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CAERT, B.P 141 Bureau Poste El-Mohammadia Alger, Algérie, Tel +213 21 52 01 10 Fax +213 21 52 03 78
Email : admin@caert.org.dz

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Terrorism in Africa

Africa Sees Stability, Growth in 2015 Despite Terror Challenge

31 December 2015

Nairobi — Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has witnessed a year of overall stability and growth in 2015 as it embarks on a journey to realize Agenda 2063, a blueprint for the continent's development in the next half century.

OVERALL STABILITY AND GROWTH

During the year, overall political stability has paved the way for economic growth. Some 10 African countries, including Nigeria, Togo and Tanzania, held elections, and unlike before, most of these elections had been conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner without electoral violence.

In South Sudan, the warring factions signed a peace deal in August; and in November, they signed an agreement on transitional security arrangement, an important move to implement permanent ceasefire in the world's youngest nation after it fell into conflict in 2013.

While global economic recovery remains slow, most economies in the SSA region have shown robust growth.

A World Bank report in October says Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda and Tanzania are expected to sustain annual growth at around 7 percent or more from 2015 to 2017.

Although economic growth in the region may slow to 3.7 percent this year compared to 4.6 percent in 2014 due to plummeting prices of oil and other commodities, it is projected to pick up to 4.4 percent in 2016, and further strengthen to 4.8 percent in 2017.

INTEGRATING AFRICA

A more peaceful and stable Africa has enabled the continent to steadily push forward the integration process.

As part of the first 10-year implementation plan of the Agenda 2063, the African Union launched in June its Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) negotiations. This came just days after the signing of a Tripartite Free Trade Agreement (TFTA), which covers 26 African countries and represents about 60 percent of Africa's GDP and population.

Slated to be implemented in 2017, the CFTA will be built on the TFTA, and create a market of more than 1 billion people. It is expected that the continental wide free-trade area, with a combined GDP of over 2 trillion U.S. dollars, will drastically reduce trade barriers and facilitate free movements of goods, services and people.

WIN-WIN COOPERATION

In 2015, China and African cooperation ushered in a new era of mutual benefits, with bilateral relations elevated to a historic new height.

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the founding of Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). In early December, China proposed to lift China-Africa relations to a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership at the FOCAC summit in Johannesburg, opening a new era of win-win cooperation and common development between the two sides.

To strengthen cooperation with Africa, China announced that it will roll out 10 major plans covering industrialization, agricultural modernization, infrastructure, green development, and people-to-people exchange, etc, in the next three years. And China will also offer 60 billion dollars to ensure smooth implementation of these initiatives.

TERROR CHALLENGE

Terrorism, however, remains a big challenge for parts of Africa as the continent makes its way on the path of prosperity. Terror attacks in some African countries have continued unabated over the past year.

Kenya's Garissa university attack, which killed 148 people in April, has been the deadliest one perpetrated by Somalia's Al-Shabaab militant group in recent years, while latest waves of Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria alone have left hundreds dead.

Moreover, regional militant groups are showing tendency to connect to outside terror groups and change tactics, as evidenced by Boko Haram's swearing of allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL).

Despite the challenge, Africa is unswervingly marching on the path to achieve its Agenda 2063 goals, aiming to empower women, boost industrialization and economic growth and create more education and employment opportunities...

Terrorism is not the whole picture, and terror activities cannot stop the continent's efforts to seek peaceful development.

There is no doubt that as Africa reaches higher levels of stability and economic development, the root causes of terrorism will be eventually tackled.

Xinhua

The economics of terrorism in Africa

Scaling up military missions is costly and the unpredictability of terror strikes often requires extra spending on security

December 18, 2015

Terrorism on the scale witnessed in Paris last month is nothing new in Africa. In Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger, the extremist group Boko Haram — famous for



its kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls in 2014 — has inflicted thousands of casualties with suicide bombings and assaults on civilians. In Kenya, the Somali group Al Shabab has carried out two major attacks — on Nairobi's Westgate shopping mall in 2013 and on Garissa University in 2015 — as well as many smaller acts of terror.

Meanwhile, in Tunisia, Daesh (the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) has targeted tourists — orchestrating attacks on a museum and a beach resort. And in Mali, shortly after the attacks in Paris, gunmen belonging to an Al Qaida affiliate stormed the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako, killing 22 people. Terror, it seems, has become part of the new normal in Africa.

These attacks, and others, have cast a dark shadow across the continent's long-awaited economic rise. It is not difficult to see why. Terrorism risks derailing Africa's economic and political development in six important ways.

For starters, there is the sheer scale of the humanitarian catastrophe. Since 2009, Boko Haram alone has killed more than 10,000 people in Nigeria and has driven nearly a half-million from their homes. Traumatized populations have fled to refugee

camps in Cameroon, Chad and Niger, where malnutrition and disease are becoming increasingly prevalent — especially among children.

Second, terrorism is undermining gross domestic product (GDP) growth and weighing down overall economic performance in affected countries. The economy of northern Nigeria, for example, has been devastated by the ongoing violence. The International Monetary Fund now includes terror threats among the major risks to the economic outlook in Nigeria, Tunisia, and Kenya. Already, economic indicators in these countries have been revised downward after terrorist incidents. Following the attacks by Daesh, for example, Tunisia's projected annual GDP growth for 2015 was cut from 3 per cent to 1 per cent. The tourism sector is expected to experience a 45 per cent decline — implying a drop in revenue of some \$1.1 billion (Dh4.04 billion). The damage to the sector — and, more broadly, to investor confidence — will trickle across Tunisia's economy, pushing down output, fiscal revenue and foreign reserves.

Third, the fight against terrorism is sucking up scarce financial resources. Scaling up military missions is costly and the unpredictability of terror strikes often requires extra spending on security, which sometimes causes governments to miss their fiscal targets. After the Garissa University attack, for example, the Kenyan government increased security-related spending by 0.3 per cent of GDP and provided additional financial assistance to the tourism sector.

In Central and West Africa, the fiscal pressure has been especially intense. In addition to the outlays required to equip the armed forces engaged against Boko Haram, Nigerian officials estimate that billions of dollars will be needed to rebuild ravaged infrastructure in the north. Similarly, Chad's soldiers fought alongside French troops against terrorists in Mali, and now they have coalesced with those of Nigeria and Cameroon in fighting Boko Haram. In April, the country was granted \$170 million in debt relief — the payoff for years of economic reform. But now it is being forced to use part of its hard-won fiscal space to finance the fight against terror.

Fourth, the countries at risk are among the most promising frontier markets. In Nigeria, which recently became Africa's largest economy, a dynamic private sector has been diversifying an economy that has long been dominated by oil production. Similarly, Kenya, home to a thriving information and communication technology sector, is leading the world in the rollout and leveraging of mobile money. If these economies are upset, they risk dragging down Africa's overall performance.

Fifth, terrorism is undermining state building. In most African countries, the military is weak and insufficiently equipped to handle this new threat, whereas terrorist groups are often well-funded and deploy committed combatants equipped with state-of-the-art weapons. Such face-offs undermine the state's monopoly on the means of violence and pose a challenge to its power and legitimacy.

Finally, the risk that fighting terrorism poses to civil liberties is especially acute in Africa, where institution building is still an ongoing process. Some non-democratic regimes may take advantage of anti-terrorism policies to prey on their own people. There is also a threat to the fabric of society if fear of extremism leads Muslims to be stigmatised or marginalised.

Most of the civil conflicts that held back Africa's development for decades have finally come to an end. But terrorism risks undermining the continent's hard-won sta-

bility and strong GDP growth. Localised security issues are metastasising into macroeconomic threats. This new danger to Africa must be addressed if the continent is to maintain its upward momentum.

—Project Syndicate, 2015

Koffi Alle is senior adviser to the International Monetary Fund's executive director for Africa and former economic adviser to the minister of economy and finance of Cote d'Ivoire.

<http://gulfnnews.com/>

Terror's true threat: the 'us' and 'them' feeling

26/12/2015



Crowds gather to pay a silent tribute to the victims of the terror attacks at the Place de la Republique, in Paris. Photo: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

On January 7, 2015, Lassana Bathily, a 24-year-old Muslim from Mali in west Africa, was working in a kosher grocery shop in Paris. He risked his life to save 15 Jewish people when the shop was attacked by extremists.

He hid the shoppers, including a baby, in a cold storage room. He had the presence of mind to turn off the cooling unit so those hiding inside wouldn't suffer hypothermia.

He told them to stay calm and quiet, to huddle together for warmth, and he went out in search of help. He saved the lives of 15 Jewish people and risked his own life in the process.

When asked on national television why he did this he said: "We are brothers. . . this is not a question of Jews, Christians or Muslims, we are all in the same boat."

What terrorism does is strike at the heart of what it is to be human. It wins when we begin to lose that sense that "we are all in the same boat." Terrorism will win when we close down our hearts and minds.

Terrorism thrives on its ability to penetrate into the hearts and minds of its intended victims. It is a type of psychological warfare aimed at dividing and conquering by attacking the hearts and minds of those who stand in its way.

The insidious nature of the increasing threat of terror attacks in our cities, our supermarkets and our schools is how the extremists plan to win. This form of psychological warfare gets at the very core of what it is to be a human.

If we walk into 2016 blind to the terrorist tactic of dividing and conquering through fear, they will gain a psychological foothold that will be difficult to undo for generations to come.

As we reach the end of 2015, in the face of mounting terror threats and trying to come to terms with the heartbreaking loss of so many innocent lives, we are facing the biggest challenge of our generation.

After centuries of getting it terribly wrong, western Europe established a way for its citizens to live in relative harmony. Our democratic system and human rights commitment are of relatively recent design. It is a flawed system. It is a system that fails many and is in need of constant adjustment.

But it is a system that has brought significant social and economic stability to western Europe. This democratic system is not the result of natural evolution. This fragile, fledgling and imperfect democracy is the design of the human heart and mind when it is not riddled with fear. It is what happens when humanity is inspired by ideals, wants to do something better and is informed by a deep understanding of the importance of the collective. It is what happens when humanity is not operating from fear.

Terrorism will win when it undermines the potential of humanity to create and sustain social systems like our fledgling democracy informed by human rights and deep knowing of the importance of the collective.

Terrorism will win when we allow it to pit Christians against Muslims, when it erodes our sense of common humanity, our sense of "all being in the same boat".

The human brain has developed over many millions of years. We have made significant advances over the last few decades in our understanding of the human mind. We know that the typical psychological response to the fear evoked by terrorism is to get 'tunnel vision' in our thinking. We take psychological shortcuts and reach very simplistic, black-and-white conclusions.

In threat mode, we get hijacked by a part of the brain known as the amygdala. The amygdala is the most primitive part of the human brain. It is only concerned with immediate survival - and it over-rides the rational and reflective capacity of the brain.

At times, this is absolutely necessary. Your child steps out onto a busy road - the amygdala kicks in and produces an immediate reaction; you reach out and grab the child.

There is no time or need for reflection in this situation.

The danger comes when we get stuck in threat mode because we make kneejerk reactions when they are not necessary.

Such reactions will inflame the current terror threat and will play into the hands of terrorists - and this is exactly what the terrorists want.

The real challenge for us as individuals and for our world leaders in the years to come is to make sure we do not react in this kneejerk way to the terrorist threat.

We need to resist the amygdala-hijack that reduces our concern down to myself, my kin, my religion, my country - and to remember that we all share a common humanity.

We NEED wise and brave leadership that can pull us back from the brink of playing into the hands of the terrorists by allowing them to close down our hearts and minds. Terrorism strikes at the heart of what it is to be human - our capacity to connect with our fellow human beings.

Our need to connect is biologically hardwired; we are utterly vulnerable and dependent on others from the first moments of life.

Paul Gilbert, a leading figure in the field of evolutionary psychology, says that from the day we are born we are biologically programmed to respond to the care and kindness of others.

We know from decades of research that our social connectedness is a key to our mental well-being and by extension is essential to stable societies.

Our connection to other human beings is what keeps us alive.

From the very beginning, if we do not belong or connect as infants, we die. It's that simple. Our survival is dependent on human connection.

The danger of terrorism is that it has the capacity to deeply disrupt our hardwired need for connection and belonging. We begin to live in smaller and smaller worlds increasingly defined by 'us' and 'them'.

Historically, most of our major world conflicts, and some closer to home, are fuelled by extraordinarily contracted sense of 'us' versus 'them'.

From the local to the international, much of our conflict emerges from a very fixed and territorial sense of 'me' - my office, my country, my religion.

The terrorist attacks we have witnessed in 2015 have the potential to rob a city, a nation, our fledgling democracy, of its sense of safety for a very long time.

The terrorist threat can strip humanity of its innate capacity to aspire to ideas of democracy or commit to human rights - it can close down our hearts and minds.

We need leadership that will help us continue to resist the threat mode that reduces our concern down to 'me', my kin, my religion, and to realise - just as the Muslim shop assistant in Paris did last January - that we are all in the same boat.

Irish Independent

<http://www.independent.ie/>

Africa: Tackling New Threats to African and Global Peace and Security

17 DECEMBER 2015

PRESS RELEASE

The changing human security landscape in African and globally requires innovative responses to the complex threats that undermine the continent's potential for growth and development. Over the next five years, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) will be at the forefront of efforts to understand and resolve these challenges.

Africa is seeing the emergence of new actors in violent conflicts and fragile contexts. Transnational organised crime groups and terror groups capitalise on poverty, weak governance and poor service delivery to recruit from marginalised populations. Violent extremism across the continent is also fuelled by links to global extremist groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

'Not all of these threats are new', says ISS Executive Director Anton du Plessis. 'But what is changing is how, when and where they intersect; the linkages are becoming important'. These hybrid threats emanate from militias, armed gangs and organised criminal groups whose activities are transnational and often span multiple jurisdictions. Cybercrime adds to the risks, and can weaken state authority and exploit vulnerable groups.

'We are positioning the ISS to be a leading organisation on understanding and responding to these changing human security dynamics in Africa and globally', says du Plessis who was recently appointed executive director after serving as acting executive director and then managing director of the ISS from 2013.

Research will remain the cornerstone of the ISS' work. Timely and relevant research creates the space for dialogue that is the first step towards crafting better policies and decisions. Credible analysis by ISS experts who understand the context and are informed by their wide networks enables the provision of valuable policy advice.

Building on this solid foundation, the focus for the next five years will be on finding practical solutions and partnering with governments and other organisations to make them a reality. A core part of the ISS' work is training prosecutors, police, military officials and other decision makers across the continent. The ISS also contributes African expertise to the United Nations, African Union, regional economic communities, national governments and civil society.

'The ISS is much more than a think tank', says du Plessis. 'Our connections across the continent mean we can convene and work with senior representatives from government, civil society and the diplomatic community to solve human security problems'.

A key part of the ISS strategy in the next five years will be adapting to the environment in which non-governmental organisations and think tanks now operate in Africa and globally. Traditional sources of funding are changing as donor countries replace development aid with investment and partnerships, and favour short-term projects over institutional contributions.

'The impact of the global financial crisis means we have to become better at navigating this environment rather than being caught on the back foot', says du Plessis. 'Our focus will be on the relevance, sustainability and financial health of the ISS through sound management and administration'.

For more information, contact:

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201512171219.html>

Algérie: L'importance de la réconciliation dans la lutte contre l'extrémisme et la violence soulignée à Alger

24 Décembre 2015

Alger — L'importance de privilégier la réconciliation face à l'extrémisme violent qui s'inscrit dans un "projet criminel ciblant les richesses et l'identité" de la nation arabo-musulmane a été soulignée jeudi à Alger.

Lors d'un séminaire organisé par l'Association al-Irshad Oual Islah en coordination avec le Forum mondial pour la modération sous le titre "Réconciliation et réforme : choix de la Nation face aux défis actuels", les intervenants ont mis l'accent sur l'importance de privilégier la réconciliation dans la conjoncture actuelle que traverse la nation arabo-musulmane".

L'"Algérie a réussi à panser ses blessures qui ont duré plus d'une décennie à la faveur de sa politique de réconciliation nationale", un choix qui lui a permis de contrer l'extrémisme et la violence, a estimé le secrétaire général du Forum, Marwan Faouri.

