muslims, too.

"Is it normal that while terrorism succeeds in recruiting hundreds and even thousands of Muslims, we are satisfied to persuade ourselves that their numbers 'are still negligible' compared to the global Muslim population? Must the number of terrorists swell to tens or hundreds of thousands before we realize that a thunderous pounding torrent [is headed] towards us, and that this means that we must stop, convene, and give intellectuals the freedom to examine the reasons [for this] and the freedom to publish the results of their studies?"

He continued: "Unfortunately, the Muslims do not yet unanimously condemn ISIS. Some Muslims praise them [ISIS members], think the media wrongs them, and join them at the first opportunity, and even carry out the first suicide mission they are offered anywhere in the world!"

http://www.wnd.com/2016/04/

From Right to Favor

The refugee question as moral crisis.

A tent at the entrance of the Jungle in Calais, France, on January 8, 2016, with a Banksy painting of Steve Jobs, whose father was Syrian, and the remnants of tear-gas grenades from a recent police intervention. *(Didier Fassin)*

EDITOR'S NOTE: This essay is based on a lecture delivered at the Einstein Forum in Potsdam, Germany, on December 3, 2015, and draws on material previously published in Revista Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares and Mittelweg 36.

Since the November 13 attacks in Paris, which killed 130 people and injured 350, and the New Year's Eve melee in Cologne, where the police recorded 379 allegations of sexual assault and robbery, it has become increasingly difficult to have a sensible discussion about the refugee question in Europe. Even though the perpetrators of the Paris attacks were almost all French and Belgian citizens, and the suspects in Cologne were mostly Moroccans and Algerians, politicians, commentators, and citizens throughout Europe have pointed to the events to justify the rejection of asylum seekers from Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East. They allege two things: a possible fifth column of terrorists traveling among the asylum seekers, and the impossibility of integrating these refugees into Western societies. What has been lost in the debate is the recognition that the recent influx of asylum seekers and the wave of anxiety it has generated have revealed the refugee question rather than having created it. Indeed, there is a long-standing distrust and hostility in Europe toward non-Europeans fleeing persecution and violence.

The so-called European refugee crisis is a moral issue before it is a demographic one, and the extent to which it even is a demographic issue is not entirely clear. At the end of 2015, the European border agency Frontex released statistics about the

entry of 710,000 migrants into the European Union from January through September. These "massive numbers," as the report characterized them, made headlines and fueled xenophobic reactions across the continent. It was only after the figures were criticized by human-rights activists that the agency added a "clarification" on its website explaining that "a large number of the people who were counted when they arrived in Greece were again counted when entering the EU for the second time through Hungary or Croatia." It is estimated that this overcounting has increased the figures by probably one-fourth, thereby exaggerating the perceived size of the influx. Similarly, the obstacles on the Eastern European routes created to deter the movement of people seeking to reach Germany or Scandinavia have produced a glut of dramatic images of crowds blocked behind border fences, clogged at passage points, or confined in train stations, which have also fed anxieties all over Europe.

In reality, the 500,000 to 600,000 migrants who, according to the adjusted estimation of Frontex's figures, entered the European Union during the first nine months of 2015 represent barely more than one person per 1,000 of the total EU population. In contrast, refugees in Lebanon count for approximately one-fourth of the country's population—proportionally, 250 times more. And in comparison with other historical periods, the current refugee tally is barely higher than that of the early 1990s, when people fled to the EU from conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. The problem today is the unequal distribution of these asylum seekers among the nations of the EU. For first-time asylum applicants between 2014 and 2015 as recorded by Eurostat, there is a stark contrast between countries that have refused to take their share—notably the United Kingdom and France, with an increase from 2014-15 of 19 and 20 percent, respectively—and countries that have demonstrated their willingness to offer protection to refugees, such as Germany (with 442,000 new asylum seekers in 2015) and Sweden (with 156,000), representing an increase of 155 and 108 percent, respectively.

With parity and solidarity among EU members sorely lacking, what could have been a collectively manageable problem has been met with populist rhetoric in some member states and led to a costly generosity on the part of others. The criticisms expressed in Munich on February 13 by French Prime Minister Manuel Valls against German Chancellor Angela Merkel's refugee policy, which he called "unsustainable," represent a clear indication of the profound divide among European leaders with respect to the values of the 1951 Geneva Convention. "Europe cannot take in all migrants from Syria, Iraq or Africa," Valls stated. "It has to regain control over its borders, over its immigration or asylum policies." The fact that Valls is the head of a socialist government, whereas Merkel leads a center-right coalition, shows that the crux of the refugee crisis is more moral than political.

These tensions are hardly new: Over the past four decades, the status of refugees and the parameters of asylum in Europe have been reshaped by changes in both the political representation of the individuals concerned and the evaluation of their claims' legitimacy by government officials. Whereas many European states once regarded asylum as a right, they now increasingly treat it as a favor. In parallel, the image of refugees had to be transformed, from victims of persecution entitled to international protection to undesirable persons suspected of taking advantage of a liberal system. The situation of the millions of Syrians fleeing the civil war in their country epitomizes this reversal: The sympathy aroused by the tragic photograph of a drowned Syrian child whose body washed ashore on a Turkish beach on September 2—one of

close to 3,500 such fatalities last year, the greatest proportion of which have been coming from Africa—was short-lived. In a matter of days, sympathy had lost out to animosity and the politics of fear.

* * *

Under the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is any person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." The convention was limited to the victims of "events occurring before 1 January 1951," meaning that it pertained exclusively to people in Europe who were the victims of World War II. It was not until 1967 that the UN's Protocol of New York generalized Geneva's protection to anyone who fits its definition of a refugee. However, it soon became obvious that the globalization of asylum, especially the principle of treating all victims fairly, was taking a profoundly asymmetrical and unequal path. To put it schematically, in the Global South, there are *refugees*, and in the North, there are *asylum seekers*. The difference is not just one of terminology or even status; it is a fundamental difference of recognition.

In the Global South, the general pattern is that people fleeing violence go to a neighboring country, where they are usually gathered in camps. Such is the situation today for the hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, of Syrian refugees in Turkey and Jordan, and of Somali refugees in Kenya. The 10 countries with the highest number of refugees are all in Asia and Africa, with Turkey and Pakistan each having more individuals under their protection than the entire European continent. By contrast, in the Global North, the general pattern is that of people requesting the protection of nations in Western Europe and North America through administrative channels. Such is the experience of tens of thousands of asylum seekers in France, Britain, and Germany, although the country with the greatest number of them in the world is South Africa, which alone counts for one-third of the total number—more than all of the asylum seekers in the European Union. According to the latest statistics from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), dating from June 2015, of the 2.3 million asylum seekers in the world, 798,000 were in South Africa and 678,000 in Europe, with the report calling for "caution" in the latter case "because of the reported instances of the same individual being registered multiple times across the continent."

This geographical distribution has important repercussions. In the Global South, people are collectively considered to be refugees based simply on their being a fugitive from a war zone or a country with a climate of political repression. In the North, they are regarded as asylum seekers, with each claim being individually assessed through inquisitive procedures, at the end of which a minority will be granted refugee status. There also exists a sort of intermediate option, resettlement, by which certain countries from the Global North, such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, establish quotas for refugees at camps in the South, who are selected according to specific criteria and given authorization to immigrate—an arrangement which is nothing less than a market of compassion.

This divide between South and North, however, has been challenged by the recent evolution of conditions. Precarious settlements that function like refugee camps ex-

ist not only in Africa and Asia but also in Europe, as has been the case near Calais in northern France, where until March some 6,000 people lived in squalor in a settlement known as "the Jungle" before it was dismantled by the government of François Hollande, which had given the refugees this waste ground one year earlier but decided to get rid of it once it had been equipped with tents, wooden shacks, medical units, and other necessities with the assistance of NGOs.

In France, as in most European countries, the individual examination of applications is the only path to asylum. Two institutions perform this triage: the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless People (OFPRA), an administrative institution whose officers initially evaluate the claims, and the National Court of the Right of Asylum (CNDA), a judiciary institution in which magistrates adjudicate the appeals of rejected claimants, and whose proceedings I observed for six months over the course of 2009 to 2010, attending approximately 100 hearings.

Ideally, the recognition of the "well-founded fear of being persecuted" should be a relatively straightforward matter based on the asylum seeker's stories and supporting documents. The account of past events (violence endured or exposure to threats), accompanied by material evidence (passport or identity card proving origin and citizenship, newspaper articles or trial proceedings, medical or psychological certificates), attests to the probability of future persecution were an applicant to return to her country. However, there is always the possibility that an applicant's story could be based on lies and her documents forged. The examination of her claim is therefore an inquiry into its truth.

When evaluating the truth of a claim, officers and magistrates look for two qualities: veracity and sincerity. If the account and the materials provided correspond with what the officers and magistrates know or imagine of the situation in the applicant's country, then the claim has veracity. If coherence between the alleged facts of the case and the applicant's personality and attitude can be inferred from an interview or a hearing, then the applicant is thought to be sincere. Over the past few decades, however, the emphasis has shifted from the veracity of the account to the sincerity of the person.

