

Al Qaeda vs. Daech in the Sahel : what to expect?

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Summary

Multiple players that destabilize the countries in the region characterize the terrorist landscape in the Sahel. Despite the fact that each terrorist group has particular areas of action and zones of influence, nevertheless two main ideological tendencies confront each other in the Sahel: on one hand, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and on the other, the Islamic State (IS) organization (also known as Daesh). However, some groups continue to act independently of the allegiances they have pledged by refusing to follow the orders of their hierarchical leaders. Faced with this complexity of terrorist players in the Sahel, this Policy Brief proposes to examine the situation by discussing the system of allegiances, the relationship between the different groups, as well as the role played by state actors in their struggle against these different nebulae.

Introduction

Already infested by terrorist groups since the early 2000s when the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) took up residence there, terrorist groups' activity increased and became organized in northern Mali when GSPC pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda, to become Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

The Libyan crisis had its first major repercussion, the occupation of Northern Mali in early 2012 by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), a separatist group Touareg, which since 1960 is at the origin of recurrent crises and conflicts between Azawad and its movements in the Malian government. The impact of this occupation was worsened by a military coup in Bamako that not only weakened the Malian state, but also allowed the terrorist and separatist groups to extend their hold over entire northern Mali.

The cohabitation of jihadist, separatist and organized crime groups in this part of Mali resulted in the proliferation of dissident clusters within AQIM (MUJAO) and the MNLA (Ansar Dine). The military operation launched in 2013 by France had the effect of "kicking the anthill" which caused a scattering of the jihadists without neutralizing them. Today, they are back under different names and linkages, but still with considerable ability to harm.

«If AQIM and the Islamic State organization seem to act using the same means, their political aspirations are divergent and they compete for jihadist leadership.»

At the same time, the Boko Haram organization, created in Nigeria in 2000, has spread throughout the Lake Chad region and threatened some of the Central African countries.

Given these elements, it would be interesting to conduct a situational analysis to better understand the developments in the region and to develop hypotheses for its evolution. Thus, we will first look at the situation in the region, which is characterized by an opposition between two ideological currents, before we proceed in formulating perspectives for its evolution.

I. Existing terrorist forces: two opposing forces

Although they are often autonomous movements, extremist groups exist through allegiance systems that are part of larger terrorist movements. Thus, two extreme ideologies are present today in Africa and share the terrorist environment that plagues the Sahel, each with its own objectives: on one hand, the “Islamic State” organization (Daesh) trend, and on the other, the “Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)” trend.

If AQIM and the Islamic State organization seem to act using the same means, their political aspirations are divergent and they compete for jihadist leadership. While Al Qaeda targets the distant enemy represented by the West, the Islamic state organization instead leads territorial struggles against its nearby enemy.

1. The Islamic State: a more violent tactic combined with a more attractive strategy

The repercussions of the Libyan crisis have spread beyond its borders to affect neighboring countries, notably Niger, Mali and Nigeria. Armed fighters and arms trafficking have been converging in southern Libya. These elements have fuelled violence and extremism in northern Nigeria, Mali and Niger. The Libyan crisis has also revived a dormant rebellion by the Tuaregs.

As a result, extremist movements began to proliferate in the Sahelian region. Factions are organized within the Maghreb and the Sahel and pledge allegiance to the Islamic State. Thus, these extremist groups operate beyond traditional state borders.

At this stage it would be wise to question whether the conditions for the proliferation of the Islamic State

in the Middle East are present in Africa and whether they constitute a favorable environment for Daesh’s proliferation.

a. Jund Al-Khilafa fi Ard al-Jazair

In 2014, an Algerian extremist faction based in the Kabylie region separated from Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)¹ and pledged allegiance to the Islamic State organization, considering it more on the right path in comparison with AQIM. Thus Jund Al-Khilafa, a distinct movement of Jund Al-Khilafa historically active on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, was created in Algeria.

Although unknown to the general public, the organization made its first media appearance a few days after its creation with the publication of a video in which a French hostage is beheaded. Jund Al-Khilafa committed this act due to the refusal of the French forces to cease their strikes on Islamic State positions in Irak.

«After winning the presidential elections, Muhammadu Buhari aimed to counter the extremist group Boko Haram.»

