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Editorial Note

Africa in Focus

We are pleased to release Volume 6, Issue 7 (August 2014) of the Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis (CTTA) at www.rsis.edu.sg/research/icpvtr/ctta. This issue presents a regional focus on Africa, an emerging hotspot of the global jihadist threat.

Prem Mahadevan offers a succinct overview of the agendas, activities and tactics of the major jihadist groups in Africa as well as emerging threats in the region. In this he brings to light collaboration undertaken between certain African jihadist groups to boost operational capabilities in logistics and intelligence, while emerging leaders are seen to be breaking the chain of command within groups in their pursuit for power and prominence, resulting in internal power struggles.

C. Nna-Emeka Okereke studies the Boko Haram group, which poses a threat to Nigeria's security as well as that of the West and Central African regions. He concludes that while robust counterterrorism offensives by the Nigerian security forces have resulted in a decrease in the frequency of attacks, Boko Haram's operational and financial capabilities to conduct attacks as well as export terrorism across borders remain intact.

Zakaria Ousman Ramadane argues that the emergence of religious extremism and terrorism in Somalia and other countries in the Horn of Africa, a traditionally Sufi region, have its roots in the poverty and debilitated political and socio-economic institutions caused by cycles of state failure as well as repeated natural disasters and ensuing famines. The vast ungoverned spaces have given free reign for terrorist groups such as Al Shabaab to grow in strength and engage in illicit trade. Ramadane understands that only a concerted regional effort by the countries of East Africa can effectively challenge the transnational terrorist and extremist movements in the region or help Somalia out of this sapped stage.

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Jihadism in Africa: Marching Together, Striking Separately

Prem Mahadevan

The 2013 hostage sieges in Kenya and Algeria indicate that African jihadist groups are cooperating with one another even as their leaderships wage internal power struggles. Recent events in Iraq are likely to accentuate this trend, by prompting younger commanders to carry out glory-seeking operations in defiance of their chain of command.

The raid upon Nairobi's Westgate Mall in September 2013 may have been part of an emerging pattern across Africa, wherein jihadist groups collaborate with each other and boost their collective operational reach, even as their leaders compete for credibility at the intra-organisational level by authorising attacks in parallel on prestige targets. Eight months before, Africa had seen a high-visibility strike on expatriates in January 2013, when jihadists stormed the Tigentourine gas facility in Algeria. During both raids, the attackers demonstrated detailed knowledge of the target's topography, suggesting that advance reconnaissance had been carried out. This in turn leads to the question of how jihadist groups raise the logistics and intelligence networks required for strikes in denied territory, and whether such strikes will become the norm.

Perhaps African jihadists have reversed the conventional military dictum of 'marching separately, striking together'. In a new form of mission command, Al Qaeda and its affiliates seem to be cooperating in overall capacity enhancement, but leaving scope for local rivalries to play themselves out in a competitive dynamic focused on external adversaries. Although rifts in a rebel movement have usually been a promising sign for intelligence and security communities to build on, the internal cleavages in African jihadism may portend a different future. At the very least, trends in recent years suggest that long-range strikes launched from conflict areas are becoming easier, due

to entrenched local support and loose operational hierarchies.

Building Support among Alienated Communities

In Kenya, Al Shabaab partnered with Al Hijra, a militant group that recruits from the country's Muslim minority. Over five years, an estimated 500 Kenyan youths crossed the border to fight in Somalia, allowing the foreign group in turn, to establish a support base within Nairobi's Somali-dominated Eastleigh district. This base allowed the Westgate attack planners to familiarise themselves with the layout of the mall, and allegedly, to stockpile ammunition on-site.

In Algeria, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, formerly with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), relied on a local militia named the 'Sons of the Sahara for Islamic Justice' to conduct reconnaissance at the Tigentourine gas plant. Given that both Al Shabaab and AQIM are affiliated with Al Qaeda, and both have ties to the Nigerian group Boko Haram, concern can legitimately be raised as to whether a major attack on an economic target in Nigeria might be likely in the near future.

Sceptics point out that Boko Haram is a localised group, confining more than 80 percent of its combat actions to Borno state in north-eastern Nigeria, where it enjoys a measure of popular support. Furthermore, recent massacres and kidnappings of school students by its cadres have eroded this support base. In such a situation, the group would lack the means to execute a major strike against high-value business assets, even if it developed an intention to do so.

Personalities Compete while Organisations Collaborate

Yet, both the Westgate and Tigentourine attacks occurred within a context of leadership intrigue and external setbacks. This combination of circumstances can also be found in Nigeria.

