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Africa to send 7 500 troops to fight Boko Haram

AN African Union official said African leaders have agreed to send 7,500 troops to fight the Boko Haram insurgency in northeast Nigeria.

The head of the African Union's Peace and Security Council, Samil Chergui, said on Saturday the move came after the council urged heads of state to endorse the deployment of troops from five West African countries to fight the terror group.

African leaders who are members of the 54-nation African Union are meeting in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa for a two-day summit.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the African Union proposal to set up a regional five-nation force of 7,500 troops to fight Boko Haram militants.

Support for the initiative came hours after the Chadian military said three soldiers and 123 militants were killed in two days of fighting with a Chadian army contingent in northern Cameroon.

"I welcome the decision of the AU and regional countries to establish an MJTF (Multinational Joint Task Force) against Boko Haram," he told reporters on the sidelines of the summit.

"They have committed unspeakable brutality. Those terrorists should be addressed with a regional and international cooperation. Not a single country, even the regional countries, can handle this alone," he said. "The United Nations is ready to fully cooperate with the African Union."

Ban nevertheless said that "military means may not be the only solution." "There should be very careful analysis of the root causes why this kind of terrorism, and extremism, violent extremism, are spreading," he told reporters.

At least 13,000 people have been killed and more than a million forced from their homes by Boko Haram violence since 2009. The group also carried out the mass abduction of 276 girls from the town of Chibok in April last year.

The uprising has become a regional crisis, with the four directly affected countries — Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria — agreeing along with Benin late last year to form a joint force of 3,000 troops, although the force remains unoperational due to disagreements between Abuja and its neighbours.

The proposed force was backed by the AU's Peace and Security Council on Friday, and the pan-African body is now seeking UN Security Council approval, plus a "Trust Fund" to pay for it — although diplomats said that while "logistical support" would be forthcoming, it remains unclear whether African nations will secure cash pledges.

http://www.newzimbabwe.com/

IS THE CONCEPT OF TERRORISM STILL USEFUL? – ANALYSIS

Jarrod Hayes argues that there is nothing analytically distinctive about the tactics, perpetrators and psychology of 'terrorism.' As a result, he thinks scholars and policymakers should stop using the term, particularly since it tends to undermine our efforts to tackle political violence.

By Jarrod Hayes*

With high-profile incidents of political violence continuing to make headlines, the time has come to question the labeling of these events as 'terrorism.' While politically or ideologically motivated violence remains all too real, approaching events such as these through the framework of 'terrorism' does little to help academics or policymakers understand or prevent them. Fourteen years into the Global War on Terror, the political and security baggage that accompanies the label 'terrorism' may even undermine such efforts. This is because the term terrorism creates the false impression that the actions it describes represent a special or unique phenomenon. Because this confusion impedes our ability to understand politically motivated violence as part of broader social and political systems, the costs of continuing to use the concept of terrorism outweigh the benefits. The simplest solution to this problem would be for scholars and policymakers alike to jettison the term.

The political costs of 'terrorism'

Securitization theory highlights the discursive construction of threats as well as the political ramifications of security. One of its principal tenets is that how we talk

about the world shapes and changes how we make sense of and act in the world. Because language allows human beings to construct and convey organized concepts, it *does*something in itself. The language of 'terrorism' provides an important illustration of this. Securitization theory might ask two questions: first, in describing events as 'terrorist' attacks, what intellectual and political agenda is at work? Second, what links the September 11, 2001 attacks and the October 2014 shooting of a Canadian soldier in Ottawa, both of which have been labeled terrorist acts? The first of these questions suggests that the word 'terrorism' may have taken on a political significance that undermines efforts to tackle politically-oriented violence. The second suggests that the intellectual agenda of terrorism may be deeply problematic, even though much of the work in terrorism studies remains quite useful.

The invocation of terrorism is a relatively recent phenomenon, even if the practice of politically-oriented violence is not. A Google Ngram search of the keyword 'terrorism' shows that the word virtually did not exist before the 20th century:

Moreover, looking at how the term has been used historically demonstrates that its current meaning is relatively new. For example, in an 1818 treatise on reforming the House of Commons, Jeremy Bentham referred, without irony, to politicians who acquired their seats through the manipulation of fear as 'terrorists.' Kellogg Durland, in his 1908 book on turmoil in the Russian Empire, produced the following quote from a military officer in the context of the Siedlce Pogrom in Poland: "'We must set against the terrorism of the revolution a still more frightful terrorism [by the state]," referring to repressive measures. These two examples indicate that ter-

rorism has taken on a range of meanings, from the political manipulation of fear to the deployment of political violence by both state and non-state actors. Indeed, a striking feature of the latter quote is that state 'terrorism' is invoked approvingly.

The point here is that the label terrorism is filled with social and political meaning. In the modern setting, invoking terrorism communicates imminent, existential danger from an unrelenting, shadowy enemy. This enemy, at least in the Western context, is typically Muslim and intent on the physical destruction of society and civilization—typified in George W. Bush's claim that terrorists "hate our [American] freedoms." The elusive but dire nature of the threat justifies the suspension of civil liberties and the empowerment of government at home (such as through the USA PATRIOT act in the United States and similar counterterrorism measures in the United Kingdom) as well as the use of military forces to kill terrorists overseas (whether by deploying military personal 'on the ground' or with autonomous weapons platforms like Predator drones).

Using the term 'terrorism' invokes a system of meaning that generates fear and insecurity. This helps to justify the centralization of power by government. Somewhat counter-intuitively, however, it also ties the hands of government in terms of the policies it can pursue. The existential nature of the threat of 'terrorism' and the militarization associated with the concept creates a bias towards short-term, militarized responses. In other words, if governments respond to the threat of terrorism in non-militarized, long-term ways, they risk losing legitimacy and/or elections. This means that more socially nuanced, non-militarized and long-term responses to political violence tend to be subordinated to immediate demands for militarized action. Thus, the contemporary concept and language of terrorism obscure the social complexities of how groups use force to pursue political ends. The result is that anti-terrorism policies typically fail to address the underlying problems that give rise to and enable politically oriented violence.

What is terrorism?

Scholars and academics face a different set of problems. While terrorism studies certainly predates the September 11, 2001 attacks, those events accelerated the development of the field. At the core of the intellectual agenda of terrorism studies is the premise that terrorism is a unique social phenomenon. Yet, as Leonard Weinberg and his coauthors have argued, terrorism is an essentially contested concept, which presents significant challenges for studying it academically. The first of these challenges is a definitional one. Audrey Kurth Cronin, for instance, provides a definition of terrorism that sounds reasonable enough: terrorism is 1) political in nature (i.e., it seeks to induce political change by inducing fear, overreaction, etc.), 2) is perpetrated by non-state actors, and 3) is characterized by the deliberate but seemingly random targeting of non-combatants. In this definition, terrorism is an asymmetric tactic of weak non-state actors against (usually) much stronger states.

By this definition, however, scale is not an element of terrorism. The 2014 death of a Canadian soldier standing guard in Ottawa might be classified as terrorism in the

same way as the 2004 Madrid train bombings. This reveals the first problem with the scholarly study of terrorism: the classification of political violence based on intent. Although identifying politically oriented violence *might* be relatively straightforward in some cases, assessing its 'terrorist' nature is not. The overused adage that "one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter" gets at this issue. It implies that whether the concept of terrorism applies depends on whether one is on the receiving end of the violence, instead of an intrinsic or unique feature of that violence. Indeed, the Syrian government calls the Free Syrian Army terrorists, but the US government recognizes them as lawful combatants in a civil war. This reveals that 'terrorism' is a political claim rather than a unique social 'thing' that is somehow fundamentally different from other forms of politically oriented violence.

What about definitions of terrorism based on the asymmetric nature of the violence or the targeting of non-combatants? The problem here is that neither of these features is unique to phenomena described as terrorism. Asymmetric tactics are pervasive in politically oriented violence. China, of course, has developed a supersonic missile for possible use against United States aircraft carriers—an asymmetric tactic designed to counter vastly superior American naval capabilities. Guerilla warfare conducted by the North Vietnamese military and their proxies in South Vietnam was also asymmetric but was never considered terrorist in nature. Neither is the targeting of non-combatants unique to 'terrorist' phenomena. The United States, for example, targeted non-combatants on very large scales in the fire-bombings of Tokyo and Dresden during World War Two. More recently, the Syrian government (by all reports) has had few reservations about targeting non-combatants in the country's ongoing civil war. But it too escapes the label 'terrorist'.

The definition of terrorism as violence perpetrated by non-state actors is also problematic. Ultimately, this is little more than a definitional fiat. As the Syrian civil war demonstrates, there is no appreciable difference between the violence perpetrated by the Syrian state and that committed by non-state actors. The same could be said for the civil war that ravaged the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Moreover, states frequently use non-state actors as proxies, as Libya did in the 1970s and 1980s and Iran continues to do with Hezbollah. The political violence of these non-state actors, while perhaps better funded, is not substantially different than it would be without state sponsorship.

Finally, one might argue that the indirect, psychological aspect of terrorism – namely, that it causes fear in populations not directly targeted by the violence – sets it apart as an object of academic study. But this too is highly problematic. Arguably, in dropping nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the US sought to generate fear in the population that was not directly targeted. Yet most scholars do not consider those bombings to be terrorist attacks. Indeed, as Clausewitz noted in *On War*, breaking the opposing side's 'will to fight' is central to any military strategy. Fear of death or destruction is one (although not the only) means of doing so,

and is thus part and parcel of most traditional military conflicts. These issues may help to explain why defining terrorism in psychological terms represents a minority view. In the Weinberg et. al. study the authors found that scholars define terrorism in terms of the psychological element only about twenty percent of time.

Terrorism or political violence?

Of course, these points about the scholarly study of terrorism are not new to those who study it. But if there is nothing fundamentally unique about terrorist violence, then the concept of 'terrorism studies' has a serious problem. This is not to say that scholarship on political violence that is currently considered to be part of terrorism studies is intellectually bankrupt. That is certainly not the case. Scholars like Audrey Kurth Cronin,Max Abrahms, and Jenna Jordan among others are doing important work on how globalization facilitates the expansion of political violence and on the social dynamics of groups engaged in political violence. But their insights are about the social and political dynamics of political violence rather than on terrorism *per se*.

Take, for example, Abrahms' finding that violence by terrorist groups is used to generate strong affective ties within the group. Though fascinating, this is not only true of terrorism. The issue of affective ties for all social groups is the subject of considerable research in social psychology. Indeed, Boaz Atzili argues that states rely on threats to territory and the corresponding use of violence to build in-group affective cohesion, which suggests the dynamic has broader roots and may apply to state and non-state actors. Likewise Jenna Jordan's work on decapitation (i.e., dissolving terrorist groups by killing their leaders) finds that the success of the tactic relies on the social constitution of the terrorist group. This finding has remarkable parallels with Brian Phillips' work on leadership decapitation in the context of Mexican drug trafficking networks. But clearly, the problem of group cohesion in leadership transitions is not specific to terrorist groups—authoritarian states and corporations face the same problems. Thus Jordan's findings are important for and contribute to a broader discussion on group cohesion.

Studying 'terrorism' as though it were a distinct social phenomenon has (at least) two detrimental consequences. First, it helps to reify the political dynamics outlined in the first portion of this essay by contributing to the political narrative that there is something 'out there' called terrorism that is a unique threat—with all the political repercussions that follow. Ironically, Cronin in particular expresses frustration with the political dynamics surrounding terrorism even as she fuels that dynamic by reifying the concept of terrorism.

Second, by operating within a terrorism studies 'space', these and other scholars miss out on important dialogue that needs to occur over the causes and constitution of politically oriented violence at all levels of aggregation. By focusing on terrorism, scholars may miss important contributions to the understanding of political violence in addition to broader developments.

Politically and intellectually, therefore, the concept of terrorism is counter-productive. Academics, policymakers, and the public should abandon the concept and get down to the real business of understanding the 'how', 'why', and 'what' of political violence.

http://www.eurasiareview.com/

Algeria

Algeria fights terror financing

22/01/2015

The Algerian government on Tuesday (January 20th) presented a new strategy to stop money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

The draft legislation put forward by Justice Minister Tayeb Louh is aimed at "defining the offence of financing terrorism, in accordance with international standards, and strengthening the mechanism to freeze and/or seize funds belonging to terrorists".

This means that banks would from now on have a legal basis for their action to combat money laundering and terror financing.

Algeria's parliament is set to take up a bill to toughen laws against terror financing.

Louh said the bill "takes into account the balance between Algeria's constitutional arrangements and the country's international commitments".

The minister explained that the new text proposed three fundamental amendments, the first being a "precise and global" definition of the crime of financing terrorism. The proposed amendment "considers financing terrorism to be a crime, regardless of whether the offender and backer are in Algeria or abroad".

The second change, concerning the legal definition and administrative procedures

for freezing or seizing assets, proposes that the president of the Court of Algiers be authorised to take such a decision.

The third amendment covers the "completion of preventive measures concerning the duty of vigilance over suspect financial transactions".

The African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (CAERT), which is based in Algiers, has clear views about the current situation.

There has been a change in the nature of terrorist groups, according to CAERT head Francisco José Madeira. Their independence from the parent organisation, al-Qaeda, also means they need local funding. This requires them to turn to drug and weapon smuggling, as well as kidnappings, he said.

"Just as states are stepping up the fight on each side of the Atlantic, powerful criminal groups are taking advantage of the vulnerability of our countries to use the Gulf of Guinea as an access route for cocaine from Colombia and Afghanistan to the vast Sahel area," the CAERT director added.

"Political conflicts in West Africa have resulted in a worrying growth in the smuggling of unregistered weapons, which are a significant supply source for the terrorists," he told Magharebia. "A definite deal has been struck between those smuggling drugs, weapons and people, and the terrorists."

Experts say that for countries facing the terrorist threat, kidnappings can be reduced through policy changes regarding ransoms.

According to Kamal Rezzag Bara, an advisor to the Algerian president's office, "the payment of ransoms leaves the way open for even more hostage-takings, and makes it easier for terrorism to receiving funding."

"It's thought that around 150 million euros of ransoms have been handed over to terrorist groups active in the Sahel region," he noted.

http://magharebia.com/

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Chad

L'armée tchadienne fait mouvement vers le Cameroun contre Boko Haram

17/01/2015

Des soldats tchadiens quittant Bangui, le 4 avril 2014.

L'armée tchadienne faisait mouvement vendredi vers le Cameroun voisin pour livrer bataille aux islamistes armés de Boko Haram, accusés par Washington et Paris de "crimes contre l'humanité" après une série d'attaques meurtrières au Nigeria.

Une colonne de plusieurs dizaines de blindés tchadiens a quitté vendredi N'Djamena en direction du sud pour rejoindre le Cameroun, a constaté un journaliste de l'AFP. Les véhicules ont emprunté le pont enjambant le fleuve Chari pour prendre la route du sud vers Bongor, secteur dans lequel les soldats tchadiens pourraient traverser la frontière camerounaise et se diriger vers l'ouest, en direction du Nigeria.

Quelques heures plus tôt, l'Assemblée nationale tchadienne avait autorisé l'envoi de soldats tchadiens, "en appui aux forces camerounaises et nigérianes engagées dans la guerre contre les terroristes au Cameroun et au Nigeria".

Dans un message lu à l'Assemblée, le président tchadien Idriss Deby Itno a dit vouloir "reconquérir Baga, base principale de la force multinationale. La libération de cette localité (du nord-est du Nigeria), qui constitue l'épicentre de nos échanges économiques, est indispensable à la relance du trafic et à la circulation des biens et des personnes en toute sécurité". Début janvier, Baga, située sur la rive du lac Tchad, avait été prise par les islamistes armés.

1,5 million de déplacés

Selon Amnesty International, cette attaque est "la plus grande et la plus destructrice" jamais perpétrée par le groupe armé depuis le début de son insurrection en 2009, qui depuis a fait plus de 13 000 morts et 1,5 million de déplacés.

Après Amnesty et le secrétaire d'Etat américain John Kerry jeudi, le président français François Hollande a également utilisé le terme de "crime contre l'humanité" pour qualifier les exactions de Boko Haram, déclarant que "ce ne sont plus simplement des femmes qui sont enlevées, c'est déjà suffisamment atroce, ce sont des enfants qui sont massacrés, ce sont des villages, des villes entières qui sont rasées".

"Nous devons soutenir les pays concernés par ces fléaux : le Nigeria, le Cameroun, le Niger, le Tchad", a-t-il dit. "Nous avons fait la démonstration de l'unité de la communauté internationale face à un ennemi commun (...): le terrorisme", a-t-il ajouté, en référence aux attentats de la semaine dernière à Paris (17 morts, une vingtaine de blessés).

"Réponse régionale"

La sous-secrétaire générale de l'ONU, Leila Zerrougui, a appelé vendredi à une "réponse régionale", tandis que le président ghanéen, John Dramani Mahama, qui préside actuellement la Communauté économique des Etats d'Afrique de l'Ouest (Cédéao), a déclaré espérer parvenir à "un plan d'action spécifique pour en finir avec le problème du terrorisme sur le continent" africain.

"Nous ne pouvons rester là sans rien dire, à attendre les bras croisés que la communauté internationale intervienne, pas quand nos frères et nos soeurs sont massacrés et brûlés dans leurs maisons et dans les rues de leurs villes et leurs villages", a-t-il dit.

L'ambassadeur russe au Cameroun a assuré, après un entretien avec le président Paul Biya, que la Russie fournirait des armes modernes au Cameroun pour combattre Boko Haram.

Des témoignages édifiants continuent d'affluer sur Baga. "Boko Haram a enlevé au moins 300 femmes et nous a détenues dans une école de Baga", déclarait une femme citée par Amnesty dans un communiqué jeudi, sous couvert d'anonymat. "Ils ont libéré les femmes âgées et les mères et la plupart des enfants au bout de quatre jours, mais ils détiennent toujours les jeunes filles", ajoutait-elle.

Mala Kyari Shuwaram, un chef local de Baga, a fui à Dubuwa, sur la rive tchadienne du lac Tchad où ont afflué 7.500 réfugiés, selon le Bureau des affaires humanitaires de l'ONU (Ocha). Il assure que Boko Haram s'est installé dans la localité.

Contenir la menace

Le groupe islamiste a proclamé un califat dans le nord-est du Nigeria et multiplie les attaques dans le pays et contre le Cameroun voisin.

Lundi encore, il a lancé un raid sur une base de l'armée camerounaise à Kolofata. Yaoundé a fait état d'un bilan de 143 "terroristes tués" pour un seul décès côté camerounais. Aucun bilan indépendant n'est toutefois disponible.

Cette attaque ainsi que l'activité incessante du groupe dans la zone a conduit le Cameroun à faire appel à son voisin pour contenir la menace. Le Tchad, qui considère désormais que Boko Haram menace ses "intérêts vitaux", dispose d'une armée puissante. Elle a fait ses preuves au Mali début 2013 dans la lutte contre les groupes jihadistes locaux aux côtés de l'armée française, qui depuis a installé l'état-major de son opération de lutte contre ces groupes au Sahel, baptisée "Barkhane", à N'Djamena.

http://www.jeuneafrique.com/

Twenty-seven killed in attacks in Egypt's North Sinai, Suez

30 January 2015

Sinai-based militants have killed hundreds of security officers since president Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood was removed from power following mass protests against his rule.

Twenty-seven people were killed in four attacks in Egypt's North Sinai and Suez, security and medical sources said, in some of the worst anti-state violence in months and after commemorations around the anniversary of the 2011 uprising turned deadly this week.

Egypt's government faces an Islamist**insurgency** based in Sinai and growing discontent with what critics perceive as heavy handed security tactics.

Thursday's first **attack** was a bombing of military buildings in the capital of North

Sinai province, that killed 25 and wounded at least 58, including 9 civilians, security and medical sources said.

The flagship government newspaper, al-Ahram, said its office in the town of Al-Arish, which is situated opposite a military hotel, headquarters and base that security sources said were the intended targets, had been "completely destroyed".

Later, suspected militants killed an **army major** and wounded six others at a checkpoint in Rafah, followed by a roadside bomb in Suez city that killed a police officer, and an assault on an army unit south of Al-Arish that wounded four soldiers, security sources said.

Sinai-based militants have killed hundreds of security officers since president Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood was removed from power following mass protests against his rule.