Even so, veracity and sincerity are both difficult to assess. Acknowledging a narrative as truthful and an individual as trustworthy requires a level of trust. The most remarkable change in the politics of asylum over the past few decades has been the reversal of trust into mistrust. Confidence dominated in the mid-1970s, when more than nine out of 10 claimants in France were granted asylum. By contrast, doubt appears to have taken firm hold in the mid-2000s, when barely two out of 10 claimants obtained refugee status. The comparison between a criminal court and an asylum court is instructive: Whereas in the former those accused of a crime are deemed innocent until proven guilty, in the latter those who are allegedly victims of persecution are suspected of lying until their trustworthiness is established. In criminal court, the judge and the prosecutor have clearly separate functions; in asylum court, the magistrates are prosecutors during the hearing and judges during the deliberation. Forty years ago, almost all claimants were granted asylum in France; today, most of them are rejected.

* * *

How to account for such an evolution? Why would the Vietnamese boat people who fled Communist repression in 1978 be so different from the Somali boat people fleeing Al-Shabaab's exactions and civil war in 2015? Why were the former rescued and eventually welcomed in Europe and the latter left to die in the Mediterranean?

The official explanation of this change in status focuses on the downturn in the French economy in the mid-1970s. The apparently benevolent attitude of Western countries in the two decades following the ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention was largely the result of two overlapping contingencies: the need for a workforce to rebuild European countries after World War II, and the political tensions associated with the Cold War. Refugees from the Global South and Communist regimes were welcomed, and their employment contracts served as residence permits and spared them the trouble of dealing with the asylum bureaucracy; most potential claimants did not even bother to apply for refugee status. Often living in poor conditions in hostels or slums on the periphery of cities, these migrants were harshly exploited in industry as well as in agriculture. From 1954 to 1974, the proportion of non-citizens in France doubled, notably with the arrival of Spaniards and Portuguese fleeing both poverty and dictatorship. During those years, the authorities were not very concerned about the distinction between economic migrants and asylum seekers. The number of refugees in the mid-1950s was around 420,000, or more than one -quarter of the 1.8 million foreigners living in France.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, the French government was confronted with rising unemployment, especially among unskilled workers, due to the restructuring of the industrial sector and the impact of the oil crisis. To tackle the problem, the government decided to close the borders to labor migration. According to the official explanation, this led many newcomers in the country to seek asylum, the avenue that seemed at the time the most favorable to obtaining residency documents. This interpretation is only partly valid. Indeed, whereas it is probable that some economic migrants became asylum seekers after the mid-1970s, it is also certain that until then, most victims of persecution had been content with a mere employment contract. The paradox of the new policy was that, whereas asylum seekers had been indiscriminately welcome as economic migrants for 30 years, they were now suspicious for being just that. Today, refugees count for less than one-twentieth of all foreigners residing in France: 194,000 out of 3.9 million.

* * *

This evolution was due to the greater scrutiny of asylum seekers. As the influx of claimants increased from 2,000 in the early 1970s to 50,000 in the early 2000s, institutions became stricter in their examination of applications in order to distinguish legitimate claims of asylum from illegitimate ones. The authors of the latter were called, at best, "economic refugees" and, at worst, "bogus refugees." According to the authorities, it was not because of increasingly restrictive policies that the number of applications granted refugee status declined. Rather, it was because more applicants with fraudulent claims or false identities were trying to take advantage of the liberality of the system. The cases of "asylum fraud" that received a great deal of media attention in the 1980s seemed to confirm this distinction, although a systematic investigation of fingerprints conducted by the administration at the time established that only 3 percent of all claimants were spurious.

In fact, contrary to the official account, changes in the liberality of the institutions in charge of granting asylum do not correlate with fluctuations in the number of claimants. Despite irregular variations in the latter, the initial admission rate has regularly decreased in France since 1976. If the officers were being rigorous because migrant workers were knowingly misrepresenting themselves as asylum seekers, one would have expected that the more claims there were, the more severe the agents would have been in their assessment. A close look at the statistics proves otherwise. Although the yearly number of claimants in the early 1980s and the late 1990s averaged 20,000, three times more applicants were granted asylum in the first period compared with the second. For similar numbers of applications in 1976 and 1996 (approximately 18,000), or in 1986 and 2006 (roughly 26,000), the admission rate decreased fivefold in the 20-year interval. In other words, the decrease in admissions, which is manifest in terms of absolute figures as well as proportion, is difficult to explain by a simple transfer of economic migrants into the pool of asylum seekers.

An alternative explanation is that the decline is mostly the result of a change in politics. It is not because there are more bogus refugees that the authorities have become more selective; rather, it is because the authorities are being more selective that more asylum seekers are rejected and declared bogus refugees. Why is this so? One generally restricts the interpretation to a political question: As immigration became more controlled in France, asylum seekers were assimilated into the category of unwanted immigrants. The mistake—i.e., of an asylum seeker for an immigrant—has to seem self-evident in order to even happen. As it turns out, the moral grounds of this confusion were established through a radical change in the perception of the asylum seekers by French society—that is, in the evaluation of their claims and the emotions they provoke.

* * *

In the years immediately following the ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the public image of refugees in France was dominated by two major populations: at first, the survivors of the camps of World War II and, later, the victims of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Commiseration with the former and respect toward the latter were the prevailing moral sentiments. Humanitarianism and realism converged. And only these two populations were a cause for concern because, until 1967, when the New York Protocol was ratified, the convention's protection concerned only Europeans.

In the 1970s, two new waves of asylum seekers garnered much public sympathy: Chilean resistance fighters fleeing Gen. Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship after the 1973 coup, and the Vietnamese boat people who started to appear in 1978. The response of the French government and populace to their misfortune was mixed with admiration in the first case and compassion in the second. Neither the suspension of labor migration nor the increase in the number of asylum claims by a factor of 10 during the 1970s prevented politicians of all parties from expressing solidarity with both groups. In those years, although immigration had begun to be seen as a threat for both economic and security reasons, the moral image of refugees remained positive: Their narratives were scarcely questioned and their documents rarely challenged. In the context of the diminishing Cold War, France and most European countries were still trying to preserve a space for human rights between the Com-

munist regimes and the Latin American dictatorships.

But from the 1980s onward, the attitude of the authorities changed drastically. Both the national and international contexts were different. On the international stage, the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of the East/West divide. The new Europe of Schengen was increasingly obsessed with protecting its borders. Refugees from the Global South became the targets of xenophobes, and asylum policies were integrated into the broader program of immigration control in the European Union. Meanwhile, at the national level, increasing unemployment and the emergence of the far right placed immigration at the center of a hostile public debate. Racist crimes multiplied, leading to the historic 1983 March for Equality and Against Racism in France. French politicians were no longer willing to distinguish asylum seekers from undocumented immigrants.

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In this new context, those seeking refugee status were regarded with suspicion. Their word was viewed as deceptive. Despite what was known at the time about the persecution of Chechens in Russia, Tamils in Sri Lanka, and Darfuris in Sudan, members of these groups rarely garnered sympathy, and the number granted asylum hardly exceeded one out of 10. Even foreign nationals from Haiti, after the 2010 earthquake had caused major damage in a country already suffering from chronic political violence, or from Congo, affected by a civil war responsible for an estimated 3 million deaths, never attracted the kind of support shown to people who had fled comparably tragic environments in the past. Wariness now curbed compassion.

How, then, does one explain that most asylum requests in France today result in rejection when, not so long ago, nearly all requests received a favorable response? In light of my interviews with rapporteurs and magistrates who had lengthy experience of asylum court, the only morally tolerable answer for them is to make a distinction between the value of asylum and the worthiness of those who claim it. The refugee-selection process has turned asylum into a scarce good. By creating this scarcity, the process transforms each decision into what sociologists call a "tragic choice," because the possession or deprivation of asylum puts the lives of the individuals concerned at risk. In this case, for the claimants, refugee status is truly vital, both since its possession provides access to social rights and because its deprivation can threaten a person's very existence. Yet for the rapporteurs and magistrates, the tragic choice has a second dimension: Asylum as an abstract principle, of which refugees are the concrete manifestation, is also always endangered. The rapporteurs and magistrates see themselves as striving to protect the purity of the principle and authenticity of the claims from putative fraud and abuse.

The evaluation of asylum claims is now based on a remarkable paradox. The more suspicious magistrates and rapporteurs are of the claimants and their evidence of potential or actual persecution, the more valuable the abstract principle of asylum becomes. The high proportion of rejections, far from leading officers and magistrates to question the reality of the protection offered by the 1951 Refugee Convention, reinforces asylum's virtues; the greater the discredit that befalls asylum seekers, the more valuable asylum becomes. I have sometimes seen a UNHCR assessor acting as the most inquisitorial official in a hearing and the most inflexible one during deliber-

ations. In such circumstances, the institution guaranteeing the rights of refugees appears to be the one making asylum status inaccessible.