Rappelant l'objectif noble de la réforme, il a affirmé que le "terrorisme n'a ni pays ni religion et que toute tentative de le lier à l'Islam est une 'aberration'", a-t-il fait remarquer.

Il ne fait aucun doute que l'extrémisme et la violence répandus dans les pays musulmans sont alimentés par des parties qui ne veulent du bien ni pour ces pays ni pour l'humanité tout entière, a poursuivi M. Faouri.

Le membre du bureau de l'association, chargé du développement humain, Fares Khaled a souligné "l'importance" de retourner à l'option de réconciliation et de réforme.

L'analyste politique libyen, Mohamed Ali Salabi, a mis en avant "les efforts consentis par l'Algérie pour préserver sa souveraineté et son intégrité territoriale et régler les différends entre les parties libyennes, en faisant prévaloir le principe de réconciliation".

L'ambassadeur de l'Etat de Palestine à Alger, Louaï Aissa, a souligné "la nécessaire union des pays arabo-musulmans face aux menaces qui les guettent et pour défendre la cause palestinienne".

"Une opportunité historique de judaïser El Qods s'offre aujourd'hui à l'ennemi sioniste qui recourt en cela à qualifier les Palestiniens de terroristes et à mobiliser l'opinion publique contre eux, d'où l'importance pour les pays musulmans de faire front uni", a-t-il ajouté.

Congo-Kinshasa: Kabila - « Les perspectives pour notre pays sont en définitive encourageantes »



Photo: Radio Okapi/Ph. John Bompengo

Le Président Joseph Kabila lors de son discours sur l'Etat de la Nation le 14/12/2015 à Kinshasa.

Par Omer Nsongo Die Lema

Tradition respectée : le Président de la République a édifié, ce lundi 14 décembre 2015, le congrès sur l'état de la Nation au cours de l'année qui s'achève dans deux semaines.

La cérémonie s'est déroulée au Palais du Peuple, devant l'Assemblée nationale et le Sénat réunis pour la circonstance, conformément à l'article 77 de la Constitution ainsi libellé : « Le Président de la République adresse des messages à la nation. Il communique avec les Chambres du Parlement par des messages qu'il lit ou fait lire et qui ne donnent lieu à aucun débat. Il prononce, une fois l'an, devant l'Assemblée nationale et le Sénat réunis en Congrès, un discours sur l'état de la nation ». Avec 372 députés nationaux sur 500 et 70 sénateurs sur 108 présents - le quorum étant largement plein - le congrès a siégé valablement et le message du Chef de l'Etat a été bien dit et clairement entendu par les destinataires conduits, par leurs bureaux respectifs avec à leurs têtes, pour l'Assemblée nationale, l'honorable Aubin Minaku, et, pour le Sénat, l'honorable Léon Kengo...

Dans l'assistance, on a pu noter aussi la présence du Premier ministre Augustin Matata Ponyo et son gouvernement, du Président de la Cour constitutionnelle Benoît Luamba et son bureau, du Procureur général de la République Floribert Kabange Numbi, du Directeur de cabinet du Chef de l'Etat, Néhémie Mwilanya Wilondja à la

tête de son bureau, de quelques gouverneurs de province et commissaires spéciaux ainsi que d'autres officiels du pays, toutes institutions publiques confondues, du corps diplomatique et, évidemment, des forces politiques et sociales représentatives de l'unité nationale.

Le Président de la République a entamé sa prestation par le rappel des effets des catastrophes naturelles survenues dans plusieurs villes et locales du pays ces temps derniers en raison du changement climatique, et ceux des catastrophes humaines dues à des conflits armés qui continuent d'endeuiller principalement l'Est, précisément Beni et ses alentours, dans le Nord Kivu. De la guerre classique qui l'a affaibli considérablement, l'ennemi est passé au terrorisme en menant des raids contre des populations civiles.

Présentant les condoléances de la Nation et les siennes aux familles prouvées, il a demandé à l'assistance l'observation d'une minute silence.

C'est alors qu'il est entré dans le vif du sujet en abordant tour à tour les questions économiques, les questions sociales et les questions politiques, mais en faisant auparavant le constat d'un état de la Nation « pour le moins contrasté, l'embellie dans certains secteurs ne pouvant occulter les préoccupations légitimes de chacun » des Congolais.

Il a considéré comme motif de satisfaction le fait que malgré les multiples défis auxquels fait face la Nation, au moins « demeure préservé l'héritage commun nous légué par les héros et martyrs de notre indépendance, à savoir : un Congo uni, libre et véritablement souverain, dans les limites de ses frontières internationales héritées de la colonisation ».

Ni sang, ni sueur...

Attendu toutefois - et pour cause - sur questions politiques en raison particulièrement des enjeux électoraux, le Chef de l'Etat a tenu à rappeler aux Parlementaires combien les progrès réalisés en 2015 résultent « de la paix et de la stabilité politique et économique retrouvées, sans lesquelles rien n'aurait été possible ».

Se félicitant alors de la mise en place de la nouvelle équipe de la Centrale électorale, et estimant l'impériorité permettre à ce bureau « d'accomplir sa mission à la satisfaction de nous », il a résolument engagé « la Nation sur la voie du Dialogue Politique Inclusif ». Il est d'avis que la mise en place du comité préparatoire et de la facilitation internationale vont faciliter à brève échéance « le démarrage effectif dudit dialogue, avec pour objectif de trouver des solutions consensuelles aux questions majeures qui minent le processus électoral, ouvrant ainsi la voie à des élections crédibles et apaisées ».

Le Président de la République a tout naturellement convié les Congolais « à tirer avantage de notre tradition séculaire du dialogue comme mode de règlement des divergences politiques et sociales ». Dans cette logique, il s'est voulu ferme à l'égard des fauteurs de troubles. « ... ce n'est pas par la violence que nous réglerons nos divergences. Ce n'est pas non plus des Nations Unies, de l'Orient ou de l'Occident que viendront les solutions à nos problèmes. Mais plutôt de nous-mêmes, et par le dialogue entre des Congolaises et des Congolais, mus par la fibre patriotique, et inspirés par l'appel à l'auto-détermination et à l'auto-prise en charge, toujours d'actualité, de

nos deux héros nationaux, Patrice-Emery LUMUMBA et M'zee Laurent-Désiré KABILA », a-t-il dit.

Mieux, faisant valoir sa qualité de Garant de la Nation, il en a appelé, « une fois de plus, au sens élevé de responsabilité de chacun et de tous, afin qu'au sortir du Dialogue National, nous soyons plus unis qu'avant, dans la mise en œuvre d'un processus authentiquement congolais, fruit d'un consensus librement dégagé, avec pour objectifs la consolidation de notre jeune démocratie, et la préservation de la paix chèrement acquise, de la sécurité, de la stabilité et des progrès enregistrés sur la voie du développement de notre pays".

Dans cette optique, il a rassuré les Congolais qu'il ne permettra pas que « les sacrifices consentis au cours de ces dernières années pour bâtir la paix et la sécurité » autant au pays que dans la région en vue de baliser la voie vers l'émergence « soient compromis, sous quelque prétexte que ce soit, par ceux qui, de mauvaise foi et de manière délibérée » font le choix de « rester enfermés dans leurs postures négativistes, refusant le dialogue au profit des complots contre la République et promettant sang et sueur à notre pays ». Déduction cinglante : « Il n'y aura ni l'un, ni l'autre ».

Le Congolais peut de ce fait en être sûr : ses intérêts et ses aspirations légitimes à la quiétude et au bien-être, a souligné le Chef de l'Etat, « seront, en tout temps et en toutes circonstances, sauvegardés et promus par les Institutions de la République ».

Et le Raïs de le rassurer davantage par cette profession de foi : « Là où il lui est promis la mort, nous l'assurons que tout sera mis en œuvre pour protéger la vie. Là où on veut tout détruire, notre engagement, c'est de construire et de développer sans relâche nos villes et nos campagnes ».

En définitive, dira-t-il, il revient au peuple congolais « de choisir, lors des élections, lequel des deux projets de société lui convient le mieux », tout comme il lui revient également, le moment venu, « de se choisir librement ses dirigeants à tous les niveaux ».

Le Président Joseph Kabila a terminé ce chapitre par le sujet relatif au mode de scrutin. On se souviendra que dans son discours du 26 novembre 2015 annonçant la tenue du Dialogue national, il a demandé aux forces vives de la Nation déclaré si l'on ne peut pas « pas engager, dès à présent, une réflexion sur un système électoral avec des modalités de vote peu coûteuses, comme c'est le cas dans d'autres pays ». Dans les phrases précédentes, il venait de mettre en exergue le coût du processus électoral tel qu'évalué par la Céni pour l'ensemble des élections (près d'un milliard et deux cent mille dollars américains), les disponibilités du Gouvernement à cet effet (près de cinq cent millions de dollars américains) et la capacité de mobilisation actuellement réduite des recettes publique. Un dilemme à résoudre.

Cette phrase a fait l'objet, de la part des anti-Dialogue, d'une extrapolation nécessitant une clarification. « ... Je demeure une fois de plus persuadé que l'option à lever sur les modalités de vote prévue à l'article 47 de la Loi électorale, à savoir : soit le vote par bulletin à papier, soit le vote électronique, pourrait contribuer à réduire substantiellement le coût des opérations électorales », a déclaré le Président Joseph Kabila dans son discours sur l'état de nation.

Effectivement cette disposition est ainsi libellée : « Le vote s'effectue soit au moyen d'un bulletin papier soit par voie électronique ». Impossible de renvoyer l'opinion à la Constitution puisque celle-ci ne contient aucun article fixant un moyen quelconque pour un scrutin.

Avant les questions politiques, le Chef de l'Etat a abordé les questions économiques et sociales.

www.allafrica.com

Ethiopia

East Africa: Ethiopia's Foreign Policy - Promoting Peaceful Coexistence With Somalia

Irrespective of government change, Ethiopia has been always committed towards African brothers' struggle for political independence. It is for this reason that the Ethiopian Foreign Affairs Security Policy and Strategy designed by former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi principally hub on peaceful coexistence and good neighbourhood with each countries regardless of the behaviour of the regimes. This policy and strategy has been implemented effectively to normalize hostilities invested by former regimes.

Practical case in point is Somalia.

Somalia has been in total political collapse since 1991 which happen to be save heaven for various colours of internationally feared hard-liners. Somalia has been the breeding ground of militants since then. Though the main problem of Somalia is internal in nature, but the external stimulus could not be discounted. It has been a country where various global extremists operating their anti-peace mission which consumed untold lives of people. Though there is an elected government, it could not function well for the reason that of the extremists composed of different warlords who effectively diluted it. As a result, Somalia is labelled as 'failed state' to this date. It had been torn apart and divided by warlords who sucked the blood of Somali people. Socio-economic and political institutions were dismantled. Lawlessness, daytime naked peculates and killings became the order of the day. In Somalia, during the reign of the radicals, everything sin happened. The diffusive din of war of the extremists masked under religion motto turned out to be as a way for political power.

The fragility of Somalia and the region was intensified by the hostile foreign policy calculated by Eritrea's regimes to spread political Islam to Somalia. It was also conditioned among others by the Issayas's regional hegemonic project and economic reasons that led to regional crisis. Shooting to every direction policy of Eritrean dictators has tremendously caused the region to remain fragile. The nature of the Eritrean state and its wild ambitions to play a dominant regional role has led to inter-state wars and tens of thousands of fatalities (Medhane 2004). "Meanwhile, after the year 2000 the North-East African balance of power was totally altered. Eritrea was defeated and it was no longer a significant regional actor". But its frustration could shake the region. The notorious jihadists equipped and provided with latest munitions from the Eritrean regime and others began flailing to appear as formidable forces in the region. Particularly, the Mafia styled government of Issayas Afworki could not even refute the claim presented against it by UNSC that it has been training, financing and directing the diabolic elements in Somalia. As a result, the UNSC sanctioned it to refrain from its destructive policy which gave the

recognition that Eritrean current belligerent groups are nothing but a threat for peace and stability to the region. The sanction was a certificate given in recognition of his depraved acts he has been committing from day one of his power in Asmara.

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201512171300.html>

Kenya

Kenyan Muslims shield Christians in Mandera bus attack

21 December 2015



Somali-based al-Shabab frequently launches attacks over the border in Kenya

A group of Kenyan Muslims travelling on a bus ambushed by Islamist gunmen protected Christian passengers by refusing to be split into groups, according to eyewitnesses.

They told the militants "to kill them together or leave them alone", a local governor told Kenyan media.

At least two people were killed in the attack, near the north-eastern village of El Wak on the Somali border.

The Somali based al-Shabab group says it carried out the attack.

The group often carries out attacks in Kenya's north-east.

The bus was travelling from the capital Nairobi to the town of Mandera.

When al-Shabab killed 148 people in an attack on Garissa University College in April, the militants reportedly singled out Christians and shot them, while freeing many Muslims.

Last year, a bus was attacked near Mandera by al-Shabab militants, who killed 28 non-Muslims travelling to Nairobi for the Christmas holidays.

Africa Live: BBC news updates

Why is al-Shabab targeting Kenya?

"The locals showed a sense of patriotism and belonging to each other," Mandera governor Ali Roba told Kenya's private **Daily Nation newspaper**.

The militants decided to leave after the passengers' show of unity, he added.



The passengers on the bus showed great bravery, but there was another quality revealed by their surprising decision to stand up to the gunmen: Frustration.

The majority of the local population in the north-east are Kenyan Muslims of Somali descent, and they have been hit hard by the consequences of al-Shabab attacks, even if non-Muslims are supposedly the main target of the Somali militant group.

An attack last year in Mandera, in which Christians were killed after being separated from Muslims, caused the departure of more than 2,000 teachers, as well as many health workers who had come from other parts of the country.

Perhaps the passengers felt that the region could simply not afford another such attack.

It will be interesting to see if their actions embolden local populations to increase their resistance to al-Shabab, which has attacked the area several times.

An employee of the Makkah bus company, who had spoken to the driver involved in the attack, confirmed to the BBC that Muslims had refused to be separated from their fellow Christian passengers.

One of the victims was shot dead after trying to run away from the militants after passengers had been forced off the bus, the same employee told the BBC's Bashkas Jugsodaay in Nairobi.

Al-Shabab has been at war with Kenya ever since Kenyan forces entered Somalia in October 2011 in an effort to crush the militants.

Kenya's north-eastern region has a large population of ethnic Somalis.

Al-Shabab attacks in Kenya

September 2013 - Al-Shabab militants seize the Westgate shopping mall in the capital Nairobi, killing 67 people.

June 2014 - At least 48 people die after Islamist militants attack hotels and a police station in Mpeketoni, near the island resort of Lamu.

November 2014 - The group targets a bus full of teachers in Mandera County, executing 28 non-Muslims at point-blank range.

December 2014- Al-Shabab kills 36 non-Muslim quarry workers near the north Kenyan town of Mandera.

April 2015 - Militants carry out a massacre at Garissa University College in north-east Kenya, killing 148 people.

<http://www.bbc.com/>

Menaces terroristes au Mali : l'état d'urgence une nouvelle fois prolongé

le 31 décembre 2015



Le gouvernement malien et l'Assemblée nationale du Mali ont autorisé mardi la prorogation jusqu'au 31 mars de l'état d'urgence déjà instauré à deux reprises depuis l'attentat jihadiste contre un grand hôtel de Bamako en novembre.

Présenté lundi en Conseil des ministres, le projet de loi autorisant la prorogation de l'état d'urgence « en raison des menaces graves sur la sécurité des personnes et de leurs biens » a été voté mardi 29 décembre par l'Assemblée nationale malienne, a indiqué à l'AFP une source parlementaire, précisant que « le projet de loi a été voté à l'unanimité par les députés présents à l'hémicycle lors des discussions ».

L'opposition parlementaire, qui a voté le projet de loi, a cependant demandé « plus de rigueur » dans son application afin d'éviter « une banalisation de la mesure ».

L'état d'urgence avait été proclamé une première fois pour dix jours au soir de l'attaque contre l'hôtel Radisson Blu de Bamako le 20 novembre. [Il avait de nouveau été imposé le 22 décembre pour une nouvelle période de dix jours.](#)

« Éviter toute surprise désagréable »

« Si le gouvernement a pris cette mesure, avant la fin de l'état d'urgence qui est en cours, c'est pour prendre les devants et éviter toute surprise désagréable », a déclaré à l'AFP un responsable malien sous couvert d'anonymat.