The military said in a statement on its Facebook page that the attacks were the result of a successful campaign to pressure the militants.

Tensions have risen across Egypt this week with protests, some of them violent, marking four years since the uprising that ousted longtime autocrat **Hosni Mubarak** from power.

Earlier on Thursday, a group of women protested in Cairo over the death of activist Shaimaa Sabbagh and around 25 others said to have been killed by security forces at rallies commemorating the 2011 uprising.

Sabbagh, 32, died on Saturday as riot police were breaking up a small, peaceful demonstration. Friends said she had been shot, and images of her bleeding body rippled out across social media, sparking outrage and condemnation.

"The Interior Ministry are thugs!" chanted around 100 womenprotesters at the site of Sabbagh's death. Some held up signs with the word "Murderer" scrawled over the face of Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim.

The protesters were defying a law that severely restricts protests. "People are here at incredible risk to themselves. But it's a way of standing against the fear they have instilled," said activist Yasmin el-Rifae.

Ibrahim has said an investigation into Sabbagh's death will lead to prosecution if any member of the security forces is found responsible.

One of the organisers of Thursday's demonstration said they had asked only women to attend because they feared **infiltration** by plainclothes male agents.

Across the street from the protesters, beside police officers, men stood making lewd gestures and yelling profanities. Others chanted in favour of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Criticism is growing of the security tactics Sisi has used since Mursi was ousted.

A crackdown that began with the deaths of hundreds of Brotherhood supporters and the imprisonment of thousands more has expanded to include liberals and other activists.

Some of those now on the wrong side of the government initially supported the protests that led to Mursi's removal and Sisi's rise to power, as people who knew Sabbagh said she had.

http://www.dnaindia.com/

Libya

ISIS heads west

01/31/2015

 The new Libyan branch of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria could have picked few more eye-catching ways to stage its debut in the capital, Tripoli, than with an attack on a landmark building, the seafront Corinthia Hotel.

The attackers combined a commando raid on its marble-clad lobby, a car bomb that exploded as guests fled and the capture of hostages on the 21st floor. The attack killed at least nine people, including five foreigners, one of them American.

The luxury Corinthia hotel, which is Maltese-owned, somehow had managed to sidestep sanctions and wars. The haven it provided made it a favorite of foreign visitors, including United Nations officials. It even became the residence of Omar al-Hassi, the self-declared prime minister. That sanctuary now has been defiled.

In the name of its "Tripoli province," ISIS claimed responsibility for what was Libya's deadliest attack on Western interests since the raid on an American diplomatic mission in Benghazi that killed the ambassador and three of his compatriots in September 2012.

The jihadists named two of the assailants, a Tunisian youth and his equally fresh-faced Sudanese accomplice. They were, they said, avenging the death in American custody of an alleged al-Qaida operative, Abu Anas al-Liby, earlier this month. They threatened more strikes to come.

Panicky officials from Libya Dawn, the loose alliance of predominantly western Libyan and Islamist militias that is currently ruling Tripoli, blamed Khalifa Haftar, the retired general backing the internationally recognized rival government in Libya's east. Others accused die-hard followers of the former dictator, Col. Muammar Qaddafi, an easy if much derided catchall.

So brazen and ruthless was the guerrilla attack on the hotel that, "After today there's no question about whether ISIS has a presence in Tripoli," said a security man based there.

Hundreds of Libya Dawn's militiamen, he said, have gone to the battlefront, many miles to the east, to fight Haftar, leaving their defenses vulnerable closer to home. At the same time ISIS has urged foreign fighters to head for Libya and its ungoverned spaces. In its Dabiq magazine last year, ISIS outlined how Libya's chaos and abundance of arms made the country "ideal for jihad."

Tunisian militants, in particular, are said to have used Libya as a training ground before heading to Syria. In October one carried out a suicide bombing.

The main ISIS stronghold in Libya long was thought to have been Derna, a port nestled between cliffs in the east, where there was a training camp for a few hundred of its fighters. Last month, however, the jihadist group signaled its greater reach by capturing 20 Egyptian Christians in Sirte, a town midway between eastern and western Libya. It also claimed responsibility for destroying a checkpoint guarding the route to Mali.

More misery awaits. Some of the foreigners that ISIS struck worked for a Florida-based energy company, A.P.R. They had been working on power generation for an electricity network plagued by power cuts. Even before the attack they were preparing to leave. Bereft of power Libya's water supply, which is pumped along the Great Man-Made River, will run dry. Foreign airlines already have withdrawn, while ships bringing food and fuel think twice before docking at Libya's ports.

At least the hotel attack might prove "a wake-up call," said United Nations envoy Bernardino León, who is shepherding talks on reuniting the country's splintered factions in Geneva. "The country is really about to collapse."

Only a unity government, he said, can tackle the ISIS threat. A meeting of rival militia leaders began on Thursday, with talks planned to resume in Libya in early February involving the politicians, including hitherto recalcitrant representatives from Libya Dawn.

With the crucial exception of Benghazi, Libya's second city in the east, fighting largely has subsided since the UN brokered a countrywide cease-fire. ISIS' attempt to exploit the vacuum of a failing state could tip it back into conflict.

http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/ISIS-heads-west-290374251.html

Terrorists at the Corinthia

29 January 2015

A vehicle belonging to security forces is pictured near Corinthia hotel (rear) in Tripoli on Tuesday. At least eight people, including five foreigners, were killed when gunmen stormed the luxury hotel. Photo: Ismail Zitouny/Reuters

As I write, different Libyan sources wrangle over who is really behind the attack on the Corinthia hotel in Tripoli. Isis claimed responsibility. But the Tripoli-based government has pointed at a group associated with the Tobruk-based (and internationally-recognised) government.

Despite the unclear situation, the case illustrates what is wrong with much conventional wisdom about the nature of Islamist terrorism in general.

Conventional wisdom lumps all Muslims as proto-jihadist supporters. In addition, it lumps together all kinds of Islamist terrorism, even though they might call for rather different counter-strategies. For example, the rationale of states that sponsor terrorist groups is not the same as that of a terrorist network, like Isis or Al-Qaeda. Conventional wisdom believes such distinctions are not important.

Of course, once you believe all this, it makes sense to believe that the whole of Islam is against us, just biding its time. If the enemy is so great and insidious, then pre-emptive strikes and total repression are the rational response. And, under the pressure of vote-catching and fund-raising, some Western politicians sign up to the conventional wisdom.

But it's not what anti-terrorism experts believe. They distinguish between states and nationalist terrorists (for both of whom terrorism is a negotiating instrument but who accept the international community as it is) and jihadists who reject the international order.

The experts think it's as dangerous to present Isis and Al-Qaeda as an unprecedented kind of enemy as it is to glide over some important differences from other terrorist groups.

They base that judgement on their knowledge of other terrorist groups, analysis of Islamist manifestos, profiles of suicide bombers… In short, real information, sifted and compared.

The experts urge that anti-terror responses are measured, differentiating (between the various factions within a network, let alone all Muslims) and non-polarising.

Collective anti-terror experience shows total repression is often counter-productive and decapitation of terrorist leaders alone will not necessarily work.

It's important also to choose which members of the terrorist network one can offer an exit-strategy (since many terrorist recruits, in Isis too, often regret their decision but can't see how they can return to their previous lives). And it's essential to flake away critical support and members by negotiation, so as to isolate the inner core.

It's at this point that someone always pipes up to say that there's no such thing as a moderate Muslim: they don't think like other people because religion is non-negotiable to them, and that the real Islam urges them all to wage war on unbelievers, permitting them only to bide their time.

Therefore, the argument goes, there is no such thing as negotiation; there is only appeasement.

There are several ways to show the problems with this argument. I could use the same technique of selective quotation to show that evangelical Christianity is set on a new Crusade to dominate the world. Indeed, all I'd need to do would be to translate one or two Islamist videos intent on 'showing' just that.

But we can learn a thing or two from the targeting of the Corinthia. Even from the little we know (at the time of writing), we can see a logic that confirms what the experts say about Islamist terrorism in general.

First, why the Corinthia?

An attack on the Corinthia is an attack on a specific kind of economy

Here in Malta, some online posters immediately concluded that either Malta was the target or else there was a specific VIP at the hotel.

The Tripoli-based government took the line that this was an act of black propaganda by the Tobruk-based adversary, aiming to turn the world against Tripoli.

To those who said Malta was the target, I have belated news for you. The Corin-

thia group has long outgrown the country of its origin. Its profile in Libya, especially, is that of an international blue-chip company responsible for flagship projects associated with economic development and cosmopolitanism.

It's unlikely that either of the two warring governments would want to target the Corinthia, although one cannot exclude an allied militia that conducted a rogue operation (or else had a different operation go wrong – a previous bomb attack that damaged the Corinthia was of this kind).

An attack on the Corinthia is an attack on a specific kind of economy. The hotel both symbolises it as well as hosts many of the businessmen, lobbyists and diplomats that drive it.

If this attack drives them away, the Libyan economy will become even more unstable than it is already and the political consequences will be dire.

The beneficiaries of this attack will be groups like Isis and Al-Qaeda. The attack will disrupt the fledgling, already weak peace process.

It will polarise the main factions in Libya. It tempts the international community to get out of what seems like a morass.

If it damages the Libyan economy, it will end up making ordinary Libyan people more dependent on the smuggling and crime networks associated with the militias, not least Isis and al-Qaeda, whose penetration of western Libya, especially the coast, is based on securing more sources of income, not just political domination.

With oil production down, and dwindling oil revenues, ordinary Libyans face a salary crunch several months down the road if the current impasse is not solved.

If it isn't, the Islamist militias will offer a simple economic incentive: salaries twice the average, paid regularly.

This is what they are already doing in Libya as in Syria.

The strategy is easy to follow – as long as you understand Islamist terrorists as an interest group with problems of recruitment unless it runs a protection racket: special salaries for recruits, terror and random violence for the rest.

But if you follow the conventional wisdom, you will see all Muslims as proto-terrorists and the terrorists' ideology as essentially the real Islam to which all Muslims subscribe.

So you won't be able to make sense of anything: not why Muslims need special incentives to join a group, not why the majority resists in any case, not why the terrorists need to kill so many fellow Muslims.

You will also not understand the process by which the jihadists came to penetrate

western Libya. It's too complicated to describe on this occasion but one factor – say, in the coastal town of Sabratha – is the alliance with former Gaddafi men pursuing self-interest (even though more of them are to be found in the Tobruk alliance).

The expert view on Islamist terrorism enables us to pursue peace (at some expense to justice) using strategies of negotiation and offers of safe exit, which are an essential part of the dismantling of terrorist networks.

The conventional view – based on lumping all Muslims together as unthinking, irrational fanatics who hate us – is a recipe for bolstering jihadist recruitment: truly a case of our racism coming back to haunt us.

http://www.timesofmalta.com/

Libye, combien de divisions ?

le 16 janvier 2015

Kadhafi est parti, mais la violence et la terreur sont restées. L'unité nationale de façade qu'imposait le dictateur n'a jamais atténué les vieilles tensions tribales et régionales. Conflits qui resurgissent aujourd'hui radicalisés, sur fond de processus démocratique paralysé et d'ascension jihadiste.
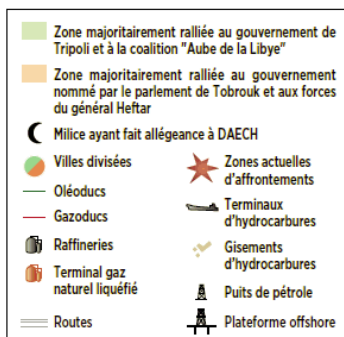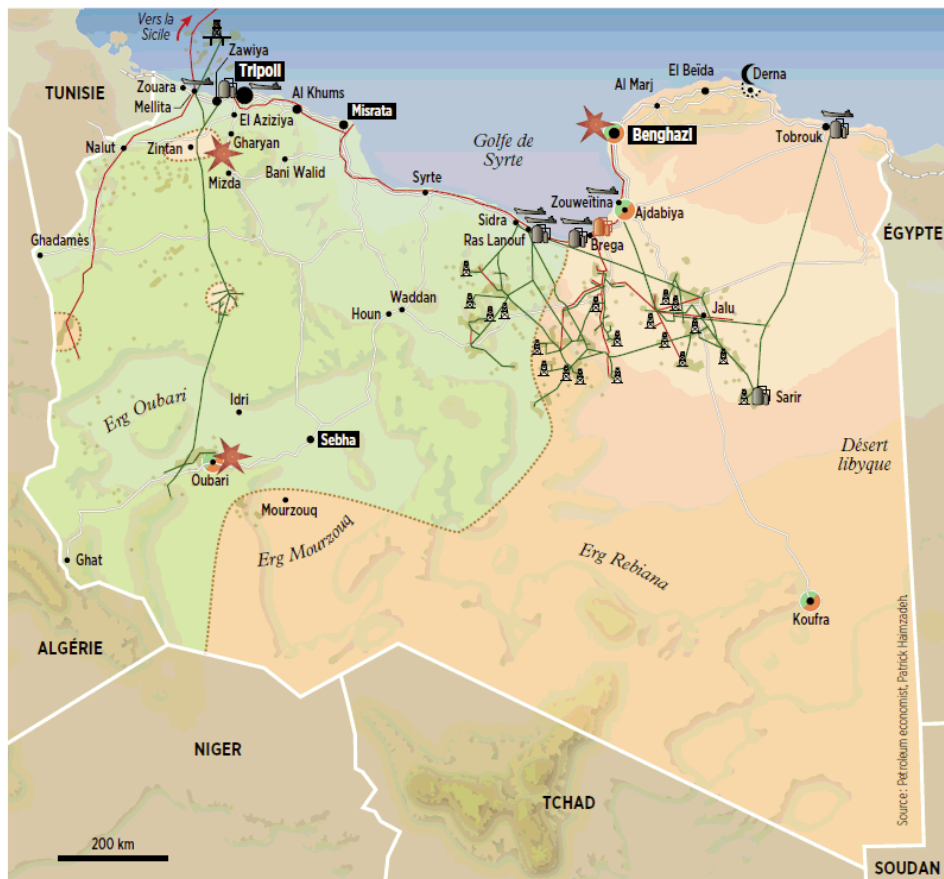
Dans le cadre de ses synergies géopolitiques, le Diploweb.com est heureux de vous présenter une carte et un article extraits du n°65 d'Alternatives internationales, décembre 2014, pp. 48-51.

TROIS ANS après la chute du régime Kadhafi (1969-2011), la Libye apparaît plus divisée que jamais. Si la situation y est régulièrement qualifiée de « chaotique » par les grands médias français, elle relève pourtant d'une logique qui trouve son origine dans la sociologie et l'histoire de ce pays jeune dont la naissance comme État indépendant ne date que de 1951. La monarchie constitutionnelle libyenne voit alors le jour sous la forme d'une fédération des trois grandes entités qui existaient en tant que provinces autonomes sous l'Empire ottoman (1299-1922) : la Cyrénaïque à l'est, la Tripolitaine à l'ouest et le Fezzan au sud. Des entités que la colonisation italienne (1911-1943), puis l'occupation franco-britannique (1943-1951) avaient conservées. La découverte du pétrole au début des années 1960 et la volonté du roi Idriss, originaire de Cyrénaïque, de disposer d'un pouvoir centralisé pour assurer la gestion des revenus de l'or et la modernisation d'un pays qui compte alors parmi les plus pauvres de la planète, l'amènent – malgré l'opposition sévèrement réprimée de la Tripolitaine – à transformer en 1963 la fédération en un État unitaire. C'est donc une Libye à l'identité nationale incertaine, dominée par les rivalités entre tribus, villes et régions, et dont l'appareil militaro-sécuritaire et l'exploitation du pétrole ont été confiés à des conseillers et entreprises britanniques et américains, qui en 1969 connaît le coup d'État du colonel Kadhafi, originaire de l'ouest du pays. Le nouveau régime (Jamahiriya) affirme les principes de souveraineté nationale (fermeture des bases militaires étrangères, nationalisation du pétrole…) et affiche une volonté de construction d'un État moderne dépassant les clivages traditionnels tribaux et régionalistes. Si cette rhétorique nationaliste et révolutionnaire qui sera déployée pendant 42 ans a indéniablement contribué à la construction d'une identité nationale libyenne, la pratique politique de Kadhafi, fondée sur le clientélisme et l'exploitation des rivalités tribales et régionales pour asseoir son pouvoir et celui de ses affidés, n'ont fait qu'entretenir voire renforcer les divisions au sein de la société libyenne.

La chute sans l'atterrissage

Contrairement à ses voisins tunisiens et égyptiens où les moments révolutionnaires de 2011 ont abouti sans affrontements majeurs aux départs des dictateurs, la chute du régime Kadhafi survient au terme d'une insurrection, puis d'une guerre civile de

huit mois avec intervention militaire directe de l'OTAN. Cette guerre et l'ingérence d'acteurs extérieurs aux côtés des opposants armés ravivent des lignes de fracture traditionnelles que le régime autoritaire de Kadhafi avait entretenues tout en les maintenant sous contrôle, et en ouvrent de nouvelles. Ce conflit qui a tant dérouté les stratèges de l'OTAN est marqué par la multitude des fronts et l'absence d'unité entre les différentes composantes de l'insurrection, tant au plan politique que militaire.

Carte de la Libye, zones d'influence des deux camps, décembre 2014

Ils n'étaient pas plus de 30 000 à avoir pris les armes contre le dictateur.

Sitôt le lynchage du colonel Kadhafi le 20 octobre 2011, de multiples affrontements limités éclatent sur la quasi-totalité du territoire entre milices locales, souvent pour le contrôle de territoires ou des revenus des trafics transfrontaliers, sur fond de différends tribaux anciens et de règlements de comptes entre « révolutionnaires » réels, tardifs ou autoproclamés (le ministère des martyrs estime aujourd'hui leur nombre à 200 000, en réalité ils n'étaient pas plus de 30 000 à avoir pris les armes contre le dictateur) et anciens kadhafistes ou considérés comme tels. Le nouveau gouvernement n'ayant d'autre choix que de s'appuyer sur des miliciens pour supplanter l'armée et la police qui se sont disloquées pendant la guerre de 2011, ce sont en général les milices les plus puissantes originaires de Misrata, Tripoli, Benghazi et Zintan, étrangères aux différends concernés, qui sont envoyées sur place pour limiter le niveau de violence. Avec des succès très inégaux.

Les campagnes contre les villes

C'est donc sur fond d'affrontements locaux récurrents que se déroulent, le 6 juillet 2012, les élections du Congrès national général (CNG), première assemblée élue de la Libye post-kadhafiste. Si le bon déroulement relatif de ce scrutin, qui voit un taux de participation de plus de 60 % dans un tel contexte d'insécurité et dans un pays sans État, peut laisser croire que le processus de construction démocratique est en bonne voie, les réalités du pays vont démontrer le contraire. Le CNG est rapidement divisé par ses clivages entre villes et régions, et paralysé par l'opposition croissante en son sein de deux grandes factions s'appuyant chacune sur de puissantes milices. La première – majoritaire - souvent qualifiée d'« islamiste » par ses adversaires et les médias occidentaux regroupe, autour du parti des Frères Musulmans bien implanté en zone urbaine, les représentants de Misrata, troisième ville du pays et siège des plus puissantes milices de Tripolitaine. Se présentant comme le garant de la « pureté révolutionnaire », elle fait adopter, en mai 2013 dans des circonstances controversées, la loi dite « d'exclusion politique » interdisant à tout cadre de l'ancien régime d'occuper un emploi officiel. La seconde faction s'est constituée autour de l'Alliance des forces nationales, regroupement de partis auto qualifiés de « libéraux » crée par Mahmoud Jibril, homme d'affaires, un proche de Sayf alislam Kadhafi (fils du dictateur) fortement impliqué dans l'ancien régime avant de rejoindre l'insurrection en 2011. Nombre des responsables de l'Alliance, ayant occupé des fonctions officielles sous le régime Kadhafi, sont touchés par la loi d'exclusion. Cette faction dispose du soutien des puissantes milices de la ville de Zintan qui, comme les milices de Misrata, ont joué un rôle important durant la guerre de 2011. Bien que méfiantes les unes envers les autres, les puissantes milices soutenant chacune des deux factions coexistent alors « pacifiquement » et veillent à ne pas empiéter sur le territoire des autres, leurs « mentors politiques » étant conscients qu'un affrontement entre elles mettrait un terme au processus politique engagé et

plongerait le pays dans la guerre civile ouverte. Si la grille de lecture d'un clivage idéologique entre « islamistes » d'une part, et « libéraux » ou « nationalistes » d'autre part, a régulièrement été mise en avant par les médias étrangers, la réalité est plutôt celle d'une lutte pour le pouvoir entre deux factions dont les chefs manipulent des « identités primaires » (clan, tribu, ethnie…) plus ou moins idéalisées, et l'esprit de corps des milices qui les soutiennent, pour les mobiliser contre leurs adversaires. La question de la laïcité n'est en effet pas pertinente en Libye, tous les acteurs s'accordant sur le fait que la charia devra constituer la source principale (mais pas exclusive), de la future Constitution et du droit.