Jund Al-Khilafa had 30 members, which is not a sufficient force to maintain its activities in Algeria. Although the group has become more violent since becoming affiliated with the Islamic State organization, it has gradually lost ground in Algeria and as such, its impact has reduced. This decline became more acute following the assassination of Abu Doujana, leader of the group, as well as another member. Consequently, the presence and the very influence of the Islamic State organization has weakened in Algeria and may even be doomed to disappear from the country.

b. Islamic State from West Africa: the Boko Haram faction

By spreading its activities within Libya, the Islamic State organization takes advantage of chaos and is gradually taking root in Africa. This introduction into Africa will enable it to seduce other extremist groups in Algeria, Libya, Egypt and Nigeria.² In the Sahel, Boko Haram, an armed

1. Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed. “Radicalization: Social Media and the Rise of Terrorism.” House Testimony, Hearing before the US House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security 28 (2015).

2. Caramel, Laurence, and Joan Tilouine. “L’Etat Islamique Multiplie ses

extremist group based in Nigeria, pledged allegiance as a group to affirm that it has the same objectives and enemies as the Islamic State organization.³ This alliance system establishes the expansion of Daesh in Africa and demonstrates that its sphere of action extends beyond the Middle East where it is beginning to lose ground.

After winning the presidential elections, Muhammadu Buhari aimed to counter the extremist group Boko Haram. A year after he came to power, the number of attacks sharply diminished, although President Buhari was not in command of the most significant operation.

Boko Haram is a relevant reflection of the ideological split that exists between AQIM and the Daesh. Indeed, at its creation in 2002, the group advocated the establishment of a caliphate directed by Shari'a.

Eight years later, when Abubakar Shekau became the head of the organization, Al Qaeda's ideas influenced him, as well as those of the "Islamic State" organization. Gradually, his group became closer to the Islamic State organization and pledged allegiance to it in March 2015. It called itself the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which gives it more legitimacy. However, several rumors of the death of Abubakar Shekau have emerged since 2009, which he discredited through videos or recordings proving that he was still alive. Following an announcement of his death in 2016, Daesh handed over the leadership of its West African Province to Abu Musab al-Barnawi, a former spokesman for Boko Haram.⁴ The Islamic State organization criticized Shekau's methods, which were considered far too radical, especially when using children for suicide bomber operations. Following this nomination, which Shekau rejected, two tendencies emerged from Boko Haram: Shekau and al-Barnawi.

Nearly half of the Boko Haram members had rallied with the ranks of the Islamic State organization in retaliation to Shekau, who refused to comply with Islamic State orders. This situation largely contributed to an internal split within Boko Haram confirmed by Marine Lieutenant General Thomas Waldhauser, named to take command of US Africom.⁵

"Franchises" en Afrique." LeMonde.fr. N.p., 10 Mar. 2015. Web.

3. AFP. "Nigeria: Boko Haram Fait Allégeance au Groupe État Islamique - JeuneAfrique.com." JeuneAfrique.com. N.p., 08 Mar. 2015. Web. 01 July 2016.

4. "Boko Haram in Nigeria: Abu Musab Al-Barnawi Named as New Leader." BBC News. BBC, 03 Aug. 2016. Web. 30 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36963711>>.

5. Stewart, Phil. "Boko Haram Fracturing over Islamic State Ties, U.S. General Warns." Reuters. Thomson Reuters, 21 June 2016. Web. 30 Dec. 2016. <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-nigeria-boko-haram-idUSKCN0Z72WT>>.

c. Islamic State in Libya

With the rise of the Arab Spring in 2011, Libya underwent an unprecedented political crisis. Increasing violence combined with a high death toll prompted the international community to intervene on the basis of the principle of Responsibility to Protect.⁶ On the other hand, the intervention did not anticipate the possible repercussions that led to chaos in the country after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi.

Currently, Libya is fragmented among five political entities that each governs part of the country.⁷ The official government controls only a small part in the east of the country and a province to the northwest. Conflict resolution is even more problematic because several players come into play, challenging the negotiation process.