*   *   *

Yet moral sentiments are rarely consistent. As the traditional rationales for granting asylum were being discredited, two new categories escaped this moral downgrading: girls at risk of being subjected to female circumcision in their home country, and men and women declaring they had been persecuted for being homosexuals. In both cases, the criterion cited was that of the "social group," a category drawn from the 1951 Refugee Convention.

The first category—those at risk of female circumcision—was introduced by a series of legal decisions handed down in France by the National Court of the Right of Asylum in 1991; a 2001 decision expanded the definition of those at risk of political persecution to include the girl's or woman's parents. Although Mali was one of the most peaceful and democratic countries on the African continent during the first decade of the 2000s, the admission rate of Malians seeking asylum in France over that same period jumped from 0.1 to 75 percent. Malian nationals eventually boasted, in proportional terms, the highest rate of successful claims in France—12 times higher than Kurds from Turkey, and 75 times higher than political opponents of the regime in Bangladesh, two countries where repression was intense. Most claimants under this new ruling are from Western African Muslim countries.

The second category—gay and lesbian persons—was created in 1999. The legitimacy of the claim is established according to the same criteria used in cases of alleged persecutions for political opinion: Asylum seekers have to prove that their sexual orientation has been made public through their behavior or even their declaration of it, thereby putting them at risk of being the targets of homophobia. Most applicants in this category are from Muslim countries in North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

Both social groups—girls at risk and their parents, and gay and lesbian persons—benefit in France from a particular liberality of the asylum administration, especially when compared with individuals persecuted for political, religious, or ethnic reasons. In court, the hearings of the former are often held behind closed doors with few questions asked—a stark contrast with the long, trying, and public questioning of the latter—and the final decisions are far more favorable. As a result, one has a significantly higher probability of being granted refugee status by claiming to be at risk of ritual circumcision or homophobic harassment than by alleging to be in danger of persecution as a political opponent of the government or the member of an oppressed minority. The higher legitimacy granted to gender and sexual-orientation issues—including so-called forced marriage and sex trafficking—over traditional forms of persecution signals a shift in moral hierarchies, with certain human-rights violations becoming more valued than others.

The generosity of the protection offered to girls or women at risk and their parents, as well as to gay and lesbian persons, has two political consequences. First, it radicalizes the image of the uncivilized and undemocratic "other." Genital mutilation is barbarous, homophobia nefarious; Africans who practice the former exhibit their backwardness, while Muslims who display the latter show their intolerance. Second, it reinforces the liberality of the West as a promoter of women's rights and sexual equality, at the same time that it deflects attention from both the growing lack of

sympathy for asylum seekers on racial, ethnic, national, religious, or political grounds, and the increasingly dismissive and hostile attitude of governments toward immigrants in general.

* * *

To understand asylum trends in Europe, it is also important to grasp how state officials and activists view the relationship between the political economy of immigration (i.e., the means of restricting the influx of people crossing borders) and the moral economy of asylum (the values and effects attached to the internationally recognized principle of providing protection to refugees). This, however, is rarely done.

On one side, the authorities state that the two economies are completely distinct: One has to control the borders as well as protect refugees. This official version is not only repeatedly proclaimed, but has taken an extreme form recently: We have to close the borders to avoid the infiltration of terrorists, but we will grant asylum to "real" refugees as long as they're selected in so-called hot spots on the frontier of Europe, where the dirty work of human triage can be done without witness. The only way to adjust this view to what happens on the ground is to affirm that most asylum seekers are in fact economic migrants, which is the reason why they are rejected. But this interpretation is belied by the facts—most notably, as I have shown, by statistical data.

On the other side, human-rights organizations routinely link the moral economy of asylum and the political economy of immigration. They argue that officers and magistrates reject claims because they have been told to help contain the demographic flux across borders. This view presupposes the duplicity of the agents, who would be adjudicating claims according to criteria alien to asylum. This interpretation is not supported by my fieldwork; most officers and magistrates are genuinely persuaded that, independent of any exterior pressure from the government or public opinion, they are making a good decision when they accept or reject a claim. They were convinced they were doing the right thing when they were granting asylum to more than nine out of 10 claimants, and nowadays they are just as convinced in the fairness of their judgment when they are denying asylum to eight out of 10 applicants, even though the stories told in the past were not more credible, and claimants today are compelled to provide more evidence than ever before.

To untangle this knot, one has to distance oneself from both the justifications of the government and the conspiracy theories of the activists. Neither is entirely inaccurate, but each is insufficient. Some migrants are probably making unfounded claims, as in earlier days. And politicians have often wittingly manipulated facts about claimants so as to legitimate their change in policy. Yet by thinking about the moral economy of asylum, one can avoid both self-indulgent justifications and conspiratorial interpretations. The reality is that officers and magistrates can be convinced they are defending an abstract ideal while discrediting those who appeal to it, and that society at large can adhere both intellectually and emotionally to this view, according to which France remains the homeland of human rights, while rejecting more asylum seekers than almost any other European country (its admission rate is half of the EU's average).

The current situation of refugees in Europe is marked by this discrepancy between words and acts, between the official language of rights and the actual practice of ex-

clusion, and its justification through the discrediting of asylum seekers and the disqualification of their claims. It is increasingly difficult to dismiss the fact that most refugees come from countries like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, or Eritrea, where political violence and persecution have reached extreme levels. The naked truth of Europe's unwillingness to respect its international commitments thus appears in full light: What used to be a right guaranteed by the community of states is reduced to a sort of favor granted to the happy few. Selective humanitarianism has replaced legal entitlement.

* * *

The hundreds of thousands of people crossing through the Balkans from the Middle East and across the Mediterranean from Africa in search of protection have not created a moral crisis. Rather, they have revealed a latent moral crisis that has been brewing for several decades, beginning with the decay of the 1951 Refugee Convention's ideals.

The agreement reached between the EU and Turkey on March 18 marks the collapse of the principles adopted in 1951. It provides that all asylum seekers, whatever their citizenship, who reach the Greek coast will be forcefully returned to Turkey, a country whose entry into the EU had been refused a few years ago because of its violations of human rights, and whose government has since then become much more authoritarian. Additionally, for every potential Syrian asylum seeker deported from Greece, another one currently housed in a Turkish camp will be relocated in Europe. The resettlements cannot exceed 72,000 people, which factors out to approximately one-fifth of the 363,000 Syrians who have applied for asylum in the EU in 2015. Although already practiced elsewhere—Australia, for instance—this externalization of the asylum procedure is unprecedented in Europe. By preempting the possibility of refugee status being claimed by people from the Middle East fleeing persecution, the joint-action plan counts as the ultimate renunciation of the international right to protection established after World War II.

http://www.thenation.com/article/from-right-to-favor/

Mass migration leading to staggering number of European jihadists

Apr. 06, 2016, 9:00 am

French fire brigade members aid an injured individual near the Bataclan concert hall following fatal shootings in Paris, France, November 13, 2015. Photo/

Mass migration is allowing terrorists to sneak into the EU, its own border agency admitted last night.

In a devastating report, it said the Paris attacks proved jihadists were exploiting the refugee crisis.

The Frontex agency logged a record 1.82 million illegal crossings into the EU last year – six times more than in 2014.

But it said it had no idea how many illegal migrants there were and, in any case, had no way of tracing their movements inside the EU.

Officials also warned a "staggering" number of European citizens had become jihadists and were taking advantage of lax border controls.

"The Paris attacks in November 2015 clearly demonstrated that irregular migratory flows could be used by terrorists to enter the EU," said the report, Frontex's risk analysis for 2016.

"With no thorough check or penalties in place for those making false declarations, there is a risk that some persons representing a security threat to the EU may be taking advantage of this situation," read the report.

In another highly-charged day for the referendum debate:

1. EU judges ruled that foreign crime suspects cannot be deported automatically if they risk being imprisoned in degrading jail conditions abroad;

2. Cabinet minister Chris Grayling said the UK risks being left voiceless and subject to more harmful meddling by a "giant federation of eurozone states";

3. The billionaire founder of Phones4U dismissed the prospect of huge job losses in the event of Brexit;

4. David Cameron insisted however it would be an "act of self-harm" to quit the Brussels club;

5. Germany admitted that half of the one million refugees who have entered the country have vanished.

Dominic Raab, Tory justice minister, said: "This is a damning indictment by the very EU body charged with managing Europe's external border.

"Frontex has set out all too starkly the risks, including from crime and terrorism, that the EU's free movement rules leave Britain wide open to.

"With no solution in sight, the safer option is for Britain to leave the EU in order regain control over our borders and immigration policy."

Two of those involved in the November 13 Paris attacks entered the EU through the Greek island of Leros and had been registered by the authorities after presenting fraudulent Syrian documents, Frontex said.

It added: "The staggering number of EU citizens who joined the (Syrian) conflict as jihadists has resulted in a number of returnees opting to use irregular means of travelling.

"Extremists will exploit irregular migration flows whenever such movements fit their plans."