Un clivage entre « urbains » et « ruraux ».

Une autre grille de lecture plus pertinente est celle du clivage entre « urbains » et « ruraux ». La première faction regroupe en effet grossièrement les populations se réclamant d'une tradition urbaine affirmée, la seconde étant constituée majoritairement de populations dont les racines rurales bédouines prédominent sur leur identité citadine. Kadhafi ayant fait des tribus d'origine bédouine du centre et du sud de la Libye l'axe de son pouvoir au détriment des grandes villes, le conflit actuel entre les deux camps recoupe l'opposition récurrente en Libye entre centre et périphérie. C'est dans ce contexte de paralysie du CNG, d'absence d'État et de violences locales que le 16 mai 2014, le général Heftar (ancien commandant du corps expéditionnaire libyen au Tchad en 1983, puis exilé volontaire aux Etats-Unis jusqu'en 2011), lance son opération « Dignité » avec pour objectif affiché « d'éradiquer <u>les Frères musulmans et les islamistes</u> », tous qualifiés par lui de « terroristes extrémistes ». L'offensive est lancée à Benghazi contre les puissantes milices qui ont constitué le fer de lance de l'insurrection de 2011 et disposent de ce fait d'une forte légitimité « révolutionnaire ». Dirigées par des chefs se réclamant du courant salafiste nationaliste et non pas des Frères Musulmans) et partisanes d'un État libyen unitaire, ces milices aguerries et bien armées sont alors en voie d'intégration dans les structures étatiques naissantes (armée, police). En Tripolitaine, les milices de Zintan rallient l'offensive du général Heftar et donnent l'assaut au CNG le 18 mai, mettant ainsi un terme au processus de construction politique amorcé deux ans auparavant.

Déstabilisation étrangère

L'offensive du général Heftar n'a donc pas permis de rétablir l'ordre en Libye, mais l'a au contraire précipitée dans une véritable guerre civile entre deux camps.

Le général Heftar, sans doute <u>inspiré par le coup de force du maréchal Sissi en Égypte</u>, transforme ainsi les différents affrontements limités et relevant avant tout d'enjeux locaux qui prévalaient jusqu'alors, en un affrontement bipolaire entre deux camps s'étant chacun désormais fixé pour objectif d'éliminer l'autre. Le premier camp, celui des pro opération « dignité », qui regroupe schématiquement la faction « anti-islamistes » évoquée précédemment, comprend en outre des unités militaires constituées de cadres et de soldats de l'ancien régime, des membres de

tribus du djebel Akhdar, les miliciens autonomistes de Cyrénaïque, les milices de Zintan en Tripolitaine et celles de Toubous de la région de Koufra. Dans le deuxième camp, celui des anti-Heftar, réunis sous la bannière de l'opération « Aube de Libye », on trouve principalement les grandes brigades « révolutionnaires » de Benghazi, Tripoli,Misrata, Zawiya, Gharian, Zliten et Zwara, ainsi que celles de la tribu des Machachiya rivale traditionnelle des Zintan, et les Berbères du djebel Nefoussa. De leur côté, les régions et tribus qui avaient soutenu le clan Kadhafi durant l'insurrection de 2011 veillent pour l'essentiel à ne pas prendre position. Après six mois de combats, la situation militaire a tourné à l'avantage des anti-Heftar qui contrôlent désormais la quasi-totalité de la Tripolitaine. Les Zintan, dont les milices ont perdu la bataille de Tripoli, ont dû se replier dans leur fief montagneux du djebel Nefoussa. Malgré la profondeur stratégique dont ils bénéficient vers le grand Sud, les bonnes relations qu'ils entretiennent avec certaines tribus de cette région (notamment des groupes touareg) et leur contrôle de trois champs de pétrole du Fezzan, ils ne disposent plus de la capacité de peser militairement en Tripolitaine. Dans l'est du pays, à Benghazi, les anti-Heftar ont pris l'avantage, mais les combats se poursuivent. L'offensive du général Heftar n'a donc pas permis de rétablir l'ordre en Libye, mais l'a au contraire précipitée dans une véritable guerre civile entre deux camps. Elle a en outre contribué à rapprocher les différentes milices d'obédience islamiste des groupes plus radicaux d'Ansar al-Charia, implantés surtout à Benghazi, Derna et Syrte, et qui rejettent tout processus électoral au profit des modes de consultation traditionnels des sages et des anciens (*choura*) seuls conformes à la charia selon eux. Enfin cette offensive a précipité l'internationalisation de la crise libyenne. Outre leur soutien politique et médiatique au général Heftar, l'Égypte et les Émirats arabes unis sont intervenus directement dans le conflit libyen : bien que les deux pays ne l'aient pas reconnu, il est avéré que des appareils émiriens ont bombardé le 18 août des positions anti-Heftar à Tripoli avec le soutien de l'Égypte qui leur a ouvert ses bases et son espace aérien. En renforçant les extrémistes des deux camps, toute intervention étrangère ne fait pourtant que renforcer la logique de guerre civile. Une guerre qui en s'installant dans la durée risque en outre de laisser une marge de manœuvre accrue aux quelques groupes jihadistes qui, eux, refusent le cadre national. Des groupes pour le moment très minoritaires et isolés géographiquement (Derna).

Élections, piège à tensions !

La tenue des élections de juin 2014 n'a donc fait que verrouiller le différend entre les deux camps.

C'est dans ce contexte que s'est déroulée l'élection d'un nouveau parlement le 25 juin 2014 (18 % de participation). Prévu pour siéger à Benghazi, il s'est finalement installé à Tobrouk dans une zone sous contrôle des milices soutenant le général Heftar. Sur un effectif élu de 188 députés (sur 200 théoriques), seuls 112 siègent, certains élus originaires de zones opposées au général Heftar le boycottant. Ce parlement a élu un gouvernement en septembre qui devrait s'installer dans la ville de

Bayda. Parallèlement, à Tripoli, passé sous contrôle des troupes d' « Aube de la Libye » le 23 août, les membres de l'ex-CNG ne reconnaissant pas la légalité du nouveau Parlement qu'ils accusent – à juste titre – de s'être rallié au général Heftar en s'installant à Tobrouk, se sont réunis à nouveau pour élire leur propre gouvernement « de salut national ». La tenue des élections de juin n'a donc fait que verrouiller le différend entre les deux camps. D'autant que la reconnaissance par la communauté internationale (à l'exception de la Turquie, du Soudan et du Qatar) comme seul interlocuteur du parlement de Tobrouk, pourtant élu avec une très faible participation et qui ne contrôle que 10 % du territoire libyen, risque de conforter les plus radicaux des deux camps dans leur rejet de tout dialogue. Le 6 novembre, la Cour suprême libyenne a invalidé le scrutin, décision rejetée par l'assemblée de Tobrouk. Le prolongement de la guerre, alors qu'aucun des camps n'est en mesure d'étendre son contrôle sur l'ensemble du territoire comporte un risque important de faire évoluer le pays vers un pourrissement « à la somalienne » – à défaut de conduire à une partition officielle du pays qui n'est demandée, à ce stade, par aucun des belligérants.

http://www.diploweb.com/Libye-combien-de-divisions.html

Boko Haram, ISIS and al-Qaeda: how the jihadists compare

January 20, 2015 5

Boko Haram is suspected of using girls as suicide bombers. Children stand near the scene of an explosion in a mobile phone market in Potiskum, Nigeria, Jan. 12. Two female suicide bombers targeted the busy marketplace the previous day. (Adamu Adamu/Associated Press)

Boko Haram, the vicious jihadist group carrying out attacks in northern Nigeria and neighbouring countries, hasn't received the media and diplomatic attention that al-Qaeda and ISIS get.

But terrorism experts are now seeing growing similarities between Boko Haram and ISIS, which operates in Iraq and Syria.

While the world news media was focusing on the Charlie Hebdo and related killings in Paris, Boko Haram was apparently carrying out even bloodier attacks in northeastern Nigeria.

That these massacres did not receive anywhere near the same media interest as the Paris attacks did not surprise Rita Abrahamsen, who's in Paris, teaching courses on African politics and African security at Sciences Po (Institut d'études politiques de Paris).

Unlike the Paris events, she says, Boko Haram's attacks have become an almost daily occurrence in remote northeastern Nigeria, and its violence can appear almost routine.

Abrahamsen contrasts that with Paris, where "the death toll was smaller but more shocking, and strikes at the heart of Europe."

The University of Ottawa Graduate School of Public and International Affairs professor, whose most recent book is *Conflict and Security in Africa,* is also a former journalist. Abrahamsen says it's not simply that journalists don't care about Nigeria.

But she points out that it's hard for any neutral observer to know what's really going on in northeastern Nigeria, and there's little, if any, video available of Boko Haram attacks.

Campaign posters for Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan, are going up in Lagos and elsewhere for the Feb. 14 election. Rita Abrahamsen says the president has every possible interest in playing down the Boko Haram attacks as much as possible and not drawing attention to them. (Akintunde Akinleye/Reuters)

She also notes that the Nigerian government of Goodluck Jonathan — with an election set for Feb. 14 — "has every possible interest in playing this down as much as possible and not drawing attention to it."

Divided country

Cédric Jourde, a West Africa expert at the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa, points out that in Lagos, Nigeria's — and Africa's — largest city, the newspapers don't have that much coverage of Boko Haram attacks either.

Nigeria is a country divided between north and south, and the region where Boko Haram operates is the most remote, the poorest and the furthest away from Lagos and the south.

For people in the capital, the violence in the north is becoming banal, there's fatigue with the story, Jourde says.

Speaking during a panel discussion about Boko Haram on CBC Radio's*The Current* last week, Max Abrahms, a terrorism expert at Northeastern University in Bos-

ton, said that people think of Boko Haram's violence "less as a terrorist campaign and more as a civil war.

"And when it's seen as a civil war it tends to attract less international attention."

Learning from each other

Today, though, Boko Haram is more frequently being compared to ISIS, one of the main Islamist groups fighting in the Syrian civil war, and in Iraq.

And both groups, it seems, have learned lessons from the other, and replicated each other's practices, even though there is no reliable evidence of any direct connection between the two.

However, Jourde says there's a probable connection between Boko Haram and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which operates in countries north of Nigeria. As part of the Sahel, northern Nigeria belongs to the same geographic, cultural and historic region, which includes Mali, Niger, Cameroon and Chad.

On the weekend, Boko Haram apparently carried out another mass kidnapping, this time in northern Cameroon. About 80 people, mostly women and children, were seized in the village of Mabass, but the Cameroon army claims to have freed about a third of the hostages.

Fighters from ISIS, the Islamic State group, parade down a main road in Mosul, Iraq, June 23, 2014. Both Boko Haram and ISIS have declared a caliphate. (Associated Press)

One thing both Boko Haram and ISIS do have in common is that both groups have declared a caliphate.

But while ISIS does seem to have military control of an area of Syria and Iraq, for Boko Haram, Jourde says, it's only a claim at the moment, as the group doesn't appear to have asserted its authority over a territory and a population over a significant period of time.

"The notion of the caliphate supposes that all Muslims agree to follow that leader," Jourde says, but that's not the case here as Boko Haram's targets have apparently included mosques as well as leaders who practise Sufi Islam.

Abrahamsen says that Boko Haram's idea of seizing control seems to mean chasing out the army and police and all government institutions. Since most people also flee, there's not much left to rule.

Speaking on *The Current*, London-based analyst Imad Mesdoua said "there's no evidence [Boko Haram] are administering, in a formal sense, the areas that they control, in the same way that ISIS does."

Abrahamsen also questions whether Boko Haram is unified under leader Abubakar Shekau, and to what extent he controls the group.

Focused on Nigeria

While publicly Shekau has pushed a global jihad message similar to ISIS and al-Qaeda, in practice the group is focused on Nigeria and the countries on its northern border.

ISIS also makes an effort, with considerable success, to attract jihadists from around the world, but Boko Haram is believed to have very few, if any, international members.

For global jihadists, Nigeria doesn't have the same appeal as joining ISIS, says Jourde. There's no famous tyrant, like Syria's Bashar al-Assad to fight against, nor Western military involvement to draw them in.

Abrahamsen does note, however, that in the last half year or so, Boko Haram has been copying ISIS's approach in their propaganda videos, following their example in style, imagery and even logo.

The two groups also seem to be replicating each other's tactics, with mass kidnappings of women and widespread atrocities to terrify communities.

However, Jourde says those tactics are much older than both groups and have been used by militant groups and governments in many countries. Kidnappings are often carried out as a way to earn money and in the Sahel, mass enslavement and rape is nothing new, according to Jourde.

Even with the latest round of killings in Baga and nearby, Boko Haram is following an old tactic. The villages had formed self-defence groups, which Boko Haram considers collaborating with the army. Jourde explains that by killing everybody, Boko Haram sends a message to other villages: do not co-operate or collaborate with the government.

Given all that, Abrahamsen is concerned that "there is this temptation to wrap all these different types of movements into one big global threat, whereby people are going to rise up in all corners of the world against our Western lifestyle."

But she says "that is not what is going on and I don't think it's a helpful approach, either politically or in terms of security responses."

It has declared its own "caliphate", sworn allegiance to the Middle Eastern death cult calling itself Islamic State, and its followers believe western education is evil.

As such, Boko Haram fits the Islamofascist typecast.

But it also bears remarkable similarity to another violent terror group, the Lord's Resistance Army, led by Joseph Kony but founded by Alice Lakwena as a charismatic Christian movement in the 1980s.

http://www.cbc.ca/

Can Boko Haram Be Called An Islamist Movement?

The group bears many similarities to violent African gangs and funds itself with robberies and extortion, Sky's Sam Kiley writes.

20 January 2015

Boko Haram Kidnaps 50 Children

One might, therefore, be tempted to conclude that Boko Haram is nothing more than a profiteering gang of murderers and thugs - a west African version of the LRA, the Interahamwe, or the Mai Mai of the Congo.

But it would be too easy to dismiss Boko Haram as not being a "proper" Islamist movement.

Most often, the truth is that whatever the genesis of violent groups, even ones with a legitimate fight, they very often – in fact overwhelmingly – become self-serving movements focused on perpetuating the wealth and interests of their leadership above all else.

This is why whether they are Boko Haram, IS, the LRA or al Shabaab, they need a constant flow of volunteers to replenish their ranks who arrive still believing in the original cause. When these fade, they forcibly recruit.

The same pattern can be seen in areas under IS control in Syria and Iraq.

IS kidnaps women, forces them into sex slavery, extorts protection money from the local population, kills with impunity and claims a religious imperative just like Boko Haram or the LRA.

"God made me do it" is both a powerful mantra and a pretty good excuse.

Even the austere al Qaeda franchises are on the make - officially to ensure they can continue their "resistance" against the decadent west.

Moktar bel Moktar, who was behind the Algerian Tigantourine gas facility attack in which 39 hostages died in 2013, was an arms drugs and cigarette smuggler who split from al Qaeda - probably because he wasn't sharing his profits with jihadi comrades.

Similarly, Boko Haram has thrived in smuggler country on the triple borders of Cameroon, Nigeria and Chad.

It has funded itself with bank robberies and extortion, swollen its ranks with abducted youth, and used rape and forced marriage to carry its programme into the next generation.

It has not "ruled" anywhere. It has laid waste. It has profited. And its success has attracted criminals and lost youth who have wrapped themselves in a black flag to self-justify a joyriding run of murder.

It's not clear that Boko Haram's followers have even the faintest grip on Islam.

They do, however, like so many elsewhere, enjoy the power that flows from the muzzle of an AK47 and the perks that it brings.

This is why they should not be seen as any kind of strategic threat. They are not. None of them are.

They pose a criminal problem because that is what they are – criminals

Video: Dec: Girl Refuses To Detonate Bomb

http://news.sky.com

Analysis: Is Nigeria too big to fail?

Thanks to the Kouachi brothers, the world seems to care about Nigeria again

ithin days of their deadly terrorist attack in Paris people began to question why the killing of a few French cartoonists could produce such a feverish global response while a massacre of hundreds, possibly thousands of Nigerians by Boko Haram – a group espousing the same brand of Islamic extremism as the Kouachis – was ignored.

Whether that was down to double standards or simply geopolitics, the intensifying insurgency in northeast Nigeria is now fully back in the global spotlight. In the wake of the Paris attacks US President Barack Obama and UK Prime Minister David Cameron vowed to defeat the 'barbaric killers' of Boko Haram and other terrorist organisations.

In one sense, this is music to the ears of both Boko Haram and the Nigerian government.

By 'internationalising' the insurgency, Boko Haram's legitimacy within global jihadism is enhanced, accelerating the flow of weapons and fighters from the wider Jihadi network. For its part, Nigeria's government welcomes any conflation of Boko Haram with Islamic State or Al Qa'ida, since it helps obscure its own culpability in the escalating crisis.

No one knows if the pledge by Obama and Cameron to fight terrorism in Africa will amount to much. Many would argue that it would be better for Nigeria – and Africa – if it didn't.

Big powers can unwittingly unleash dire consequences when they try to intervene, even in a limited way, in highly complex conflicts. The current example *par excellence* is the West's military intervention in Libya in 2011. President Jacob Zuma, speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, has gone so far as to claim 'the issue of Boko Haram stems from what happened in Libya'. Not quite, but it's certainly exacerbated the problem.

Nigerian troops lack sufficient firepower and support to effectively tackle Boko Haram - hence the deteriorating morale within one of Africa's most experienced armed forces: dozens of its soldiers are on death row for mutiny – though it's not the full story.

Collusion between Boko Haram and the military has been well-documented. In some cases this is due to corruption, in others it's ideological kinship. Sometimes, soldiers just don't want to fight. No one seems to know the true extent of the problem.

The official response to Boko Haram's killing rampage in the northeastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, now in its seventh – and most destructive, according to a recent report by Amnesty International – year has been inept.

Criticism of President Goodluck Jonathan has grown since the last outrage by Boko Haram that captured the world's attention, the (still unsolved) kidnapping of hundreds of girls in Chibok in April 2014.

Leaders in the three affected states have accused him of abandoning the opposition-controlled northeast, in part so voting cannot take place in the volatile region during next month's national elections. The President's supporters claim that at least one governor is funding Boko Haram and all three administrations are complicit in the group becoming 'embedded' in society due to years of inaction and complacency.

Together, they've all failed the people of the northeast, one of Nigeria's poorest regions, home to large numbers of alienated, unemployed youth and state institutions unable to deliver basic services. Its history of religious and communal tensions amplifies the risk of radicalisation.

Will any foreign militaries dare to venture into this miasmal mess?

The UN Special Representative for West Africa, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, has urged Nigeria and the three neighbouring states directly affected by the insurgency – Niger, Chad and Cameroon – to set aside their differences and create a regional force to defeat the militants. Only Chad appears willing, though tellingly it has sent troops to support Cameroon, victim of several cross-border incursions by Boko Haram, rather than Nigeria.

Ghana's President John Mahama has gone a step further, imploring his fellow African statesmen to consider an Africa-wide plan to end the insurgency and 'rid the

entire African continent of terrorism… we cannot stand by silently, idly waiting for the international community to intervene on our behalf.'

The African Union (AU) has shown itself capable of being an effective coordinator and troop provider in Somalia, delivering a degree of stability to the capital, Mogadishu, that no other multi-national force – including the American-led one in the early 1990s – has achieved. But any joint counter-insurgency plan for Nigeria would need to overcome intense political rivalries and a deep reluctance among key AU states to share intelligence.

A direct role for US, UK or other Western militaries appears unlikely, for the moment. Last week the UN Security Council raised the alarm about Boko Haram's increasing threat to security across West and Central Africa, but underlined the need for Nigeria and its neighbours to take collective action. That President Obama failed to mention Nigeria in his recent State of the Union Address suggests that no major US assistance is planned.