L'attentat du Radisson Blu a été revendiqué le jour même par le groupe Al-Mourabitoune du jihadiste algérien Mokhtar Belmokhtar, en coordination avec Al-Qaïda au Maghreb islamique (Aqmi), les deux formations annonçant ensuite avoir scellé à cette occasion leur alliance.

Il a également été revendiqué par le Front de libération du Macina (FLM), formation jihadiste apparue récemment dans le centre du Mali, « avec la collaboration d'Ansar Dine », groupe jihadiste de l'ex-chef rebelle touareg Iyad Ag Ghaly.

<http://www.jeuneafrique.com/>

La France "neutralise" une dizaine de terroristes d'Al Mourabitoun au Mali

Par [Michel Cabirol](#) | 23/12/2015



Un millier de soldats français sont toujours déployés au Mali, essentiellement dans le cadre de Barkhane (Crédits : © Joe Penney / Reuters) Les forces françaises de l'opération Barkhane ont mené dans la nuit de samedi à dimanche dernier une opération contre le groupe djihadiste Al Mourabitoun à Ménaka dans le nord du Mali, a annoncé mardi soir le ministère français de la Défense.

Dans la nuit du 19 au 20 décembre, les forces françaises ont conduit une opération dans la région de Ménaka, au Mali, contre un élément du groupe terroriste Al Mourabitoun, responsable de nombreux attentats à l'encontre des populations malienne et nigérienne, des forces armées locales et des forces internationales. Le groupe Al Mourabitoun a notamment revendiqué l'attaque contre l'hôtel Radisson Blu de Bamako qui avait fait 20 morts le 21 novembre dernier dans la capitale malienne.

"Au terme de combats violents qui ont duré près de quatre heures, deux pick-ups et une dizaine de motos ont été saisis. Une dizaine de terroristes ont été neutralisés. Une quantité importante d'armements et d'explosifs a été récupérée".

Al Mourabitoun, groupe djihadiste sahélien dirigé par Mokhtar Belmokhtar et lié à Al Qaïda, a également revendiqué l'attaque d'un restaurant de Bamako où cinq personnes ont été tuées en mars dernier et celui commis en août dans l'hôtel By-blos de Sévaré, dans le centre du Mali, où 17 personnes ont trouvé la mort. De nombreux combattants opèrent dans le vaste désert du nord du Mali, dont certains sont liés à Al Qaïda, ou bien à des organisations laïques de la communauté touarègue, en lutte pour l'indépendance d'une région qu'ils appellent Azawad.

Un millier de soldats français sont toujours déployés au Mali, essentiellement dans le cadre de Barkhane. La mission de l'Onu compte elle près de 10.000 hommes.

Etat d'urgence au Mali

Lundi, le gouvernement malien a proclamé l'état d'urgence pour une durée de dix jours, à la suite de ce que des sources proches de la sécurité présentent comme une série de menaces émanant de groupes djihadistes. Après l'attaque contre l'hôtel de luxe Radisson Blu, à Bamako le 20 novembre, le gouvernement avait alors proclamé l'état d'urgence pour une durée de dix jours.

"L'institution de l'état d'urgence vise à donner aux autorités compétentes les moyens de droit leur permettant de mieux circonscrire et combattre tout projet d'atteinte à la sécurité des personnes et de leurs biens et toute tentative de troubles à la quiétude des populations", a estimé le gouvernement dans un communiqué, sans donner davantage de précisions.

Selon deux sources proches des services de sécurité, des menaces lancées par des groupes djihadistes ont précipité lundi l'annonce du rétablissement de l'état d'urgence. L'une de ces sources a indiqué que cela faisait suite à une rencontre de chefs islamistes dans la région de Kidal, la semaine dernière. Des tirs de roquettes ont visé lundi dernier la ville de Gao, dans le nord du Mali, où stationnent des casques bleus et des soldats français.

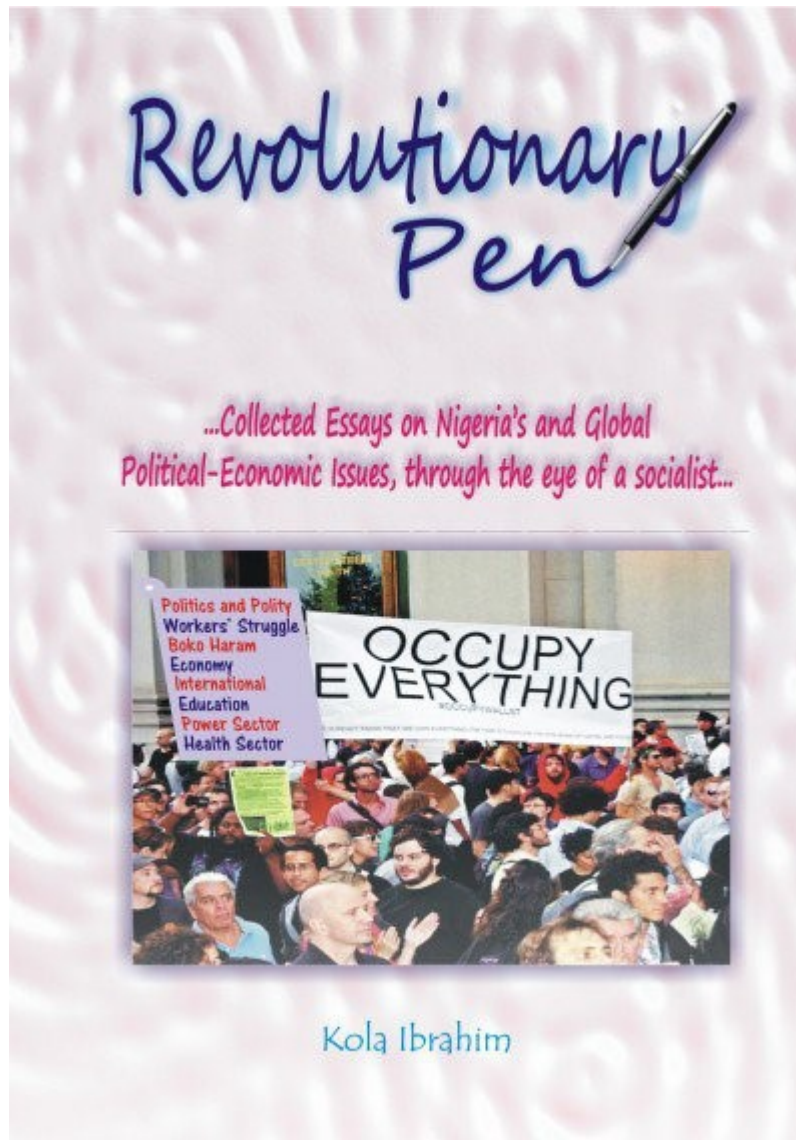
Gao est une des principales bases de l'armée française dans le cadre de l'opération régionale antiterroriste Barkhane. Cette opération, qui mobilise quelque 3.500 soldats français dans cinq pays de la région, a pris le relais de l'opération Serval lancée au Mali en janvier 2013 pour repousser les groupes armés islamistes qui menaçaient de prendre le contrôle de Bamako.

<http://www.latribune.fr/>

Nigeria

Revolutionizing Political Economic Analysis in Nigeria A Review of Kola Ibrahim's book: "Revolutionary Pen"

31 December 2015



*Records of events are very important. They serve as not only historical documents but a guide for the future. The book, **Revolutionary Pen** has done it properly as it chronicles events of struggles of the working people, youth and the poor, that emanated in almost all facets of the encounters of the working masses and the society at large; at every serially and not seemingly ending periods of attacks by the state on them. It does not stop at reporting these events, but goes further to analyse the way forward the working masses and the society in general can take to end these state attacks and also to realise their own inherent political power, which can and*

only give them the panacea, to rebutting the system of oppression, and take charge of their patrimony.

It should be put rightly on record that events happen almost every second but many are missing in history. This is the main reason the book, ***Revolutionary Pen***, which is a compilation of many articles on the field of struggle of the working people, epitomizes and accurately gives proper records of how these events happened, and also the way out of the problems associated, which makes it a resort for researchers and activists alike.

Far from a conventional write up, the book touches on the much awaited and “hoped for” 2015 Elections, which majority of the Nigerian masses reposed their belief for “Change” from the rotten and corrupt past Jonathan/PDP-led government in. It also x-rayed the similarities, nexus and the profit-oriented coloration of both Jonathan and nascent Buhari governments.

We are now in the aftermath of the elections, and the new ‘Change’ government and agenda are unfolding in the eyes of Nigerians. But before mentioning the tumultuous struggles of workers and pensioners for a living wage and pensions, it is necessary to say a few words on the current and unabated Boko Haram terror campaign in the north-eastern part of Nigeria. The book actually explains in clear terms, the roots of militancy and insurgency in the Nigerian society, the creators of this menace, the reasons behind their rise and how these terror groups and terrorism can be subdued, through the mass actions of working people, youth, labour movement and community movements. I believe that if the solutions proffered in this book can be put to practice by those affected and involved, our society, Nigeria in particular, would have less to bother about rightwing militancy and terrorism.

According to the book, the region where the menace of Boko Haram terrorism is rampant (the North East Nigeria) is the most underdeveloped part of the country where an average youth hardly knows the wonders or the efficacy of science and techniques. The book put forward that the reason is not far-fetched. It explains how these north-eastern youth could not get access to quality education, while the bulk of their endowments and patrimonies are being shared as take-home by rich few in corridors of power. Furthermore, these rich few utilize divisive instrument of religion and ethnicity to subjugate the mass of people, as expressed in the use of Sharia by northern ruling elites when they lost control of political power. The monster of religious division and radicalization thrown to the society is now confronting the country through the Boko Haram terrorism.

Anyone could try to denounce the plight of workers and their senior brothers, the pensioners, especially when one enjoys a juicy contract sum from government or when one is not so ‘lucky’ to be in the employment of capitalist class – either in the state establishment or private sector. The reality of mass suffering of workers and pensioners was clearly expressed in the struggle for implementation of N18, 000 minimum wage and the continuous battle of pensioners for their pittance called pensions, after they have committed their adult lives to the public and private establishments.

The fact that the fate of the working class and those of other oppressed and exploited class is interwoven was recently expressed in Osun State where, as a result of the non-payment of salaries for several months, other oppressed strata, including market

women and artisans, find it difficult to sustain a decent living and regular income. This underscores the essence of the book's serious and detailed analysis of the struggle of workers and pensions, and linking it with the general economic straitjacket the capitalist system, nay its neo-colonial type in Nigeria, has pushed the working and poor people into.

It also explores the role of labour leaders and labour movement in the struggle for living wage and pension payment; drawing out the lessons and errors of the leadership. The leadership of labour had earlier requested a N52, 200 minimum wage in 2010 only to settle for N18, 000 minimum wage in early 2011. Interestingly, when most of the state governments, federal government and private sector employers refused to implement or properly implement the meagre wage law, the labour movement could not defend the wage effectively.

The same story could be said of pension of retirees where the labour movement, instead of defending living pension based on cost of living and other economic and social indices, supported the fraudulent contributory pension scheme that deduct from workers' salary in order to pay them pension. The recent attack on pensioners by state-sponsored gangsters in June 2015 in Osogbo, Osun State, who protested non-payment of their pensions for up to a year, and stories retirees dying on the queues in the process to collect their meagre pensions, reflect serious suffering pensioners are undergoing. On the other hand, very few in control of retirees pensions are looting en mass billions from these funds.

Today, there is serious attack on N18, 000 minimum wage as many state governments are planning to cut the workers' salaries while some like the Osun State government have resorted to paying half salaries for workers. There are also plan to sack several thousands of workers by public and private sector. This section of *Revolutionary Pen*, under the title Workers' and Pensioners' Struggle, is a vital material for working people and activists searching for tactics and methods of defending a better living wage for workers and pensioners. More importantly, it underscores the need for labour movement to build a new mass party of working people, youths and the oppressed as a way of permanently ending the misery and sufferings of workers and pensioners. The writer, Kola Ibrahim, has since 2012 written a book on Minimum Wage struggle where all issues pertaining to minimum wage were clearly explained.

The mass misery and squalor ravaging workers and the entire peasantry at large is not limited to Nigeria or Africa alone; it spreads across the entire globe. This itself the working masses must realize that it is a virile tool in the hands of the state. Examples are not far-fetched. We have cases in the northern part of Africa and Middle East where youths and working people, fed up with the failure of global capitalism and their sit tight rulers to improve their lots, took the road of mass revolts and revolutions against their ruling classes. This saw the defeat of decades-old regimes such as those of Hosni Mubarak and Ben Ali in Egypt and Tunisia respectively.

Aside spreading like wildfire, the revolts and revolutions also show the limit of terrorism as a tool of fighting the ruling class. Regimes that used terrorism as a tool to drive through anti-poor policies and sustain their rule were overthrown by mass revolts and revolutions. Of course, most of these revolutions have been derailed with counterrevolution taking deep root. This is a product of failure of these revolutions to end the rule of capital and establish a government of workers, youths and poor.

This book underscores the fact that concessions are not won on a platter of gold, but fought for and won by mass of people organized in their common struggle to break the stranglehold of ruling class and improve their conditions.

This book under the section, International Issues, addresses the rise of revolutionary movements in Egypt, Senegal and Burkina Faso, and the continued Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It draws on various international issues and the struggles of the working people globally to underscore the uniformity of struggle of the working people and the need for international mass movement of working and oppressed people. It also exposes the hypocrisy and the failure of global capitalism and imperialism to solve political, social and economic crises facing humanity.

The book also put in proper perspective how the economy has been bastardized by selling off public properties to private individuals at a give-away prices all in the name of obnoxious privatization. Example is when Prof. Barth Nnaji who owns a private electricity firm was made a Minister of Power by the Goodluck Jonathan government. The resultant effect is that the public power sector was sold off to private firms close to corridor of power but with no serious plan to undertake massive long-term investments in the power sector. The same power sector today has not been performing better than before it was handed over to private shylocks. The case has been a sorry one with poor people paying the price with skyrocketing and estimated bill for unavailable electricity. The country after committing over \$20 billion to the sector since the civil rule began in 1999 can only boast of about 4,000 megawatts of electricity for a population of over 170 million. Meanwhile, South Africa with around a quarter of Nigeria's population generates more than 40, 000 megawatts. Even at that, millions of working class South Africans do not have access to electricity.

Revolutionary Pen submits that only when our economy is nationalized under democratic public control and management can we have serious plan of massive development of the power sector as part of the holistic plan to develop the economy and the society. The book explores various capitalist options propounded by bourgeois strategists and clearly shows how Nigeria cannot get out of its underdevelopment under this system.

Addressing the educational crisis in the country, the book provides analysis on how governments at various levels and at different times have neglected the education sector through under funding and capitalist policies of commercialization, rationalization and privatization. The chapter on education titled Education Sector, addresses various issues ranging from analysis of the education sector especially in view of the 2013 six-month strike of the university lecturers' union, ASUU, to attempt of the Fashola government to totally price education out of the reach of the poor by hiking fees in Lagos State University (LASU), the only state owned university by over one thousand percent. It also addresses the issue of private university education that is becoming a significant feature of education system in Nigeria; while the book also addresses the problem of non-functioning library system in Nigeria, which as the author noted, mirrors the crisis in the education sector as a whole. The author was himself a proven student leader and activist during his days as a student; therefore, his proposals and analyses clearly expressed those of an insider, who has been part and parcel of the struggle and debate about proper funding and management of education sector.

The economic analysis ranging from the global economic meltdown that started in 2008 to the banking crisis in Nigeria in 2009 and the fraudulent bailout system under Jonathan administration, give vivid view of the future of Nigeria, nay the world under the current capitalist system. Not to be forgotten also is the analysis on the health sector vis-à-vis the Ebola virus disease and the attack on doctors in Lagos State by the Fashola government. The health sector analysis clearly delves into the root of the crisis facing the health sector such as inadequate funding and mismanagement of health institutions by government appointed managers. In the analysis on Ebola, the book also dwells on the role of global political economy and especially the pharmaceutical companies in the health crisis especially in Africa and third world countries. The author, just as he did in the education sector, challenged the in-house unions in the health sector to rise to the occasion by building a united platform of struggle to seek improvement in the health sector. The book conclusively links this with the ultimate political challenge before the working and poor people, by linking the health sector crisis with the political economy of Nigeria, nay Africa.