The Westgate attack occurred three months after Al Shabaab leader Ahmed Godane launched a purge that left 200 fighters dead, including several top leaders who disagreed with his operating style. Wishing to stamp his authority and boost organisational morale, he chose to attack a prestige target. Likewise, in early 2013 Belmokhtar was smarting about his expulsion from AQIM, and wanted to prove that he was

“... both the Westgate and Tigentourine attacks occurred within a context of leadership intrigue and external setbacks ...”

serious about waging jihad. Hitting economic assets, for both Godane and Belmokhtar, was a route towards staking out their own identity.

At the organisational level, Al Shabaab and AQIM had suffered significant military losses in the period preceding their attacks in Kenya and Algeria. Kenyan security forces had arrested several Al Shabaab operatives in the months prior to the Westgate raid. Belmokhtar's group was reeling from a French onslaught in Mali at the time the Tigentourine assault occurred. Losing their safe havens in one area required the jihadists to compensate by striking spectacularly in another.

Boko Haram is currently caught up in similar factionalism involving its leader Abubakar Shekau and a splinter group known as Ansaru, led by Cameroonian national Mamman Nur. The latter orchestrated the only major attack by Boko Haram against an international target so far: the bombing of the UN Office in Abuja in August 2011. Five months after this attack, Nur formed Ansaru as a 'humane' alternative to Boko Haram, in that the new jihadist group promised to kill only non-Muslims. Nur is a rare entity – a global jihadist within the West African jihad environment – having been trained with Al Shabaab and AQIM and being committed to a wider regional agenda. With Shekau now having earned widespread opprobrium for his antic of abducting defenceless schoolgirls, Nur might be looking to position himself as a 'true' jihadist, focused only on fighting the Nigerian security forces and Western interests in the country.

There is also the possibility that Shekau himself might order an attack on prestige targets with an economic undertone, as a way of slicing his cake both ways. By striking at non-Muslims in a media-drawing event, he can douse some of the criticism that his mass-kidnapping spree has

aroused among the global jihadist community. He would thus undercut potential challengers to the leadership position in Boko Haram, and in West Africa more generally.

Cross-pollination – Ideological and Operational

In 2010, Al Shabaab and Boko Haram had issued threats against the FIFA World Cup tournament being held in South Africa. At the time, neither group had the capability to follow through on this bombast, but then the 2011 Arab Revolts in North Africa marked a turning point in the global jihad. AQIM, having undergone relentless attrition at the hands of Algerian security forces, became the best-armed terrorist group in the region due to loosened state control over military arsenals in Libya. It promptly shared its new combat expertise with Boko Haram, in accordance with Al Qaeda Central's larger vision of propping up regional partners. Thus, without the Nigerian group having to adopt a tell-tale name change which would have attracted hostile attention from the West, it became a silent beneficiary of Al Qaeda's outreach.

On the other side of the continent, Somali Salafis were exploiting decades of contact with Salafis in Kenya, infiltrating mainstream religious institutions among the country's largely Sufi Muslim population. This infiltration continued even as Al Shabaab camps in Somalia became a receptor for jihadists from further afield, training them in combat tactics for probable use in their home countries. Even with Al Qaeda's core leadership largely destroyed, the group's ideology has survived to infuse another generation of Islamist militants. Unlike Osama Bin Laden however, jihadist leaders of today have proven to be successful businessmen with a penchant for combining holy war with personal profit. Groups such as Al Shabaab, AQIM and Boko Haram run lucrative extortion and trafficking rackets. This makes them more resilient to outside pressure, but also prone to infighting, as control over finances translates into greater operational leadership and more individual prestige for factional leaders.

What Now?

The situation is likely to deteriorate due to the capture of Mosul in June 2014 by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). This event has been labelled by some commentators as the

“Unlike Osama Bin Laden, jihadist leaders of today have proven to be successful businessmen with a penchant for combining holy war with personal profit.”

biggest success of global jihad since 9/11, and has opened a new threat in both ideological and operational terms. To start with, ISIS is rich, despite the emphasis that Western security agencies have poured during the last decade in closing down terrorist funding channels. Besides looting an estimated US \$429 million from the Iraqi central bank, the group has demonstrated through its capture of oilfields in Iraq and Syria, that jihad can be financially self-sustaining. Furthermore, it has shown the value of ruthlessness, being prepared to employ sectarian massacres as a tool of mass mobilisation. Its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is deeply unpopular within the old guard of the global jihadist movement, for his persistent refusal to scale back indiscriminate attacks in accordance with the orders of Al Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Yet, Baghdadi has also proved that a risk-taking battlefield strategy can yield strategic dividends, and his success will likely inspire younger members of Al Qaeda affiliates to plan their own 'rogue' operations. With Africa providing large swathes of loosely policed territories and a handy base for transnational crime catering to European narcotics markets, the continent can become a proving ground for ambitious jihadist commanders. Westgate and Tigentourine might remain outliers, but they could just as easily be the forerunners of a new wave of assertiveness in the African theatre, following recent jihadist advances elsewhere, in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Rumblings in the North