Nigeria's National Security adviser says the country doesn't need the help of the UN or the African Union. His assertion that Nigeria and its immediate neigbours are in "good shape to address the issue" is scarcely credible, though.

The conundrum facing both the African Union and the wider international community is deciding when 'local' becomes 'global'.

The destruction of Boko Haram will not necessarily lead to a more peaceful and stable Nigeria. The extremist group rose out of a toxic brew of corruption, religion, politics and ethno-regionalism, in which struggles over Nigeria's vast oil revenues have played out for decades. That's a long-term, local problem only Nigeria can sort out.

At the same time, Boko Haram's once fanciful predictions of a caliphate are starting to resemble facts on the ground. It now controls territory roughly equal to the size of Belgium. More and more foreigners have joined its ranks. In some places Boko Haram is beginning to act like a government, providing public security and services.

The establishment of a proto-Islamic state in Africa's most populous state and biggest economy raises a question of global concern: is Nigeria too big to fail?

Just as key banks were rescued because the consequences of their failure were deemed too grave for the financial system as a whole, serious consideration must be given to what might happen next – nationally and regionally – should Boko Haram's campaign of terror go unchecked.

Not least of all, to their innocent victims. The insurgency has already displaced 1.5 million people and caused untold fear and suffering now stretching beyond Nigeria's borders.

Pressure on the government to permit international assistance at least around the need to protect civilians is likely to grow. What form that assistance takes will be

crucial.

NATO initially derived its authority to intervene in Libya from a UN resolution 'to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack', though its mission evolved well beyond this mandate. Four years on, the motives for the NATO intervention and whether it's weakened the (still nascent) international norm of Responsibility to Protect are hotly debated.

Wariness about ulterior agendas in the region is high. Nigeria's oil wealth is seen as a major draw for any would-be Western military presence. Cameroon, rich in untapped resources, is increasingly concerned that Boko Haram's incursions might be the pretext for France to become involved.

Though French troops were lauded for coming to Mali's rescue in 2013, when the capital Bamako appeared set to be overrun by radical Islamists, African governments harbour deep suspicions about France's motives.

Some analysts believe that if Muhammadu Buhari, the President Jonathan's main contender and a northern Muslim, wins the election on 14 February the insurgency may quieten down, providing a space for negotiations with Boko Haram.

As likely, however, is the vote will exacerbate religious and regional tensions within the country, especially if the loser contests the results, as it looks almost certain. Mix in a runaway insurgency, crumbling armed forces and plummeting prices for oil – more than 90 per cent of the country's export earnings – and the prospect of a 'perfect storm' is not so far-fetched.

Even if Nigeria is 'too big to fail', options available to the Western countries to ameliorate the current crisis are limited. To help fight Boko Haram they first need a reliable military or security partner. As the crisis has worsened it's become less clear who that might be.

Paradoxically, one ray of light in the minds of military planners is that if Boko Haram is indeed transitioning from asymmetric warfare to holding territory, then it's also making itself a more identifiable target.

But that will be small comfort to Nigerians affected by the insurgency.

One of their greatest writers, Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, remarked last year that dealing with Boko Haram has become "the responsibility of the global community, a crime against humanity has been committed'.

He may be right. But everyone will have to first fully understand what they are getting themselves into. **DM**

Dr Terence McNamee is the Deputy Director of The Brenthurst Foundation

Photo: An undated photograph from 2014 made available 13 January 2015 shows members of the Nigerian military manning checkpoints in Maiduguri, North East Nigeria. EPA/STR

"Boko Haram, une combinaison monstrueuse d'Al-Qaïda et de l'Etat islamique"

Par Fabrice Aubert le 15 janvier 2015

DECRYPTAGE - Mathieu Guidère, islamologue et spécialiste des mouvements isla-mistes, explique à MYTF1News que le groupe nigérian, autrefois proche d'Al-Qaïda, est aujourd'hui tenté par le "jihad territorialisé" mené par l'Etat islamique. Boko Haram a tué des centaines de personnes depuis le début de l'année.

 Depuis début janvier, le groupe terroriste **Boko Haram** a lancé une grande offen-sive à Baga, dans le Nord-Est du **Nigeria**, région qu'il contrôle déjà en grande partie. Ponctuée de massacres de populations civiles, cette offensive aurait fait des cen-taines de morts.

Professeur des Universités et islamologue, Mathieu Guidère est spécialiste des mouvements islamistes. Il a écrit de nombreux livres sur le monde arabe et musul-man. Il décrypte la situation pour MYTF1News.

MYTF1News : Certaines sources font état de 2.000 morts à Baga, le gouverne-ment évoquant une centaine de victimes. A-t-on une idée plus précise de ce qui se passe sur place et du nombre de victimes ?

Mathieu Guidère : La zone étant soumise à un "black out", les témoignages directs sont rares et contradictoires. Les chiffres divergent énormément selon les sources.

Ce que l'on sait, c'est que Boko Haram, poursuivant une stratégie d'expansion terri-toriale, s'est attaqué à plusieurs villages en même temps et que ceux qui ont résisté ou aidé l'armée fédérale ont subi des actions de représailles terribles, avec des mises à mort systématiques. Ce qui est certain, c'est que la stratégie de massacres initiée par Boko Haram continue sans relâche. Et prend même de l'ampleur au Nord-Est du pays.

MYTF1News : Avec ses dernières actions, Boko Haram montre qu'il est de plus en plus fort. Cette montée en force est-elle surtout liée au calendrier électoral pour "frapper fort" avant la présidentielle du mois prochain ?

M.G. : Le contexte électoral n'est en effet pas étranger à cette montée en puis-sance de Boko Haram. Le groupe profite de ce contexte pour politiser au maximum son action et pour s'imposer dans le débat politique. En outre, les hommes poli-tiques nigérians, du Nord (à majorité musulmane) comme du Sud (à majorité chré-tienne), instrumentalisent la question sécuritaire et la lutte contre le **terrorisme** à des fins électoralistes. Il n'existe en effet pas aujourd'hui un consensus au Nigeria concernant la manière de lutter contre Boko Haram. Et celui-ci en profite pour étendre son pouvoir et multiplier les massacres.

"Boko Haram se finance en taxant les populations locales"

MYTF1News : Comment Boko Haram continue-t-il à recruter et à se financer ?

M.G. : Boko Haram continue de recruter auprès des populations musulmanes du Nord-Est du pays. Il s'agit de recrutements forcés la plupart du temps, par peur des représailles et des massacres. Mais ces populations sont également prises entre deux feux : celui de l'armée et celui du groupe terroriste. Elles sont donc sommées de collaborer ou de périr.

Boko Haram continue aussi de prospérer sur ce que l'armée abandonne en termes de terrain et d'armes. Il gère également divers trafics sur les territoires qu'il contrôle. Aujourd'hui, il s'oriente de plus en plus vers un financement à la manière de l'**Etat islamique** (EI) en se substituant au gouvernement fédéral et en taxant les populations locales. Comme le fait l'EI en Syrie et en Irak.

MYTF1News : Justement, sur le plan idéologique, Boko Haram est-il désormais plus proche d'Al-Qaïda que de l'Etat islamique ?

M.G. : Boko Haram était proche d'**Al-Qaïda**. Il a même bénéficié un temps de l'aide militaire, logistique et financière d'Al-Qaïda au Maghreb islamique (**Aqmi**) avant 2013 et l'intervention française au Nord du Mali. Mais, depuis, il a dérivé vers une idéologie de "**jihad** territorialisé" dans le sillage de l'Etat islamique, dont il a d'ailleurs salué d'ailleurs la déclaration du "califat". On peut donc dire qu'il est aujourd'hui un groupe hybride, pour ne pas dire une combinaison monstrueuse, de l'idéologie des deux organisations terroristes les plus puissantes.

"Boko Haram pourrait menacer sérieusement les pays voisins"

MYTF1News : Boko Haram s'attaque aussi désormais directement au Cameroun. A-t-il les moyens d'y agir comme dans le Nord-Est du Nigeria et de déstabiliser la région ?

M.G. : Il y a quelques mois, le chef de Boko Haram, Aboubacar Shekhau, a déclaré le "califat" sur les régions qu'il contrôlait. Puis, il y a une semaine, il a menacé directement le **Cameroun** et annoncé son intention de reconquérir les anciens territoires du "Califat de Sokoto" (1804-1903), lequel regroupait une partie des régions actuelles du Nigeria, du Cameroun, du Tchad et du Niger. Si cette dynamique de conquête territoriale n'est pas stoppée, Boko Haram pourrait menacer sérieusement les pays voisins. Et déstabiliser ainsi toute la région, comme l'a fait l'Etat islamique au Moyen-Orient.

MYTF1News : Faudrait-il alors une intervention internationale, si le Nigeria le demande bien sûr, pour stopper cette progression ?

M.G. : Comme en Syrie et en Irak, la communauté internationale devra, à un moment ou un autre, prendre ses responsabilités et aider le gouvernement du Nigeria à stopper les massacres de Boko Haram. Il faut rappeler que cette communauté avait promis monts et merveilles lors de la conférence de Paris organisée après l'enlèvement de plus de 200 jeunes filles en avril 2014 -lesquelles sont d'ailleurs toujours en captivité.

Mais le Nigeria n'a rien vu arrivé puisque les efforts internationaux ont été dirigés

contre l'Etat islamique. Aujourd'hui encore, la question reste posée. Mais il y a peu de chance de voir une intervention militaire au Nigeria, car d'autres zones semblent encore plus urgentes, comme le Yémen ou la Libye...

"Perçu comme une menace locale"

MYTF1 News : Boko Haram pourrait-il un jour être tenté par agir en Europe ?
M.G. : Boko Haram a déjà menacé divers pays européens, dont la France. Mais, pour l'instant, son action s'est limitée à l'enlèvement et à la prise d'otages. Il ne semble pas avoir les moyens ni les relais nécessaires pour frapper en Europe ou aux Etats-Unis.

Et c'est pourquoi il continue d'ailleurs d'être perçu comme une menace locale, au pire régionale. Mais certainement pas internationale ou globale. Cela laisse ainsi le Nigeria et les pays de la région désemparés face à une situation qui devient de plus en plus intenable.

http://lci.tf1.fr/

South Sudan

South Sudan: Jonglei – "We Have Always Been at War

South Sudan's Jonglei state is emblematic of the regional, national and local challenges to peace and of the limitations of trying to resolve a conflict by engaging only two of the nearly two-dozen armed groups in the country.

Despite eleven months of peace talks mediated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), South Sudan's civil war threatens to intensify in the coming weeks. Most of the nearly two dozen armed groups in South Sudan are, at least nominally, allied with President Salva Kiir's Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) or former Vice President Riek Machar's SPLA-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO). Yet most of these groups are not battling for control of the central government and their casus belli is different from that of Kiir or Machar. Some groups are fighting over land and representation in state and local governments, while others are caught in cycles of revenge attacks that began with atrocities against members of their community. Crisis Group's latest report, _South Sudan: Jonglei – "We Have Always Been at War"_, calls for IGAD to enhance its political presence in South Sudan, to better engage with armed groups and to ensure talks in Addis Ababa reflect the diversity of armed interests on the ground.

The report's major findings and recommendations are:

Jonglei state's mix of violent ethnic militias, armed political opposition, intercommunal clashes and dysfunctional governance were part of the tinder that led to the outbreak of South Sudan's civil war a year ago. Today, civilians are displaced and starving, and a return to war is all but guaranteed. While the government has the upper hand militarily, interminable rebellion and continuing regional interference point to a turbulent future.

The trajectory of the war in Jonglei demonstrates the dangers of limiting IGAD's peace process to only the government and Riek Machar's SPLM/A-IO (Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Movement/Army-In Opposition). IGAD should expand its political presence in South Sudan to engage more directly with the various armed groups – including non-South Sudanese ones – and the communities that support them. Engaging these groups is critical to building support for a future peace agreement and to ensuring that Salva Kiir and Riek Machar cannot use these armed groups to undermine talks or an agreement.

The multiplicity of armed groups and their independent nature suggest that far more effort should be dedicated to discussions about security arrangements that go beyond the government and the SPLA-IO.

Much of the political work should be done in South Sudan, not Addis Ababa, and IGAD should carefully assess which conflicts require resolution at the national level and which should be addressed at the local level.

Engagement with armed groups will lay the groundwork for the national political processes and transitional arrangements that are needed for a sustainable peace once a deal is reached in Addis Ababa.

"This war cannot be resolved by engaging only two of the nearly two-dozen armed groups in the country and ignoring those that have not yet entered into the fight", says Casie Copeland, South Sudan Analyst. "IGAD should enhance its approach, which already includes regional and national tracks, with strengthened engagement with armed groups to move the peace process forward".

"As the case of Jonglei illustrates, armed groups continuously assess their alliances, make and break them frequently, and will do the same with respect to the benefit or detriment they perceive from a peace agreement", says Cedric Barnes, Horn of Africa Project Director. "Kiir and Machar have built their coalitions on these shifting sands and any deal between the two could fall apart if their constituent groups don't see an advantage for themselves. This calls for more systematic engagement at the community level".

https://us-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/

Uganda

Uganda: Dominic Ongwen - Born At the Time of the White Ant, Tried By the ICC

24 January 2015

Captured LRA Commander Dominic Ongwen (third from left)

Shortly, Dominic Ongwen will be the first commander of an internationally listed terrorist organisation to give acte de presence at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Dominic Ongwen

Coming from the 'bush', he arrives in gloomy and wintery The Hague, almost a decade after the world's permanent atrocity court dispensed arrest warrants for him and four fellow rebellious leaders of the sectarian Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

Infamously guided by the schizophrenic self-proclaimed spokesperson of God, Joseph Kony, the mob brutalised the people it claimed to be fighting for: the Acholi in northern Uganda. Instead of fulfilling its dream to fashion a theocracy based on the Bible's Ten Commandments and Acholi folklore, the LRA embarked on a crusade of terror.

Emblematically, the LRA's ghastly initiation rituals notoriously encompassed cutting

of limbs, lips and ears of civilians, kidnapping and indoctrinating thousands of kids to serve as soldiers and sex slaves. Ongwen was himself captured and whipped as a poor child. Ironically, it is now he, himself, who faces allegations of crimes against humanity and war crimes, perpetrated when he was grown man.

And the charges are no child's play: murder, enslavement, inhumane acts, cruel treatment, attacking civilians and pillaging. A complicated challenge surfaces for current Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, who co-signed the warrants when she was still a deputy.

In the eyes of public opinion on the troubled ICC, it is far from a comfortable case, which comes at an inconvenient time. Brushing off the dust of a dormant criminal file with a former child soldier turned 'terrorist' in the dock is perhaps not the desired 'easy catch' the war crimes court is after. And where to hold the hearings, if it comes to trial?

Born at the time of the white ant

At some point in the wet season of 1980, Alexy Acayo and Ronald Owiya, two schoolteachers living in Paibona, fêted the birth of their fourth child: Dominic Okumu Savio. Times were tough. When Dominic was five or six years old, Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) overthrew the short-lived military junta of Tito Okello, who hailed from Dominic's home region, Acholiland.

Okello's forces repelled and a protracted bloody bush war was soon to dominate the youngster's life, living in fear of NRA midnight marauds, killings and rapes. But danger lingered everywhere. Forced recruitment by rebel-turned Acholi combatants also loomed, at a time when the spiritual leader Alice Auma's (a.k.a. Lakwena) Holy Spirit Movement and her Holy Mobile Force morphed the skirmishes into a quasi-sectarian feud.

When Lakwena was defeated and exiled in 1988, her relative and former choirboy Joseph Kony - known to be haunted by spirits - withdrew from the Holy Spirit remnants and reconstituted them into what became the LRA. Now dreading snatching and subsequent intimidation and retaliation by Kony's racketeers, Dominic's parents re-baptised their son Ongwen ("born at the time of the white ant").

Sadly, the schoolboy had to use that alias in 1990, during his last walk to Abili Primary School in Koro. Some accounts narrate that the ten-year-old, small and frail boy was seized and carried by other captives and placed under the helm of lapwony (teacher) Vincent Otti, then still a junior commander, reportedly killed a few years ago but currently remaining an ICC fugitive.

Rise to the Control Altar

An illiterate youngster, Ongwen, underwent the LRA's violent and disorienting rites de passage and 'education'; he was to forget his former life and was taught that he was predestined to fight for the rights of his Acholi people. The false name he gave

his captors soon turned into his nom de guerre.

Other abductees, his former little boy and girl fighters, have said Ongwen was a formidable child warrior, conducting successful raids, capturing fighters and weaponry.

He rose within the ranks and moved to southern Sudan sometime in 1993 or 1994, where Kony fought a proxy battle against the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which was backed by Kampala. In Sudan, Ongwen was put in charge of field operations, conducting raids and organising abductions of children from northern Uganda.

The white ant was good at his job. Kony supposedly praised him as a role model for other abducted children and let him rise in the LRA ranks.

At 18 he was personally promoted to lieutenant. In the early 2000's, Ongwen - who by then was a known assassin, a loyal fighter and outliving his superiors - became commander of the Sinia Brigade and entered the 'Control Altar', the core LRA leadership.

At this time, the war reached a new peak. In March 2002 the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) launched operation 'Iron Fist' against LRA bases in Sudan.

But the guerrilla rebels hit back with relentless large-scale brutalities across northern Uganda: massacring, marauding thousands of progenies and displacing hundreds of thousands of ordinary Ugandans. Over 1.6 million Ugandans had fled their homes by 2003 and had settled in so-called Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camps.

Diplomacy of justice

"The conflict in northern Uganda is the biggest forgotten, neglected humanitarian emergency in the world today," UN officials decried at the end of 2003. But Museveni, the country's President since 1986, lamented the lack of actual international assistance to help stop the LRA, even though the post-9/11 USA administration had declared it a terrorist group in 2001.

"Having exhausted every other means of bringing an end to this terrible suffering, the Republic of Uganda now turns to the newly established ICC and its promise of global justice," Museveni's Attorney General wrote in a 27-page letter referring the case to the freshly appointed court's prosecutor, Luis Moreno Ocampo.

On 16 December 2003 Uganda requested "that investigations focus on the persons most responsible for such crimes, namely LRA members in positions of command and control, especially because a significant proportion of low-ranking perpetrators are forcibly conscripted children that have committed crimes under duress, and thus are themselves victims of the LRA leadership."

Kampala further pledged "its full cooperation to the Prosecutor in the investigation

and prosecution of LRA crimes [...]" and sent along documentation on LRA atrocities.

Time for diplomacy of justice. In the next month, after Museveni and Ocampo discussed the details of the referral and agreed on practical and political arrangements in a hotel in London, the Argentinean prosecutor happily and proudly announced the start of planning for the court's first inquiry. Meanwhile, atrocities kept piling up.

Barlonyo, a large IDP camp was attacked on 21 February 2004, with Okot Odhiambo's LRA 'Trinkle' brigade allegedly shooting, hacking and burning to death over 200 people.

Ocampo was somewhat immodest in his claims, envisioning that his international justice intervention would help end the decade-old war. He quickly promised "that the crimes committed in Barlonya camp will be investigated and that those bearing the greatest responsibility will be prosecuted." The prime focus was the LRA, not Museveni's forces.

But time passed by as Ocampo was still hiring lawyers, analysts and investigators into his newly created, but still small, Office of The Prosecutor (OTP), while also dividing labour between the Democratic Republic of Congo's war torn-Ituri region and northern Uganda and eyeballing Darfur. A so-called "Uganda joint team"- including a dozen investigators, analysts and trial lawyers, led by American prosecutor Christine Chung - was recruited in early 2004. There was no scarcity of sources.

Uganda, as promised in its referral, was a key investigating partner and shipped piles of reports and evidence of LRA activities to The Hague, including intercepted radio and satellite phone communications.

With a strong appetite to start trials, prosecutors Ocampo, Bensouda, Chung and Eric MacDonald went into overdrive. Tight deadlines left no time for thorough collection and broad analysis of existing information. But, according to case-leader Chung, in an interview with the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) "[...] many think for too long [and] at some point you need to go to the field."

Indictments to go

So, pressure was mounting. Ocampo was calculating that talks between the LRA and Kampala were swiftly progressing and that he could contribute to a potential peace agreement with international justice.