Finally, the book is a library material for students and academics seeking historical analyses and alternative narrative on the political, social and economic issues in Nigeria, Africa and the world. The ending chapter on politics, which includes an essay on the politics and personality of the late pro-democracy activist, Gani Fawehinmi, a discourse on the undemocratic nature of Nigeria's electoral system, and the debate on the political crisis generated by the health problem and eventual death of the late president Umar Yar'Adua, is also worth reading.

It is an honour to write a review of such an important historical book as Revolutionary Pen. The book is both revolutionary in its analyses and alternative approach to documenting political, social, economic and historical issues. Of course, I hope the publisher will improve on the quality of the book in terms of its production including its cover and graphics. However, the content and the historical value of the book far outweigh in manifold, the shortcoming of the production. I therefore recommend the book to activists and civil society community; students of politics, history and economics; researchers and academics; labour leaders, journalists/media practitioners, and all those interested in alternative and leftwing understanding of Nigeria's and global political economic issues.

Revolutionary Pen: Collected Essays on Nigeria, and Global Political-Economic Issues, through the eye of a socialist, by Kola Ibrahim, 2015

Abiodun S. Falodun is Coordinator, Campaign for Democratic and Workers' Rights (CDWR), Osun State Chapter

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/>

Nigeria: la guerre contre Boko Haram est-elle vraiment gagnée?



© BERTRAND GUAY AFP

Il y a quelques jours, le président du Nigeria annonçait que la guerre contre le groupe jihadiste était gagnée. Il y a deux jours, Boko Haram frappait de nouveau.

Muhammadu Buhari a-t-il parlé un peu vite ? Le nouveau président du Nigeria avait promis, durant sa campagne pour l'élection présidentielle, d'écraser l'insurrection de Boko Haram, d'ici à la fin de l'année 2015. Le groupe jihadiste, qualifié par l'Index mondial du terrorisme comme "l'organisation terroriste la plus meurtrière du monde", met ce pays à feu et à sang depuis plusieurs années.

Il y a quelques jours, le président du Nigeria déclarait que la guerre contre Boko Haram avait été "techniquement" gagnée, à une semaine de l'échéance qu'il s'était donnée pour vaincre l'organisation terroriste. Des déclarations qui n'ont malheureusement pas empêché Boko Haram de frapper à nouveau.

Lundi dernier, dans l'est du pays, deux femmes kamikazes se sont ainsi fait exploser dans un marché de Madagali, causant la mort d'une trentaine de personnes. Un double attentat-suicide survenu quelques heures après une attaque menée par le groupe islamique dans la ville de Maiduguri. Dans la nuit de lundi à mardi, ce sont plus d'une douzaine d'attentats-suicides qui ont ensuite été perpétrés dans cette agglomération, causant la mort de 21 personnes.

Mais Boko Haram avait déjà frappé auparavant, vendredi dernier, en envahissant le village de Kimba, ouvrant le feu sur les habitants tout en incendiant les habitations, tuant au moins 14 personnes. Une riposte fulgurante qui fait suite à la vague de revers militaires subis par Boko Haram ces neuf derniers mois.

Une situation qu'il serait dangereux d'analyser comme un déclin de l'organisation terroriste, estime Philippe Hugon, directeur de recherches à l'Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques en charge de l'Afrique, interrogé par Benjamin Rosier.

<https://rcf.fr/actualite/>

Nigeria: The Deadline to End Boko Haram

29 December 2015

As the December deadline given by President Muhammadu Buhari for the military to put an end to the Boko Haram insurgency draws to a close, Nigerians must be under no illusion that ending the war is automatic. Such a notion will amount to a misconception, in view of the nature and the deep connections of international terrorism, of which Boko Haram is a part. The sporadic attacks carried out by the distraught insurgents even on Christmas Day, despite the counter-insurgency operations of the military, is only one indication that this war is not about to end just yet. To believe otherwise is to foster apprehension in public consciousness and unduly incite criticism against the government security measures, and also disparage the military or dampen the morale of soldiers.

It is important first, to commend the military and other security agencies combating the insurgency in the North Eastern part of the country for the remarkable feat they have so far achieved in routing the war-mongers.

They have not only restored the once broken morale of soldiers, they have proved that the long acquired international reputation of the Nigerian military as efficient and reliable peace keepers is not misplaced. Ending the insurgency, as the president ordered, includes dislodging Boko Haram members from occupying Nigerian territories and purporting to establish a rule different from that of the 1999 Constitution governing the entire country. To the extent that the military has been able to liberate occupied territories largely or wholly, that aspect of ending the insurgency can be said to be realisable by the end of this month. Indeed the military have destroyed Boko Haram camps and freed many abducted men, women and children

Only recently the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Gen. Abayomi Gabriel Olonisakin, while briefing journalists on his assessment tour of the activities of 'Operation Lafiya Dole' in the Military Command and Control Centre (MCCC) 7, Maiduguri, reiterated the sacrosanct nature of the December deadline, assuring that "the operation is well on course... the December deadline is sacrosanct... "

Considering the achievement of the military, or the joint task force over the insurgency, the assurance in Gen. Olonisakin's statement is not totally misplaced. He probably was speaking in the tone of military communication, which brooks no negotiation when an ultimatum is given. However, for the ordinary Nigerian who is being dehumanised and socially destabilised by the carnage harvested in the terrorist activities, the perceived assurance of the military should not be misunderstood, if by the end of this month, the Boko Haram still attacks any part of the country. Indeed, it is realistic to expect the insurgents to fight back.

An insight into the Boko Haram insurgency shows three stages in their murderous strategies. One is to destabilise communities by surprise, overrun security paraphernalia, occupy the territory and proclaim victory over Nigeria. The Boko Haram then embarked on a face-to-face combat with the military. Then, desperate to get world attention, it gravitated to attacking vulnerable places like hospitals, churches, mosques and facilities of international institutions and corporate bodies. Contained at that level, the insurgents resorted to using captured and brainwashed minors to

attack soft targets such as markets, motor parks, pedestrians' convergence centres, and centres for internally displaced persons.

Despite the ultimatum, the Boko Haram insurgency, though surmountable, is neither a conventional combat nor a local rebellion. Given the globalisation of terrorism, Boko Haram might be tied indirectly to both Islamic State (ISIS) and Al Qaeda. It is common knowledge amongst strategists and defence historians that, as part of a pan-Sahelian insurgency, Boko Haram has cross-bred with groups in Mali and Libya, and has also splintered into factions that are linked to Al-Shabab in Somalia and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). If this is the case, then what is before the military may be an influential sub-regional command of a global terrorism empire. The implication of this is that the Boko Haram enjoys finance, logistics, training and supplies from an unrestrained international pool. That this accounts for some challenges on the Nigerian side should not be discountenanced.

Therefore, there is a need for caution by all Nigerians, including the media, in analysing the rhetoric of deadlines and ultimatums. The situation at hand does not call for a simplistic declaration of victory by the end of the month. Such an endeavour would be counterproductive. Thus, President Buhari's ultimatum and deadline to the military, in this instance, should be viewed, not merely as a warning to comply with a directive under the pains of sanctions, but more as a guide for re-strategising and reviewing challenges being encountered by the military.

Government and military officials must tone down their rhetorics on the state of the counter-insurgency war, so as not to give the impression that all is well. Meanwhile, the Nigerian public should understand that the Boko Haram insurgents are more than mere miscreants pestering a segment of the country. The insurgency is an ongoing war against this country, and is linked to an international coalition of pseudo-Islamic war-mongers with a brutal ideology to dubiously acquire territories. As a result, the fight against Boko Haram is not the military's alone.

Whilst the military have a duty of containing the insurgency, Nigerians should applaud them for the modest success they have so far achieved in the counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations.

Deadline or not, the Nigerian populace must also own this war by giving the military the maximum encouragement.

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201512290888.html>

Opinion: Nigeria is no longer one... Nnamdi Kanu is more dangerous than Boko Haram

December 27, 2015



I write with a heavy heart as a result of what is going on under your leadership regarding the Biafra agitation and the leader of the IPOB (Indigenous people of Biafra), Mr. Nnamdi Kanu.

Let me first say that I, as an Igbo person, supported your election and campaign passionately for it on social media, but I am now on neutral grounds, because of the way you are handling the cry for Biafra though I will always support any good strides you are making for the people of Nigeria.

Some of the reasons I supported you are: 1. Your wife said during a pre-election interview that you promised to lead by listening to the concerns of the people and doing what the people want.

.2As a former soldier in the United States Army, I knew that the discipline you have as a retired general of Nigeria Army is what is needed to clean up the corruption that has long retarded the progress of Nigeria.

However, during your interview in the USA, I believe at the State Department after your election you were asked a question about how you would handle the Niger Delta on amnesty and women issues, your answer was that and I quote, “constituents that gave me 97 percent votes cannot, in all honesty, be treated equally with constituents that gave me 5 percent.”

Both videos of your wife promise of your leadership and your admission of prejudi-

cial treatment of people who did not vote for you is there on Youtube for anyone and the whole world to see.

Mr. President, the problem with this whole situation is that with the way you are currently treating the IPOB matter means that your wife has lied about you wanting to lead by listening and leading according to the needs of the people.

Moreover, I, as your initial supporter, was very bewildered and embarrassed when I saw that video where you admitted that you would lead by preferential treatment of those who voted you into office. Those who voted you into office are majorly from your region, the north, as well as the Southwestern region.

Igbos were the ones that only gave you 5 percent vote because they did not trust that you would lead with integrity. And guess what you are doing now! You are proving them right. You are showing that their fears were valid. Mr. President, leadership requires that you must be fair to all and sundry no matter how you feel about them. You cannot lead with a vindictive spirit to get back at those who didn't want you to win.

Just look at President Barak Obama for example. Barack Obama has and still suffer from a severe opposition of a great number of Americans who don't like him, but guess what, he still leads everyone with equal and fair treatment.

A leader that is temperamental enough to vilify a group of people because they did not vote for him is not yet a leader. A seasoned leader overcomes all negative emotions that tempts him to mistreat any section of people under his leadership. Otherwise, it is a dictatorship and not democracy.

Also, remember that many Igbos and Yorubas, who did not want you to become the President, accused you of being a dictator, and I have to say that you are proving them right for holding Nnamdi Kanu hostage.

I must mention that I am not for or against Biafra. I am for peace and fairness for all. If it were within my power, I would lead my people, the Igbos, to focus on what they are good at and leave Politics to those who want it so bad. On the other hand, I have seen that my people are very unhappy in Nigeria and feel grossly marginalized.

And since they have been bold enough to start a protest, they need to be heard and not ignored or shoved aside. They are human beings with feelings, values, and aspirations no matter how inconsequential anyone might see them.

So in that case, I support that there should be a referendum and due process to make a country of their own. Now there is a possibility that we may not get all the required vote to amend the Nigeria constitution; but in that case, we would have seen that due process was given and anyone that fights it would be called a trouble maker.

Right now, the trouble maker is the leader that have imprisoned the leader of a group that wants to move on to a better world for themselves. YOU are the trouble maker, Mr. President! You can stop all this by releasing him and demanding for him to go through the right process.

I have written partially on this in the past and to your attention as well hoping that your social media crew would bring it to your attention, but I have not seen any

meaningful or positive action taken towards this case. Some people have advised me that if the Igbos really want to secede, they would not have to go through you and others have educated me as well that all that is needed is for the IPOB to forward a motion for Referendum through the Nigeria National Assembly.

You might wonder why then am I writing to you if we knew what steps to take. I am writing to you because you are the President of a country in turmoil who has the power to quell the disaster that is brewing under you. The solution to put a stop to the agitation for Biafra is in your hands. All you have to do is take a leadership step by releasing Mr. Nnamdi Kanu and advising him and the group to begin the process of Referendum. If the motion holds, good, if the motion fails, then you have done your job as the President.

May I please remind you that the British, the Russians and the UN have wisely made suggestions for the immediate release of Nnamdi Kanu and for Nigeria to allow a Referendum to go through, but with all due respect, it all seems to have fallen on deaf ears. The only response I have seen from your office is a statement that **NO GROUP WILL BE ALLOWED TO TEAR NIGERIA APART**. Mr. President that is not a responsible statement in the midst of what is going on.

Nigeria has never really been one. There is a deeply ingrained spirit of tribalism in Nigeria that has infected the political and economic fabrics of the nation of which is one of the biggest reasons driving the Biafra agitation. Igbos feel totally marginalized and rightfully so.

This situation is like a bad marriage where one partner is very unhappy and keeps wanting out of the relationship, and the other partner refuses to cooperate because the relationship benefits them more.

Your energy will be better served fighting Boko Haram rather than fighting IPOB agitation that has a simple solution. And I must say that how you are handling this situation makes it look like all of a sudden Mr. Kanu has become more dangerous than Boko Haram that is still killing people actively in Nigeria when Mr. Kanu has not killed one person. When people protest for a cause, it is the responsibility of the leaders to address the issues surrounding that cause, not imprison the individuals.

The cry for Biafra did not start today. It has been going on for ages that also led to the massacre of over one million Igbos around 1967. I am not a good student of history, so I will not pretend to go into it. But I am sure you know what I am talking about.

I implore you to please listen to right conscience and make the judgment that will bring positive resolution to this case and prevent lives from being wasted over a civil war. You have the power to do this by the simple step I have mentioned above. Once again, let me say it again.

Release Mr. Nnamdi Kanu and instruct him and his group to go through the right channel through Nigeria National Assembly to put forward the motion for a referendum. Though you are old, you still have a young family that will live on after you. What legacy do you want to leave?

Op-ed pieces and contributions are the opinions of the writers only and do not represent the opinions of Y!/YNaija

Ij Onuigbo is an ex-United States Army Captain

<http://ynaija.com/>

Boko Haram violence forces 1 million children from school

December 22, 2015



In this photo taken Monday, Dec. 7, 2015, children displaced by Boko Haram in an attack on their villages receive lectures in a camp in Maiduguri, Nigeria. Attacks by Islamic extremist group Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria and neighboring countries have forced more than 1 million children out of school, heightening the risk they will be abused, abducted or recruited by armed

groups, the United Nations children's agency said Tuesday, Dec. 22, 2015. (AP Photo/ Sunday Alamba)



DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Attacks by Islamic extremist group Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria and neighboring countries have forced more than 1 million children out of school, heightening the risk they will be abused, abducted or recruited by armed groups, the United Nations children's agency said Tuesday.

The conflict has forced more than 2,000 schools to close in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger, the agency said. Some have been looted or set on fire by the insurgent group whose name means "Western education is sinful."

"The conflict has been a huge blow for education in the region, and violence has kept many children out of the classroom for more than a year, putting them at risk of dropping out of school altogether," said Manuel Fontaine, UNICEF's West and Central Africa Regional Director. Before the crisis, an estimated 11 million children of primary school age were already out of school in the four neighboring countries where Boko Haram stages attacks, the agency said.

Hundreds of schools in northeastern Nigeria have reopened in recent months, but many classrooms are overcrowded or are used as shelter for those displaced. Temporary learning spaces are being set up, but security remains a challenge, the agen-

cy said.

Insecurity also prevents teachers from going back to classes, the agency said. About 600 teachers have been killed during Boko Haram's six-year insurgency, it said.

"The challenge we face is to keep children safe without interrupting their schooling," said Fontaine. "Schools have been targets of attack, so children are scared to go back to the classroom, yet the longer they stay out of school, the greater the risks of being abused, abducted and recruited by armed groups."

Boko Haram's insurgency has killed about 20,000 people and displaced 2.3 million

<http://www.thepublicopinion.com/>

Terrorism in the World

30,000 more reasons to worry about terrorism in 2016

30 Dec 2015

There could be as many as 30,000 foreign-born members of militant group Islamic State that could soon be returning to their home countries ready for radicalization and terrorism, according to the latest research.

European cities remain on high alert following [the Paris attacks in November](#), in which 130 people died after European-born terrorists carried out bomb and gun attacks, and the lockdown of Brussels. And there are fears of further attacks.