Already, there are signs that Tunisia, one of the most moderate Arab states, is being pulled into the vortex of regional militancy due to

intergenerational differences between Islamists. The country is suffering the fallout of a double shock: the collapse of the Libyan regime of Muammar Gaddafi and the outbreak of civil war in Syria. Small numbers of Tunisian youth have been trained in Libya, with the intention of moving on to fight in Syria. Instead, their trainers have instructed some of the recruits to return and apply the skills learnt back at home. The growth of an indigenous jihadist movement in Tunisia would have wider ramifications elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa. For, many members of the country's ruling Ennahda party are themselves moderate Islamists, who had previously been jailed for their beliefs. One would expect that their religious credentials would buy a certain amount of 'street credibility' with youth who are currently gravitating towards the radical Islamist fringe. Instead, these youth are looking to violence as a means of self-promotion and community advancement. A question must therefore be raised as to whether 'moderates' are a sufficiently powerful force in political terms, to resist 'militant' upsurges across the Maghreb. Even within the Tunisian jihadist group Ansar al-Shariah, believed responsible for a spate of political assassinations and attacks on government targets, circumstantial evidence points to a growing rift between the top leadership and some junior commanders, who have turned 'rogue'.

The country to watch in future months may well be Chad, central Africa's most important military player. All four of the country's civil wars to date have featured tensions between Christians and Muslims. Sectarian strife or political instability here would provide a much-needed corridor to connect jihadist battlegrounds on Africa's west and east coasts, from Nigeria to Somalia via Sudan and Ethiopia. Chad suffers from the same underlying malady that many scholars believe is a 'root cause' of jihadism in the Sahel: desertification. Lake Chad, which has shrunk by around 90 percent since 1960, has become a symbol of the extreme economic distress felt by inhabitants of border provinces in Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon, all of which lie adjacent to the lake, besides Chad itself. With no prospects of improvement in their living conditions, the local population is reflexively sympathetic to anti-government messages carried by jihadist groups. The latter meanwhile, are concentrating on embedding themselves with ongoing tribal rebellions through informal alliances (usually forged through marriage). This gives them an indigenous flavour which makes eradicating extremist ideas all the more difficult. Even as the United States and France step-up efforts to combat terrorism in the region, they need to remain aware of the broader socio-economic dynamics that sustain extremist violence across Africa.

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The Resilience of Boko Haram: Myth or Reality?

C. Nna-Emeka Okereke

The assets of the Jama'atu Ahlissunnah Lidda'awatiwal Jihad, meaning a 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad', which the local community in Borno State refers to as Boko Haram have been depleted by Nigerian security agencies. However, the group has continued to launch deadly and audacious attacks on the Nigerian state and has proven its capability to export terrorism to bordering countries.

Since July 2009, the Boko Haram ('Western education is sinful') founded by Mohammed Yusuf has emerged as a major security challenge confronting Nigeria. The group's main aim is the forceful implementation of its extremist interpretation of Islamic Law in Northern Nigeria, in contra-distinction with the provisions of Section 10 of the Nigerian Constitution which upholds secularity of the Nigerian state. This has brought the group into direct confrontation with Nigerian authorities.

In the pursuit of its objectives, the Boko Haram has executed assaults on national and international targets both within and outside Nigeria. Major attacks claimed by the group include the suicide bombings at Nigerian Police Headquarters (Louis Edet House) and United Nations House, Abuja, in June and August 2011 respectively. Boko Haram has also attacked schools and religious institutions. In addition, security establishments such as prisons, military and police barracks have also been attacked while several foreigners from Cameroon, France, Germany, Lebanon, Britain, Philippines and Italy have also been kidnapped and killed since 2012.

It is estimated that the Boko Haram crisis has led to the death of over 10,000 people since its inception. Adrian Edwards, spokesperson of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) claims that an estimated 57,000 people have fled Nigeria as refugees to neighbouring countries since

May 2013 when Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan declared a 'state of emergency' in the frontline states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states. These are states where the sect has concentrated its activities. Amnesty International has put the estimate of deaths arising from Boko Haram attacks at 1,500 in the first quarter of 2014 alone. Earlier in August 2013, Fatou Bensouda, the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court (ICC) declared that there exists "reasonable basis to believe" that the Boko Haram has committed crimes against humanity.