Frontex also pointed to the routes used for smuggling weapons, often traded from former conflict regions such as the Western Balkans.

Around 800,000 weapons are thought to be in illegal civilian possession in Bosnia and Herzegovina alone.

A few days before the Paris attack, German police discovered pistols, hand grenades, Kalashnikovs with ammunition and explosives.

The weapons were transported from Montenegro to France in a car of a man probably linked to suspects behind the atrocity, Frontex said.

Syrian nationals accounted for the largest proportion of the 1.82 million illegal en-

tries – but still represented only one in three journeys. The share of Afghans rose toward the end of the year and Iraqis were the third largest nationality.

Many of the illegal crossings were by people who were counted for the first time when they arrived on the Greek islands from Turkey and again when they crossed one of the EU's external borders in the Western Balkans.

In all, more than one million people moved to Europe illegally in 2015 – the higher, 1.8 million figure can be explained by multiple crossings by the same individuals.

Half a million refugees who poured into Germany over the past 18 months have failed to register with authorities.

The Federal Criminal Police office say this means they have either vanished into the black market or have plunged into the criminal underworld to get money because no registration means no benefits.

David Davis, a former Tory frontbencher, said: "The border of Syria is now at Calais because in effect there is no control and no knowledge of the whereabouts of a very large number of people."

The revelations will reignite the debate over whether being inside the EU is a threat to Britain's national security. Lord Howard, a former Tory leader, has warned the Schengen open-border agreement is "like hanging a sign welcoming terrorists to Europe".
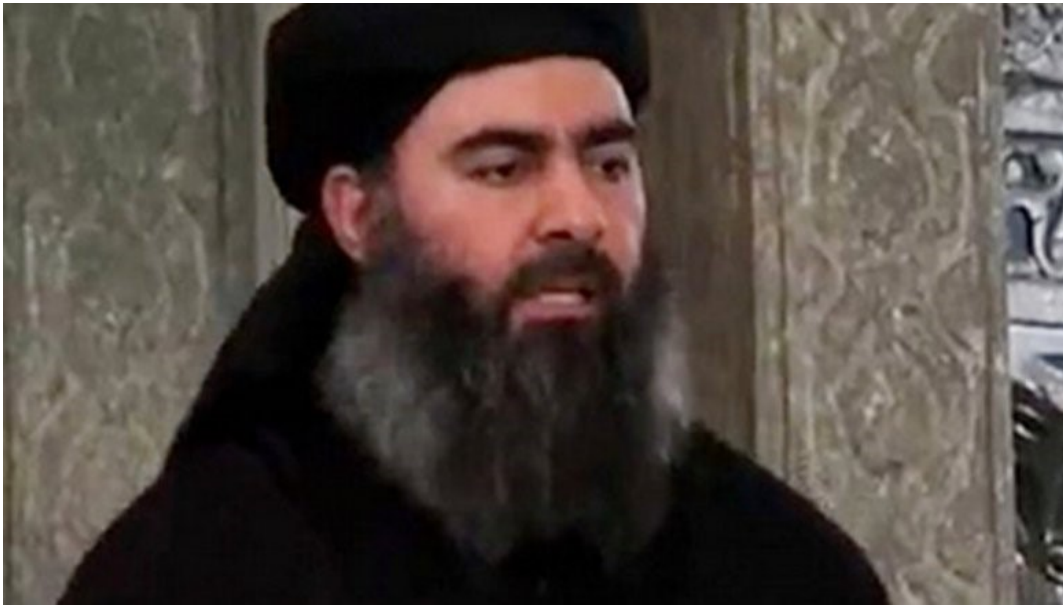
Former MI6 chief Sir Richard Dearlove has also argued Britain could be safer outside the EU as it would be able to kick out more terrorists and control our own borders.

But Home Secretary Theresa May has said that EU membership – and access to its intelligence – is "of benefit" in thwarting terror plots.

http://www.the-star.co.ke/

Can The Islamic State Be Defeated? – Analysis

Islamic State's Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Photo by Al-Furqān Media, official media arm of Islamic State terrorist group.

BY **DR. SANU KAINIKARA** APRIL 11, 2016

Forces loyal to the Assad government in Syria captured Palmyra over the Easter weekend after almost a month-long offensive. This was preceded by smaller victories in northern Syria and Iraq, demonstrating a clear deterioration in the Islamic State's strategic situation brought about by continual loss of territory. Even though the capture of Palmyra is a significant victory, the loyalist forces fighting with overwhelming firepower, air support and numerical superiority, suffered considerable casualties against a determined Islamic State (IS) fighting a defensive battle. The recapture of Palmyra demonstrates that the IS can be beaten at the operational level, but the question remains whether or not they can be defeated at the strategic level wherein it will cease to be an effective jihadist entity.

Background

The 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq that turned out to be an oppressive occupation leading to a destructive civil war that left unaccounted numbers of Iraqi civilians dead created a sectarian backlash. The despotic Shia government that finally came to power created entrenched Sunni grievances that became the core of the rebellion which coalesced as the IS. The IS was quick to take advantage of the Sunni feeling of marginalisation to consolidate their position as the defenders of the Sunni faith. This feeling of disenfranchisement was such that the IS was welcomed by Sunnis as 'liberators'. With hindsight it is clear the 2003 invasion of Iraq was needless and that it led to the creation of IS through the initial iteration of al Qaeda in Iraq.

In trying to smoothen the detrimental effects of the Iraq invasion on the region, the Western media created a perception that Islam was the root of all evil. In turn Islamophobia became central to a number of foreign policy initiatives, especially in the

Western world, that set the Middle-East ablaze. The strategy of military defeat of insurgencies or jihadist movements leading to stability is a myth unless it is simultaneously accompanied by visible and tangible efforts to rebuild the society that is broken. By its very character, war is chaotic and violent and therefore military intervention must be a considered approach, with the clear understanding that military victory does not automatically transform to stability and peace. In fact, the opposite may be true, victory creates desperate and mostly violent options for, and reactions from the defeated.

The current wave of Islamic terrorism is a symptom of political and economic dysfunction in the greater Middle-East that followed the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The US-led coalition had naively believed that the Middle-East would become functional after the perceived state sponsors of terrorism had been violently removed. In the pursuit of this objective, the US made mistake after mistake: the Iraqi armed forces were disbanded, which crated the backbone of indigenous resistance groups; the interim administration adopted sectarianism to fight the rising tide of Sunni resistance; and it thrust the concept of democracy on a state that did not have even one institution of sufficient robustness to support such a transition. Faced with the massive cost, both financial and human, in containing Iraq, the US slowly withdrew, becoming passively reactive to the region. This created a vacuum that was very rapidly filled by the IS, an evolved offshoot of the al Qaeda.

While it has carried out limited strikes against IS in Syria, the US has provided only minimal support for the Syrian rebels. In the highly confused civil war in Syria, a major part of the conflict has been between Iran and Shiite groups fighting the Sunni opposition supported by Saudi Arabia and Turkey along with a few Sunni Gulf states. The IS has benefitted from this internal squabble as well as from the single minded concentration of both Turkey and Saudi Arabia in orchestrating the removal of Bashar al Assad and his government from power.

The Islamic State

The IS can be considered the most advanced edition of a global jihadi movement that is the culmination of more than 30 years of recalibration through experience. It is unique in its reach, scale and scope of operations. The primary reason for the IS gaining such a strong foothold is the fact that there is an on-going crisis within the Islamic civilisation that has not been addressed and which is taking the Islamic world into an as yet uncontrolled downward spiral. The current situation has been a long time in the making. Throughout the 20th century, a majority of the Muslim world had lived under autocratic rule under secular dictators. However, all the autocrats failed to deliver the demands of the people and early in the 21st century were unceremoniously removed in either the so-called Arab Spring or in external interventions conducted within the ambit of responsibility to protect, like in the case of Muhamad Gadhafi in Libya.

While the removal of autocratic rulers was a welcome change, the anticipated political transition to representative governments did not take place. For historical reasons democracy, is not a concept that is easily fostered on traditional Islamic societies. The governments that replaced the dictators uniformly failed to provide competent governance, stability and security, which led to growing and unchecked violence. The lack of stability is also one of the reasons that sectarian fundamentalism thrives

in the Middle-East—it provides a semblance of security and promises the return to Islam's glorious days of the past, through a return to a fundamentalist interpretation of the faith. The counter to this trend is to evolve participatory governance based on secularism and tolerance, which will be the first step towards diminishing the prospects of the exported of violent terrorism continuing from the region.

The current dysfunctionality of the Middle-East, which is the underlying cause of global extremism and terrorism, can be traced back to the abolition in 1924 of the Ottoman Empire, which was until then the soul of political Islam. The current disconnect between the rulers and the ruled in the Arab and Muslim world creates a sense of alienation in the population, especially the educated and either un- or under-employed youth. The millennial generation—the gen X and Y youth—dream of a revival of the glory of the Ottomans, because they want to belong to an entity that is an ideal blend of power, religion and modernity. This crisis of civilisation in the broader Islamic world has to be addressed as a precursor to defeating the IS.