In the event that the LRA militants suddenly came out of the bush, he wanted indictments 'ready-to-go'. Rushing to produce arrest warrants, the OTP lawyers, by September, had already selected six local attacks carried out between July 2002 and July 2004, handpicked specific crime types and identified several suspects for the cases they wanted to present.

Under that blueprinted directive, a small multinational investigation team was sent

into the field. Astonishingly enough, none of the seven on-ground investigators had a police background. They were often flanked by a couple of analysts from the office's Jurisdiction, Complementarity and Cooperation Division (JCCD) and trial lawyers Chung and MacDonald.

As the six crime scenes in Gulu, Lira and Soroti districts were already deemed too old, forensic evidence was not trailed.

Instead, during over 50 missions in little more than half a year, the investigators identified, heard and collected testimonies from a wide range of witnesses: victims in refugee camps, insiders among LRA defectors within the Ugandan Army and former child soldiers as well as several overview witnesses.

In contrast to the simultaneously on-going probe in eastern Congo, witnesses in the still volatile Uganda were directly accessible and recourse to the controversial use of intermediaries was unnecessary.

In Uganda, the biggest challenge was to keep the number of witnesses small but of 'smoking gun' quality, something that, according to former investigators, worked out rather well.

From the outset, the targets were clear: the quasi-military structure of the LRA's leadership was well known. So was Sinia Brigade Commander Ongwen.

The white ant's name had already surfaced in the preliminary phase and the evidence collected indeed connected him to at least one of the six attacks under investigation.

That attack was part of Ocampo's application for arrest warrants in May 2005, only ten months after the start of the investigation.

After pre-trial judges Tuiloma Neroni Slade, Mauro Politi and Fatoumata Dembele Diarra reviewed the prosecutor's evidence and other information, the courts' first ever arrest warrants were issued in July. Dominic, LRA leader Joseph Kony, Vice-chief Vincent Otti and Commanders Raska Lukwiya and Okot Odhiambo altogether became wanted men for an aggregated 86 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Vacant justice

Seven atrocity counts pertain to Ongwen. In a heavily redacted warrant, only a glimpse of the case narrative against him transpires.

In general terms, it summarises a cycle of violence and pattern of brutalisation of civilians since at least 1987, including from 1 July - the date from when the ICC has jurisdiction. Central to the story is that Kony in 2003 "issued broad orders to target and kill civilian populations" and "to loot and abduct civilians."

Recordings of intercepted radio communications, accounts of defected LRA members and witness and victims' accounts allegedly show Dominic's "direct involve-

ment with the objectives and strategies of the campaign as a whole," the warrant reads. To be specific, he is charged in relation to "the REDACTED IDP Camp [...] forming part of the REDACTED campaign and having occurred in REDACTED 2004."

It appears - yet remains unconfirmed - that Odhiambo stands charged with the Barlonyo attack. We only know that the assault attributed to Ongwen occurred sometime before July 2004.

In any case, in the radio communications with the Control Altar Ongwen allegedly acknowledged that he was the commander of the LRA forces that attacked the camp by "shooting and beating civilian residents, burning huts and looting."

An undisclosed number of people were killed, abducted and injured during the violence. With all its redactions, the charge sheet had been kept under seal, probably in order to safeguard the witnesses and not to put Ongwen and the four other suspects on notice.

But then, on 30 September, the Prosecutor was informed that during yet another LRA attack on an IDP camp, Ongwen was killed by Ugandan forces.

It prompted Ocampo to publicise all arrest warrants two weeks later, saying "civilians in Northern Uganda have been living in a nightmare of brutality and violence for more than nineteen years. I believe that, working together, we will help bring justice, peace and security for the people of Northern Uganda."

It was a message in vain; the five warrants were forwarded to Uganda, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) but remained vacant.

Without its own police force, the ICC could only hope for arrests made by others, including Ugandan forces. Meanwhile, 8 months after the public announcement of the warrants, the pre-trial bench released the results of a DNA test on Ongwen's alleged dead body: it was negative.

Dominic was thus still alive and Interpol promptly issued a Red Notice for the LRA commander. But the group had already left Uganda, scattered across the region and the fugitives were successfully hiding. By July 2006, the court believed that the white ant was somewhere in the South-East Equatorial Province in southern Sudan, "attempting to cross the Nile to join the hidden LRA Headquarters in north Congo."

An ant in the bush

Relative calm had reached northern Uganda by mid-2006. But the LRA had become a regional threat, exporting their reign of terror to DR Congo, Sudan and eventually extending it to the Central African Republic (CAR). Ongwen's troops were reported terrorising communities in Congo's Haut Uele and Bas Uele districts.

In December 2009, Human Rights Watch (HRW) documented the massacre of at least 345 civilians and abduction of another 250 during a four-day rampage in Makombo. Tracked by various forces, including special Ugandan and American forces, and with a bounty of 5 million dollars on his head, Ongwen managed to remain elu-

sive until his 25-years in the bush ended in the Central African Republic early this year.

As a UN commission of inquiry published its report about ethnic cleansing of Muslims in the CAR since 2013, Ongwen reportedly fell in the hands of US 'peacekeeping' forces - via Islamic Seleka fighters - and their Ugandan allies stationed in the largely forgotten war-torn country. In a prefab hut, he was waiting to be flown ("transferred") to The Netherlands by the CAR authorities.

"The man has been in the bush for most of his life fighting and eating rats but now he is in our (UPDF) custody eating chicken. He is happy that he will get justice at the ICC," Ugandan army spokesperson Paddy Ankunda was reported saying.

And indeed, in a video on the web, Ongwen is seen walking around a compound, having dinner and laughing. Since last weekend, he has been in the custody of the ICC.

In The Hague, when he arrives at the Scheveningen prison he will get his medical and psychological check-up, a lawyer and two suits to appear neatly before three international judges. While awaiting his trial from his cell, he can spend time following educational courses, share dinners with convicted Congolese war criminals and work out in the gym.

Looming oblivion

But the court was not expecting another suspect. It is a public secret that it is inconvenient timing. Already investigating atrocities in at least eight conflict situations, Bensouda launched a preliminary examination on the occupied Palestinian territories on 16 January.

Re-opening Ongwen's dormant dossier will increase the burden on Bensouda's already overworked prosecution service. Her minimalistic 47 million dollar budget has already been fully committed to other cases, court sources complain. Financial and human resources are scarce, while locating the old witnesses against Ongwen - who ever since the investigations were fully closed nine and a half years ago may have died, disappeared or turned unwilling to testify - and possibly collecting new testimony may be a costly exercise.

So anybody expecting a quick trial, or a list of additional charges, is likely to be disappointed. Simply look at the case of Bosco Ntaganda, the renegade Rwando-Congolese warlord who surprisingly surrendered to the court in March 2013.

After additional investigations in Ituri and a close review of the current evidence, judges found "reasonable grounds" to start his trial only next summer. International justice moves at a snail's pace.

As clear-cut and obvious the allegations against the White Ant may appear in the public eye, an actual trial for the former child soldier is - next to its ethical and legal dilemmas - not a certainty.

After he makes his initial appearance at the court - introducing himself and listening to the charges being read out to him - the judges will test if the current and possibly newly retrieved evidence is sufficient to put him to trial. Practice in other cases has proved this to be a protracted legal procedure that warrants no guarantees for success. If at all, it is unclear if ICC justice will finally be done for LRA atrocities.

And if the trial does proceed, the question still arises whether justice will be seen to be done. Hidden on the dreary outskirts of The Hague, ICC trials have so far been conducted in The Netherlands and seats at the court's public galleries have remained disturbingly empty.

Victims, in whose name the ICC purports to operate, are only made apparent by their absence or as numbers in case filings. It is simply too far away from the African crime scenes the court has dealt with thus far. Under the court's rules, however opportunities loom, a trial chamber can decide to sit elsewhere.

Now that the court has executed one of its first ever arrest warrants, it may choose to have its hearings elsewhere, close to the crime scene and in view of its people: in Uganda. In any other case, the white ant will soon disappear into a nest of oblivion.

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UN

UN chief welcomes African Union's decision to combat Boko Haram

30 January 2015

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (centre) holds a press conference at the end of his visit to Ethiopia for the 24th Summit of the African Union in Addis Ababa, January 2015. UN Photo/ Eskinder Debebe

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (centre) holds a press conference at the end of his visit to Ethiopia for the 24th Summit of the African Union in Addis Ababa, January 2015. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

31 January 2015 – United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today welcomed the decision of the African Union to join forces to stop the advancement of the "murderous campaigns" waged by Boko Haram, as he stressed the importance of the continent's collaboration with the UN, emphasizing that "lives depend on preventive-diplomacy and peacekeeping."

Mr. Ban is in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, this weekend for the African Union (AU) Summit, a gathering of the continent's 54 nations, to discuss daunting challenges including the growing threat of Boko Haram. At the Summit's closing today, African leaders pledged to join forces to fight the terror group, which has in recent weeks attacked villages in Cameroon, displacing thousands to neighbouring countries and sparking fears that its insurgency was expanding beyond Nigeria.

Speaking to reporters today, the UN chief said he supported the AU's plan to fight the terror group with the establishment of a Multinational Joint Task Force, which must remain consistent with UN human rights due diligence policies.

"The murderous campaign waged by Boko Haram demands stronger and more co-ordinated action from us all," Mr. Ban said.

"Regional and international efforts must focus on protecting communities in northern Nigeria and across borders. More than a million internally displaced people and refugees must be able to return home," the Secretary-General added, reiterating his call for the immediate release of those who have been abducted, particularly the girls from Chibok.

Collaboration on peace and security is essential to the UN's partnership with the AU in that more than 80 per cent of UN peacekeepers are deployed on the continent. Mr. Ban said that through the UN-AU partnership, progress has been made in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan. More, however, could be done by working "even more closely together".

Such close partnership has paid off in the fight against the Ebola epidemic, Mr. Ban continued, commending the AU for being on the "front lines" of fighting the deadly virus. Efforts are paying off and while "we are beginning to turn the tide," Ebola is far from over.

"We must continue to demonstrate the same solidarity until Ebola is gone from every country, and throughout the next phase of recovery," the UN chief said.

After all, he continued, peace and development go hand-in-hand. Africa has made substantial progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and has the opportunity this year, like the rest of the world, to commit to a new post-2015 development agenda and a universal agreement on climate change.

"African families, communities and economies have much to gain from both these historic agreements," Mr. Ban continued, urging leaders of the continent to "listen to their people and respect their wishes and aspirations".

Several African countries will hold elections this year, he said, pledging that the UN and AU will work together to support nations to organize peaceful and credible polls. Mr. Ban also urged leaders to respect constitutional and legal limits on their terms of office.

Mr. Ban also strongly condemned the terrorist attacks in North Sinai, earlier this week which killed dozens of people, including civilians, and injured scores of others.

In his remarks to a meeting on ensuring peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Secretary-General said that despite progress made in "stamping out" the activities of armed groups, scores of civilians have been killed in recent months in the Beni area.

This only underscores the importance of eradicating all illegal armed groups from the region, Mr. Ban told the Fifth Meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and region. Welcom-

ing the use of military force against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, or the FDLR, he added, that while "military action will not resolve this issue," it is vital to eliminate the threat posed by the FDLR once and for all.

The Secretary-General also expressed concern at the slow progress in implementing the Nairobi Declarations. More than a year after those accords were signed, the amnesty and repatriation of eligible former fighters from M23 and other armed groups have not been completed. Governments of the DCR, Rwanda and Uganda must to intensity efforts to complete this process.

Also today in a meeting with Mali's Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Ban deplored the recent incidents in Gao, in the northern part of the embattled country. He reiterated the UN's commitment to work closely with the Malian Government to find out exactly what happened and encouraged the Government to continue to lead the peace process. Meanwhile, the Malian Minister, Abdoulaye Diop, reiterated his Government's support for the UN's peacekeeping mission in the country, known as MINUSMA.

http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49965#.VM4XCNXF_1U

EU

News Analysis: EU gears up for different levels of fight against terrorism

2015-01-20 23:00:50

BRUSSELS, Jan. 20 (Xinhua) -- The EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting freshly concluded on Monday, and the bloc's foreign ministers vowed to take actions on different levels to fight against terrorism.

The resolve was clear and firm, which seemed a promising signal for the possible long-term cause. And experts suggested that Europe can be better prepared to face the threat of terrorism and to respond to it more adequately. But it would be naive to believe that terrorism will ever be entirely eradicated.

DIFFERENT-LEVEL ACTIONS AHEAD

During the monthly Foreign Affairs Council meeting on Monday, the officials proposed to strengthen exchange of information, not only between the member states, but also with partner countries, and to reinforce cooperation with Arab and Mediterranean countries on countering terrorism and redoubling efforts on open conflicts and crises.

"We must build an alliance, a dialogue with these countries as we are facing common challenges," said EU Foreign Affairs chief Federica Mogherini at the press conference after the Foreign Affairs Council meeting.

At the security level, Mogherini called for input to share intelligence information not only within the bloc but also with countries around the EU "starting from the Mediterranean and the Arab world, Turkey, Egypt, Gulf countries, North Africa, but also looking to Africa and Asia."

The second point on the security level was that EU had "reinvited the European Parliament to work on the passengers name record, the PNR," said Mogherini, noting that a joint meeting of experts organized by EU and the United States together with Australia, Canada, Japan, Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and the UN agencies was to take place in Brussels on counter-financing of terrorist organizations, in particular Islamic State (IS) militants.

Regarding the second level of EU foreign ministers' decisions, they sought to raise level of cooperation both bilaterally and multilaterally with Arab and Mediterranean countries starting with the League of Arab States.

"The first victims of terrorism and terrorist acts are Muslims and Arab countries," she said, urging for work on developing a dialogue, an alliance of civilization and avoid any kind of perception of a clash.

At the third level, the foreign ministers decided to work on the cultural message, as

the dialogue should not only take part between the EU and Arab Countries but also inside the EU with the Muslim communities.

DOMESTIC SECURITY AFFECTED BY FOREIGN POLICY

While immunity from terrorism is impossible, Europe cannot protect itself against this threat without acknowledging that domestic security is affected by foreign policy, particularly toward the Middle East, said Lina Khatib, director of the think-tank Carnegie Middle East Center.

Khatib labelled Syria was at the heart of this issue. He held that Syria's civil war had enabled al-Qaeda's revival in the Middle East. The resurrection had spurred al-Qaeda sympathizers in Europe to commit terrorist acts regardless of whether they had direct connections to Syria or not.

"The attacks show that foreign policy and internal security are intimately connected," said Rem Korteweg, research fellow at the center for European Reform, when referring to the bloody attacks in Paris earlier this month.

"The West has been hesitant in responding to recent crises in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq, and parts of these countries (and others in North Africa) are now incubators for jihadist terrorism," said Korteweg.

ROOT CAUSES TO BE SOLVED

Experts also pointed out that some terrorists in Europe were born, raised and recruited in the continent, so EU should make efforts to focus on its internal problems.

Francois Godement, senior policy fellow at European Council on Foreign Relations, said in a research that the debate regarding policy responses had highlighted a few points: the necessity of reforming education in France, reflecting public dismay at the anti-Semitism and support for violence among some underprivileged youth; the need to reform jails, since prison was a choice location for radical proselytizing; reform of the Schengen regime, to improve information sharing on Europe's internal borders and travel as well as to strengthen external controls.

Moreover, modern technology and the Internet made access to instruments of terror easier and the fight against terrorism harder.

"It is therefore likely that the number of individuals willing to conduct terrorist acts will rather grow than diminish," said Marcin Zaborowski, director of the Polish Institute of International Affairs.

In Zaborowski's opinion, Europe can be better prepared to face the threat of terrorism and to respond to it more adequately. But it would be naive to believe that terrorism will ever be entirely eradicated.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/

INTERPLAY BETWEEN TERRORISM, INSURGENCY AND CIVIL WAR IN MIDDLE EAST

Terrorist groups are generally distinguished from guerrilla organisations, but this distinction is gradually disappearing as a growing number of terrorist groups adopt guerrilla tactics. This study first offers some empirical evidence in support of this claim and then argues that in light of the growing divergence between terrorist and guerrilla organisations, most terrorist groups are better conceptualised as insurgent

organisations. Such an approach can help analysts adopt a greater nuance in examining terrorist groups, leading to improved policies to stem the evolving threat of terrorism.

This paper first offers some empirical support to the idea that the vast majority of contemporary terrorist groups use a combination of terrorist and guerrilla tactics. [2] It then argues that these transformations would benefit from a growing reliance on concepts drawn from the insurgency and counterinsurgency literature on the part of analysts in order to fully appreciate the evolving nature of these groups. Finally, the study calls for increased correspondence and cross-fertilisation between terrorism studies and the scholarship on insurgency and counterinsurgency, as well as the literature on civil wars. We believe that such an interdisciplinary effort can offer a more lucid and dispassionate conceptualisation of these groups, of the full range of their activities and of the broader context in which they tend to operate. Such an approach, in turn, can improve policies to address the threat posed by these violent actors.

Analysis:

In the summer of 2014, three prominent militant groups commonly classified as terrorist organisations engaged in significant combat operations that featured capabilities and tactics exceeding those traditionally ascribed to terrorist groups. These groups also achieved rare battlefield successes untypical of ordinary terrorist groups. The 'Islamic State' (IS, formerly the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria, or ISIS) has been able to extend its stronghold and create an imposing presence over large swathes of territory in both Syria and Iraq, while threatening other neighbouring countries such as Jordan. The Lebanese Hizballah, dubbed by some analysts as 'among the most skilled light infantry on the planet',[3] continues to amass significant battlefield experience through its ongoing involvement in the Syrian civil war on behalf of the incumbent Alawite regime of Bashar al-Assad. Finally, in the Gaza Strip, the militant Islamist group Hamas has posed formidable challenges to Israeli military forces and civilians using a combination of terrorist and insurgent tactics. These trends also apply to other groups in broader geographical regions, including al-Qaeda. As a recent article by Jihadism scholar J.M. Berger argued, even al-Qaeda, broadly defined, is currently focused on fighting 'wars and insurgencies', while it conducts terrorism only 'on the side'.[4]

This paper argues that the examples above indicate a broader transformation of terrorist groups into insurgent actors that increasingly combine the use of terrorist and guerrilla tactics.

Terrorism, guerrilla and insurgency

The existing scholarship on terrorism and its perpetrators suggests that terrorist groups differ from other militant actors such as guerrilla organisations. Terrorist groups and guerrilla organisations are said to differ, among other things, in their target selection. As Alex Schmid notes in his magisterial volume on terrorism research, 'in the dominant understanding among experts, the victims [of terrorism] are predominantly not members of an armed force'.[5] Moreover, terrorist groups are generally considered to be smaller in size, while employing uncompromising violence. Conventional wisdom holds that the secret nature and small size of terrorist organisations generally prevents them from holding territory, while their focus on extreme violence prevents them from enjoying popular support.[6] Bruce Hoffman, for example, writes that terrorists do not function in the open as armed units, generally do not attempt to seize or hold territory, deliberately avoid engaging enemy military forces in combat, are constrained both numerically and logistically from undertaking concerted mass political mobilization efforts, and exercise no direct control or governance over a populace at either the local or the national level'.[7] Terrorist groups, in other words, are generally considered to have a modus operandi that differs from those of guerrilla groups.