Boko Haram assaults have also been extended beyond Nigeria and include the intermittent kidnapping of French nationals in Northern Cameroon in Dabanga and Nguetchewe in February and November 2013. In May 2014, the group kidnapped two Italian priests and a Canadian nun, and the wife of Ahmadou Ali, Cameroon's Deputy Prime Minister was kidnapped by the group in July 2014. It was in response to the growing security challenges posed by the group to Nigeria and international security that the United States Department of State labelled Boko Haram and its splinter group, the Ansaru, as Foreign-based Terrorist Organisations (FTOs) through the Executive Order 13224 in June 2012.

Boko Haram's Operational and Financial Capabilities

At the time of its inception, the Boko Haram was perceived and actually comprised of some gullible and misguided, rag tag youths recruited by Mohammed Yusuf from the ranks of artisans, school dropouts and students from *amajiris/ madrassas* (Islamic schools). This scenario changed in the aftermath of the July 2009 Boko Haram crisis which ended with the killing of Mohammed Yusuf, Buji Foi and over 300 of the group's members. Abubakar Shekau then took over the group with other remaining loyalists, and Boko Haram returned in 2010 with enhanced funding and logistics support, as well as operational training from Al Shabaab Al Mujahideen and the Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Under Abubakar Shekau Boko Haram became highly radicalised in the extremist Salafist narrative. Its members also received training in the use of arms, weaponry and explosives. The nature of its operations, choice of targets and

“... the persistence of armed conflicts across Africa's Sahel belt contributes to sustain Boko Haram by providing it with pools of experienced fighters and access to weaponry.”

swiftness with which it operates suggests that the membership of the group now transcends gullible and under-informed youths and includes strategic leaders and intellectuals. Dr. Mohammed Nazeef Yunus, a lecturer at the Kogi State University who was arrested in November 2013 and subsequently charged for his involvement in recruiting for and radicalisation of youths into the Boko Haram is an example.

Even as Nigerian security agencies have been successful in reducing the membership of the group through continuous arrests and combat fatalities, Boko Haram has continued to recruit, radicalise and train new elements through its propaganda and abductions of civilians captured from raided villages. It is also believed that several militants who have joined Boko Haram are deserters and former fighters from neighbouring countries such as Chad, Niger and Central African Republic. The tactical and operational precision exhibited by the Boko Haram during its attacks and the fact that several fighters arrested by Nigerian security agencies in counteroffensives have been identified to speak languages alien to Nigerian communities, gives credence to this suspicion. Meanwhile, the persistence of armed conflicts across Africa's Sahel belt contributes to sustain the Boko Haram by providing it with pools of experienced fighters and access to weaponry.

In addition, the Boko Haram has further benefitted from the initial inadequacies of relevant legal instruments to combat terrorism in the country. Such legal lacuna has led to the dismissal of various terrorism related charges against the group prosecuted by the Department

of State Security Services of Nigeria and the Nigerian Police Force at the courts. Nigeria however enacted a robust Terrorism Prevention Act (TPA) in June 2011 to address the lapses.

A split in the ranks occurred, and the Ansaru also known as the Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan, meaning 'Vanguard for the Defence of the Muslims in Black Africa', emerged in 2012 following discontent of some Boko Haram members with the leadership of Shekau. Its emergence was announced by Abu Usamatul Ansari through a video released in June 2012. The members frowned at the targeting of Muslims by the Shekau faction of Boko Haram and assaults on women and children. Ansaru's major defined objective is the defence of Muslims in Black Africa. Consequently, Ansaru has engaged in attacks on Western interests in retaliation for perceived atrocities perpetrated against Muslims by the western countries of Europe and America. This informed its kidnap of foreigners in Nigeria and neighbouring Cameroon. The Ansaru has also engaged in prison breaks and attacks on critical security infrastructures in Nigeria. However, unlike the Boko Haram, Ansaru have demonstrated interest in dialogue with the Nigerian government to halt its aggressions. In June 2013, the Nigerian government proscribed the Ansaru and Boko Haram through an order gazetted as Terrorism (Prevention Proscription Order) Notice 2013.