« Today, and despite its defeat at Sirte, Daesh is spreading both south and east. It still hopes to find an ally among the factions in conflict in Libya. »

Weakened by the international coalition strikes,⁸ Daesh is retreating in Iraq and Syria and is gradually spreading to Libya. Taking advantage of the chaotic conditions in the country, it propagates its activities in Libya by relying on local organizations, among which is Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam (the Islamic Youth Shura Council), or MSSI, which pledged allegiance to Daesh in 2014. For the Islamic State organization, this allegiance is of paramount importance because Libya is regarded as the key to developing in the Sahel. However, it would be wise to point out that MSSI is actually comprised of fighters from Syria who have settled in Libya. Since there is a vacuum in the political terrain, the situation has benefited IS, which has made Libya its reserve base after its gradual defeat in Syria. As a result, since April 2016 the IS has gradually established itself along the Libyan coast and more particularly in Sirte. This implementation is strategic from two points of view. On one hand, Sirte is halfway between Tobruk and Tripoli, where the two opposing governments sit, and on the other hand, Sirte is a few kilometers from the country's main oil fields. Thus, the IS occupies a central command in Libya and is propagating towards the south of the country. Today, and despite its defeat at Sirte, Daesh is spreading

6. <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/responsibility.shtml>.

7. Wehrey, Frederic, and Boukhars Anouar, eds. *Perilous Desert: Insecurity in the Sahara*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013. Web.

8. Lt Col Stéphane Spet. "Operation Serval: Analyzing the French Strategy against Jihadists in Mali." *ASPJ Africa & Francophonie 3rd Quarter (2015)*: n. pag. Air University. Mar. 2015. Web. 27 July 2016.

both south and east. It still hopes to find an ally among the factions in conflict in Libya.

In March 2016, IS launched an assault on Tunisian security forces in Ben Gardane, a city 25 kilometers from Libya.⁹ This attack allowed the Islamic State organization to assert itself in Tunisia and to establish checkpoints there. Furthermore, a flow of arms and fighters from Daesh's fiefdoms in Iraq and Syria accompanied this expansion in Libya.

2. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: between influence, spinoffs and objectives

a. AQIM

In the Sahel, AQIM covers nearly eight countries and is organized around four katibat (operational units) of which the most active is Katibat Al-Furkan.¹⁰ Having appeared in 2007 with its leader's allegiance to Ben Laden, AQIM aspires to operate throughout the Islamic Maghreb. However, in 2011 a territorial dispute arose between AQIM and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO),¹¹ which is mainly active in southern Algeria and northern Mali and targets all countries in West Africa. The territorial dispute thus rectified AQIM's operational sphere, which claims to be active in the Islamic Maghreb but in reality is based in Mali, and especially since Mali's military coup in March 2012.¹²

«Faced with this situation, nearly 75,000 Malians have sought refuge in Mauritania, among others in the Mbera camp, while another 50,000 have migrated to Niger to escape the war.»

Indeed and as early as January 2012, the government of Amadou Toumani Toure began to lose some control of the country. Two months later, a military coup occurred in

9. Porter, Geoff D. "How Realistic is Libya as an Islamic State "Fallback"? | Combating Terrorism Center at West Point." CTC Sentinel 9.3 (2016): 1-5. Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. Mar. 2016. Web. 27 July 2016.

10. Masson Michel, "Les groupes islamistes se réclamant d'Al-Qaïda au Maghreb et au Nord de l'Afrique," *Confluences Méditerranée* 1/2011 (N° 76), p. 155-168.

11. Claudot-Hawad, Hélène. "La Question Touarègue: Quels Enjeux ?" *La Guerre Au Mali. Comprendre la Crise au Sahel et au Sahara : Enjeux et Zones d'Ombre.* By Michel Galy. Paris: La Découverte, 2013. 125-47. HAL Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société, 2013. Web. 26 July 2016.

12. Siméant, Johanna, and Laure Traoré. "Mali: Le Putsh et le Nord Vus de Bamako." *Sciences Po. Centre de Recherche Internationales*, Oct. 2012. Web. 27 July 2016.