A cursory look at contemporary 'terrorist groups', however, suggests that these
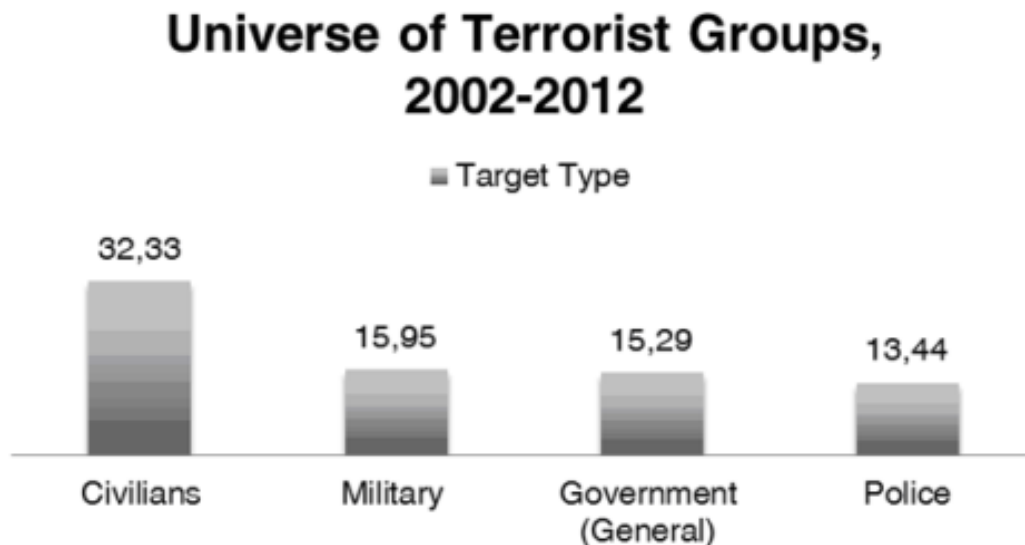
groups regularly carry out guerrilla operations as well. In the existing literature, guerrilla attacks are said to typically emphasise extended campaigns of assassination, sabotage and hit-and-run attacks carried out by small and highly mobile para-military units. Like the tactics of terrorism, guerrilla warfare is described as a 'weapon of the weak' designed to harass the enemy and gradually erode his will. Yet where terrorism is in essence an act of psychological warfare –it hopes to turn the targeted population against its own government–, guerrilla operations primarily target their enemy's capabilities.[8] Functioning as 'small armies', potent guerrilla forces are large and strong enough to seize and hold territory. Moreover, guerrilla tactics differ from terrorist tactics in terms of its main targets. While the prime targets of guerrilla fighters are the enemy's armed forces, police or support units, as well as general government and economic targets, the targets of terrorist groups are usually understood to be civilians and, at most, non-combatants.[9]

Whereas terrorist groups have traditionally been treated as distinct from guerrilla organisations, many contemporary militant groups apply both terrorist and guerrilla tactics. As Robert Scales and Douglas Ollivant argue, a growing array of Islamist 'terrorists' have turned into 'skilled soldiers' who increasingly use a blend of traditional terrorist tactics and modern war-fighting techniques.[10] Contemporary militants continue to use terrorist tactics to intimidate potential supporters and enemies alike, but their modus operandi has evolved into skills that can pose considerable challenges to states and their populations. They now 'maneuver in reasonably disciplined formations… and employ mortars and rockets in deadly barrages'. They rely on ambushes, roadside bombings, sniper fire and other tactics that in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan have imposed considerable challenges and losses to US forces. Groups such as the Islamic State, Hizballah and Hamas are able to handle second-generation weapons such as Russian RPG-29s and possibly wire-guided anti-tank missiles and build sophisticated underground tunnel systems.[11]

Empirical support for the growing terrorism-guerrilla nexus

One criterion by which to measure the growing crossover of terrorism and guerrilla tactics is to examine the choice of targets. Specifically, this analysis examines the targeting choices of groups defined as 'terrorist groups' by the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) of the University of Maryland, one of the most extensive and widely employed databases on terrorism. We examined all groups in the period between 2002 and 2012 that carried out at least six attacks –the minimum required to render the statistical analysis meaningful–.[12] 2012 is the last year for which data is available through the GTD, and we examined a period of more than 10 years because a shorter period would have significantly lowered the number of groups that would have reached the set minimum of six attacks. Furthermore, focusing on this time period allows for the analysis of contemporary militant actors, thereby rendering our study more policy relevant. These requirements left us with 119 groups to analyse. For each group we recorded the total number of attacks during that period and examined the distribution of target types, with a focus on

Figure 1. Terrorist groups: average distribution by target type, 2002-12

Universe of Terrorist Groups, 2002-2012

▪ Target Type

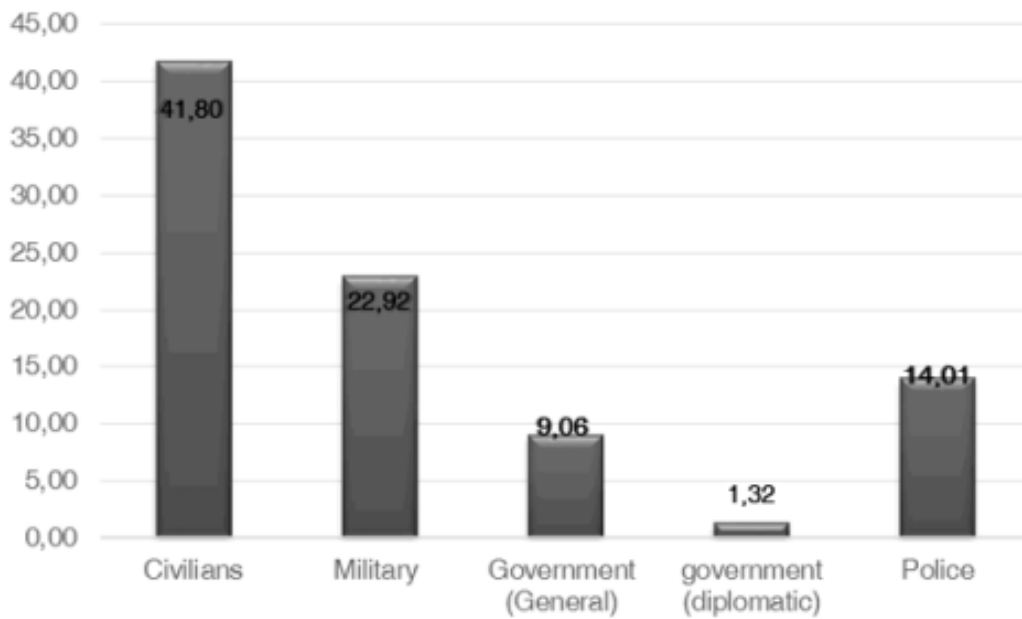|	
32,33	Civilians
15,95	Military
15,29	Government (General)
13,44	Police

Source: GTD.

As the following analysis shows, the data strongly suggest that terrorist groups indeed use a combination of guerrilla and terrorist tactics. The analysis first focused on data for the universe of groups active in that decade. For these 119 groups, the average percentage of attacks against civilians is 32% (with a median of 28.6%). As Figure 1 shows, on average civilians are the favoured targets for these groups but such attacks account for no more than a third of the total. As much as 16% of the attacks were aimed at military targets, 15.3% against government targets and 13.4% against police targets. When combined, these targets generally considered typical for guerrilla operations –such as military, government and police targets– are targeted in 44.7% of the cases –a significantly higher figure than for civilians, the classic target of terrorism.

We then conducted a more focused analysis on the target selection of 'terrorist groups' active in the Middle East and North Africa. In sum, groups active in the Middle East and North Africa are more likely to attack civilian targets compared with their counterparts in the other geographic locations combined. Still, attacks that could also be considered guerrilla attacks, ie, against military, police and government targets, outnumber attacks against civilian targets. The 10 most active groups labelled as terrorist groups by the GTD that operate in the Middle East and North Africa aim for non-civilian targets 47.3% of the time and civilian targets 41.8% of

Figure 2. The 10 most active groups in the Middle East and North Africa: target selection

Source: GTD.

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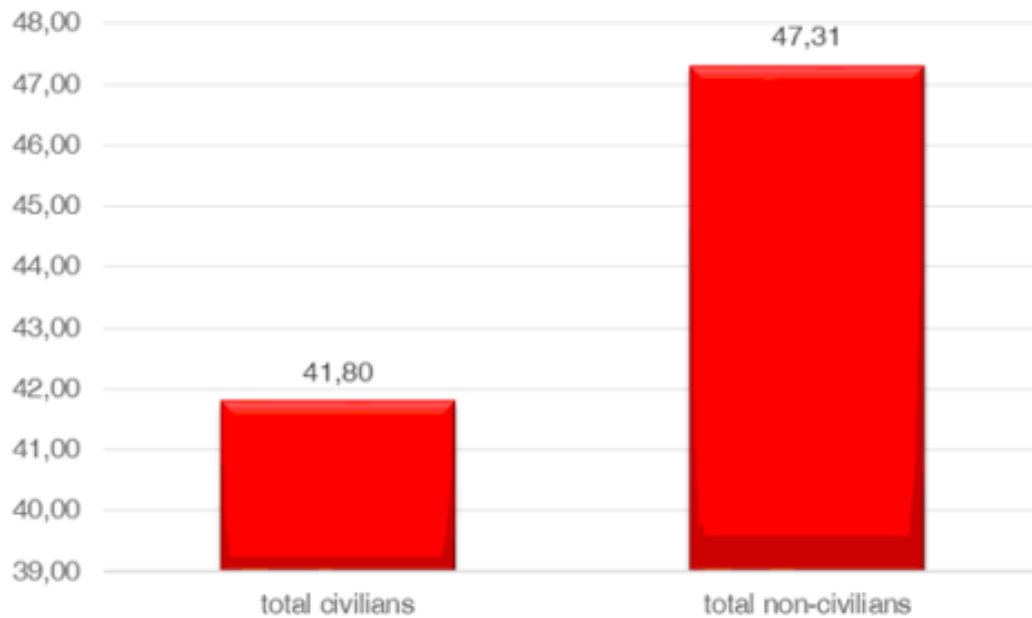the   time.

Figure 3. The 10 most active groups in the Middle East and North Africa: target type (civilians vs non-civilians)

Source: GTD.

In conclusion, an empirical analysis strongly suggests that if terrorist attacks are defined as attacks against civilian targets only, the common labelling of these groups as 'terrorist groups' is, strictly speaking, only partially accurate.

Adopting concepts from insurgency and counterinsurgency theory

The trends emerging from our data analysis seem to suggest that what are commonly labelled 'terrorist groups' are in fact entities that engage in terrorism in addition to using other tactics. We argue that an existing concept, that of 'insurgent group', is most useful in describing this development.[14] The concept accounts for the generally observable interplay between violent and nonviolent (ie, political) means of struggle, for these groups' reliance on either single or multiple tactics and for the fact that terrorism most often emerges in the context of a broader armed conflict such as a civil war.

The US Army/US Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual offers a definition of insurgency that synthesises the dominant view among insurgency and COIN theorists. It describes insurgency as 'an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control'.[15] Subversion and armed conflict –the interplay of political and violent means– are the two main ways in which insurgents seek to attain their goals. The concept of insurgency can help overcome the conceptual difficulties regarding the proper labelling of many contemporary militant groups because theorists of insurgency have long argued that insurgents typically rely on several modes of warfare at once. Although theoretically these modes of warfare do not have to include acts of terrorism –insurgents can rely, for example, on a combination of conventional and guerrilla tactics– they almost always do. Ariel Merari, for instance, observed that 'whenever possible, insurgents use concurrently a variety of strategies of struggle. Terrorism, which is the easiest form of insurgency, is practically always one of these modes'.[16]

Viewing terrorist groups as insurgent groups should not be seen as an attempt to play down the fact that these groups frequently commit acts of indiscriminate violence. Yet it does help place these acts in a broader context of a more complex reality. Based on this understanding, even the most violent groups using the most despicable tactics are likely to spend most of their time and energy doing something other than killing civilians –fighting regular troops and government forces and subverting their enemies by means of propaganda and other political means.

Of course, as the late terrorism scholar Paul Wilkinson noted, 'it is possible to engage in acts of terrorism without mounting a full-scale insurgency'. [17] Self-standing campaigns of terrorism detached from broader conflicts, however, are becoming increasingly rare, and have always been the exception. According to Wilkinson, historically, acts of terrorism have been used as 'part of a wider repertoire

of struggle'.[18] Recent research on the interplay between terrorism and civil wars –the dominant type of warfare since World War II– confirms the ongoing relevance of Wilkinson's assessment. According to data assembled and analysed by Michael Findley and Joseph K. Young, most incidents of terrorism 'take place in the geographic regions where civil war is occurring and during the ongoing war'.[19] Civil wars are typically coded, inter alia, as wars between at least two parties, one of which is the government. The conduct of civil wars is therefore, by definition, marked by insurgency and counterinsurgency, again suggesting a close interrelationship between terrorism and insurgencies.

Conclusion:

We believe that conceptualising of contemporary terrorist groups as 'insurgent groups' offers a far more nuanced approach that more accurately reflects reality on the ground. The approach helps acknowledge a number of important caveats: (1) terrorist groups use, almost without exception, terrorism in conjunction with other tactics, notably guerrilla warfare; (2) terrorist groups are becoming more sophisticated political actors, at times even striving to win over hearts and minds of local populations; and (3) terrorism is rarely a self-standing phenomenon as most terrorism occurs in the context of broader armed conflict, typically in cases of insurgency and/or civil war.

The analytical employment of the 'insurgent group' concept can contribute to a deeper theoretical understanding of the power distribution challenge that insurgent groups pose to governments by using terror. In addition, the suggested label can be useful in explaining the adoption of both violent (including terrorism) and nonviolent means of political struggle, based on the present political, economic and social conditions on the ground. Furthermore, the use of the label 'insurgent groups' allows a more comprehensive perspective on the dynamic relations between politically-motivated violent actors that use terrorism as a tactic, governments and other relevant actors. Finally, in terms of policy, the use of the suggested framework will provide a broader perspective of the insurgents' political development, a better grasp of its network of contacts and supporters and it may also afford a considerable flexibility to policy decision-making.

Theoretically our conclusions also call for closer intellectual interaction between the terrorism and insurgency studies fields, as well as to the study of civil wars. Closer correspondence between these related fields can help shed more light on the political aspects of the campaigns in which terrorism occurs. Recognising that 'terrorist' violence, brutal and wanton as it is, cannot be divorced from these groups' additional activities can assist in the formulation of better policies. Such policies should combine political and military components to address what is in essence a political-military threat. Finally, viewing terrorism as a phenomenon closely related to insurgency and civil war will allow analysts to pool the insights and best practices from academic fields that have thus far been treated separately. The

study of terrorism, insurgency and civil wars not only suffer from a disconnect as far as the analysis of their causes are concerned: analyses of how these different phenomena might end are similarly compartmentalised. Insights from the study of the termination of civil wars and insurgencies, for example, are likely to inform future studies of the decline and demise of groups heavily reliant on terrorism, and vice versa.

Source:

This article was published by Elcano Royal Institute

Notes:

[1] The author is grateful to Ronit Berger and Polina Beliakova for research support.

[2] The targeting of civilians is generally considered a key aspect of terrorism. On this point, see especially Boaz Ganor (2005), *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle: A Guide for Decision Makers*, Transaction Publishers, p. 1-24. Most scholars, however, expand that category of victims to civilians as well as noncombatants. See Alex P. Schmid (Ed.) (2013), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, Routledge, Oxford & New York, p. 39-157. For a recent discussion of guerrilla tactics targeting primarily government targets and armed forces, see Max Boot (2013), *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*, WW Norton & Company, p. xxii-xxiv. For a classic treatment of the topic, see Walter Laqueur (1976), *Guerrilla Warfare: A Historical and Critical Study*, Transaction Publishers.

[3] Robert H. Scales & Douglas Ollivant (2014), 'Terrorist Armies Fight Smarter and Deadlier than Ever', *Washington Post*, 1/VIII/2014, (accessed 6/VIII/2014).

[4] J.M. Berger (2014), 'War on Error', *Foreign Policy*, 5/II/2014, (accessed 24/VII/2014).

[5] Alex P. Schmid & Albert I. Jongman (1988), *Political Terrorism. A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Databases and Literature*, Transaction Publishers, Amsterdam & New Brunswick.

[6] See James Khalil (2013), 'Know Your Enemy: On the Futility of Distinguishing between Terrorists and Insurgents', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 36, nr 5, p. 419-430. On a traditional description of terrorist groups, see Martha Crenshaw (1985), 'An Organizational Approach to the Analysis of Political Terrorism', *Orbis-A Journal of World Affairs*, vol. 29, nr, p. 465-489. See also Bruce Hoffman (2006), *Inside Terrorism*, Columbia University Press, chapter 1.

[7] Hoffman, op. cit., p. 35.

[8] For classic doctrinal formulations of guerrilla warfare, see Samuel B. Griffith (1978),*Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, Anchor Press; Guevara, Ernesto 'Che' (1998), *Guerrilla Warfare*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln; and Robert Taber (1970), *The War of the Flea: A Study of Guerrilla Warfare Theory and Practice*, Paladin, London.

[9] For a comparison of terrorism and guerrilla strategies, see Bard E. O'Neill

(2005),*Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd edition, Potomac Books, Washington DC; Laqueur (1976), *op. cit*.; Boot (2003), *op. cit*.; and Ariel Merari (1993), 'Terrorism as a Strategy of Insurgency', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 5, nr 4, p. 213-251.

[10] Scales & Ollivant (2014), *op. cit*.

[11] Scales & Ollivant (2014), *ibid*.

[12] The GTD database distinguishes between a large number of target types, but five of these were of particular significance to this project: civilians, diplomatic, government, military and police targets. We chose a minimum of six attacks because if a group listed in the GTD database attacked each one of the target types included in the database, setting six attacks as the minimum would ensure that at least one target type was targeted more than the others. A lower cut-off point would render the statistical analysis less meaningful.

[13] As stated earlier, the GTD provides information about many other target types -However, these are of less importance to this project. Additionally, we eventually excluded one of the target types –attacks on (diplomatic) government targets– from our charts and the final analysis as this type of target was rarely struck compared with the other target types, not used by most groups and lacked sufficient weight for an empirical analysis.

[14] We are not the first authors to do so. For similar arguments, see for example Merari (1993), *op. cit*.; David J. Kilcullen (2005), *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 28, nr 4, p. 597-617; and Khalil (2013), *op. cit*.

[15] US Department of the Army (2007), *The US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, US Army Field manual nr 3-24, Marine Corps Warfighting publication nr 3-33.5, University of Chicago Press. This definition is similar to the definition in other classic texts on insurgency. Compare, for example, O'Neill (2005), *op. cit.*; David Galula (1964), *Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Frederick Praeger, New York, and John A. Nagl (2009), *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, University of Chicago Press.

[16] Merari (1993), *op. cit.*. For a similar view, see also Kilcullen (2005), *op. cit*.

[17] Paul Wilkinson (2011), *Terrorism versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response*, 3rd edition, Routledge, Oxford & New York, p. 10.

[18] Wilkinson (2011), *ibid*.

[19] Michael G. Findley & Joseph K. Young (2012), 'Terrorism and Civil War. A Spatial and Temporal Approach to a Conceptual Problem', *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 10, nr 2, 2012, p. 286.

http://www.eurasiareview.com/

AMATEURISM: THE NEW TERRORIST STRATEGY – ANALYSIS

Australia flag

The attacker in the December 2014 Sydney hostage crisis was not a 'lone wolf', but an amateur, part of a growing trend that international terrorist groups have encouraged. This strategy works because it uses the amateurism itself to evade standard counterterrorist practices, expands potential targets, and takes advantage of governments' overreaction to terrorism.

By Justin V. Hastings*

Australia was shocked by the Sydney hostage crisis in December, in which a single shotgun-wielding attacker, Man Haron Monis, took hostages for 18 hours in the Lindt Café in Sydney's Martin Place, shutting down Sydney's central business district, and ultimately resulting in the deaths of two hostages and the attacker. During the standoff, Monis showed a flag with the shahada – the Muslim article of faith – and demanded an Islamic State flag.

As is inevitable in such attacks, the news media immediately looked for connections to known terrorist groups and, when nothing substantive was found, claimed that Man Haron Monis was an example of a 'lone wolf' attacker, arguably a troubled individual rather than a terrorist. But this is a flawed way of thinking about the Sydney attack and others like it. In fact, such attacks may represent a new trend in terrorism, one for which the term 'lone wolf' is a misnomer.

Disappointment of globalised terrorism

After the September 11 attacks, many commentators proclaimed that a new era of terrorism had arrived, one in which the technologies of globalisation, such as the Internet, mobile phones, 24-hour news stations, containerised shipping, and cheap and fast commercial jet travel, would bring transnational terrorism to the doorsteps of citizens in developed countries. Yet, while there have indeed been transnational attacks and plots in developed countries, they have not occurred at the tempo that one might expect if terrorists have truly been liberated by globalisation.

Transnational terrorist groups maintain logistical support networks and communications across international borders necessary for planning and operational decisions by relying on the technologies associated with globalization. Yet the infrastructure supporting these terrorism-enabling technologies is also controlled by states: states can monitor mobile phones and emails, and they can exercise extra scrutiny at airports and seaports. With greater hostility and focus from the governments, terrorist groups have found it difficult to use these technologies without detection, thus making it difficult for them to stage transnational attacks, or even to get into some countries at all.