Boko Haram continues to have access to vast funds accumulated from various sources including the daily remittances from Yusuf's disciples whom he empowered with soft funds to start legitimate businesses such as shoe shinning, motor cycle transport (known locally as *okada*) and petty trading. Financial support for the group has also been traced to organisations registered as charities outside Nigeria, while it is suspected that several state and local government authorities in parts of Northern Nigeria pay ransom to the group to prevent attacks on their areas of jurisdiction. Arrested members of the Boko Haram group have also confessed to participation in bank robberies, looting of cattle and farms as well as kidnappings to generate funds for their operations. The Global Terror Watch currently ranks the Boko Haram as the seventh richest terrorist group in the world with an estimated US \$70 million in assets.

The Boko Haram is also known to have links with other Al Qaeda linked cells in Africa. It exhibits sympathy towards the Al Qaeda in Islamic

“... Boko Haram is often considered as a Northern agenda perpetrated by the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy to regain political power...”

Maghreb (AQIM) and extremist Islamic groups in the Sahel. Boko Haram training links to Al Shabaab was confirmed by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) following the discovery of a camp in Lower Shabelle region of Somalia where Boko Haram fighters received support in June 2011. Boko Haram's international linkages have been useful for the group's training, logistics and propaganda dissemination.

Politicisation of Boko Haram

The threat posed by Boko Haram has also been highly politicised such that the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and the main opposition alliance the All Progressive Congress (APC) have repeatedly traded accusations against each other of complicity in Boko Haram attacks.

Lawal Kaita, an opinion leader from Northern Nigeria, threatened in September 2010 that the North would make Nigeria ungovernable if Goodluck Jonathan were to win the 2011 Presidential election. Deriving from the perceived utility of group violence in the quest for power in Nigeria as demonstrated by the OPC and the Niger Delta militants, the Boko Haram is often considered as a Northern agenda perpetrated by the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy to regain political power which it lost in 1999 and 2010 to the South-West and South-South geo-political zones respectively. It is within this framework that the Boko Haram is sometimes considered as 'rented insecurity' designed to gain political advantage in the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria. This dimension to the crisis has deprived Nigeria's governing elites the unity of purpose needed to combat the scourge of domestic terrorism.

Calculated and Adaptive Tactics

The Boko Haram also exploits advantages arising from Nigeria's porous border in the Northern parts of the country to its advantage. Nigeria has an extensive international boundary estimated at about 4,900 km. This comprises of 1,690 km with the Republic of Cameroon in the east, 773 km with the Republic of Benin in the West, about 1,497 km with the Republic of Niger in the north, 87 km with Chad in the north-east and 853 km of coastline. A large part of Nigeria's border areas especially with Cameroon remains under-patrolled. This has made it easy for Boko Haram operating in the frontline states to escape into neighbouring Cameroon when confronted by military offensives.

Closely related to the above is the gap in the coordination of military offensives against the group between Nigeria and Cameroon. Quite often, such offensives are conducted independently, thereby making it easy for the terrorists to cross over the borders into Cameroon or Nigeria respectively, enabling them to avoid confrontation with the pursuing security forces. While this scenario is deplorable, it is important to note that Nigerian military offensives are quite often in immediate response to real-time Boko Haram assaults on towns and villages in Nigeria and are rarely planned in advance. The Cameroonian military have also operated in isolation of their Nigerian counterparts in efforts to expel or eliminate Boko Haram elements from their territory. The imperative of carefully coordinated military offensives by countries is vital to counter Boko Haram.

Future of Boko Haram

The Nigerian government and its security agencies are continuously adjusting to the challenge posed by Boko Haram. Military and security assets are being upgraded, while specialised trainings to officers and men to counter asymmetric warfare have been introduced as an integral part of their curriculum. Nigeria has also strengthened its response to Boko Haram with the amendment of her Terrorism Prevention Act in 2013 which was perceived as inadequate in its earlier form to combat the threat. The immediate gains from the counterterrorism legislation include the conviction of Kabiru Sokoto on 20 December 2013 for masterminding the 2011 Christmas Day bombing of St. Theresa's Catholic Church in Madalla near Abuja which led to the death of 44 individuals. Prosecution of arrested group members

“The imperative of carefully coordinated military offensives by Nigeria and Cameroon is vital to counter Boko Haram.”

apprehended for committing acts related to terrorism is still on-going.