Security services in Europe remain on high alert should members of Islamist terrorist groups, such as the so-called Islamic State, strike again in revenge for the Western airstrikes against ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

"The risks presented by returning jihadis will likely only increase over the coming year, as more of the estimated 30,000 foreign fighters who have joined Islamic State are expected to return to their countries of origin," analysis firm Verisk Maplecroft said in a report released in early December.



Stringer/Reuters

"Islamic State has illustrated its adeptness at reaching out to predominantly young Muslims across Europe, Africa and Asia, as well as the Middle East and North Africa, through an extensive propaganda apparatus."

ISIS' use of social media and slick productions has enabled the group to boost its "virtual community of would-be jihadis around the world," Verisk noted.

Foreign fighters

With the group able to attract foreign recruits online, ISIS has been inciting its followers to commit acts of terror at home or so-called "lone wolf" attacks. It is estimated that ISIS has attracted around 30,000 foreign fighters from as many as 100 countries since 2011, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace.

The institute's 2015 "Global Terrorism Index", published in November, shows that many of those foreign fighters came from other Muslim nations such as Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco and Turkey (the "top five" countries of origin).

However, rivalling the numbers of fighters coming from across the Muslim world were thousands of fighters from the West. As many as 2,700 were estimated to be from Russia, as many as 1,750 from France and hundreds from Germany, the U.K. and Belgium (the top five non-Muslim countries of origin for ISIS fighters).

This is reflected in what happened in Belgium and France this year: The majority of the Paris attackers were born and bred in France and Belgium, the second generation of migrants.

Europe therefore is waking up to an uncomfortable reality: Unemployment and disenfranchisement, and a lack of integration, can become a combustible mix for some young men and women, making them easy to radicalize against the West with many journeying to Syria to take up arms for ISIS – or to stay and fight on home soil.

How US and Russian arms fell into ISIS' hands

Indeed, ISIS has encouraged its followers to commit attacks at home saying that those who could not journey to Syria should attack within the so-called "crusader" nations – those involved in airstrikes against ISIS, such as the U.S., France, Russia and U.K.

That advice has been borne out in attacks directed at Europe at home and abroad. From the Charlie Hebdo massacre in Paris at the start of the year to the attack on British tourists in Tunisia, the downing of a Russian jet in Egypt in October and the Paris attacks that followed in November, those responsible for carrying out these predominant attacks have all claimed to be ISIS members or affiliates allied to the group.

Europe bracing itself

Paul Beaver, a U.K.-based defense analyst, told CNBC that, Western European capitals were "bracing themselves for another year of high threat levels" as intelligence and security services work to ensure that "home-grown terrorists" with ISIS allegiances do not create another Paris-style attack.

"The risk is that the terrorists will become more innovative as they try to find new ways of attacking and damaging the Western way of life. Link this aspiration of some form of pay back from the damage inflicted on so-called IS in Iraq with a desire for a caliphate from Spain to Indonesia and the result is increased pressure," he added.

The key ISIS targets allies want to destroy

Part of the problem, Beaver noted, was that unlike terrorist groups that operated in the 1980s and 1990s, such as the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland, "the new brand of terrorist does not require any form of central control" and are predominantly individuals without 'cells' in the traditional sense.

As Europe faced a new kind of terrorist, people could have to relinquish some closely held freedoms as authorities looked to strengthen their response to the threat although there are concerns that this plays into the terrorists' hands.

There are also fears that pointing the finger at foreign-born fighters will play to rightwing parties in Europe, creating more divisions and anti-immigration sentiment at a time when there are thousands of refugees fleeing civil war in the Middle East. Europe as a whole faced some uncomfortable decisions, Beaver said.

"The security services need more and more resources and capabilities to monitor borders, passports, telecommunications and all the other attributes of a modern, civilised society that a liberal democracy holds dear. There will be more intrusion into private lives; there will be greater risk; there will be another terrorist outrage; but there will be giving in to demands which the vast majority of people in Europe find repulsive," he noted.

<http://www.cnn.com/>

Terrorist Threats Heighten New Year Tensions Worldwide

ISIS, al-Qaida and Boko Haram threaten to target festivities around the world.



Police officers detain a man in the historic center in Brussels on Thursday, Dec. 31, 2015. The New Year's Eve fireworks display and all official events are being canceled in Belgium's capital due to threats of an extremist attack. It was not known why the man was detained.

Dec. 31, 2015

Just days after the Iraqi government and its Western-backers dealt [a serious blow](#) to the Islamic State group by retaking much of the Iraqi city of Ramadi, tensions soared worldwide on New Year's Eve as authorities prepared to prevent some sort of high profile [retaliation or terrorist attack](#).

Turkish authorities arrested two suspected Islamic State group militants who had reportedly planned a suicide attack, The Associated Press reported. The Mayor of Brussels canceled a New Year's Eve fireworks display amid a heightened extremist threat, and Russia canceled its New Year festivities in Red Square. [The Telegraph](#) of London reports the Metropolitan Police force canceled all leave for its armed officers – an unprecedented move in the wake of [Austrian authorities' warning](#) of shooting or bomb plots in numerous European cities.



From Charlie Hebdo to San Bernardino, an Ominous Year in National Security

The U.S. [National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin](#) lists no specific warnings of an attack against America, but adds that the Department of Homeland Security "is especially concerned that terrorist-inspired individuals and homegrown violent extremists may be encouraged or inspired to target public events or place," particularly in the wake of the shootings in [Paris](#) and [San Bernardino, California](#).

"There'll be obvious security measures you will see, and a number of measures you won't see" New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio [said this week](#). "What we can assure you is that preparations are extraordinary."

The New Year threats are not limited to Western targets. Groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Taliban in Afghanistan or Kurdish fronts in Turkey continue to terrorize the local population.

U.S. security agencies also remain concerned that al-Qaida, ousted by the Islamic State group from the forefront of worldwide terrorist brands, may try to conduct some sort of high-profile attack to maintain relevance and boost recruitment.

"We can't lose sight of the al-Qaida threat," says Scott Stewart, a former State Department special agent who now oversees terrorism and security analysis with Texas-based private intelligence firm Stratfor. He cites al-Qaida's recent gains in places like Yemen despite prior losses from U.S. drone strikes. American officials have long considered al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula as one of the most active planning cells for foreign attacks. "They still retain a very potent presence."

His organization released an analysis Wednesday highlighting the myriad threats that face Western targets, but also point out security forces have intensified their ef-

forts in response.



New Year, New War in Afghanistan

"The possibility of an attack during end-of-year celebrations is really no greater than it was on the eve of Nov. 1 or Dec. 1 – and it may even be less because of increased awareness and security measures," it states. Terrorist operatives are limited in their ability to strike hard or soft targets – like schools or churches – during a time of heightened alert. And arrests made by Western authorities in recent weeks may not be related to specific attacks, but rather aimed at disrupting longer-range terrorist operations. These arrests also might be designed mostly to calm tensions among the people these agencies protect.

"It is not unusual to see a flurry of arrests prior to a perceived attack date, especially in Europe. Many of those arrested are usually quietly released later without charges being filed," according to the analysis. "Such arrests also serve the political purpose of reassuring the population that the authorities are doing something." The authorities view the possibility of [disrupting a plot in the works](#), or of perhaps gaining some actionable intelligence of such a plot, worth the effort even in cases where prosecution is not likely.

<http://www.usnews.com/>

2015 year in review

December 27, 2015



A civil defence member gestures towards a rebel fighter as they search for survivors at a site hit by what activists said were airstrikes carried out by the Russian air force in Idlib city, Syria

2015 was dominated by the war against the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria, the increasingly complex Syrian situation, a number of jihadist terrorist attacks throughout the world, a migration crisis in Europe, the election of a left-wing Syriza government in Greece, a nuclear deal with Iran and a global climate change agreement.

In Iraq and Syria, IS continued to sicken and disgust the world with their acts of genocide and crimes against humanity. Earlier in the year, IS made territorial gains in both Iraq (Ramadi) and Syria (Palmyra). However, since October a coalition of mainly Kurdish and other fighters managed to retake vast areas of territory from IS control including Singar and Tikrit in Iraq; Ramadi is also expected to be liberated soon. Western-led airstrikes against IS largely made it possible for the Kurds to advance and retake territory.

Britain's Parliament gave the go-ahead for the bombing of IS targets in Syria; Russia also started conducting airstrikes in Syria but Western powers claimed Moscow, which supports the regime of Bashar al-Assad, is mainly attacking the moderate Syrian rebels and not IS. Furthermore, Amnesty International has accused Russia of deliberately targeting civilians, which if true amounts to war crimes.

The Syrian conflict became more and more complicated with the Russian airstrikes – the shooting down of a Russian jet by Turkey exemplified this complication – but a political process for a possible diplomatic solution to the war did begin in Vienna, despite differences over Assad's future. The resolution passed unanimously by the UN Security Council just over a week ago, which sets out a timetable for formal

talks and a unity government in Syria within six months, is encouraging.

IS or IS-affiliated groups also carried out a number of fatal terrorist attacks throughout the world. The most notorious ones included two attacks in Paris – one on the offices of Charlie Hebdo and a second, much more fatal one last month in four separate strikes in the capital, the murder of Egyptian Christians in Libya, the attack by al-Shabab gunmen at Garissa University in Kenya, bomb attacks against Shi'ites in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Beirut, the bombing of a Russian jetliner over Sinai, suicide bomb attacks in Ankara, shooting sprees in Tunisia, and multiple attacks by Boko Haram in Nigeria, the country which has suffered the most at the hands of jihadists. In Bamako, the capital of Mali, an al-Qaeda linked group carried out a fatal attack on a hotel.

The Paris attacks led to the EU agreeing to share more intelligence between its members, the European Commission proposing the creation of a standing European border force that could take control of the bloc's external frontiers, and the UN Security Council unanimously adopting a resolution declaring IS "a global and unprecedented threat to international peace and security" and urging all countries to "take all necessary measures" to combat the group. Finance ministers from the UN Security Council also adopted a resolution aimed at starving IS of funds.

Europe faced a migration crisis with a sudden influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees over its borders, half of them from Syria, as well as thousands of Africans crossing the Mediterranean. A number of EU summits were held to deal with migration and an EU – Africa Migration Summit was held in Malta in November in which the EU pledged the setting up of a Trust Fund worth €1.8 billion to help foster stability in Africa. Some EU countries suspended their membership of the Schengen agreement as worries over migration and terrorism increased. In an unprecedented move Sweden's Social Democratic Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven, announced that most refugees would now only receive temporary residence permits, in a bid to stop the huge influx of migrants, mainly Syrians, who were pouring into his country at a rate of 10,000 a week.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel proved her leadership credentials in tackling the sudden influx of Syrian refugees, where she said those fleeing the conflict in Syria were welcome in Germany. The European Commission meanwhile, devised a resettlement plan for refugees to be distributed throughout the EU using a quota system. This has got off to a slow start with opposition from many Eastern European countries such as Hungary, led by the right-wing Victor Orban, much to the anger of countries like Italy, which have long argued for burden-sharing within the EU.

An election in Greece at the beginning of the year brought the radical anti-austerity left-wing Syriza party led by Alexis Tsipras to power, leading to another eurozone crisis. The Syriza government wasted six months in 'negotiations' and then called a referendum on the austerity measures imposed by the EU and the IMF, urging voters to reject them, which they did. However, with the situation deteriorating and the EU not budging Tsipras was forced to accept even harsher bailout conditions which Greek votes backed when they re-elected Syriza in another election in September. Once again Chancellor Merkel showed great leadership in this crisis.

Pope Francis continued to speak out in favour of social justice and the environment



German Chancellor Angela Merkel showed great leadership skills during Europe's migration influx, the Greek eurozone crisis and in working towards a ceasefire in eastern

In Britain the Conservatives won an absolute parliamentary majority, their first since 1992, the Liberal Democrats were reduced to eight seats, the Scottish Nationalists won all of Scotland's seats except for three, and Labour turned to the left after their defeat by electing Jeremy Corbyn as the new leader. Prime Minister David Cameron made it clear that renegotiating aspects of the UK's EU membership would be a priority.

In France, President François Hollande's ratings in the polls increased after the Paris attacks but his Socialist Party's popularity did not. Consistently high unemployment coupled with people's fears in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks led to the right-wing National Front coming first in the first round of regional elections. However, a higher voter turnout and tactical voting in the second round led to the National Front being soundly defeated.

In Spain the dominance of the two main political parties came to an end after last week's elections which saw Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's Popular Party with the most votes but short of an overall parliamentary majority. Rajoy's slide in popularity was due to a combination of corruption allegations and austerity measures. Spain now has a four-party system (excluding the minor and regional parties) consisting of the Popular Party, the Socialist Party and two newcomers: the left-wing Podemos and the liberal Citizens party. Weeks of wrangling now lie ahead in the attempt to form a coalition government.

In Portugal the centre-right coalition led by Pedro Coelho consisting of the Social Democratic Party and the People's Party led also garnered the most votes but lost its

overall majority. An attempt by Coelho to form a minority government was voted down in Parliament and consequently Socialist leader António Costa, whose party came second in the election, formed an alliance with the other parties on the left, including the Communists, and was appointed Prime Minister.

In Denmark the centre-left parliamentary bloc led by Social Democrat Helle Thorning-Schmidt was defeated at the polls and replaced by a centre-right minority government headed by Lars Lokke Rasmussen. Rasmussen has to rely not only on the other centre-right parties for his majority but also the anti-immigration Danish People's Party, which become the second-largest party in Parliament.

In Poland, the Law and Justice Party, which espouses right-wing populism, was elected to office. It has threatened the independence of the Constitutional Court, attacked the media, appointed a chief of security services who had been previously convicted of abuse of power and made the ridiculous suggestion that former prime minister Donald Tusk, now President of the European Council, should be prosecuted for his handling of the 2010 air crash in which President Lech Kaczynski died. It is a sad and difficult time for Poland, once a shining example of a successful new EU member State.

In Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development party won an absolute majority of seats in November's election after losing that majority in an earlier election. The truce between the Turkish military and the Kurdish PKK broke down, and Erdogan's Nationalist anti-Kurdish rhetoric was largely responsible for his electoral victory.

In Russia, Opposition politician Boris Nemstov, who was opposed to President Vladimir Putin's involvement in the war in Ukraine, was shot dead in Moscow, joining a list of victims which includes journalists and human rights activists who were critical of the Kremlin. The Russian economy did not perform well and is expected to contract by 3.8 per cent this year; the fall in the price of oil and EU and US sanctions against Moscow over its behaviour in Ukraine did not help. A Minsk 2 ceasefire agreement, however, was signed between Putin, Hollande, Merkel and Ukrainian President Petro Petroschenko which has eased the fighting somewhat in eastern Ukraine. Merkel played a key role in the ceasefire agreement.

Libya continued to be divided between the internationally recognised government of Tobruk and a rival government in Tripoli. The power vacuum and lack of a central authority led to IS increasing its presence in the North African country. The UN intensified its efforts at encouraging the formation of a national unity government and last week a peace agreement was signed in Morocco between the two sides, which however, has been opposed by the leaders of the country's two Parliaments.

The Nobel Peace Prize for 2015 was awarded to the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet for its decisive contribution to the building of a pluralistic democracy in Tunisia in the wake of the 2011 revolution. Despite the odds Tunisia remained the only glimmer of hope in the Arab Spring.

Yemen was engulfed in a tragic civil war between the forces loyal to the government of Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi and the Houthi Shi'ite rebels loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Saudi airstrikes against the Houthis and the presence of both al-Qaeda and Islamic State made a difficult situation even more complicated.

North and South Korea were on the brink of war when North Korea shelled the South Korean city of Yeoncheon

Egypt remained under the tight grip of President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi who continued to crack down on the banned Muslim Brotherhood as well as on civil rights. In a twist that brought international condemnation former President Mohammed Morsi and 100 other Muslim Brotherhood members were sentenced to death by an Egyptian court.

Saudi King Abdullah died in January and was replaced by his half-brother, King Salman. The kingdom continued to be under the spotlight for its clampdown on dissidents and civil rights campaigners such as blogger Raif Badawi – awarded the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought – who was accused of insulting Islamic values and later sentenced to 1,000 lashes and 10 years in prison. The Saudi government was also urged to do more to stop the funding of jihadist movements by wealthy private donors and to clamp down on certain Wahabi clerics who preach a doctrine of intolerance.