Islamic State, and Al-Qaeda before it, thus face a problem of being frozen out of many developed countries. They have responded by giving up on attempting to move weapons or people across international boundaries, and instead encouraging a new type of terrorism, one that does not need to use the technologies of globalisation to be successful.

In each of the incidents in this new wave of terrorism, one or sometimes two attackers staged a relatively unsophisticated attack with some but not dozens of casualties. They were usually resident in the country where they were attacking, or at least had easy access to their target country, and used simple weapons – cars, knives, and shotguns.

A number of attacks in recent years fit this pattern: in addition to the Sydney hostage crisis, there are also the May 2014 shooting by a French national at a Jewish museum in Belgium, the beheading of soldier Lee Rigby in the United Kingdom in May 2013, the shooting attack at Parliament Hill in Ottawa in Canada in October 2014, the bombing of the Boston Marathon in 2013 and the December 2014 attacks in France that used cars to run into crowds.

Why amateur terrorism works

Since the groups themselves may only encourage rather than control the attacks, and may have never heard of the attackers before, they sacrifice command and control, as well as the ability to control logistics or training for attacks. Since the attackers often have no formal training, the attacks themselves are often amateurish, poorly planned, and rarely kill large numbers of people. Yet both these sacrific-

es redound to the benefit of the amateur terrorists and the organizations that encourage and claim credit for their actions in four ways.

First, lack of command and control means that several ways for governments to gain information about attacks – intercepting communications, following links and relationships, and surveilling associates of known terrorists – are relatively ineffective in stopping the plots. A poorly planned attack is also often one that lacks any traceable communications with others.

Second, a lack of logistical sophistication make it easier to carry out the attack itself, and harder to stop before the fact. The attackers often use everyday items that are readily available in country and not amenable to being controlled even by well-functioning governments, and draw little of no suspicion when they obtain them. Increasingly harsh laws are unable to stop attackers — this is partially why China has been unable to stop Uyghur separatist attacks, which have used knives, cars and homemade explosives, despite having a police state.

Third, the groups can rhetorically benefit from attacks that are congruent with their objectives that occur in developed countries far from their logistical chains or command and control networks. By "adopting" amateur attackers, as both Al-Qaeda and Islamic State did after the Sydney hostage crisis, praising Monis' actions in their magazines, terrorist groups are able to make it appear as if the tentacles of radical Islam are everywhere.

The existence of pinprick attacks around the world may also serve to encourage even more such plots, as amateur attackers use the attacks to reach out to the terrorist groups and demonstrate their solidarity (as Monis did), rather than the other way around.

Finally, the groups (and arguably the amateur attackers) have realised that they do not actually need to do much to damage their enemies. The effectiveness of the attack is not dependent on the size of the attack itself (or even whether the attacks kill anyone directly) but on the auto-immune response from the target state and its society.

With a shotgun and a black flag, Monis occupied Australia's media space for nearly two days, and was able to shut down downtown Sydney, while the state library, parliament and supreme court were closed, and the train station and nearby roads were shut down. Simply taking hostages and identifying himself as sympathetic to radical Islam was enough to achieve economic and psychological effects Islamic State never would have been able to achieve on its own, using its own resources, in Australia.

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Attentats déjoués en Belgique

17/01/2015

Attentats déjoués en Belgique: quatre suspects arrêtés à Athènes, le chef de la cellule jihadiste y figurerait selon

TERRORISME - L'enquête sur la cellule jihadiste démantelée cette semaine en Belgique a rebondi samedi 17 janvier avec l'arrestation de quatre hommes à Athènes, même s'il n'est pas encore formellement établi que le chef présumé du réseau jihadiste figure parmi ces suspects.

Abdelhamid Abaaoud, un Belge de 27 ans d'origine marocaine, a été identifié par les médias comme le cerveau présumé des attentats déjoués jeudi contre la police en Belgique, après l'assaut mené contre une planque dans lequel deux hommes sont morts à Verviers (est). Selon l'agence américaine Associated Press, il ferait partie des quatre hommes arrêtés samedi.

Pour formellement identifier les suspects, la police antiterroriste grecque doit encore envoyer leurs empreintes digitales et des échantillons d'ADN aux autorités belges, selon une source policière. Contacté par l'AFP, le parquet fédéral belge n'a voulu faire aucun commentaire.

Les arrestations se sont déroulées en milieu de journée dans un quartier central d'Athènes, à Pangrati. Des téléphones portables ont été saisis.

Un ex-combattant de Daech en Syrie

Abdelhamid Abaaoud, qui dirigeait et finançait la cellule depuis la Grèce où son téléphone avait été localisé, a combattu dans les rangs du groupe Etat islamique (ou Daech) en Syrie, selon les médias belges.

Il apparaît notamment dans une vidéo où l'EI se vante de commettre des atrocités, s'adressant goguenard à la caméra alors qu'il conduit un véhicule qui tire des ca-

davres mutilés vers une fosse commune.

Il s'est également illustré en faisant venir son petit frère de 13 ans en Syrie. Les photos du garçon, posant des armes à la main, avaient été publiées l'été dernier dans la presse belge et certains journaux anglais l'avaient désigné comme le plus jeune jihadiste de l'EI.

Les "sites stratégiques" surveillés

La cellule démantelée, composée en partie de jihadistes revenus de Syrie, voulait "tuer des policiers sur la voie publique et dans des commissariats" par le biais d'attentats "dans tout le pays", selon le parquet fédéral.

Craignant une attaque "imminente", la police a donné l'assaut jeudi soir contre la planque de deux jihadistes présumés à Verviers, qui ont répliqué à l'arme de guerre et sont morts dans la fusillade. Une troisième personne a été interpellée sur place.

Au total, 13 personnes ont été arrêtées dans plusieurs communes belges, dont cinq ont ensuite été inculpées pour "appartenance à un groupe terroriste". Trois d'entre elles ont été incarcérées.

Des perquisitions ont permis de retrouver des armes, des produits permettant de fabriquer des bombes, d'importantes sommes d'argent mais aussi des uniformes de police et des faux documents. Deux fugitifs, qui avaient quitté la Belgique juste après l'assaut, ont par ailleurs été arrêtés dans les Alpes françaises.

Niveau de menace relevé d'un cran

Le niveau de menace terroriste a été relevé d'un cran, à 3 sur une échelle de 4 en Belgique, et samedi matin, quelque 150 paracommandos ont été déployés à Anvers, qui compte une importante communauté juive, et Bruxelles. Ils doivent surveiller des "sites stratégiques" dans le quartier des diamantaires d'Anvers, mais aussi les institutions européennes, le siège de l'Otan, les ambassades des Etats-Unis et d'Israël ou encore la grande synagogue à Bruxelles, a expliqué le ministre de la Défense Steven Vandeput.

Devant le musée juif de Bruxelles, où un attentat islamiste a causé la mort de quatre personnes en mai dernier, des militaires en treillis portant un fusil automatique et un pistolet étaient en faction. Aucun soldat n'a toutefois été déployé dans les gares ou aéroports.

D'autres communes, comme Verviers, ont demandé des renforts. Jusqu'à 300 militaires pourront être engagés dans ces opérations de maintien de l'ordre, du jamais vu en Belgique depuis une vague d'attentats commis dans les années 1980 par les Cellules communistes combattantes.

La Belgique, un important vivier de recrutement

La Belgique, avec 184 ressortissants partis combattre en Syrie, selon les autorités,

est un important vivier pour les recruteurs de jihadistes européens. Vendredi, un Belge de 18 ans qui voulait se rendre en Syrie avec de faux papiers été arrêté.

Un homme qui avait intimidé des libraires à Eisden-Tuinwijk (nord-est), les menaçant de mort s'ils vendaient Charlie Hebdo, a été interpellé.

A Bruxelles, le parquet a demandé samedi des poursuites contre deux frères qui avaient menacé des policiers en faisant référence aux attentats de Paris du 7 au 9 janvier qui ont coûté la vie à 17 personnes dont trois policiers.

La Grèce avait été, comme toutes les capitales européennes, mise en alerte après les attentats de Paris par la possible présence ou le passage sur son sol de membres de réseaux jihadistes.

http://www.huffingtonpost.fr/

COUNTER TERRORISM LESSONS FROM PARIS ATTACKS – ANALYSIS

JANUARY 24, 2015

Journalists, police officers, and emergency services in the street of the shooting, a few hours after the attack on Charlie Hebdo offices in Paris, France. Photo by Thierry Caro, Wikipedia Commons.

As details of the troubled dark past of the Paris attackers are emerging, the failure of intelligence agencies in preventing the attacks is well evident.

The two brothers, Cherif and Said Kouachi, who carried out the shooting at the Charlie Hebdo office had known linkages with a notorious jihadist ring which had been operating since 2003 from 19th Arrondissement of Paris. The 19th Arrondissement network began to operate after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. It drew inspiration from Arabian jihadist figures like Abu-Musab al-Zarqawi and Anwar Awlaki. The jihadists linked with the network have been found to be associated with terrorist conspiracies in Iraq, Tunisia, Algeria and France.

Cherif Kouachi was arrested by French police in 2005 while he was leaving for Iraq to take part in jihadist activities there. He spent three years in prison pending trial, and was ultimately convicted, but was released in lieu of custodial period already served while under trial. While in jail he came in close contact with Al Qaeda's recruiter of Algerian origin, named Djamel Beghal, as well as Amedy Coulibaly who killed four hostages at the Kosher Grocery Store. Cherif Kouachi was again arrested along with Coulibaly in connection with a plot to secure the escape of a leading Algerian jihadist from French prison but was later released as investigators were not able to find adequate evidence.

Still in 2011 the Kouachi brothers were able to travel to Yemen via Oman where they attended short duration arms training camp and met Al Qaeda preacher and then leader of Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) Anwar Awlaki. While the Kouachi brothers proclaimed at Charlie Hebdo office that they are acting on the behest of AQAP, the latest video released on the internet features Coulibaly swearing allegiance to Islamic State's self-proclaimed Caliph al Baghdadi. In the video, Coulibaly claims to have worked in coordination with Kouachi brothers as they carried out strikes against Charlie Hebdo office. Coulibaly may be heard in the video as saying: "We did some things together, some things separate – that way we would have more of an impact… We arranged it to synchronize so we would go out at the same time, which was not a problem."

The fact of coordination between them is also evident from the reports in European media to the effect that Coulibaly's wife Hayat Boumeddiene (also wanted in connection with Paris attacks) slipped into Islamic State-controlled area of Syria as early as Jan 2. Investigations have revealed that Hayat was maintaining constant contact with Cherif Kouachi's wife before she left for Syria.

New tactical cooperation

This is the first case where jihadists from Al Qaeda and Islamic State may have closely coordinated their actions without any sanction from their respective high commands. Clearly, the nuanced ideological differences and hegemony struggle between the Al Qaeda and Islamic State leadership has not affected the close relationship between the committed grassroots jihadists who once worked as part of the same network. While the Islamic State twitter handles hailed the Paris attackers, a clearer statement is still to emerge from Al Qaeda's central leadership based in Pakistan. But the Al Qaeda leadership will find it extremely difficult not to welcome this voluntary coordination.

Hit and run, hit again

The Paris attackers may have unknowingly or knowingly laid down a new tactical model which other terror modules may try to emulate in future. While the Kouachi brothers hit a soft target i.e. Charlie Hebdo office, they took no hostages nor did they exchange fire with the police. They simply vanished from the scene drawing thousands of French policemen in a massive manhunt.

While this was going on Coulibaly sprang into action shooting down a policewoman the next day. Again Coulibaly did not pick up any skirmish with security personnel and ran away using the metro. The following day when police was able to zero in on the Kouachi brothers, Coulibaly emerged again and attacked the kosher grocery store and staged a simultaneous hostage crisis. All this manoeuvering which involved mysterious street shootings in different parts of the city amplified the paranoia among the masses. This is what Coulibaly means when he says "……….that way we would have more of an impact".

Case similarities with Sydney cafe attacker

The perpetrators of the Paris attacks had a well-known criminal record and radical leanings like Man Haron Monis, who took 18 people hostage in Sydney's Lindt Cafe on Dec 15, 2014. Both Kouachi brothers and Monis had been on the watch list of French and Australian security services respectively but were dropped later as their activities did not look all that notorious. Monis, a born Shia, had recently converted to Sunni faith and had sworn allegiance to Baghdadi on his website, just a day before he attacked the Lindt Cafe.

Time to revisit penology

Cherif Kouachi during the period he spent in the French prison became even more committed to the global jihadist cause as he came in touch with key Al Qaeda operatives lodged in the same jail. Coulibaly, who was in jail on robbery charges, also got radicalized through the same influences. Clearly, the classification of prisoners in French jail was faulty and helped in the hardening of terrorists. Every prison system has lessons to learn from the entire episode which underlines the need to keep under trials and ordinary felons segregated from terrorist ideologues and recruiters.

These happenings also underline the need for constantly monitoring the terror under trials out on bail as well as terror convicts after they are released while serving their sentences.

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Youssoup Nassoulkhanov, de l'Alsace au jihad ?

16 janvier 2015

Un extrait de la vidéo publiée sur YouTube d'un Français appelant à «tuer» et «égorger» en Europe, identifié par des proches comme un habitant de Schiltigheim.

ENQUÊTE

Dans une vidéo postée mercredi sur Internet, un jeune homme appelle au meurtre en Europe au nom de l'Etat islamique.

Youssoup Nassoulkhanov (prononcer «Youssouf»), un homme d'une vingtaine d'années, d'origine tchétchène, travaillait depuis mai 2013 comme assistant infographiste à la mairie de Schiltigheim, une petite ville de l'agglomération strasbourgeoise. Il apparaîtrait dans une vidéo postée le 14 janvier sur internet, titrée «Des combattants français au sujet de *Charlie Hebdo* à Raqqa». Le maire de Schiltigheim, Jean-Marie Kutner, a été contacté jeudi soir par les services de renseignement français, l'informant que Youssoup aurait été reconnu sur la vidéo.

L'homme s'exprime en français mâtiné d'expressions arabes, vêtu chaudement, et portant un fusil d'assaut muni d'une lunette de précision. Après une introduction «Rencontres au sujet de l'attaque bénie en France», le jeune homme déclare : *«Ça devrait être fait depuis longtemps»,* mais il ne cite pas nommément l'attaque de *Charlie Hebdo,* ni la fusillade de Montrouge ou l'Hyper Casher. *«Les tawaghit* (les idolâtres, ndlr) *en France et dans toute l'Europe font tout pour détruire l'Islam, le vrai Islam. […] Je dirais à tous les Français, nous allons venir en Europe, ces opérations-là ils seront de plus en plus en France, en Belgique, en Allemagne, en Suisse, partout en Europe et partout en Amérique.»* Dans une autre séquence, tournée dans une rue passante, il s'adresse ensuite à ses *«frères qui ne peuvent pas rejoindre les terres de l'Etat islamique : faites votre mieux, faites tout ce que vous*

pouvez, tuez-les, égorgez-les, brûlez leurs voitures, brûlez leurs maisons. Le califat va s'installer dans toute l'Europe.» La vidéo se termine avec les exhortations de deux autres jihadistes, qui s'expriment eux aussi en français.

«C'est une vidéo classique de l'Etat islamique, explique Romain Caillet, doctorant à l'Institut du Proche-Orient. *Ils aiment bien faire ce type de micro-trottoirs centrés sur des nationalités. On en voit plusieurs fois par semaine, mais mesurer leur impact est difficile. Cette propagande peut servir à montrer qu'il y a des Français là-bas, mais aussi à effrayer l'opinion publique.»*

«D'une grande gentillesse et d'une grande politesse»

«Je le croisais tous les matins dans l'ascenseur, on parlait, explique Jean-Marie Kutner. *Il était d'une grande gentillesse et d'une grande politesse.»* Un ancien collègue n'en revient toujours pas : *«Son contrat se passait bien et on lui avait dit qu'on pourrait peut-être le titulariser après trois ans. Il était calme et réservé. On discutait de pas mal de choses.»* Choqué, il ne voulait même pas voir la vidéo. *«Ca me fait mal au cœur. J'ai pris un coup ce matin. Je ne voulais pas y croire.»*

En juin 2014, Youssoup annonce à son employeur qu'il part pendant deux semaines en Tchétchénie avec sa sœur, pour régler des formalités administratives. Finalement, il y reste pendant un mois. A son retour, en juillet, durant le ramadan, pas de gros changements dans son comportement. *«Même s'il ne parlait jamais de religion, on s'est posé des questions. Quand les autres restaient une heure à la mosquée, lui y passait cinq à six heures.»,* ajoute Jean-Marie Kutner. En août, selon la mairie, il demande à repartir. On lui répond que ce n'est pas possible. Toutes ses semaines de congé sont épuisées. Mais le 14 août, Youssoup ne se présente pas au travail, prétextant un rendez-vous chez le médecin. Il disparaît de la circulation et ne donne plus aucun signe de vie. Depuis le début de l'année, il n'avait plus de portable. Très inquiet, son père se serait déplacé trois fois à la mairie pour demander de ses nouvelles. En vain. Contacté vendredi par Libération, il ne souhaite pas s'exprimer.

«Tout n'était pas noir dans sa vie»

Youssoup serait arrivé en France à l'adolescence. Il habitait chez ses parents, avec ses frères et sœurs. *«Je crois que pour lui, les traditions culturelles tchétchènes étaient un sacré poids,* se souvient un ancien collègue. *Pendant un moment, il parlait de trouver un appartement. Finalement, ça ne s'est pas fait. Mais tout n'était pas noir dans sa vie.»*

En mai 2014, nous avions rencontré Youssoup pour un reportage consacré au Street Work Out (1). Mélange entre musculation et acrobaties, cette discipline consiste à faire des figures sur le mobilier urbain. Il faisait partie d'un petit groupe de jeunes qui s'entraîne régulièrement dans un parc de la ville. Youssoup, qui voulait créer une association, était très accueillant, peu bavard mais passionné. Son attitude, dans la vidéo postée jeudi, contraste terriblement avec la personnalité qu'il

montrait à l'époque. Entouré de sa bande de copains, il voulait organiser des compétitions, faire parler de ce sport. Youssoup était l'un des plus talentueux. Au milieu de nombreux éclats de rires, de la musique dans les oreilles pour se motiver, il testait de nouvelles figures devant les autres qui l'encourageaient. « *Dans notre groupe, il y a toutes les nationalités qu'on peut trouver*, se réjouissait le jeune homme. *On partage entre nous, quoi.* »

Youssoup Nassoulkhanov en démonstration de Street Work Out, dans un parc de Schiltigheim, en mai 2014.