Security measures adopted by the state are yielding positive results. The Boko Haram has been largely confined to the three frontline states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. There have however been intermittent strikes in some buffer states that share geographical and cultural boundaries with the frontline states such as Bauchi, Kaduna, Kano and Plateau states. The volume of Boko Haram attacks within the Maiduguri metropolis and environs have also been reduced drastically since the declaration of a state of emergency in May 2013. This partly explains Boko Haram's shift to remote and less patrolled border frontiers around Sambisa and Gworza. The group has also resorted to attacks on seemingly unusual targets like the abduction of 276 school girls at Chibok and attacks on travellers within the frontline states. The continued pressure on the group seems to have partly led to the attacks in Abuja in April and June 2014, which were likely to have been designed as diversionary measures from the heat it is experiencing at the frontline states. The flight of Boko Haram members into parts of neighbouring Cameroon can also be explained within the context of increasing government pressure.

Beyond legal regimes and military operations, Nigeria's response to the Boko Haram phenomenon also includes community engagement. In Borno state, the emergence of the Civilian Joint Task Force (Civilian JTF) is in recognition of the need for synergy between security agencies and the people to address the situation. The Civilian JTF is a confidence building initiative between the public and security agencies and strengthens the social resilience of the local population where it exists.

Nigeria has also solicited international cooperation to address the threat of Boko Haram. The imperative of international cooperation cannot be overemphasised in view of the transnational dimension of the threat and the international linkages of the group. Such cooperation extends to training, intelligence and information sharing as well as joint border patrols with neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Niger and Chad. Interstate cooperation to counter the Boko Haram has intensified since the group began cross border assaults in neighbouring Cameroon. In the aftermath of the abduction of school girls in Chibok, the Nigerian government invited and received technical assistance from the United States military to conduct search and rescue operations. The Government of France and Britain among others have also offered to assist Nigeria combat Boko Haram.

Deriving from the gains of Nigeria's counterterrorism offensive against the group, the Coordinator of National Information Centre (NIC), Mr. Mike Omeri, declared that the Boko Haram anomie attacks indicate that the group is in its dying days. Notwithstanding this optimism, there still are several vulnerable areas which the Boko Haram exploits to pursue terrorism. These include the nature of most traditional markets and motor parks which remain crowded and under-secured, the initial laissez-faire attitude to communal security, and inadequate police infrastructure, among others.

It is not an overstatement to assert that Boko Haram remains a major physical security challenge confronting Nigeria since the post amnesty programme in the Niger Delta commenced in 2009. Terror attacks by the group have resulted in wanton carnage and destruction of lives and property. Boko Haram continues to pose threats to public safety and national security in Nigeria. The group has also internationalised its operations with some observable cross-border attacks in neighbouring Cameroon through kidnappings and hostage-taking to direct assaults on the government and people of Cameroon. So far, sustained counterterrorism measures adopted by the Nigerian government have however succeeded in reducing the frequency of Boko Haram attacks without completely eliminating the scourge. In view of the inherent threats posed by Boko Haram to Nigeria's national security as well as the regional security of West and Central Africa, it has become imperative to solicit sustained international cooperation especially between Nigeria and its neighbours to combat the scourge of terrorism associated with Boko Haram.

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Somalia: State Failure, Poverty and Terrorism

Zakaria Ousman Ramadane

Bad governance, weak leadership, manmade and natural disasters and terrorism have crippled Somalia's economy and political and social institutions, and made the country one of the most conflict-ridden and underdeveloped in Africa. The vast ungoverned territories continue to be exploited by terrorists and criminal elements. Given Somalia's governance deficiencies, the only sustainable way to deal with the Al Shabaab threat is a strategy based on regional and international cooperation.

In the recent years, Africa has been witnessing a number of violent intra-state conflicts leading to the diversion of a significant portion of resources, including official funds earmarked for development, to emergency assistance to cope with the consequences of these conflicts. The Sahel in the West and the Horn of Africa in the East are the two hotspots of conflict in Africa, which are crippled by sectarian violence, drug-trafficking and terrorism. The two regions also suffer from environmental degradation.

Although the violent extremist Islamist groups operating in the Horn of Africa espouse a Salafi-Wahabist Islamic narrative, Sufism is the predominant form of Islam traditionally practiced in the region, which includes Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Kenya. The main Sufi Orders in Somalia are Qadiriyya, Ahmadiyya, Dandarawiyya and Salihiyya. Although Salafism entered the region by 1960, the growth of the radical Salafi-Wahabist Islam and the subsequent spread of extremist jihadist ideologies in East Africa have come about in the recent decades.