The IS is the product of anarchy because of the inability of the current governments to provide security and stability to the people. When totalitarian governments like Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq is overthrown without a sufficiently effective replacement, the governance vacuum tends to get filled by marginal entities that could be grotesque in its appearance and character. They also tend to be equally extreme and oppressive as the regime that is being replaced. The failure of the state in Iraq following the 2003 invasion and in Syria as a result of the civil war that started as a rebellion in 2011, provided the impetus for the IS to assume its current shape and flourish. IS today enforces bureaucratic authority over the territories that it controls, runs schools, manages waste removal and metes out swift and brutal justice to the population under its jurisdiction. When combined with extreme religious repression, it is no wonder that the areas that it controls have lapsed into forced 'peace' and stability.

There are two fundamental source for IS's power. First, a radical jihadi ideology, more virulent than any other that have so far been expounded, which appeals directly to the discontented and mal-adjusted Muslim youth suffering from an exaggerated sense of disenfranchisement. Second, a perception of it being victorious, bolstered by the rapid spread in the media of the drama that accompanies any victory. In fact IS needs the demonstrated and broadcast victories to lure more recruits to its ranks. The other side of the coin is that although the IS has demonstrated that they are better organised than the jihadists that preceded them, the fact is that it not a great military power. They continue to hold ground mainly because of the breakdown of society and the inherent instability brought about by the collapse of law and order in Iraq and Syria.

An unanswered question that continues to loom is whether the IS should be treated as 'state' or whether it should continue to be dealt with as an insurgent/terrorist organisation. The answer to the question is crucial to formulating the strategy to ensure that the entity is defeated.

Should the IS be Considered a State?

There is a reluctance in the Western nations to even consider the status of the IS as anything but an insurgency in the Middle-East and an organisation that carries out terrorist acts in the rest of the world. The mention of IS is almost always prefixed with the term 'so-called', a clear indication of the difficulty being faced in labelling the group. However, the IS currently functions more as a state rather than as an insurgency although the military actions being carried out against it is following the

pattern of a counter-insurgency (COIN) operation. COIN strategy that is currently being followed will only create a prolonged degradation of the IS and is unlikely to bring about its destruction. If it is considered a state, the application of force will dramatically change and the desired results could be more easily achieved.

Some of the fundamental attributes of a state are: control of clearly demarcated territories; collection of taxes in those areas; dispensation of justice, which would mean the existence of enforceable laws; the availability of officials to enforce these attributes; a military force to protect the sovereignty of the territorial holdings as well as other policies; financial control through an enforced budget; and regularly paid governmental employees to keep the wheels of governance in motion. The IS has all these attributes and has even produced a written 'principles of governance' as a guide. It is critical to understand this reality in order to create a viable strategy to defeat the entity. Since it functions as a state, even if it is a failing state, it will also embody all the vulnerabilities of a state that can be identified and targeted.

The fundamental vulnerability of a state is the necessity of the government to have legitimacy. In effect, all insurgencies are aimed, in one way or the other, at undermining the legitimacy of the ruling government. IS claims legitimacy as the successor of the long-defunct Caliphate, and can be targeted by not permitting it to create clearly demarcated geographic borders that is also sanctified by religious homogeneity. In the current situation, the IS needs to be targeted as a state if the desired results are to be achieved.

The low oil prices and deliberate targeting of its oil production facilities have had a visible impact on the financial status of the IS. The focus now will have to shift from military degradation, which has already been achieved, to ensuring the loss of the claimed Caliphate status. In these circumstances the centres of gravity would be the tools of governance—economy and resources, infrastructure, communications—that should be targeted to make the situation unviable for the IS to continue to perform as an entity. The primary aim should be to degrade the ability to carry out 'governmental' functions through disrupting economic activities, transportation facilities and propaganda machinery. Propaganda has been one of the greatest assets of the IS so far and by targeting the infrastructure that provide it the ability to communicate its primary tool of extolling its virtues can be eliminated.

The narrative needs to be changed to ensure that the message is of the IS unravelling rather than of continuing victories. Perception management assumes a crucial role in this offensive.

The answer to the question posed at the beginning of this section, 'Should the IS be considered a state?' would seem to be straightforward—yes, it should be targeted as state if it is to fully defeated.

The Ground Realities in the War against the IS
The war against the IS is actually being played out to different tunes, according to the individual proclivities of the participant. Therefore, at the moment it is an incoherent mess with different aims—the ouster of the Assad regime, attempts to keep Russia out of the equation, rolling back the Iranian influence, and to carry out massive bombing attacks on IS held areas. None of these aims are compatible with each

other.

While the removal of Bashar al Assad and his government is definitely a long-term possibility, perhaps even a necessity, the reality is that the current regime is critical for the stability of the interim government and the subsequent transfer of power. Assad will eventually have to go, but not at the whim and fancy of Turkey and/or Saudi Arabia. The fact remains that removing the current government before a viable alternative can be put in place will lead to a chaotic state and Syria as an entity, even in a diminished state, will cease to exist after that.

Russia has, of its own volition, stopped its military campaign—a good sign. However, Syria is only 500 miles from the Russian border and considering the fact that it has domestic Islamic fundamentalist threats, Russia will be involved in all diplomatic and other initiatives being put in place to ensure that the ceasefire does not get violated. Russia will want to minimise the chances of its own Muslim population being radicalised by any increase in fundamentalist activities in Syria. It is certain that it will not hesitate to initiate military action again if it feels the need to do so to protect its interests; any premature removal of Assad would be such a condition. It is irrational to think that after its military action Russia will stay on the sidelines and witness further deterioration in the situation in Syria.

The instinctive reaction of Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies is to undermine Iran's influence in Iraq and Syria. However, the most tenacious and effective military force opposing the IS on the ground are the Iranian backed Shiite militia, the Hezbollah and Assad's forces, mostly operating jointly. Any dilution of this combine will benefit the IS directly. The IS is a fundamentalist Sunni movement and harbours great hatred for the Shiites. The other Sunni nations, led by Saudi Arabia, share the same antipathy and are now in an unenviable situation where both the IS and the Shiite coalition are both unacceptable. However, the reality is that Iran's contribution to halting the progress of the IS conquest must be recognised and acknowledged.

Increasing the Western air attacks will over a period of time become counter-productive because it will reinforce the IS narrative of this war being a new crusade by Christian entities into Muslim lands, following the invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. The gullible population will easily be swayed by this allegation and could increase the local support to IS. In these conditions, even if the IS were to be 'crushed' a new iteration with the same or similar narrative will emerge to take its place. The reality is that Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey helped create the IS by bankrolling disparate groups of extremists, which subsequently coalesced into the IS. Even when the absolute barbarity of the IS was exposed, these nations remained ambivalent about opposing it, continuing to consider the increasing influence of Iran as greater of the two evils. Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies have only provided token military support to the Western coalition that they had joined in the beginning. Their contribution have all but dried up, UAE flew its last sortie in March 2015 and Jordan in August 2015. The inherent Sunni solidarity that these nations feel with the IS undermines their commitment and promises that were made to an anti-IS campaign. However, the legitimacy of a victory—if there will be one—depends on visible regional contribution. A purely Western victory will only create further fissures in the firmament. This is the stark reality.

Turkey is playing an individual game in this imbroglio—purely concerned with undermining the Kurdish influence and increasing power in Northern Syria, while car-

rying out a COIN operations against their own Kurds. Weakening or defeating the IS is still not visible on its agenda. The Kurds are capable fighters and were the first ones to beat the IS on the battlefield. They are intent on furthering their own agenda and although not permitted to be part of the peace negotiations, they have declared an autonomous state. The Kurds have no loyalty to either Iraq or Syria as nations, but are pursuing their age-old goal of creating a Greater Kurdistan which also includes southern Turkey. This has increased the tension between the Kurds and Turkey. Western assistance to the Kurds in their fight against the IS can only be considered a tactical move, because there is unlikely to be Western support for the creation of an independent Kurdistan carved out of territories from Syria, Iraq and Turkey. However, the IS has indirectly and inadvertently laid the groundwork for a Kurdish state by facilitating the smoothening the traditional Kurdish factionalism by forcing them to face a common and ferocious adversary. Kurdish advances towards autonomy has been the result of the chaos created by the IS in Iraq and Syria.

Taking back the areas that have been captured by the IS will require troops on the ground, as has been demonstrated in the recent liberation of Palmyra. These troops will have to be local armies, which brings about the question of whether they have the capability to do so or not. The Western nations have already borne a very high human and materiel cost in the campaigns in the Middle-East in the past two decades and is now unable and unwilling to accept any more attrition. The refusal to have troops on the ground in the anti-IS campaign is a manifestation of Western reluctance to absorb any more of the cost involved and not a lack of understanding that recapture of territory means bots-on-the-ground. An air campaign can achieve degradation only to a certain point.