Comment Youssoup aurait-il pu basculer à ce point? Messaoud Boumaza, le recteur de l'institut Al-Andalous, à Schiltigheim, ne se l'explique pas. «*C'est la deuxième plus grande ville du Bas-Rhin après Strasbourg. Ca n'est pas une ville pauvre, ça n'est pas une ville difficile avec beaucoup de délinquance. La seule réponse que je peux trouver c'est l'effet boule de neige. L'un part et d'autres suivent. Nous sommes doublement horrifiés, en tant que citoyens français et en tant que musulmans.*» Après les attentats qui ont secoué la France la semaine dernière, l'imam a choisi d'axer ses prêches sur ces questions. Depuis plusieurs années, il tient «*des cercles de réflexion hebdomadaires avec des débats ouverts*» qui réunissent 15 à 50 jeunes tous les jeudis. Il faut «*multiplier nos efforts pédagogiques auprès des jeunes et de la société,* poursuit-il. *Il ne faut pas cantonner le problème à la communauté musulmane. Ce sont des enfants de la France. Ils ont fréquenté l'école de la République.*»

Youssoup serait le deuxième Schilikois parti faire le jihad. Le 8 novembre, une vidéo était postée sur YouTube, montrant deux enfants armés d'une kalachnikov, disant
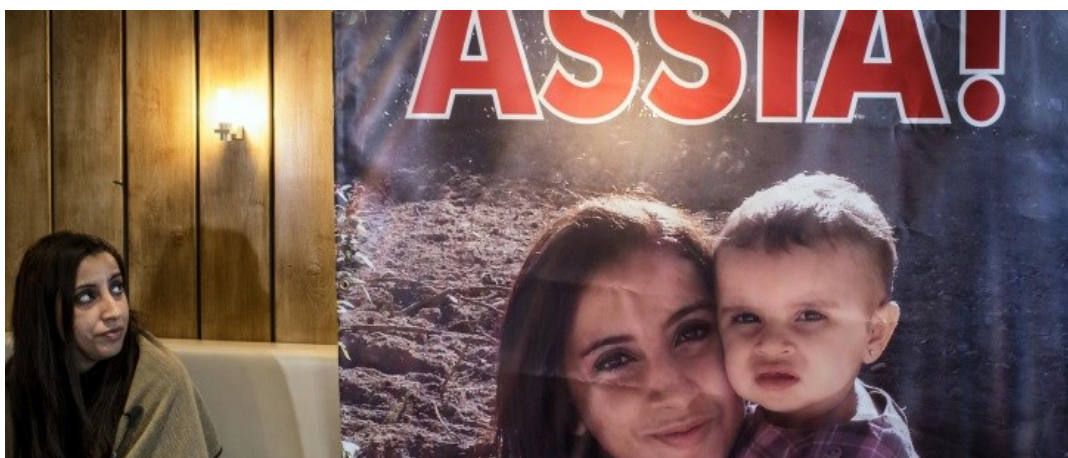
venir de Strasbourg et Toulouse. Une troisième personne, qui n'apparaît pas à l'image, s'entretient avec eux. Il s'agirait d'Oumar Diaw, 33 ans, Français d'origine sénégalaise, issu d'une famille musulmane. Sa voix a été reconnue par des amis du quartier. La scène se déroulerait à Raqqa, le bastion syrien de l'État islamique. Celui qui se fait surnommer *«Omar»* avait rallié la Syrie quelques semaines après s'être marié à Schiltigheim, mais sans son épouse. Son départ avait lui aussi surpris ses amis.

(1) Dans le cadre d'un reportage - non publié - réalisé pour le Centre universitaire d'enseignement du journalisme, à Strasbourg (Cuej).

http://www.liberation.fr/

Ces femmes qui ont vu leur compagnon se radicaliser

Le 15 janvier 2015

Mériam Rhaiem et sa fille Assia, enlevée par son père radicalisé et retrouvée en Turquie. Photo AFP / JEFF PACHOUD

Elles ont vu leur homme s'éloigner d'elles pour se noyer dans les vidéos de propagande. Puis leur interdire de travailler ou les menacer de partir avec leur enfant, loin des « mécréants ». Deux femmes ont accepté de témoigner des dérives de leur ex-conjoint et de leur désarroi face à une justice qu'elles jugent inadaptée.

Le compagnon d'Océane s'est transformé en l'espace de quelques mois. Cela a commencé par les heures passées sur Internet, la succession de « vidéos violentes » dans lesquelles des « barbus » évoquent le « complot de l'Occident » et appellent au djihad. Aux discours paranoïaques succèdent bientôt les interdits. « Ce n'est pas de l'islam, mais un radicalisme digne d'une secte. Il m'a coupée du monde », dit-elle, précisant qu'il ne « connaissait rien à cette religion » avant d'épouser les dogmes de ses endoctrineurs. Plus de télé, de musique, de sorties sans son autorisation, de visites à la famille ou aux amis. Il cesse de travailler et insiste pour qu'elle quitte son propre emploi, dans la sphère médicale. Parle de mourir en martyr, lui soutient qu'elle l'« empêche de se rendre en Syrie ». Passe des heures à la convaincre de changer son apparence, de mettre des gants et des chaussettes dans ses ballerines. Elle reste, comme hébétée. « Petit à petit, il gagnait du terrain pour en arriver au niqab. J'ai lutté, lutté, mais il n'arrêtait pas de parler et j'ai cédé. Il pleurait, me disait que Dieu ne m'avait pas assez guidée. J'ai tout accepté, je l'aimais. C'est difficile de lutter face à un manipulateur qui est lui-même manipulé. »

Pour trouver de l'aide, la jeune femme fera appel au [CPDSI, le Centre de prévention contre les dérives sectaires liées à l'islam](). Il s'agit de la première structure d'appui aux familles et aux professionnels spécialisée dans la radicalisation islamiste, mandatée par le ministère de l'Intérieur. L'anthropologue [Dounia Bouzar y accompagne les familles des victimes d'embrigadement]() : proches de jeunes partis en Syrie, parents impuissants et conjoints, « de plus en plus nombreux », selon elle.

Chez les compagnes d'hommes radicalisés, elle a constaté plusieurs types de comportements. « Certaines réagissent tout de suite et s'en vont, d'autres cherchent à comprendre et se sentent responsables de la situation, se demandant si elles ont été de bonnes épouses. Elles vont entrer dans ce système de rupture en croyant sauver leur compagnon. Pour d'autres, c'est l'arrivée d'un enfant qui sert de déclic, quand le père va lui interdire de se mêler aux "impurs" dans le bac à sable », décrypte-t-elle.

"Ma fille m'a sauvée"

C'est ce qui s'est passé pour Océane. Après la naissance de leur fille, son ami coupe les têtes des poupées, proscrit les jouets et les berceuses, impose le voile à l'enfant. « Il me disait qu'il préférait mourir plutôt que de la laisser aller tête nue à l'école. Qu'il faudrait quitter la France lorsqu'elle aurait cinq ans. Il parlait d'aller au Yémen », assure-t-elle. C'est elle qui finira par partir avec sa fille : « Elle m'a sauvée. »

C'est d'ailleurs la question des enfants qui cristallise les peurs de ces femmes. Surtout après [l'enlèvement en 2013 de la petite Assia](#) par son père, radicalisé, alors que celui-ci avait la garde de l'enfant ; elle sera récupérée en Turquie un an plus tard, près de la frontière syrienne. Contactée par téléphone, la mère d'un autre enfant retenu à l'étranger n'a pas souhaité s'exprimer, craignant les représailles du père parti rejoindre les fondamentalistes. Quant à Océane, elle est révoltée contre la justice française. Le juge a accordé un droit de visite au père. « Malgré les photos de ma fille voilée et des textos me disant de lui montrer des vidéos violentes. » Le juge a mis cela sur le compte de la liberté de conscience. « Mon avocat est consterné. » Elle dit risquer de voir sa fille placée car elle refuse de la laisser à son ex-compagnon pour le week-end. « L'enfant a une interdiction de sortie de territoire, mais il peut prendre la voiture, faire un faux passeport. Je ne veux pas que ma fille se retrouve en Syrie ou au Yémen. »

"Il m'a dit qu'il allait l'enlever pour qu'elle ne soit pas élevée par une mécréante"

Aurélie était déjà séparée lorsqu'elle a constaté la radicalisation de son ex-mari à son retour de Tunisie. « Il n'avait plus le droit de me regarder, il était marqué au front à force d'avoir prié. Il voulait interdire à ma fille d'aller à l'école et a essayé de me convertir », énonce-t-elle. La petite lui explique à demi-mots que son père « l'oblige » à porter le niqab et à prier quand il la garde. « C'était de la maltraitance psychologique, la petite avait des plaques sur le visage à force d'angoisser. Un jour, il a explosé et m'a dit qu'il allait l'enlever pour qu'elle ne soit pas élevée par une mécréante. » Depuis, deux dimanches par mois normalement réservés à la garde du père, elle vit dans la peur qu'il ne vienne effectivement chercher l'enfant et quitte la ville. « Les travailleurs sociaux ne connaissent pas le sujet et ne sont pas formés. On me dit que j'exagère », confie-t-elle douloureusement. Après cinq mois de procédure, Aurélie attend la prochaine audience « la boule au ventre », « sans être sûre de gagner ».

Certains fonctionnaires reçoivent pourtant une formation spéciale pour les sensibiliser à la question de l'endoctrinement de l'islam radical. « Enseignants, travailleurs sociaux, agents de sécurité, préposés à la protection de l'enfance : plusieurs centaines de fonctionnaires sont formés, dont les écoutants du numéro vert pour aiguiller les familles et évaluer la gravité des cas, depuis le simple rejet de la culture familiale jusqu'au départ en zone à risque », assure Serge Bilsko, président de la Miviludes, (Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires), qui travaille conjointement avec le CPDSI.

Dans ces affaires, qui concernent une poignée de procédures, il n'existe pas de réponses spécifiques dictées par la loi. Lorsqu'il s'agit de statuer sur l'autorité parentale, la résidence de l'enfant ou le droit de visite des parents, c'est au droit classique de la famille que sont renvoyées ces femmes. « Il n'y a pas de règle générale, tout cela est une question d'espèce », analyse Francis Arragon, avocat à la cour. La justice dit agir au nom de l'enfant et de la liberté de conscience. Les mères doivent apporter la preuve que le père, par ses violences physiques, affectives ou psychologiques, menace la santé de l'enfant ou compromet son avenir. Et l'avocat de conclure : « Vous pouvez être un islamiste radical et être un bon père. » Dounia Bouzar ne l'entend pas de cette oreille : « Il faudrait juste appliquer la Convention internationale des droits de l'enfant. Couper la tête d'une poupée, ce n'est pas être musulman, c'est avoir un comportement psychotique. »

http://madame.lefigaro.fr/

United Kingdom

Isis using UK female jihadis to incite terror acts back home, say researchers

Intensive monitoring of social media accounts of female Britons based in northern Syria reveals women's key new role

Mark Townsend and Toby Helm The Observer, Saturday 17 January 2015

A soldier on duty outside the US embassy in Brussels. Security across Europe has been been stepped up after a series of counter-terrorism raids in Belgium and France on Friday.

A hardcore of British women who have travelled to Syria to join Islamic State (Isis) are encouraging other women in the UK to carry out terrorist attacks back home, the *Observer* has learned.

The role of British female jihadists in inciting terrorism in the UK has been uncovered by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR) at King's College London, which has identified a group of around 30 female Britons based in northern Syria.

According to monitoring of their social media accounts, a number have been acting as Isis recruiters or openly praising the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings, while encouraging more bloodshed, including the beheadings of westerners.

Until now, the western women joining Isis have largely been portrayed as passive – travelling to marry jihadists and bear their children away from the frontline. But as police across the UK prepare for possible attacks against them and with Europe on high alert following arrests of suspected Islamist militants in Belgium, France and

Germany, the ICSR work shows that many such women are part of the escalating threat.

Melanie Smith, research fellow at the ICSR and the person in charge of the first known database of [female foreign fighters](), said: "British women tend to incite [attacks], they say to people that can't move to the Islamic State: 'Why not carry out something at home?' That's a common message: if you can't leave your family behind or afford to move to Syria then carry out something."

Information from the database, which has details of 70 women, the youngest a French 15-year-old, suggests the portrayal of women as merely providing support and children for male fighters is becoming increasingly outdated.

Smith said: "I don't think anyone talks about women returning as a risk. While they might not have the same military training, you can see women online being frustrated about the fact they can't fight and they suggest to each other that they could do something else. [Women historically have been used in suicide bombings]() and singular operations."

The ICSR, which is run by Professor Peter Neumann, observed a spike in social media activity following the Paris shootings, with researchers identifying a significant number of UK women praising the attacks in Paris. Among them was a 16-year-old from Manchester who celebrated the shootings on Twitter, while another British woman greeted the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings by saying: "May Allah help them kill as many kafirs they can #parisshooting."

Another potential name to be added to the ICSR database is Hayat Boumeddiene, partner of one of the Paris attackers, Amédy Coulibaly, [and France's most wanted woman.]()

David Cameron, who is in Washington on a two-day trip, told the CBS political show *Face the Nation* that Britain now faced a "very severe threat", adding that an attack was "highly likely". While the prime minister insisted he and President Barack Obama had made significant progress in talks on how to counter international terrorism, he acknowledged that it would be a long struggle.

"I think the reason some people are concerned about this strategy is that perhaps we haven't said enough about how long it is going to take to work," he said. He conceded that "it is going to take a very long time to deal with this", because the answer lay in having strong governments and security forces in Iraq and Syria.

The UK government and US secretary of state John Kerry will welcome foreign ministers from around 20 countries to Lancaster House in London on Thursday for a day of talks on how to combat the threat of Isis. Discussions will focus on the military campaign, Isis's financing, foreign fighters, strategic communications and humanitarian assistance.

But as Cameron stressed the importance of the UK's "special relationship" with the

US, diplomats and pro-EU politicians expressed concern that the UK was in danger of isolating itself from the EU at the very time when European nations needed to work together.

Lord Hannay, the former UK ambassador to the EU and the UN, who chaired a House of Lords committee on the UK's involvement in EU justice and home affairs issues, said that the UK would be "out in the cold" in terms of European cooperation in the fight against terrorism if it had not opted back in to EU measures such as the European arrest warrant – or if it were to leave the EU after the referendum promised by Cameron in 2015.

The crossbench peer, who now advises the cross-party group British Influence, which campaigns to keep the UK inside a reformed EU, said that if Eurosceptics had got their way last year, pulling the UK out of most EU police and justice cooperation, it would have left the country more exposed. "Just think where we would be today, in the midst of a major threat to European democracies if we had not opted back in on 1 December … We would be out in the cold and more at risk. Absolutely."

In Greece anti-terror police were interrogating four suspected jihadis, including the alleged mastermind of the cell that was dismantled in Belgium on Thursday, following their arrest in Athens.

Officials were also examining logs of their mobile phones found in their city centre apartment. Greek security forces have long expressed fears of jihadis infiltrating the country. Earlier on Saturday, Belgian state broadcasters said authorities were seeking a Brussels man of Moroccan origin who was hiding in Greece.

http://www.theguardian.com/

Yemen

Who is the group that just toppled Yemen's government?

January 24, 2015

A Houthi Shiite fighter wearing an army uniform chants slogans during a demonstration Friday to show support for his comrades in Sanaa, Yemen. Thousands of protesters filled the country's streets, some supporting the Shiite rebels who seized the capital and others demanding the country's south secede after the nation's president and Cabinet resigned.

Leadership in limbo — A full day after the president of Yemen and his entire government abruptly resigned, calm prevailed on the streets of the capital even while it remained unclear who was in charge of this country of 26 million.

The Houthi militiamen who drove President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi to step down continued Friday to surround the presidential palace and other key points and appeared to consolidate control, patrolling the streets in pickup trucks. By the end of the day, with no one challenging their authority, they parked their vehicles on street sides and rested casually with their Kalashnikov assault rifles hanging loosely off their shoulders.

The militia leaders did not immediately make any official claim that they were moving to fill the power vacuum left by the president's resignation, although local news agencies reported that they were trying to form a presidential committee to govern the country. Hadi, along with his prime minister and cabinet members, stepped down suddenly Thursday, saying they did not want to be a party to what Hadi's

supporters have called essentially a coup, after presidential guards were withdrawn and Hadi was kept under what amounted to house arrest.

In Sanaa, Yemen's capital, residents seemed to adopt a resigned, wait-and-see attitude.

"People here are followers, not influencers," Mohamed Saleh al-Sanabani, 48, said. "It doesn't matter what party comes to power, the question is: Are they thinking about the people, or are they only thinking of themselves?"

— *New York Times News Service*

On Thursday, the entire government of Yemen's president, Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi — a key U.S. ally in the region — resigned. Following the resignations, control of the country appears to have been turned over to Houthi rebels, a group that is both opposed to U.S. influence and is allegedly supported by Iran.

Yemen is a key area of concern for the United States, in large part due to the presence of the country's much-feared and powerful al-Qaida affiliate. Yet the Houthis are little known outside the country. What does their success mean?

Q: Who are the Houthis, and where did they come from?

A: The Houthis are a Shiite insurgency group that originated from northwestern Yemen's Saada province. Charles Schmitz, a professor at Towson University, writes that their origins lie in the Shabab al-Mumanin (the Believing Youth), a group that operated in the early 1990s. The Believing Youth worked to raise awareness about the Zaydi branch of Shiite Islam, which had dominated Yemen for centuries but was sidelined after a civil war in the 1960s and repressed by the Yemeni government.

After the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Hussein al-Houthi, one of the leaders of the Believing Youth, began staging anti-American protests and became a vocal critic of then-president Ali Abdullah Saleh. After Houthi's followers clashed with the government, Yemeni forces killed him. Following his death, the group was renamed after him. The insurgency continued, led by those related to Hussein al-Houthi — 33-year-old Abdulmalik al-Houthi is the current leader.

Q: How did they become so powerful?

A: A long period of armed conflict with the government turned the Houthis from "student activists to seasoned insurgents," Schmitz writes, and the government's harsh tactics in the north found them a broad set of allies. While they reached a cease-fire with the government in 2010, the next year large protests against President Saleh offered them a new opportunity. The group took advantage, consolidating their control in the northwest and taking part in the National Dialogue Conference after Saleh stepped down from power.

Hadi became president in 2012 after a U.N.-brokered peace deal, yet he suffered from a variety of differing problems, including a southern separatist movement, the growing threat of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, and the continuing loyalty of

many military officers to Saleh. Again, the Houthis, emboldened by previous successes, pushed on. In September, the group began a dramatic new offensive, eventually gaining a large amount of ground from government forces, and reaching Sanaa, the Yemeni capital.

Intense fighting broke out in Sanaa this week. While it initially looked like a coup, Houthi leaders offered Hadi a power-sharing accord that would have allowed him to stay in power. However, Yemen's leaders balked at the deal and resigned en masse. In a public address, Hadi apologized, saying that "we have reached a dead end."

Q: Is this a sectarian conflict?

A: Yes and no. The Houthis are Shiite, and many of the forces they are fighting are Sunni. Part of their appeal comes from the idea they are representing Yemen's Shiite minority, which is estimated to account for 35 percent of the country's Muslims.

The reality, however, is more complicated.

For one thing, Zaydi Shiites (almost entirely found in Yemen) are quite distinct from the rest of Shiite Islam, recognizing only the first five of the 12 imams (making them "fivers," as opposed to the "twelvers" of mainstream Shiite Islam). Zaydis are considered to be theologically closer to Sunni Muslims than other Shiites. (It's worth noting that former president Saleh, who ruled Yemen for 12 years and was attacked by the Houthis, is himself a Zaydi and is widely suspected of working with the Houthis after losing power).

Analysts say that the popular appeal of the Houthi insurgency can't entirely be put down to sectarian factors. In a 2010 Rand Corp. report, the authors noted that "it is a conflict in which local material discontent and Zaydi identity claims have intersected with the state center's methods of rule and self-legitimation." That analysis was echoed last year by Silvana Toska, a Middle East researcher, who noted that the Houthis were supported by "vast numbers of Yemenis who view them as a real opposition to the elites that is untainted by corruption."

Q: What role is Iran playing?

A: Saudi Arabia and other Sunni states have accused the Houthis of being a proxy for Iran, the region's Shiite superpower. The Houthis themselves deny this. Some outside sources have also suggested a link, however. Last year, Reuters spoke to officials from Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Iran who all claimed that Tehran had supplied money, weapons and training to the Houthis.

One Iranian official told Reuters that there were a "few hundred" members of Iran's Quds Force, the external arm of the Revolutionary Guard, training Houthi fighters in Yemen and that Houthi fighters had traveled to Iran to train as well. The Quds Force is believed to have operated with a number of other Shiite groups, most notably in Lebanon and Iraq.

It's tough to know to what extent Iran actively helps the Houthis, if they actually do. Many have long suspected the Yemeni government and the Saudis of exaggerating the link in a bid to get more U.S. assistance. Notably, as the Yemeni government began to fall, Saudi Arabia, which had supported Sunni groups opposed to the Houthis, cut their aid to the country.

Q: What does it mean for the United States?

A: It's hard to say. The United States' major concern in Yemen is likely still AQAP, a Sunni extremist group. The Houthis are certainly no friend of al-Qaida (they have fought the group at points), and Yemen's drone strikes are operated from Saudi Arabia anyway. Even if the Houthis remain dead set against U.S. involvement in the country, if they can form a popular, functioning government their takeover may not be a bad thing.

The problem, of course, is what happens if they can't. As aid from Saudi Arabia dries up, the country's economy will struggle. Without clear authority in Sanaa, groups such as AQAP and the southern secessionist movement have more space to act. And if the Houthis push a Shiite sectarian line, that may push Yemen's Sunnis to follow extremists. What was once a key U.S. ally now seriously risks becoming a failed state.

http://www.bendbulletin.com/

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