State Failure and Terrorism in Somalia

The factors contributing to the emergence of religious extremism in the Horn of Africa are mainly political and socio-economic. One of the major socioeconomic factors has been the imposition of Structural Adjustment

Programs (SAPs) on governments in East Africa, which were initiated by the Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank and the International Monetary fund) in the 1980s. The East African governments were compelled to make drastic budgetary cuts, as one of the goals of the SAPs was to make a general saving by cutting government spending. According to some assessments, however, these macroeconomic reforms resulted in emasculating state capacities and provided a windfall of opportunities for political movements (mostly Islamist) to take root, as public spending for delivery of essential services such as education, health, electricity, water and security decreased substantially and were confined to the urban middleclass and elite areas. Income distribution also polarised due to the structural adjustment, as many individuals formerly employed in the state sector lost their jobs. For example, in Somalia, the government was unable to employ university graduates to sectors such as education and healthcare, which were formerly administered by the state, which caused almost all schools and medical facilities to shut down.

By and large, the Somalian political leadership, like that of its counterparts in many East African countries, also failed to meet people's expectations for socio-economic development. Indeed, the corruption and embezzlement of public funds by the political leadership of Somalia increased simultaneously with the spread of poverty, unemployment and tribalism (inter-tribal conflict). By the late 1980s, the government of Somalia could no longer fulfill its core function of providing basic public services to the population, the state had become irrelevant to people's lives and various extremist and rebel groups began to exploit segments of the population and challenge the central government.

The civil wars in Somalia in the 1990s, which followed the fall of former president Mohammed Siad Barre, culminated in a virtual 'state collapse' exposing the country to violence and instability. As a result, Somalia underwent tremendous structural political transformations: in northern Somalia, the self-declared Republic of Somaliland came into being, which was formed by the Somali National Movement (founded and led by members of the Isaaq clan of the Somaliland region), which also included the semi-autonomous region of Puntland.

“... the SAPs resulted in emasculating state capacities and provided a windfall of opportunities for political movements (mostly Islamist) to take root.”

In Somalia, even with the unprecedented inflow of foreign aid and troops, state collapse has created vast ungoverned spaces which are in the hands of terrorist movements and criminal groups. The central government of Somalia presently has control only over Mogadishu and key towns in south-central Somalia, while the jihadist and other secessionist groups control all other parts of the country.

The destabilising effect of militant Islam and political conflict in Somalia is exacerbated also due to pervasive poverty and environmental degradation. During the last fifty years, the Horn of Africa has experienced four cyclical droughts, resulting in famines, environment degradation and the displacement of people and animals. In Somalia, 70 percent of the people depend directly or indirectly on a subsistence economy. The system of agricultural production and animal rearing based on a subsistence economy has not been able to cope with the high population growth (3 percent annually), and the population has been devastated by frequent floods and droughts leading to desertification and the destruction of harvests. The demographic map of the country has in fact permanently shifted due to the displacement of a large portion of the Somali population to the south, with concentrations in IDP camps. Life in camps has altered traditional family structures and undermined social cohesion. Significantly, camp populations which are mainly comprised of young males – an economically vulnerable segment of the population – have become an easy prey to terrorist recruiters.

Evolving Terrorist Network

According to an estimate of the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) of the University of Maryland, Al Shabaab Al Mujahideen, the most significant terrorist group in Somalia, has carried out approximately 550 terrorist attacks (mostly within Somalia but also outside of it, notably in Kenya and Uganda), killing more than 1,600 and injuring more than 2,100 individuals, since its inception in 2007. It is estimated that Al Shabaab has 1,000 to 4,000 fighters of which 200 to 400 are foreigners (from Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sudan, Kenya, the United States and other African states). The primary objective of Al Shabaab, an Al Qaeda affiliated organisation, is to establish an Islamic state (caliphate) and topple the internationally recognised Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG), which is administered from Mogadishu. Al Shabaab is associated with the strict Salafi-Wahabist doctrine of Islam which calls for governance according to Sharia (Islamic) Law. The group also calls for a cultural revival and revitalisation of Islam among the population. Al Shabaab is currently in control of southern and central Somalia and has established Al Shabaab branches and Islamist administrations throughout these territories, each running a mosque, a school and a youth club. While Al Shabaab is the major jihadist group in Somalia, Hizb al Islamare is equally violent. The Hizb al Islam, which separated from Al Shabaab in 2012, controls Beledweyne and administers the Hiraan region, as well as Afgoi district near Mogadishu. Hizb al Islam is presently not believed to be affiliated to Al Qaeda.