Mali and led to the takeover of the north of the country by an armed Islamist group, which claimed its autonomy.¹³ Accused of not having been up to the task of managing the crisis of the Tuareg rebels, President Toure was deprived of his functions. An interim civilian government headed by President Dioncounda Traore temporarily replaced him. The country is gradually weakening and is politically divided between the north, claimed by the Azawad movement in April 2012, and the south, under government control.¹⁴ The Tuareg rebellion itself compounds these issues, with the Tuareg split between rebels and supporters of the Azawad movement. Faced with this situation, nearly 75,000 Malians have sought refuge in Mauritania, among others in the Mbera camp, while another 50,000 have migrated to Niger to escape the war.¹⁵ This political disruption makes room for AQIM, which in 2015 claimed two attacks in Mali: in Nampala on January 5th,¹⁶ and in Bamako at the Radisson Blu Hotel on November 23rd.¹⁷ It continues to carry out attacks in northern Mali against agents the UN Integrated Multidimensional Mission for Stabilization in Mali (MINUSMA), the Red Cross, Malian soldiers, and Operation Barkhane.

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Given the pace of the attacks, it would be legitimate to ask whether AQIM is not gradually becoming the Malian version of Boko Haram. On the fringes of AQIM as an organization, two extremist movements, Ansar Dine and Al Mourabitoun, pledged allegiance to AQIM and provide logistical support.

13. Dembele, Mamadou Lamine. "Analyse de la Crise Politico-sécuritaire Actuelle au Mali aux Prismes des Relations Entre les Pouvoirs Publics et les Milieux Religieux Musulmans (Analysis of the Present Politico-Security Crisis in Mali through the Relations between the Malian State and Muslim Religious Communities)." *Social Science Research Network. SSRN*, 18 Sept. 2013. Web. 26 July 2016.

14. Chena, Salim, and Antonin Tisseron. "Rupture d'équilibres au Mali: Entre Instabilité et Reconstitutions." *Afrique Contemporaine* 1/2013 (n° 245). p. 71-84. Cairn.info. De Boeck Supérieur, 2013. Web. 26 July 2016.

15. Lejeune-Kaba, Fatoumata, and Leo Dobbs. "UNHCR Reinforces Assistance to Refugee Hosting Countries, Ahead of Mali Elections." *UNHCR News*. N.p., 28 June 2013. Web. 26 July 2016.

16. Longaray, Pierre. "Al Qaeda Militants Claim Attack on Mali Army Base That Killed at Least Eight" *VICE News RSS*. N.p., 6 Jan. 2015. Web. 30 June 2016.

17. Onuoha, Freedom C. "Attacks on Hotels in Africa." *Al Jazeera Center for Studies*. N.p., 16 Mar. 2016. Web. 27 July 2016.

b. Al Mourabitoun - Al Qaeda in West Africa

Composed of a 100-man force from Mali's Tuaregs and Arabs as well as from other countries (Algeria, Tunisia, etc.), Al Mourabitoun represents a branch of Al-Qaeda in West Africa. Not complying with the requirements of territoriality, they are active in six countries: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Libya, Mali and Niger. Their leader, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, had already accumulated previous positions in extremist groups before merging with the MUJAO (Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa) to create Al Mourabitoun. Thus, he sought to implement his experience - accumulated in particular with the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) then the Algerian GSPC before joining Al-Qaeda - to set up outside Algeria. He became the first man from AQIM who succeeded in establishing himself in the Sahelian region.¹⁸ After the creation of Al Mourabitoun, a desire for legitimacy prompted the group to pledge allegiance to a more internationally recognized organization. It is in this wake that the group divided between Adnan Abu Walid Sahraoui (former MUJAO spokesman) who pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, and Belmokhtar who refused to acknowledge this allegiance by stipulating that it was not approved upstream. A separation between the two groups resulted, which led to Al Mourabitoun's allegiance to AQIM in 2015. Since its creation, the group has conducted six attacks including Bamako, Ouagadougou and Grand Bassam.

c. Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO)

Since the dissidence with Belmokhtar, only MUJAO vestiges remain. Its leader, Adnan Abu Walid Sahraoui, pledged allegiance to the Islamic State organization. He renamed his group Islamic State in the Sahara without obtaining recognition of the organization. His group has only claimed one attack since its allegiance to the Islamic State organization: an attack in Burkina Faso in September 2016.

«The MNLA, on the other hand, was an ethno-political and territorial movement, seeking independence from Azawad, a territory in northern Mali that accounts for almost two-thirds of the country.»