If further degradation is required purely through air attacks, there will have to be greater destruction, which may be construed as being indiscriminate. The strategy of coercion works only up to a point, thereafter escalation is required for further escalation. In the air campaign against the IS the Western forces have reached this point. The reality is that there is now a critical necessity for the local armies to take the initiative, a situation that is highly unlikely to happen.

The questions that emerge are: what does defeat of the IS mean? What happens in the Middle-East after a military defeat has been achieved? There are two factors to be cognisant of, if and when a military defeat of the IS takes place. One is that it will sustain the IS resolve to retaliate through acts of terrorism in the West, like the Paris and Brussels attacks. However, these acts of terror will primarily be to galvanise the faithful and less for the actual act of terrorising the population. Second is that a battlefield victory in a faraway place is unlikely to terminate domestic acts of terrorist violence in the Western countries. Policy makers will have to be aware of these two factors. The reality is that the military campaign against the IS is only one part of what will be a long and brutal war.

A critical factor is that IS is focused on the narrative of an idea, which can only be countered by the spread of another idea or concept. Currently no such idea is being propagated and the regional governments also do not offer any viable alternatives in governance, being equally autocratic and ruthless. For the moment at least, it seems that the defeat of the IS is a distant and secondary priority for the Middle-Eastern partner nations in the Western coalition. In any calculation regarding the future of the Middle-East and the IS, these essential realities have to be taken into account.

Possible Strategies and the Future

The Middle-East region has now become a collection of autocratic or dysfunctional states. Stability is a thing of the past, and even notionally stable nations like Saudi Arabia and Turkey are being subject to terrorist attacks. The smaller Gulf States have their own challenges and are not up to contributing in any meaningful manner to the stability of the greater region. The fundamental issues that destabilise the region are: non-participatory governance, the lack of transparency in state dealings, sectarianism that has created visible fault lines in societies, perceptibly corrupt authoritarianism, and a lack of safety and security for the populace. The activities of the IS in creating a state of anarchy in Iraq and Syria and the Saudi Arabia led war in Yemen have exacerbated the situation. Even a cursory analysis would arrive at the conclusion that the region needs the superimposition of a new political order to make it stable. However, this would first require the IS to be eradicated from the region as a reckonable force.

Strategies to Defeat the IS

IS has thrived on selling the idea of creating a caliphate that will bring back the glory of the Ottomans, promising disenchanted and disenfranchised Islamic youth a return to past greatness. Therefore, any strategy that could work will have to be aimed at targeting this narrative. The core of the IS is built around a sense of invincibility, achieved through concerted propaganda and the use of social media. The ideology, backed by religious extremism is spreading both in the physical and cyber space. This is the centre of gravity of the IS. The need of the hour is to prove the claims of the leadership to be based on falsehoods and harking back to the Middle Ages with no connection to the reality of the 21st century. This is easier said than done in a constituency that has virulently rejected any modern and secular ideas. Unravelling the IS narrative will require the propagation of a counter-idea that creates a model that is modern and powerful with a clearly articulated understanding of Islam and demonstrated respect for the religion. This will be a difficult task. However, the fact remains that only an idea can counter another.

Along with military actions undertaken to diminish the IS's fighting capabilities, a series of serious economic steps will have to be put in place to assuage the currently deprived state of the nations that IS has targeted. At the same time strictly imposed financial sanctions on the IS itself will gradually cripple its ability to function effectively. The people's concerns regarding safety and security will have to be addressed on priority through creating a governing body that does not make visible mistakes that most such experiments seem to have made in the region. Essentially, all trappings that permit IS to claim legitimacy as a caliphate through associating with the defunct Ottoman Empire must be directly targeted and degraded. Perception management is critical under these circumstances. These are long term strategic initiatives that will need sufficient time to bear results.

In the short and military terms, the Western forces have to consciously avoid occupying territory. At some stage in the war, boots-on-the-ground would become necessary, to wear down the last resistance through sheer attrition.

The need for the employment of ground troops to take back territory, with the attendant risk of increased casualties, is the only drawback of air campaigns. However, the ground forces must be local forces if another wave of insurgency is not to erupt. Both Iraq and Syria are societally broken nations with almost no infrastructure

left to re-establish stability. They require concerted nation-building efforts to bring the societies back to some semblance of normalcy. However, these activities can only be undertaken after a military 'victory' has been achieved. The manifest difficulty here is the manner in which victory is to be defined before nation-building activities can be initiated.

The current international coalition battling the IS is a group of Western nations with token representation from Arab countries and Turkey. A coalition is only as viable as the weakest constituent and therefore must have countries of consequence fully involved as members. Currently this is not the case and the coalition operations have been cleverly portrayed by the IS as a Western attack on Islam and its territories. Further, coalitions need to be patient in achieving the desired objectives because by their very nature, their effectiveness is slow to be established.

In contrast, the focused campaign that Russia launched was much more effective than the long-drawn coalition operations. A coalition defeat of the IS will require the lead to be passed to a regional nation with the Western nations gradually taking on a support role. The 'victory' can be sealed only with such an approach, it has to be seen as won by Muslim states denying the call to Caliphate. Symbolism matters as much as military victory on the ground. Unfortunately there does not seem to be either the appetite or the capacity in any regional nation to be the leader. There are other vexed reasons, mainly the sectarian divide, which precludes any one nation being accepted as the lead. Even if the coalition degrades the IS to a position close to non-existence, the lack of acceptance of a common goal will permit it to spring back to life.

Considering that there is no likelihood of a consensus on the way forward in the region, even after a military defeat of the IS has been crafted, the only way forward would be the creation of a new political order. A new order can only be created after the current turmoil has settled and there is assurance of keeping any vestige of the IS out of the equation. The current cultural confusion in the Islamic world has to be squarely addressed. The concept of harking back to a Caliphate of the 7th century—the age of the Prophet and of grandiose religious faith—will only continue to generate new claimants to the throne, even as the old ones are removed or destroyed. Islam as a religion has to understand that there are no magic wands that can be waved to recreate its glorious past and no magic spell to ensure its triumphs. It has to live in the 21st century. Only a new order will ensure this transition.

If such a transition is not achieved, the region and the religion is bound to remain within the vicious cycle of one group after virulent group coming to the fore and being destroyed while they, on their part, also destroy the Middle-East.

Crystal Gazing – Into the Future

There are contradictory opinions regarding the current state of the IS and what the future would hold. One is that the entity is becoming stronger, an opinion taking its cue from the effortless ease with which it was able to carry out recent terrorist attacks in Europe and Iraq. It is also pertinent to note that IS has been carefully cultivating the franchises that claim to owe allegiance to it in other areas such as South Asia and Africa. The second opinion is that the IS is in its death throes because of the air campaign that has targeted its manpower, finances, supply capabilities and

reduced its territorial holdings. The reality would be somewhere between the two extremes, although it is possible that The IS is currently on a downward spiral.

There is no doubt that the IS territory has been shrinking in the past few months; it is about 30 percent less than the holdings of 2014. However, whether this is a temporary setback or not is yet to be determined. It is certain that IS will attempt to expand further into the region, as well as into Asia and Africa and the so-called satellite provinces, through its affiliates in order to offset the loss of territory. It will also endeavour through all means to hold on to its core around Raqqa. The IS will increase its terrorist attacks on soft targets to divert attention from its current defeats and wait for an opportunity to recoup and counter-attack. These attacks will be undertaken as a demonstration of its pervasive nature, even when it is being militarily defeated in the Middle-East. It is possible that it will increase its demonstrated brutality, if that is at all possible, that has kept the Arab countries off the battlefield. IS realises that legitimacy in victory will only be achieved when the regional nations take the lead in the battlefield.

As the IS territory shrinks in the Middle-East, there is the risk of a power vacuum emerging that will inevitably lead to tensions between the various groups fighting the IS and the Syrian Government. More important are the three rivalries being played out the Middle-East that could give the IS an opportunity to recoup and come back into the fray. One, the sectarian rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia the two 'giants' of the region; two, the geo-political rivalry between US and Russia coming to a head in the region; and three, the Turkish bull-headedness against Kurds of all denominations and their opposition to the Syrian Kurds creating a contiguous zone from Afrin to Kobani. The unfortunate situation is that the IS is only a second priority for all the participants in the confused conflict. The presence of foreign forces will always leave an aftertaste of coercion, however subtle the intervention. Therefore, it is critical for the regional nations to take charge. The reality of course is that such a situation will remain a pipe dream.

The partial ceasefire in Syria could be seen as the first step in isolating the IS, although this has to be followed by a long political and governance campaign to ensure that it remains segregated. The isolation has to be enforced through military campaigns, which is the only reasonable way forward in the current circumstances. The pitfall here is the violation of the ceasefire by other entities to further their own ambitions such as the removal of the Assad regime. Providing an effective and viable government in the shattered nations is critical to ensure that the IS does not take root again after being defeated. The ability to provide basic amenities and ensure the safety and security of the citizens is the first step to defeating IS. If the basic civic infrastructure that IS now provides cannot be assured and gradually bettered, the military defeat of the IS will only create further resentment against the 'liberating' forces, irrespective of whether they are Western or regional. Even so, provision of stable governance is the best of a no-options situation.