Al Qaeda's connection with Somali jihadist operations started from 2008 with individuals associated with Al Qaeda from the Middle East and Asia participating in Al Shabaab attacks, as well as in the illicit trade of charcoal out of Somalia to neighbouring countries and the Middle East. The involvement in illicit trade not only generated money to support Al Shabaab's activities but also furnished Al Qaeda access to the booming illegal arms market in the region as reported by Radio France International (RFI) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

The organisational structure of Al Shabaab is important to understand how the group operates. It is known that the leaders of Al Shabaab operate with a Shura Council (Islamic advisory council) which sets the agenda for the group, i.e. to establish an Islamist state and apply Islamic law as a code of conduct for Muslims throughout

“... terrorist activities of Al Shabaab have largely been carried out by small local groups of individuals who receive instructions from the Shura Council (generally) via the hubs, but have the operational capability to carry out attacks on their own.”

Somalia. While Al Shabaab's founder-leader Ahmed Abdi Godane (a.k.a Abu Mukhtar Abu Zubair) along with other leaders such as Ibrahim Haji Jama al Afghani, Mukhtar 'Abu Mansur' Robow, Fu'ad Muhammad Khalaf 'Shongole' (Al Shabaab's spokesman), 'Ali Mahamoud Rage' and preacher 'Abd al Qadir Mu'min' were likely to have been a part of the Shura Council, its present membership is not known.

Al Shabaab's operating structure is based on networks of a number of small cells (nodes), where some (hubs) provide centralised direction and communication linkages to others that are decentralised and are many in number (while some cells may operate entirely independently from hubs). Hubs channel financial aid and guidance to the nodes without asserting active control or direction. Nodes identify targets and initiate terrorist operations largely independent of the hubs, but making use of the hub's resources and assistance. While the ties between hubs and nodes are weak, ties within the node itself are very strong and quite resistant to erosion. Consequently, nodes have been extremely difficult to penetrate, monitor or detect. The terrorist activities of Al Shabaab have thus largely been carried out by these small local groups of individuals who receive instructions from the Shura Council (generally) via the hubs, but have the operational capability to carry out attacks on their own.

There is an indication that Al Shabaab may be looking to work with other jihadist groups in the region. It is reported that a Boko Haram fighter from Nigeria went to Somalia and allegedly received training from Al Shabaab. The return of the Boko Haram fighter from Somalia to Nigeria coincided with the August 2011 bombing of the UN compound in Abuja. However, it seems that a partnership between Boko Haram and Al Shabaab would be difficult to sustain due to the geographical distance between the groups (Boko Haram operating from northern Nigeria in the north-west of Africa and Al Shabaab based in Somalia in the north-east of the continent). But the tie between Al Shabaab and Al Hijra in Kenya could be developed due to the long land and sea borders, and due to the presence of the large and ancient community of persons of Somali origin in Kenya. In fact, Kenyan Muslims have been recruited by Al Shabaab and Al Shabaab used the Somali-dominated Eastleigh district of Nairobi to plan the Westgate Mall attack in 2013.

Despite the heavy presence of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) since 2007 in Somalia to support the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia to maintain peace and stability (AMISOM's chief mandate being to consolidate peace and stability in Somalia by helping the new government to contain, repulse attacks and work towards defeating Al Shabaab), the scope of Al Shabaab's terrorist activities continue to deepen inside the country as well as outside of Somalia not only in numbers but in terms of networking and expansion of the illegal arms trade with actors from other conflict zones in close proximity, such as South Sudan.

The Way Ahead

The general lawlessness in Somalia and the transnational nature of the terrorist and criminal networks in the Horn of Africa, call for a concerted regional effort to effectively respond to the threats. Better integration of national, regional and international instruments based on the shared goals of greater security as well as development will result in more comprehensive and long-term solutions, that can not only defeat terrorism, but prevent it by strengthening respective national governments and countering radicalisation and promoting socio-economic development regionally. Such an effort involves improved communication and collaboration between the countries of the region, key donors and multilateral bodies. In formulating a regional security policy, synergy based on pooling resources and knowledge on violent extremist groups must be achieved, along with the ownership and coordination of medium and long-term joint military actions as required. Indeed, the situation in Somalia may constitute a prime opportunity for East African states to come together as a regional community to combat the menace of terrorism and the related criminal domain.

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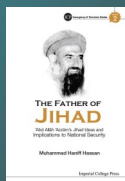
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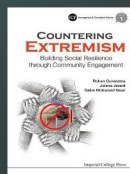
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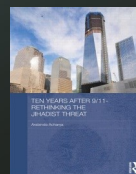
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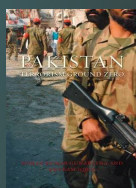
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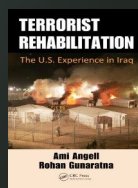
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