US President Barack Obama deserves credit for the very important role he played in both the Iran nuclear deal and the climate change agreement.

The Middle East peace process remained stalled with no sign of a return to the negotiating table by the Israelis and Palestinians. Israel continued to build illegal settlements in the West Bank and the surprise re-election of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party only made matters worse. Throughout the year there were persistent clashes in the West Bank between Palestinians and Israeli troops. Netanyahu showed his disrespect towards President Barack Obama when two weeks before the Israeli election he addressed the Republican-controlled US Congress where he criticised the possibility of a nuclear deal with Iran.

The Iranian nuclear deal was undoubtedly the best news of the year. The historic deal between Iran and the 5 +1 world powers (US, Russia, Britain, China, France and Germany) (and the EU) sharply decreased the chance of a war and has the potential to open up a new chapter in relations between Iran and the West (in particular the US) and to change the geo-political dynamics of the region. Particular credit goes to Obama for his patient belief in diplomacy and to Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, without whom no deal would have been possible. The landmark deal curbs Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief.

During a visit to India, US President Obama and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a breakthrough on a pact that will allow US companies to supply India with civilian nuclear technology. The historic 2006 India-US nuclear deal had been held up for eight years amid US concerns over who would be liable for any nuclear accident, but this has now been resolved.

The mass murder by the co-pilot of a Germanwings plane, Andreas Lubitz, who intentionally started a descent into the French Alps while the captain was locked out of the cockpit, was one of the huge stories of the year and shocked the entire world. This terrible tragedy resulted in the deaths of 150 people of various nationalities, including 72 Germans and 50 Spaniards. The plane was on its way from Barcelona to Dusseldorf. Lubitz had suffered from a psychological illness and had been depressed, raising serious questions about the psychological screening of pilots.

To everyone's delight, the world reached a climate change agreement in Paris at a summit earlier this month. The main highlights of the agreement include a pledge to keep global temperatures "well below" 2.0C and to "endeavour to limit" them even more, to 1.5C, to limit the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by human activity, to review each country's contribution to cutting emissions every five years, and for rich countries to help poorer nations adapt to climate change by providing \$100 billion by 2020. US President Obama was instrumental in leading the world towards an agreement.

In the US, where the economy continued to perform well and job creation continued to rise, President Barack Obama continued to express his frustration at the number of mass shootings – including one in San Bernadino, California by alleged IS sympathisers and another in Charleston, South Carolina by a white supremacist – as well as Congress's reluctance to enact gun control legislation. The spotlight was also on a number of police forces throughout the US for their acts of brutality and excessive use of force. One of Obama's foreign policy decisions was to extend the US military presence in Afghanistan beyond 2016.

The US presidential election got underway with billionaire Donald Trump surprisingly in the lead for the Republicans and Hilary Clinton the front-runner for the Democrats – although Vermont Senator Bernard Sanders was doing well in the polls. Trump's right-wing populist rhetoric, his crude language, as well as his insults directed at Muslims, women and Mexicans shocked many people but he nevertheless continued to lead among the Republicans.

The mass murder by the co-pilot of a Germanwings plane who intentionally started a descent into the French Alps shocked the world

The right-wing drift of the Republican party as a whole also worried many observ-

ers, with many of the party's presidential candidates adopting ultra conservative positions in both domestic and foreign policy.

Australia got a new Prime Minister, the fourth in five years, when a revolt within the ruling Liberal Party ousted Tony Abbott and replaced him with Malcolm Turnbull. Canada got a new Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, as the Liberals defeated the Conservatives in the general election. In Latin America an encouraging development was the re-establishment of US – Cuba diplomatic relations in July. President Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro had a historic meeting on the sidelines of the Summit of the Americas in Panama in April.

There was good news from Venezuela, where the Opposition Democratic Unity coalition won a landslide victory in the country's legislative elections. Its two thirds majority means it can challenge President Nicolas Maduro, a doctrinaire Socialist and successor to Hugo Chavez, and put an end to the country's unfortunate chapter which was characterised by the jailing of Opposition politicians, food shortages, economic mismanagement, super high inflation and unemployment and GDP contraction.

Argentina decided it was time for a change after 12 years of Peronist rule (first Nestor Kirchner, and for the past eight his widow Christina Kirchner) and elected the centre-right mayor of Buenos Aires, Mauricio Macri, as President. In Brazil the economy shrank by 4.5 per cent in the fourth quarter, adding to the woes of President Dilma Rousseff who was threatened with impeachment by the Opposition over corruption allegations.

North and South Korea were on the brink of war last August when North Korea shelled the South Korean city of Yeoncheon leading to South Korea firing several artillery rounds in response. Tensions later eased after rounds of talks between the two countries. Earlier this month, however, North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un suggested that his country has the capacity to launch a hydrogen bomb; this has not been independently verified.

In November the leaders of China and Taiwan, President Xi Jinping and President Ma Ying-jeou, held historic talks in Singapore – their first in more than 60 years. The talks were largely symbolic, but nevertheless important.

Between June and August China's stock market indexes fell sharply, by around 30 per cent, and around \$3-\$4 trillion were wiped out, leading to fears of a spillover effect on the Chinese economy and consequently the global economy. Thankfully this did not happen.

There was very good news for democracy in Burma with the landslide victory of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy in the country's election. The NLD will control the next Parliament and can choose the next President but the military-drafted Constitution guarantees that unelected military representatives take up 25 per cent of the parliamentary seats and have a veto over constitutional change.

A 7.8 magnitude earthquake in Nepal in April killed over 9,000 people, injured more than 23,000 and left hundreds of thousands of people homeless with entire villages flattened. A second major earthquake (7.3) occurred in May killing 153 people and injuring more than 3,200.

A historic presidential election was held in Nigeria in which Muhammadu Buhari defeated incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan. Mr Buhari became the first Opposition candidate to win a presidential election in Nigeria. In Burundi violent clashes took place between the security forces and opponents of President Pierre Nkurunziza who wanted to run for a third term in office. An attempted coup only complicated matters.

Pope Francis continued to speak out in favour of social justice and the environment with the release of his encyclical in June. He spoke on a similar theme during a speech to the United Nations in September when he warned against “a selfish and boundless thirst for power and material prosperity”.

The Pope made history by becoming the first Pontiff to address Congress when he visited the US and showed his commitment to strengthening ties between Christians and Muslims by visiting Bosnia, Kenya and the Central African Republic. Pope Francis’s visit to the Philippines in January had become the largest papal event in history, with around six to seven million attendees in his final Mass at Manila.

<http://www.timesofmalta.com/>

Afghanistan

Who Is ISIS Afraid of?

Popular outrage in Afghanistan sees the Islamic State avoiding responsibility for beheadings.

Kabul is Afghanistan's capital, a city of over five million people that has transformed completely since 2001. Kandahar was, and remains, a stronghold of the Taliban. The highway between Kabul and Kandahar, which passes through Wardak, Ghazni, and Zabul, is sometimes called the Highway of Death. One British journalist, writing in 2012, called it a “bomb-cratered, 300-mile long shooting gallery”. Most Afghans have no option but to travel along it. Tens of people are killed taking the highway each year.

In early 2015, survivors of the highway told journalist Samad Ali Nawazesh about the pattern of attack: “When we go off the Kabul-Kandahar highway towards Jaghoori we are accosted by many types of robbers and armed individuals. They search the passengers, rob and release some. Sometimes they behead passengers”.

Before that, in 2014, the Kabul-Behsud highway (that intersects the Kabul-Kandahar highway) had become famous as a “Death Road” where Afghanistan's minority Hazara were specifically targeted for murder by the Taliban. The Hazara are a traditionally oppressed minority. In recent decades, they have begun a resurgence, attaining opportunities in education and employment that had traditionally been closed to them. The Taliban's persecution of them has been partly sectarian (Hazara are Shia, while the Taliban are Sunni), partly traditional oppression (trying to keep the Hazara in their lower-status place through terror). Many factions in the civil wars Afghanistan has suffered since 1979 have targeted Hazara civilians with a particular ferocity.

So, when, a few months ago, a group of Hazara civilians – four men, two women, and a child – were abducted on the Kabul-Kandahar highway, held for a month, probably by ISIS-Afghanistan (a split from the Taliban), and then beheaded, the authors of the atrocity, as well as the country's government, may have expected the same kind of terrorized response that they have grown accustomed to.

The response was not what they expected. The families of the victims refused to bury the bodies. They marched with the coffins in Kabul.

NEWS: 14 Years Later, NATO to Keep 12,000 Troops in Afghanistan

Writing in the Swedish Feministiskt Perspektiv, Dr. Farooq Sulehria, a journalist with extensive experience in Afghanistan, described the mass protest of November 11, in which Kabul “erupted” on a scale seen “for the first time in three decades”, with a “30,000-strong rally” that “stretched over 15 kilometres.” The protest was remarkable not solely for its size: “While Hazara dominate numerically, every ethnicity is visible in the rally... Women in their thousands, sometimes carrying coffins on their shoulders, are marching at the vanguard.” The protests, Sulehria writes, sidelined the traditional Hazara leadership. “Muhammad Mohaqiq, a warlord and

second deputy to CEO, as well as Karim Khalili, former vice president, were not spotted at the rally.” The Afghan diaspora also mobilized, with rallies in many cities at Afghan embassies all over the world. Among the chants there was one notable for its simplicity: “death to the Islamic State”.

And even though since November there have been more abductions of Hazaras along the highways and more people found beheaded, there are signs that the protests may have shaken both perpetrators and the government. To date, no one has taken responsibility for the murders, even though everyone holds ISIS-Afghanistan responsible.

The scale of the protests took the Afghan authorities by surprise. The protests had several new features: solidarity across Afghanistan's Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara groups; their grassroots nature, sidelining the traditional warlord-type authorities; and their militancy. After a long period of official silence, Afghanistan's president promised to take action.

Afghanistan has many traditions. Yes, some of these are conservative and religious. But one that is rarely remembered is the tradition of nationalism that united the country's ethnic groups in the struggle for sovereignty and development – there were many mass protests on that basis in the 1970s.

Another tradition that is rarely remembered is the tradition of women's struggles. In the spring, I wrote about the massive outpouring of rage and protest after the murder of a woman named Farkhunda outside of a mosque in Kabul. That outpouring, which also surprised both the murderers and the authorities, forced the government to act to arrest and jail some of the perpetrators.

It is too early to know if the protests of 2015 are the beginning of something bigger in Afghanistan. But there is certainly potential. Maybe enough potential to scare those who are most comfortable terrorizing others. Large numbers of people that are militant, hard to scare, and hard to divide on sectarian lines are a formidable force, one Afghanistan may see more of in 2016.

<http://www.telesur.tv.net/>

Belgium

Menace d'attentats en Belgique : les festivités du Nouvel An annulées

31/12/2015

Alors que de nouvelles perquisitions et arrestations ont eu lieu mercredi à Bruxelles, le bourgmestre de la capitale belge a décidé d'annuler les festivités du Nouvel An en raison du risque d'attentats.

Le maire de [Bruxelles](#) a annoncé mercredi soir à la télévision belge l'annulation des festivités du Nouvel An et du feu d'artifice, [face à la menace d'attentats](#). Le niveau d'alerte terroriste est actuellement de 3 sur une échelle de 4.

"Malheureusement, le feu d'artifice et tout ce qui était prévu demain (jeudi) soir et qui devait rassembler beaucoup de monde dans le centre de Bruxelles, nous sommes contraints de l'annuler compte tenu de l'analyse du risque faite par le centre de crise", a déclaré le bourgmestre [maire] de la capitale belge, Yvan Mayeur, en direct sur la chaîne publique La Une. Une décision qu'il déclare avoir prise en concertation avec le ministère de l'Intérieur belge.

"C'est sur la base de l'Ocam, l'organisme national d'évaluation des menaces, que le maire a fini par trancher, rapporte Kattalin Landaburu, correspondante de France 24 en Belgique. C'est non sans peine qu'il a pris cette décision, car les retombées pour le secteur touristique et celui de la restauration risquent d'être très importantes. Environ 50 000 personnes étaient attendues pour la Saint-Sylvestre, [selon le site de la RTBF](#). Seul le marché de Noël est maintenu.

Nouvelle perquisition en lien avec les attentats de Paris

La Belgique et notamment Bruxelles, qui abrite les institutions européennes et l'Otan, est placée depuis fin novembre au "niveau 3 d'alerte terroriste", soit un cran en-dessous du niveau maximal, ce qui correspond à une "menace possible et vraisemblable". La capitale belge a même vécu pendant presque six jours au niveau 4, à la suite des attaques du 13 novembre à Paris.

LES EXPLICATIONS DE NOTRE CORRESPONDANT

Un peu plus tôt dans la journée, [une nouvelle perquisition a eu lieu Molenbeek-Saint-Jean](#) dans le cadre de l'enquête sur les attentats de Paris. Selon les médias belges, elle s'est déroulée rue Delaunoy d'où est originaire Salah Abdeslam et qui a servi de port d'attache à plusieurs membres de cellules jihadistes. Une personne a été interpellée pour être auditionnée. D'après le parquet, un juge décidera jeudi de la placer sous mandat d'arrêt ou de la relâcher.

Mardi, le parquet fédéral avait annoncé l'arrestation de deux personnes soupçonnées de préparer des attentats dans la capitale pour les fêtes de fin d'année. Évoquant des menaces "sérieuses", le parquet a indiqué que "plusieurs lieux emblématiques de Bruxelles" étaient visés. "Les enquêtes sont toujours en cours, le parquet bruxellois,

le parquet fédéral, continuent de travailler sur cette menace", a encore justifié le bourgmestre de la capitale belge.

Avec AFP

<http://www.france24.com/>

France

Fear of terror is far greater than any threat of terror attacks on planes.

30 December 2015



ISIS. (photo credit: ISLAMIC SOCIAL MEDIA)

The bomb scare which forced Air France Flight 463 from Mauritius to Paris into an emergency landing in Kenya only days before Christmas was an indication of how nervous airlines are in the new age of Islamic State branded terror.

It was a clumsily produced faux bomb that brought down AF463, but only two months after the actual (suspected) bombing of a Russian passenger plane over Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, airlines and their passengers are jittery.

A former police officer, 56, and his wife, were questioned by French police following their arrival at Charles De Gaulle airport and were later released. Neither of the pair were charged and investigations into the incident continue, but it was the third time in 15 days that Air France jets were diverted due to a bomb scare.

The public perception of the danger, however, far outweighs the true risk, according to security experts.

Terrorist attacks have marked 2015 from its beginning almost to its end.

From the Charlie Hebdo/Hyper Kacher attacks in Paris, on January 7, to the November mass shootings, also in Paris, that killed 131 people, a terrifying sequence

of assaults by the Islamic State (ISIS) have distorted public perception about the real threat stemming from the Syrian civil war, now in its fifth year.

No real surge of terror exists, Charles Burbridge, Managing Director of G4S Risk Consulting, told The Media Line. “Terrorism, particularly international terrorism, very rarely occurs in waves, it is usually not as coordinated as that.” He explained that the effort, resources, and planning - all undertaken covertly - make it difficult for terrorists to conduct activities on such a massive scale.

Air France’s decision to divert three passenger planes at a significant cost reveals mostly how cautious the industry is being. “Airlines get threats quite a lot, the fact that Air France chose this as a credible threat is no doubt an internal matter, that they would rather err on the side of caution,” says Mark Feldman, CEO of Jerusalem’s Zion Tours travel agency.

“The main problem is that it is so easy to bring down an aircraft in midair,” says Aviv Oreg, a former senior security officer for El Al Israel Airlines and for John F Kennedy Airport “All you have to do is somehow smuggle a box of 300 or 200 grams [of explosives] onto the aircraft,” he told The Media Line. Once a plane is at high altitude and in low air pressure a relatively small explosion can be enough to cause a fatal crash.

Despite the vulnerability, air travel remains the “safest mode of transportation,” Feldman pointed out to The Media Line. The cause for the imbalance between actual and perceived risk is simple, Burbridge says: it’s the death toll. When an airplane crashes the casualties are high and news coverage vast, but years may pass between successful attacks against airliners.