The capacity of the IS to mount any strategic attack has been reduced to a negligible level, although its 'defeat' is still a long way away. Even with further dilution of its capabilities IS as an entity will continue to be a significant threat to regional stability through perpetuating insurgency and terrorist acts, at least for the immediate future. Even after the IS is severely damaged, constant pressure will have to be applied to

ensure that no operational space is allowed for it to regroup. A rejuvenated IS will inevitably be stronger and more damaging. Currently there are reports of internal challenges to its homogeneity through increasing instances of mutiny, revolt and defections. These along with continuing military reverses would make the IS shift its operational focus to the conduct of guerrilla warfare and terrorist attacks, rather than the brazen open column attacks that it has so far practised. The fundamental fact remains that it will be impossible to eradicate the IS completely as long as the ideology survives and continues to attract adherents, even in small trickles.

Another aspect that bears watching is the spread of IS through its name being invoked in far-flung regions. While paying lip service to being part of IS, the actions of these disparate groups revolve around contests for power in their own countries and regions. It is seen that these groups almost always align with the most powerful jihadi group of the radical Sunni world as a matter of convenience. Declaration of such allegiance must not be confused with the actual spread of IS, although the gradual acceptance of fundamentalist ideology cannot be ruled out. Even so, expansion of the Western—read US—military action into other parts of the world is not the answer since it will only lead to the further geographic expansion of an endless war.

With its on-going defeat in Iraq and Syria, there is a possibility of the IS entering Turkey in a more concerted manner. It definitely has the motivation to do so, having earlier declared in its magazine 'Dabiq' that Turkey was a prime target. By attacking foreigners and minorities in Turkey it could lure even less radical elements to fight under its flag. Turkey currently is becoming increasingly divided between secular and religious groups and between Turks and Kurds. Interference by the IS will invariably exacerbate these existing fault lines, increase the already widespread violence and escalate the situation into a civil war. This could be the death knell for Turkey as the world has known it since the Ataturk reign.

Conclusion

Even considering a hypothetical defeat of the IS, the immediate aftermath for the region and its neighbourhood post-IS must be considered. First, since the IS has drawn a large cohort of international jihadists, they can be expected to scatter across the globe and in turn an increase in 'lone-wolf' activities can be expected. Second, the regional nations are even now in disagreement regarding the post-IS regional alignment. In a broader strategic analysis, it would seem that the best option is to keep the IS bottled up in a small enclave, rather than create a situation where the fighters would spread across the region in an unfocused and unmonitored leaderless manner that is bound to create further anarchy.

A full defeat of the IS will leave Iraq and Syria as broken states and societies. It will be impossible to put them together as viable and cohesive nation-states again. If a redrawing of the borders is being considered, in the same manner as the earlier Sykes-Picot agreement, it will become imperative to provide the Kurds with a Greater Kurdistan as their own homeland. In these circumstances, it is highly likely that Turkey will go to war against the creation of such a state. The only solution may be to create multiple states that have greater ethno-religious cohesion, even if they are small in size. The on-going Sunni-Shia divide in the region will not permit peace to take hold if religious and ethnic divisions and demands are not addressed. Any sectarian action will prove to be a bonanza for the IS to rebound. However, the redrawing of borders may also require the dismantling of some of the existing regimes in

the region, which will obviously not be welcomed. Further chaos can be expected. It will also require a peace enforcement force to be in in theatre for a long time, most probably running into the decades rather than years. The success of the solution will depend almost totally on the West's will and ability to create and maintain such a force and their continued commitment to stability.

The IS can be contained and dislodged; its territorial hold squeezed and destroyed; and the popular support weaned away. Eliminating its physical presence will definitely have positive short-term effects. But critical to long-term victory is the ability of the region and the Western coalition to follow up the military victory with comprehensive and successful integration and reconstruction efforts. If this is not achieved IS Mark II will emerge in a more virulent and destructive form. A studied and incremental approach to enforce political, economic and societal stability after a conclusive military victory would bear the best results.

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Identifying the Threat: What Senior Officials Still Don't Understand

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"Two European foreign fighters were killed on the same day in recent U.S. air-strikes, a Pentagon spokesman announced Thursday." Thus begins yet another article addressing the killing of *foreign fighters* in Iraq or Syria. Published on 7 April, 2016, it continues stating, "Col. Steve Warren, spokesman for the coalition against ISIS, identified the two as Abu al-Zubair al-Bosni and Khaled Othman Al Timawi. Al-Bosni was a Swedish national of Bosnian decent who was killed in Bajar, Iraq, and Al Timawi was a Swedish-born foreign fighter, described by Warren as ISIS's deputy emir of the Anwar al Awlaki brigade."

In order to fix any problem, a fundamental rule of management is that you have to first isolate and identify it. Using root cause analysis insures you are addressing the actual basis of the problem and not just the symptoms. Terrorism, be it suicide bombings, beheadings, destruction of antiquities, or attempts to acquire and hold territory, is a symptom, not the cause. Yet, we continually focus on fighting these obvious abominations, and fail to correctly identify the real basis of the problem. Following the egregious attacks of 9/11 the U.S. declared war on terror even though many experts realized that terrorism was a means to an end, not an object that could be defeated.

The situation has not gotten much better. Since the inception of al Qaeda, most Defense and Intelligence Community officials have attempted to objectify both al Qaeda and ISIS/ISIL using geographic parameters. As in the referenced article, the location at happenstance of birth often is used as a defining factor for identity. That is an error, which, until rectified will prevent more serious efforts in substantially diminishing or eliminating that threat. Simply put, Islamic fundamentalist terrorism is a concept not a place or a thing; a notion I addressed about a year ago. The conflict's name changed several times but our lack of a coherent and viable objective remains problematic.

As if to emphasis the non-territorial aspect of the issue, Admiral Mike Rogers, commander of the latest combatant command, U.S. Cyber Command, stated "that ISIS could start to view cyber as a weapon system" to attack critical infrastructure in the U.S. In fact, those associated with information warfare often struggle when attempting to finger the geographical location of an attacker. It is even more complicated when trying to formally associate any specific hacker with their government. On occasions the linkage can be made, but often not.

All of the responses to Islamic terrorism appear to be tactical rather than strategic in nature, aka *whack-a-mole*. While these seem like logical steps when you don't know what to do, those efforts fail consistently. After more than a year of constant bombing, while there have been some territorial losses for ISIS in Syria and Iraq, their strength remains about constant and they have made territorial gains in other areas, especially North Africa. The leadership decapitation tactics against them have not worked. Week after week there are announcements pertaining to the demise of one

ISIS or al Qaeda leader after another. In reality, these targeting killings do little more than provide career opportunities for those ascending through the ranks behind them.

The reality is that ISIS could have been eliminated in Iraq and Syria months ago, and it would not have required ever-increasing numbers of American forces. The solution required realignment of coalition forces. Instead, Turkey is now engaging most our effective anti-ISIS allies, the Kurds, who in turn have allowed retaliation with attacks in Istanbul. Iran has fought ISIS; but with Russia, supports the Assad regime in Syria. Saudi Arabia battles Yemeni Houthi rebels who are supported by Iran. There, however, the bombing missions have raise serious issues about collateral damage and some observers called them possible war crimes. American interests come into play as U.S. Central Command supported the Saudi actions by indicating that the laws of war are being observed. Meanwhile the media focuses on the American origin of the bombs and aircraft attacking Yemen.

All of these actions have helped facilitate ISIS, and other related terrorist groups, recruitment efforts. For ISIS members who are ideologically drive, death is anticipated, a desired outcome, and not to be avoided. Seemingly forgotten are the tenants articulated in the prescient article in *The Atlantic* by Graeme Wood titled *What ISIS Really Wants*. Specifically he noted that ISIS wanted to hold territory (a vulnerability) yet anticipates decimation and near extinction in order to precipitate Armageddon, the final days.

Competing social media programs have played interesting roles in the geography-free Netherlands of cyberspace. While techniques morph over time, media-savvy ISIS members adroitly entice a constant stream of vulnerable and willing recruits. Recently coalition elements have begun to engage in competitive messaging in an attempt to assuage would-be volunteers from venturing forth. There is debate about the attraction of ISIS. Some analysts hold radicle Islamic ideology plays a central role. Others suggest that enticement is more like the recruiting methods of gangs. That is they appeal as a chance for valor, belonging, and an opportunity to do something of meaningful. While you can argue about the apparently misguided virtues of the end-states proffered by ISIS, these values are potent in the minds of restless or estranged youth.

Less clear is the acceptance of these values by the highly educated people who have joined the radical Islamic cause and committed horrific acts. Consider the case of Tareq Kemleh, an Australian medical doctor, who made a video attempting to recruit other Western doctors to join ISIS. Not an isolated case, Bilal Abdullah, a British doctor, attempted a suicide attack at Glasgow International Airport. And then there is Major Nidal Hassan, M.D., who killed 13 soldiers and wounded more than 30 others in an attack at Ft Hood, Texas. Clearly, the attraction is more than to just the alienated, or adventure-seeking youth. However, lacking an overall strategy, the coalition resorts to tactical counter-recruitment techniques.