New media has also had an impact. “A second thing that has contributed to that [perception] is the availability of information and the way in which images are available to the public which convey... the barbarity of some of these events,” Burbridge says.

That said, the real risk may not have shifted over time. “Terrorists’ capability has increased markedly, but generally speaking, it is in line with our security architecture’s ability to deal with it,” Burbridge says.

Bruce Schneier, the Chief Technology Officer at www.resilientsystems.com also pointed at media as a source of misperception “The news has to report terrorism - and the more breathless the reporting, the better,” Schneier, a fellow at Harvard University’s Berkman Center, told The Media Line. The more journalists and politicians talk about terror the more the perception of its danger grows, he said, adding “we are all complicit in its effectiveness.”

The ISIS threat to aviation is no greater than it was from other terrorist groups in the past, Oreg, a former expert on jihadism for Israel’s military intelligence, estimates. The only difference between the 1970s and now, he says, is ISIS branding many Islamist militants seek to emulate. Unrelated attacks around the world are attributed to the group even in the absence of a direct link. Attacks such as the recent mass shooting in San Bernardino, CA, create the false impression of a wave of attacks which is not truly there. “People think ISIS is everywhere and suddenly able to put explosives on board an aircraft and are more alarmed,” he said.

www.themedialine.org.

Indonesia

Is There a Uighur Terrorist Build-Up Taking Place in South-east Asia?

Dec.

28,

2015



Bozoglan, left, a member of China's Uighur minority, walks for his appearance at the North Jakarta District Court on terrorism charges on July 29, 2015, in Jakarta.

Indonesian antiterrorism chiefs say they have broken up a plot to attack officials, churches and other targets across Indonesia

As if to underscore the increasingly borderless quality of jihadist insurrection, a suspected terrorist from China's remote northwest was arrested last week in Indonesia after the country's antiterrorism squad raided a house in Bekasi, on the outskirts of the capital, Jakarta.

During the Dec. 24 morning raid, the police also seized an explosive device in a car and a model of a government building at the house, along with bombmaking materials. It is believed that the suspect — a 35-year-old member of China's Uighur ethnic minority named Alli — was being groomed to carry out a suicide bombing.

"He's a Uighur who was learning Indonesian, and he was a [suicide bomber] in training," police chief Badrodin Haiti [told](#) the Jakarta Globe news website.

Alli is the 11th terrorist suspect [arrested](#) by the antiterrorism squad after a series of raids in cities across Java just days before Christmas. According to the police, the crackdown, which started on Dec. 18 and was based on tips from the FBI and the Australian Federal Police, foiled a plot to attack several cities on the main islands of Java, Sumatra and Kalimantan.

Among the targets were senior police officers, high-ranking government officials,

Christian churches and Shi'ite mosques.

Alli, along with six of the terrorist suspects nabbed days earlier, is allegedly part of an ISIS-affiliated terrorist ring that is linked with Bahrin Naim — an Indonesian ex-terrorism convict who has gone to Syria to fight with the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria. (The remaining four belong to another terrorist group, Jemaah Islamiyah, which is aligned with al-Qaeda.)

Some of the funding for Bahrin's terrorist ring allegedly came from an Indonesian migrant worker in Hong Kong. Tasmina, who is married to Zaenal, another would-be suicide bomber arrested in the West Java town of Tasikmalaya on Dec. 18, allegedly contributed \$600 — more than a foreign domestic helper's monthly wage in Hong Kong — to buy bombmaking materials, says Rakyan Adibrata, a Jakarta-based terrorism expert who advises the Indonesian parliament.

Alli, the Uighur suspect, is believed to have entered Indonesia via Batam, a small island off Singapore, about two months ago — along with two of his Uighur compatriots who remain at large. In Indonesia, he is accused of getting a fake ID card that said he was born in Pontianak, West Kalimantan. "He said he was a Pontianak Chinese, but his Indonesian language is very bad," Rakyan tells TIME. "It's difficult to interrogate him."

Before entering Indonesia, the police believe, the Uighurs were in Thailand and Malaysia. A police source told the Jakarta Globe that Alli might have been linked to the Erawan Shrine bombing in Bangkok on Aug. 17. (Thai police have since [ruled out](#) that possibility.)

The Uighurs, from China's northwestern region of Xinjiang, are Muslims who speak a Turkic language. They have long complained of repression and violence at the hands of the predominantly Chinese Han majority. Thousands have fled China in recent years, including to Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and Cambodia. The vast majority have no connection whatsoever to terrorism or Islamist extremism, instead claiming legitimate asylum. Their peaceful hope is to be allowed to go on to Turkey, but the Thai and Cambodian governments have instead [deported them back to China](#), despite well-founded fears that the Uighurs will be persecuted on their return.

Alli wasn't the first Uighur arrested in Indonesia. In September 2014, the police detained four Uighurs who attempted to meet Santoso — the leader of the Mujahideen of Eastern Indonesia, Indonesia's most-wanted man and a jihadist who has pledged allegiance to ISIS — in Poso, Central Sulawesi, and to join his militant group. Like Alli, they too [had been](#) in Thailand, where they obtained fake Turkish passports, and later went to Malaysia before heading to Bandung, West Java. The four were [sentenced](#) to [six years](#) in jail by Indonesia's courts in July this year and, at Beijing's behest, were repatriated to China.

In early November, Indonesian security forces shot dead a Uighur called Farouk, also known as Magalasi, when they attacked Santoso's militant group in a village in Central Sulawesi.

Indonesia hasn't seen any mass-casualty terrorist attack to date since it cracked down on Jemaah Islamiyah, the jihadist group responsible for the Bali bombings in

2002 that killed 202 people. In the past five years, nearly all victims of terrorism in Indonesia [have been](#) police officers, who are blamed for the arrests and killings of jihadists.

Yet the rise of the social-media-savvy ISIS has sparked new interest. According to the Jakarta-based Institute of Policy Analysis for Conflict, more than 1,000 Indonesians have sworn allegiance to ISIS since June 2014. The country's intelligence agency [suggests](#) 800 Indonesian citizens have joined ISIS in the Middle East, but police chief Badrodin disputes the figure, [saying](#) "only around 60 to 70."

China itself has experienced a series of terrorism attacks, including mass-stabbing incidents in Kunming and Guangzhou train stations in 2014; bombing and knife attacks in Urumqi's market and train station in 2014; and a suicide car crash in Beijing's Tiananmen Square — all of which were blamed on the Uighurs.

The presence of Uighurs in Indonesia, thousands of kilometers away, shows "interesting dynamics," terrorism expert Rakyan says. "Terrorism as 'weapon for the weak' is no longer characterized with a specific territory."

<http://time.com/>

la tête d'un véritable trafic d'êtres humains, spécialement de femmes, à des fins sexuelles"

30/12/2015

Pour la fondation Scelles, le magistrat Yves Charpenel a enquêté sur l'exploitation sexuelle des femmes au sein du groupe Etat islamique. Entretien.



Des déplacés yézidis marchent vers la frontière syrienne pour fuir une offensive jihadiste, le 11 août 2014 en Irak. (REUTERS)

Le groupe Etat islamique ne se finance pas seulement avec l'argent du pétrole. Il vit aussi de la prostitution. C'est l'une des conclusions du rapport de la [fondation Scelles](#), qui paraîtra en début d'année 2016. Depuis 20 ans, cette fondation observe les phénomènes liés à l'exploitation sexuelle à travers le monde. Pour francetv info, son président, le magistrat Yves Charpenel, analyse les rapports entre crime organisé et terrorisme.

Comment avez-vous établi que l'Etat islamique a mis en place un véritable réseau de prostitution ?

Yves Charpenel : Au début de l'année 2015, j'étais à New-York (Etats-Unis) avec des membres de la division antiterroriste de l'ONU. Nous avons évoqué l'apparition d'informations concordantes faisant état en Irak et en Syrie d'une véritable organisation de trafic d'êtres humains, spécialement de femmes, à des fins sexuelles. Avec le procureur de la république de Paris, nous avons recoupé ces informations, nous avons aussi recensé les tweets émanant de jihadistes de Daesh.

L'Etat islamique théorise et assume le fait que les femmes sont une marchandise. Notamment celles venues des zones conquises. La plupart du temps, Daesh considère qu'elles ne sont pas de bonnes musulmanes, et les traite comme des esclaves. C'est d'ailleurs le terme qui est employé par les jihadistes. "Esclave" signifie que

l'on est offerte aux combattants ou proposée à des tarifs "avantageux" – si l'on peut dire – aux aspirants combattants, dans des véritables maisons de prostitution.

Pourtant, l'Etat islamique cherche à attirer des femmes, notamment occidentales...

Le phénomène est difficile à quantifier. On parle de quelques centaines de femmes au total, dont un peu plus de 200 pour la France. L'organisation Etat islamique fait beaucoup de publicité pour attirer à lui des femmes venues de l'Occident. Ses messages ont changé ces derniers mois : les jihadistes montrent bien moins de décapitations et autres atrocités qu'auparavant au profit d'images que je qualifierais de "bisounours" ou "Club Med".

Leur propagande se décompose en deux temps. D'abord, ils disent à ces jeunes femmes qui sont souvent de confession musulmane et en situation de grande vulnérabilité : "Sachez qu'en occident vous n'êtes que des prostituées". C'est un discours manifestement écrit par des occidentaux puisqu'il affirme aussi : "Vous êtes moins bien payées que les hommes, vous êtes considérées comme des objets sexuels, donc au regard du Coran, vous êtes bel et bien des prostituées. Soyez plutôt des esclaves de l'islam en venant en Syrie. Vous serez les mères des futurs combattants et vous rencontrerez l'émir aux 'yeux verts'." C'est un thème récurrent, fantasmagorique qui en fait, signifie : "Vous serez enfin considérée, et vous serez utile." On est là dans un fonctionnement de type sectaire, avec des personnes attirées vers la promesse d'une vie meilleure.

Comment font-elles le chemin jusqu'en Syrie ?

Ces femmes sont prises en mains localement par des relais de l'Etat islamique. Elles sont ensuite acheminées par des étapes désormais connues, d'abord la Turquie puis la Syrie, où elles vont avoir en réalité le même sort que les femmes capturées. Elles sont proposées comme épouses aux futurs combattants après une cérémonie d'à peine quelques minutes. Celles qui n'ont pas plu ou qui n'ont pas trouvé "preneurs" sont ensuite revendues notamment aux maisons de prostitution libanaises. Et là, des tarifs, des prix ont été fixés, nous sommes dans l'exploitation sexuelle que l'on connaît malheureusement fort bien avec des premiers barèmes pour des "femmes" de 8 ans. Ces dernières étant "plus chères" que celles de 12 ans et ainsi de suite au fur et à mesure de l'âge de la personne. Il y a de véritables catalogues comme dans les maisons de passe "professionnelles". En plus des femmes occidentales, on trouve aussi des marocaines assez nombreuses tombées dans le même piège d'une promesse d'épanouissement religieux.

Comment s'établissent les relations entre clients, chefs de réseaux et prostituées ?

Les commandes, les échanges, les messages... Tout se fait par les réseaux sociaux : Twitter, Facebook. Quant au paiement, à l'échange marchand proprement dit, on se rend compte que cela ressemble aux conclusions auxquelles nous étions parvenus après les attentats du 11 septembre 2001 aux Etats Unis. A l'époque, à l'occasion d'un travail que j'avais effectué pour le gouvernement, nous avions établi que le terrorisme, en particulier Al-Qaïda, n'était pas financé par des opérations économiques et financières grandioses mais plutôt par des actes de petite criminalité telles que

prostitution, toxicomanie, et contrefaçon. L'Etat islamique utilise les mêmes techniques qui le conduisent à être en rapport avec des réseaux de prostitution, en particulier au Liban, que nous connaissons bien.

Le groupe Etat islamique n'est donc ni le premier groupe terroriste, ni le seul, à utiliser la prostitution pour prospérer ?

Evidemment non. Les membres du mouvement jihadiste africain Boko Haram utilisent par exemple des techniques plutôt classiques du type razzia de villages où les femmes deviennent "des butins de guerre". L'ONU estime qu'il pourrait y avoir jusqu'à 50 000 femmes concernées. A partir du moment où les femmes sont capturées – elles sont généralement d'ethnies ou de confessions (chiite ou yazidi) différentes des sunnites de Boko Haram – le groupe les utilise comme "gratification" pour ses combattants. On est donc là face à l'exploitation sexuelle de victimes en temps de guerre, un phénomène hélas bien connu. Boko Haram se finance à peu près exclusivement de cette vente de femmes et d'enfants.

<http://www.francetvinfo.fr/>

Opinion: 2015 was a horrible year

The headlines that have dominated the news this year have made for unhappy reading. There's been no historic moment of change, but the world has definitely become messier, says DW's editor-in-chief Alexander Kudascheff.



2015 was a horrible and depressing year. It was a year of crises, of war and of catastrophes. It was a year of things starting to unravel, of shows of force and of monstrous terror from Paris to Beirut to Bamako. And it was a year of change, as well as political and societal upheaval. But has it marked the end of an era? A historic turning point?

In 1989, the American historian Francis Fukuyama predicted that history was ending: that humanity had reached the endpoint of its ecological evolution. He was certain, after the implosion of the main communist nations, that the liberal Western view of democracy would triumph.

A quarter of a century later, we can confidently say that this was the wrong prediction. In fact, the opposite is true. The world is in political disarray and on the move. And the center of this commotion is the Middle East.

The rise of IS is changing a whole region

It seems to be an almost undeniable truth that nothing can be resolved in the Middle East while the Palestine conflict is allowed to continue. It's clear that the question of the Palestinians' future needs to be solved, but this has all slipped well into the background this year.

Instead, the rapid rise of the so-called "Islamic State" has seen the Middle East unravel. Its unbounded brutality, its desire to take power in Syria and Iraq and its plan to build a caliphate according to the traditions of early Islam have radically transformed the region. The former power dynamic in the Middle East, which took form after the First World War, has disappeared 100 years later. The Kurds are now hoping again for their own state. The Syrians and Iraqis, in contrast, are worried that their countries will fall

apart - or that they will change so much as to become unrecognisable.



DW's editor-in-chief, Alexander Kudascheff

And terrorism is starting to spread out from the Middle East. From Bangladesh to Mali, radical Islam is starting to shake up other countries and continents. The chain of crises goes from Asia to Africa and appears under various names: al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Nusra Front or al-Shabab. And the explosive waves churned up by these crises even have an impact in Europe. Paris has been attacked by terrorists twice this year and, as a result, the European continent has lost a lot of its self-confidence. Despite all the refugees that countries such as Germany, Sweden and Austria have taken in, Europe is starting to retire into its own cocoon on this issue. It is putting up barriers and arguing amongst itself. The rise of right-wing populist parties is obvious and worrying. A political and social answer to the situation has not yet materialized.

Meanwhile, Europe has been dealing with war on its front doorstep, in Ukraine. At least it has been possible to stop the active fighting, thanks in part to combined German and French efforts. But that is all that's been possible. And, in the process, the foreign policy weakness of the Europeans has been revealed. They are not able to get things moving, they don't dare to take risks and they display little self-assurance. Angela Merkel's catchcry of "We can do this" with regard to refugee policy has been missing a supporting and equally decisive "Yes, we can" from the EU. Instead there has been doubt and fear. This is not good enough if you want to be an international player.

Russia back in the limelight

This year has shown us two other clear trends as well. First, Russia - despite all the sanctions against it - is back on the world stage. Vladimir Putin has rehabilitated the country with his brand of power politics. Secondly, Barack Obama's USA is focusing on itself again: in part because of the upcoming elections in the country, but mainly because of Obama's now pragmatic approach, in his final year at the helm. He knows that America can't solve all of the world's problems, and he knows it doesn't want to, either.

2015 didn't mark a turning point in history. But it has shown that crises around the world are starting to merge at a global level, and that it will be more difficult to find global answers. The consequence is that countries are pursuing nationalist political interests, using the United Nations as nothing more than a stage for showboating, and not for solutions. That is why 2015 was such a horrible, depressing and difficult year. And also because there is not much reason to hope that things will be any better in 2016, either.

Have something to say? Add your comments below. The thread stays open for 24 hours after posting.

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«Ces jihadistes sont fascinés par la violence»

31/12/2015

Terrorisme - Olivier Roy, spécialiste de l'Islam et professeur à l'Institut universitaire européen de Florence (Italie)

«Ces jihadistes sont fascinés par la violence»

Invité hier matin sur *France Info*, Olivier Roy a analysé le phénomène des jeunes combattants français venant grossir les rangs de l'État islamique.

Quel est le profil des candidats au jihad en Syrie ?

Cela fait 20 ans que des jeunes dans toute l'Europe, et pas seulement, partent pour le jihad mondial. Ils se fichent complètement de la situation locale. Ils vont là où il y a quelque chose que l'on peut appeler : «jihad contre l'ordre mondial». C'était l'Afghanistan autrefois, puis la Tchétchénie, et aussi la Bosnie. Maintenant, ils vont en Syrie et en Irak. Demain, ils seront en Somalie ou en Mauritanie... Quand on regarde de près, deux catégories assez précises de radicalisés émergent. Il y a tout d'abord des jeunes issus de la deuxième génération. C'est-à-dire des jeunes musulmans dont les parents sont venus en Europe comme travailleurs immigrés soit il y a 40 ans, 20 ans ou 10 ans. Quant à la seconde catégorie, il s'agit des convertis. Elle surprend tout le monde et casse toutes les analyses faciles sur «le choc des civilisations». Ils représentent 25 % des combattants français partis sur le front du jihad. On a des jeunes Normands, Bretons qui d'un seul coup se convertissent à l'Islam dans sa version la plus stricte : le salafisme.



Quid de leurs motivations ? Sont-elles religieuses ?

C'est complexe. On ne peut pas dire que la religion soit le seul prétexte. Ils vont investir dans la religion un ressentiment contre le monde : un désir de régénération, de purification d'eux-mêmes, voir une vision suicidaire. Il s'agit en fait de révoltes individuelles et générationnelles. Les jeunes vont se radicaliser entre copains, entre «frères». Dans toutes les cellules radicales, aujourd'hui en France, vous avez une, deux ou trois paires de «frères». Ils ne se retournent pas forcément d'un seul coup contre les parents mais contre tout ce que représente le monde de leurs parents. En fait, les jihadistes sont des rebelles en quête d'une cause.

Que vont-ils donc chercher en Syrie ?

Ils vont chercher le combat car ils sont fascinés par la violence physique. Ils partent là-bas pour retrouver les univers de *Call of Duty* (ndlr : jeu vidéo de guerre) ou de *Scarface* (ndlr : film de Brian de Palma). Ils sont très «gores» et sanglants. Nous baignons dans une culture de la violence qui s'exprime sous d'autres formes en Occi-

dent que le jihadisme, mais qui fascine une partie des jeunes en rupture avec la société...

La Dépêche du Midi

<http://www.ladepeche.fr/>

L'EI subit un coup dur, après une série de défaites en Irak et en Syrie

31.12.2015 à 03:00



Un membre de l'unité anti-terroriste irakienne le 28 décembre 2015 après la prise de Ramadi
afp.com - AHMAD AL-RUBAYE

Le groupe Etat islamique (EI) a subi une série d'importantes défaites ces derniers mois en Syrie et en Irak, la plus récente à Ramadi, mais cette organisation jihadiste est encore loin d'être vaincue, estiment des experts.

L'EI avait pris en mai le contrôle de Ramadi, chef-lieu de la vaste province sunnite d'Al-Anbar, dans l'ouest de l'Irak, infligeant une cinglante défaite à l'armée irakienne.

Les jihadistes avaient également conquis Palmyre, cité antique syrienne mondialement connue, prouvant leur capacité à étendre leur "califat" autoproclamé entre l'Irak et la Syrie.

Mais les jihadistes ont récemment cédé du terrain. En Irak, ils ont perdu les villes de Baiji, Sinjar et, dimanche, Ramadi. Et en Syrie, l'EI a perdu fin décembre le contrôle du barrage de Tichrine (nord) face à une coalition militaire arabo-kurde qui l'a ainsi privé d'une source de revenus stratégique.

"Pour l'EI qui se revendique comme un Etat, contrôler des centre-villes et des infrastructures clés est important mais (les récentes) défaites entament la crédibilité de cette revendication", estime Firas Abi Ali, analyste à l'IHS Jane's, institut spécialisé dans les questions de défense et basé à Londres.

Mais la reconquête de Ramadi par les forces irakiennes est davantage une victoire symbolique, tempèrent des experts, même si elle a été menée par les seules forces fédérales, sans l'implication de milices chiites qui avaient jusqu'à présent joué un rôle central dans la guerre contre l'EI.

"L'EI est toujours capable de lancer des attaques à travers l'Irak sans Ramadi, une ville plus importante pour les forces de sécurité irakiennes que pour l'EI", estime Patrick Martin, analyste à l'Institute for the Study of War basé à Washington.

Les jihadistes ont réussi à évacuer un grand nombre de véhicules et d'armes avant la bataille de Ramadi, a indiqué à l'AFP un haut gradé irakien.

- 'En crise' -

Gagner des batailles, même si elles sont d'un intérêt stratégique mineur, demeure cependant important pour le moral des troupes qui luttent contre l'EI, souligne Patrick Skinner du cabinet de consultants Soufan Group spécialisé dans le renseignement.

Selon lui, le dernier message audio du chef autoproclamé de l'EI Abou Bakr al-Baghdadi la semaine dernière était "moins triomphant" que les précédents.

Même constat pour M. Abi Ali qui voit dans les menaces proférées contre Israël "le signe que l'Etat islamique est en crise".

"La popularité de la rhétorique antisioniste dans la région pousse les dictateurs à penser qu'elle est une garantie de soutien des foules. Ils l'utilisent pour détourner (leur population) des autres problèmes", analyse-t-il.

La coalition antijihadistes menée par Washington a en outre annoncé mardi que ses frappes aériennes avaient tué en décembre une dizaine de membres de l'EI présentés comme importants, dont un Français qui serait directement lié à l'instigateur des attentats meurtriers de Paris.

- 'Trop tôt' -

Au delà de la comptabilisation des points gagnés ou perdus par chacune des parties, de nombreux experts se sont penchés sur la nouvelle équation militaire qui a conduit aux récentes victoires contre l'EI.

A Sinjar, des factions rivales kurdes, appuyées par les frappes de la coalition internationale anti-EI conduite par les Etats-Unis, ont bouté les jihadistes hors de la ville.

Dans le nord de la Syrie, ce sont aussi des combattants kurdes, qui ont été les fers de lance de la lutte contre l'EI.

Et à Ramadi, ce sont les forces fédérales qui ont opéré avec le soutien aérien de la coalition, sans l'aide de groupes paramilitaires chiites.

"Le fait de restaurer la capacité des forces irakiennes est très important et pourrait devenir un modèle pour les offensives à venir", souligne M. Abi Ali.

"La reprise méthodique de Ramadi, avec la couverture aérienne de la coalition limitant les mouvements de l'EI (...) dans les quartiers urbains, a prouvé son efficacité

té. Une méthode qui pourrait à nouveau être utilisée à Fallouja", bastion jihadiste situé entre Ramadi et Bagdad, analyse M. Skinner.

Le Premier ministre Haider Al-Abadi s'est engagé lundi à libérer son pays de l'EI en 2016. Il a promis que le "coup fatal" pour les jihadistes sera la libération de Mossoul (nord), aux mains de l'EI depuis juin 2014, sans dire si la deuxième ville irakienne sera le prochain objectif des forces irakiennes.

Pour M. Abi Ali, les forces kurdes syriennes rencontreront plus de difficultés dans leur avancée vers Raqa, capitale de facto des jihadistes en Syrie.

Si les défaites se multiplient en Syrie et en Irak, l'EI pourrait voir dans la Libye une terre de repli. L'organisation y contrôle déjà la ville de Syrte, à 450 km à l'est de Tripoli.

De plus, rappelle M. Abi Ali, "les idéologies du jihad et de l'islam politique se portent bien. Il est trop tôt pour annoncer la mort de l'Etat islamique (...)".

<http://information.tv5monde.com/->

It's Time to Tell the Truth About the Long War Against Terrorism

Why saying the United States can destroy the Islamic State is worse than providing false hope.

16 December 2015



On Dec. 6, four days after the San Bernardino attacks, in an Oval Office address (only the third such address of his almost concluded eight-year presidency), President Barack Obama reassured Americans that we would prevail against the threat of terrorism. "The threat from terrorism is real, but we will overcome it," Obama said. "We will destroy ISIL and any other organization that tries to harm us."

The president confidently went to great lengths to tell the nation that we will draw on all aspects of American power. But Obama did not tell us the whole truth. A lie is lie only if you tell somebody something you don't really believe yourself. And without personally straining the bounds of credulity to the breaking point, I don't believe Obama believes that his current strategy will "destroy" the Islamic State or any other organization that tries to harm us. The fact that he omitted his customary word "ultimately" from his remarks likely reflected the urgency of the moment rather than any real conviction that the war Obama described in his address would be won easily or quickly.

The president isn't alone in his desire to offer up definitive solutions to the war against terrorism. A number of presidential candidates, primarily on the Republican side, have likewise made super confident and even more grandiose pronouncements about winning the war against jihadi terrorism and destroying the Islamic State. Donald Trump: "I would bomb the shit out of them." Marco Rubio: "If America does not make this [war against terrorism] our fight, the West will not win it." Lindsey Graham: "[The United States] should lead an effort to assemble a multinational force, including up to 10,000 American troops, to clear and hold Raqqa and

destroy ISIS in Syria.” And [Ted Cruz](#): “We will utterly destroy them. We will carpet bomb them into oblivion.” Even [Hillary Clinton](#), whose rhetoric is very much toned down, has spoken of a plan not to contain the Islamic State but to “defeat and destroy ISIS.”

The only problem with this kind of tough talk is that the goal of winning definitively the war against jihadi terrorism, including destroying and defeating the Islamic State, is about as likely as winning the war against drugs, poverty, mental illness, and banning guns in America. The president, as a [self-described](#) Niebuhrian and a pragmatist who understands that more often than not the best you can do is to come up with “proximate solutions for insoluble problems,” ought to know better. Sure, the nation needs to be reassured — jihadi terrorism isn’t an existential threat to America. But in that moment, the nation could have used — and could still use — some critically important reality therapy in what is certainly going to be a very long war against Islamist terrorism. And here’s why.

The United States isn’t Europe. But does that matter?

Terrorism experts argue that [four factors](#) make Europe much more vulnerable to jihadi attacks than the United States: 1) Paris was easily accessible; 2) there are many European nationals quite eager to kill their own countrymen; 3) there’s a euro-jihadi infrastructure; and lastly, 4) European security services just can’t handle the case-load tracking and preempting attacks by the number of homegrown, returning, or infiltrating jihadis. This rather comforting analysis makes sense up to a point.

It’s true that for the United States’ liquid assets (two oceans on either side), our better border controls, and a better integrated and less aggrieved Muslim American community, all give us an advantage. But over time, how much of one? In fact, homegrown jihadis don’t need a big support team or infrastructure for DIY terrorism; there are plenty of guns on hand, and by the looks of things, the San Bernardino shooters were impossible for law enforcement to track. Add a dose of easy access to jihadi propaganda on the web, nativist anti-Muslim backlash, and Trump’s “keep out the Muslims” campaign and you’ll easily double the size of a radicalized pool, a percentage of which will act violently. You don’t need Islamic State-directed operations or Raqqa-dispatched hit teams when inspiration will do nicely.

The terrorism epicenter

With all due respect to the solutionists, the war on jihadi terrorism — and that’s what it is — is a generational enterprise. Fourteen years after 9/11, more than twice the time it took for the allies to win World War II, the jihadis are thriving.

My FP colleague the inestimable Micah Zenko [noted](#) that terrorist-related deaths grew by more than 4,000 percent from 2002 to 2009 and by 148 percent from 2010 to 2014. And while he pointed out that last year not a single American was killed within the United States in a terrorist attack, the stats for 2015 are already much more tragic. The fact is, the Islamic State, al Qaeda affiliates, and a host of other maniacal groups slouching toward Bethlehem waiting to be born will not be extinguished anytime soon. Bad or no governance, leaving empty spaces in a Middle East that is angry, broken, and dysfunctional — as well as riven with sectarian tensions and pushed by powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia in their own deadly proxy war — guarantees the health and well-being of the jihadi enterprise. This region will be spewing hatred, irrationality, illogic, and a vicious Islamist medieval ideology for years to come. America won’t be the only target to be sure. In the past month, the Islamic State has either directed or inspired terrorist attacks on permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. But the United States, both for what it represents and

does in the world, will be high on the jihadi hit list.

You can't defeat something big with nothing big.

Despite Obama's pledge to destroy the Islamic State, it's highly arguable whether the United States or any other power has the will, means, or skill to do that. Paris was less a game-changer than it was another cruel turn in the long war against jihadi terrorism. Obama even boasts of a coalition of 65 nations that have pledged to defeat the Islamic State. But how many of these really count? This presumed coalition of the willing, including of course the Brits and the French, also includes a lot of other countries whose contributions are at best marginal and too many others that are [better described](#) as the unwilling and self-interested. Just look around. Russia's priority is keeping Bashar al-Assad afloat, Turkey is hammering the Kurds, and the Saudis are busy hitting the Houthis in Yemen. On top of this, no possible combination of local forces can stabilize Syria, and neither NATO nor the Western powers are willing to commit enough ground forces to destroy Islamic State sanctuaries in Iraq and Syria to guarantee the jihadis won't return. More disconcerting, the Islamic State has jumped borders now and is operating with impunity in Sinai, Libya, Yemen, and in parts of Africa. The jihadi cancer has gone global, and the great powers can't seem to stop it. And if we're waiting for the House of Islam to reform itself and purge its own radicals and extremists, we'll be waiting for a very long time to come.

The wild, wild West

As terrorism analysts Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin [point out](#), in counterterrorism and law enforcement we've come a long way since 9/11: "Post-9/11 visa requirements and no-fly lists weed out most bad actors, and both the Bush and Obama administrations demanded that countries in our visa waiver program provide data on extremists through information-sharing pacts called HSPD-6 agreements." And we're making improvements in other areas too, such as the agreement with the European Union over passenger name records in 2012.

Keeping bad guys (and girls) out is one thing. What about tracking U.S. citizens already here, particularly those who seem to live normal lives as the San Bernardino shooters seemed to have done? The FBI has [900 inquiries](#) related to the Islamic State now open in all 50 states out of some 10,000 counterterrorism cases. And how can you intensively watch and track them all? Add the ease with which weapons and explosives can be accessed; toss in the size of the country and the ease and anonymity with which people move about; and add a pinch of the freedoms that protect us all and you have a powerful brew just waiting to boil over. Indeed, some would argue that in comparison to ordinary mass killings, jihadi terrorism is rare. As of Dec. 2, in 209 of the 336 days this year, [there was at least](#) one shooting a day that killed or injured more than four people.

None of this depressing reality therapy appeared in the president's address to the nation. Understandably, Obama wasn't interested in scaring Americans but unifying and reassuring them. Maybe like 9/11, what happened in San Bernardino was an anomaly, and we will be spared another jihadi attack for another 14 years.

I very much doubt it. DIY terrorism thrives where there is an abundance of soft targets: freedom, anonymity, access to guns, and aberrant human behavior motivated by ideology and religious extremism, in this case radical Islam. Indeed, in today's world, no other kinds of religious extremists are directing and inspiring their followers to kill innocents on a global scale other than Islamist ones.

We can certainly weaken the Islamic State. We can make it harder for jihadis to operate in Syria and maybe even destroy the Islamic State's base of operations there, if

we figured out a way to fill the empty spaces with reliable local partners and better governance. But we won't win the war against the jihadis anymore than we can win the war against crime, drugs, or mental illness. Get real, President Obama and whoever will be the next president. We'll be fighting jihadis for years to come. Level with us and don't infantilize us: We deserve honesty and clarity on this issue. Sure, the goal is to win the war against jihadis. But this isn't World War II, neither in the magnitude of the threat nor in the commitment you're prepared to make. Forget the grandiosity and grand coalitions. In the meantime, just help us survive this war over the long run, hopefully with our values and our security more or less intact.

<http://foreignpolicy.com/>

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