Similarly, ISIS logistics and finance have targeted by coalition forces. It is hard to determine just how effective these efforts have been. What is known is that ISIS continues to function and wage attacks suggesting that they do have adequate resources to carry the fight forward. The continued bombing campaign has had a deleterious effect on U.S. Air Force readiness. To offset stress on the B-1 fleet, recently

added to the effort is the venerable B-52 (sometimes known unkindly as the BUFF). While the B-52 can carry a lot of ordnance, even with new sensor systems, precision is not its strong suit. There has got to be more done to countering logistics and finance than simply attacking the oil under ISIS control and intercepting international banking transactions.

What is needed is a new, comprehensive strategy that acknowledges the realities of the global totality of the situation. First, we must recognize that the threat is a concept not an object. There are deep underlying issues that cannot be bombed or killed out of existence. While ISIS, with its horrific behavior, grabs most of the current headlines, there are a host of philosophically aligned organizations that act similarly. Al Qaeda, Boko Harem, al Shabaab, are a few of the better known ones. However, we can be sure that even if those elements are annihilated, without addressing the root causes, new groups will emerge and take their place.

Second, concepts transcend all borders, and thus there are no foreign fighters. Except for legal purposes we should stop addressing combatants based on their geographic location at birth.

Third, to counter a concept a more attractive alternative is required. Given the history of American intervention in the developing world, it would be nearly impossible for a U.S. led conceptual effort to succeed. Invading Iraq to establish a shining example of democracy; a notion espoused by some neocons, was simply specious and did an inestimable amount of damage to our international credibility.

Since Islamic fundamentalism is an integral part of the problem, it is essential that more moderate Muslim leaders of the world develop the alternative solution. The strategy must be global, encompassing more than the Middle East. The alternative concept must be inclusive of competing beliefs and values, yet demonstrate abhorrence for violent behavior to accomplish political means (terrorism will not be tolerated or condoned).

It will be extremely difficult to accomplish. Confounding factors include the long-existing Sunni-Shia conflagrations and counterfactual attitudes exacerbated by information technology. Unfortunately we have entered an information age in which facts are irrelevant to large segments of societies. Even well educated people often abandon facts and reason to advance their emotionally-driven positions.

There will be geographic realignments as the antiquated Eurocentric artificial subdivisions of areas continue to dissolve. As with prior decolonization, devolution is likely to be a painful process, albeit a necessary one. Success in countering terrorist's behavior will only come when the vast majority of the world's population believes that they have a reasonable and equitable chance at personal advancement. We are a long way from that at the moment, and possibly regressing rather than making improvements.

Terroristic behavior will not stop in the near future. How, we need to reset the stage and move to a strategic approach to identifying and resolving the problems. Whack-a-mole is not working.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/

The war on terror: an interim report

7 April 2016

Al-Qaida and ISIS bookmark a fifteen-year era of global conflict marked by western hubris and failure.

*Chambers Street, New York, 11 September 2001. David Farquhar/Flickr. Some rights reserved.*These weekly analyses started immediately after the attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, and as this is the seven-hundred-and-fiftieth column it is perhaps appropriate to reflect on developments in what was soon called the 'war on terror'.

In the wake of 9/11 there was widespread support across western governments for strong military action against al-Qaida and its Taliban hosts in Afghanistan, although from the start there were voices expressing another view. The first column in this series warned that the atrocities should be seen as a provocation by al-Qaida to drag the west into a long drawn-out war in central Asia. Oxford Research Group published a longer report along the same lines (see "The United States, Europe and the majority world after 11 September", ORG, September 2001).

The scholar-activist Walden Bello, taking an even wider view, condemned the attacks but went on presciently to argue:

"[The] only response that will really contribute to global security and peace is for Washington to address not the symptoms but the roots of terrorism. It is for the United States to re-examine and substantially change its policies in the Middle East and the Third World, supporting for a change arrangements that will not stand in the

way of the achievement of equity, justice and genuine national sovereignty for currently marginalised peoples. Any other way leads to endless war."

Such views got nowhere at the time, the war went ahead, and in late January 2002 – after the Taliban had been dispersed – George Bush used his state-of-the-union address to Congress to declare an extension of the war to an "axis of evil" of rogue states, with Saddam Hussein's Iraq heading the list. The long-planned termination of that regime started fourteen months later and within six weeks seemed, like Afghanistan, to have been a great success, with Bush's "mission accomplished" speech on 1 May 2003 celebrating the end of hostilities. The war on terror appeared to have been won.

Instead, complex wars ensued in Afghanistan and Iraq with over a quarter of a million people killed, yet there have been periods when the devastating conflicts seemed to be diminishing. In 2009, for example, the incoming United States president, Barack Obama, could begin to carry out his campaign promise of getting US troops home from Iraq, and in 2011 the killing of Osama bin Laden appeared to confirm that al-Qaida was finished.

At the same time, the Arab awakening was seen initially as promising a new era for the Middle East, but it led rapidly to a bitter war and a disastrous non-peace in Libya, severe and brutal repression of dissent in Syria, and further deep divisions in Iraq with a marginalised *Sunni* minority.

Syria and Iraq then provided the opportunity for a revitalised al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) to reinvent itself and proclaim a new caliphate – Islamic State, or ISIS – which took control of a population of around six million in a proto-state that sought continual expansion. It went on to establish an offshoot in Libya with its own territorial ambitions and developed links across west Africa, the Sahel, Yemen and even Russia's Caucasus.

Within months, that brought the west back to war in the Middle East. Since August 2014, 20 months ago, some 10,000 air-raids have killed 28,000 ISIS supporters (see "After Brussels: understanding and countering ISIS's strategy",*IISS Strategic Comment*, March 2016). In this period there have been intermittent reports that this new manifestation of al-Qaida was in retreat, for example after losses in Kobane and Ramadi, or in light of the Paris and Brussels attacks, which are claimed to be desperate reactions to thesesetbacks on the ground.

The current period is hearing the same blithe reassurances, though a recent column in this series argued that the European attacks demonstrate ISIS's global prowess, its ability to stir up anti-Muslim bigotry and attract more adherents from the margins, and its capacity to extend the war from the Middle East directly to countries it accuses of killing its people (see "After Brussels, ISIS's strategy", 25 March 2016).

There is, though, an even more important dimension. It was reported in that earlier column that ISIS had been preparing this change in strategy for over a year. It now appears that the planning goes back much further, with the building up of cadres of potential attackers over several years (see Rukmini Callimachi*et al*, "In Europe, ISIS sowed its seeds", *New York Times*, 30 March 2016).

If ISIS's change of strategy predates the western military response to itsadvances – and is not at heart a response to the reversals since the air-war started 20 months ago – the implications are chastening. What this means is that the ISIS planners had worked out in advance how the west would respond to its rapid expansion, and were

far less fixated on the geographical creation of a territorial caliphate than was supposed.

Fifteen years on

*Destruction in Homs, Syria. Khaled al Hariri/Flickr. Some rights reserved.*Looking back over these fifteen years it is extraordinary how often western leaders have stated that the end is in sight and that just some more military effort will bring success. Every time, the optimism is soon blighted – yet the official mantra ('there is no alternative') persists.

From the start, it would seem, ISIS recognised that there would be a strong and sustained response and that they would face very many casualties. Because of this expectation, resources were being put into the planned war in Europe and elsewhere some years ago. This may seem far beyond what one would expect unbalanced extremists to be able to do, but one of the most consistent problems with western analysis has been a serious underestimation of the intellectual resources embedded in the creation of ISIS strategy.

On reflection this should hardly be surprising – ISIS paramilitary leaders have many years of fighting elite western forces, mostly notably in the shadow waragainst JSOC in Iraq from 2004 to 2008. Moreover, the last decade's experience itself builds on an earlier quarter of a century of paramilitary combat in Afghanistan: against the Soviets in the 1980s, alongside the Taliban against the Northern Alliance warlords in the 1990s, and against American forces in the early 2000s. It is this hard, determined background, coupled with a religiousintensity that transcends this earthly life, that makes the current war so robust and difficult to counter – so much so that it is probably not amenable to a military solution at all.

If that view is not acceptable in western capitals, neither is the scale of investment required to nurture the alternative to military control. Part of that alternative lies in countering the underlying poverty of ISIS's religious vision, and can only come from

within Islam; but the other part is addressing the reasons for the alienation and marginalisation of so many young people across the Middle East and beyond.

The latter certainly does require sustained western involvement, though of a very different kind than the military approach of the last fifteen years. Rather, it means taking to heart the views expressed by Walden Bello amid the post-9/11 fallout. In the unlikely event of this series of articles surviving another five years until the thousandth is published, some time in 2021, my fear is that we still will not have made that transition.

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