18. Cigar, Norman L, and Stephanie E. Kramer. *Al-Qaida after Ten Years of War: A Global Perspective of Successes, Failures, and Prospects*. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2011.

d. Ansar Dine

The Ansar Dine group was born in the wake of the political upheavals that seized Mali in 2012. Composed of fighters from Mali, Algeria and Nigeria, the main objective of this movement based in the northern Mali is to establish Sharia law. Its leader, Iyad Ag Ghaly, is a former Tuareg politician who was dismissed from the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). As its leader is a cousin of an Al Qaeda member, the movement has often been associated with AQIM.

In 2012, when the military, dissatisfied with Amadou Touré, removed him from power with a coup d'état, Ansar Dine and the MNLA took advantage of the political vacuum to take control of three strategic cities of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu, where Ansar Dine strictly implemented Sharia law. Ansar Dine had an ideological rather than a territorial vocation insofar as the group wanted to establish Sharia throughout the country.¹⁹ The MNLA, on the other hand, was an ethno-political and territorial movement, seeking independence from Azawad, a territory in northern Mali that accounts for almost two-thirds of the country.²⁰

Although the two movements signed a pact to create an Islamic state in Mali, they renounced it because of ideological divergences. They went to war in the battle of Gao and Timbuktu where Ansar Dine and MUJAO, after winning the battle, put an end to the existence of Azawad, a self-proclaimed state by the MNLA.

«However, those disappointed with the alliance between Belmokhtar and MUJAO continue to act under their former name, and a handful of Al Mourabitoun's fighters act under the leadership of Abu Walid Sahraoui under Daesh's banner.»

Three other factions or katibat mainly emerged from Ansar Dine: Ansar Charia or Ansar Dine North; Macina Liberation Front; and Ansar Dine South. These cooperating factions demonstrate the growing influence of the movement in Mali, which push the transitional government to seek ECOWAS support to end the violence-induced crisis.

19. Onuoha, Freedom C., and Alex Thurston. "Franco-African military intervention in the Mali crisis and evolving security concerns." *Al Jazeera Center for Studies* (2013).

20. Hagberg, Sten, and Gabriella Körling. "Socio-Political Turmoil in Mali: The Public Debate Following the 'Coup d'État' on 22 March 2012." *Africa Spectrum*, vol. 47, no. 2/3, 2012, pp. 111–125. www.jstor.org/stable/23350453.

II. Ideological dynamics, state struggles and prospects for evolution

In view of the context described in the first part, this second part looks at the prospects for the development of terrorist groups in the region. Indeed, these depend mainly on elements that we will lay out in three parts. As a first step, we will look at the relationship between terrorist groups, before studying the relationship between terrorist groups and organized crime. Finally, we will see how States organize to combat this phenomenon and by what means.

1. Relations between terrorist groups

a. The groups' tendency to multiply

In 2007, when the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda, only the three following terrorist groups were known in the entire region from the Sahel to the Atlantic:

- The GSPC, which, by pledging allegiance to Al Qaeda became its branch in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM);
- Boko Haram, which began terrorist activities in 2002;
- The Islamic courts in Somalia, which eventually gave birth to the Shebbab.

The Sahelian region subsequently experienced a proliferation of groups and small groups through two elements: either by dissent within the old organizations, or by a desire for autonomy because the small structures belonging to these organizations gradually detached themselves from them.

Thus, dissent within AQIM led to the emergence of the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). Moreover, dissent within the Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNLA) gave rise to Ansar Dine. There is also a gradual autonomy of the katiba of the "Enturbannés" who changed their name to "Signatories in Blood". The latter joined forces with MUJAO to form Al Mourabitoun before morphing into Al Mourabitoun-Al-Qaeda in West Africa.

However, those disappointed with the alliance between Belmokhtar and MUJAO continue to act under their

former name, and a handful of Al Mourabitoun's fighters act under the leadership of Abu Walid Sahraoui under Daesh's banner.

«The main factor in the birth of new groups, goes hand in hand with the expansion of the area infected by the terrorist phenomenon.»

With regard to Boko Haram, the group is now experiencing its former leader Youssoufou, with some of its fighters reversing their allegiance to Daesh, while the other ones remain loyal to the so-called Islamic state under the leadership of al- Barnawi, the leader designated by Daesh.

Having reached this stage of reflection, it would be pertinent to ask whether this tendency towards the proliferation of groups will continue. Is it a heavy trend of terrorism in Africa and the Sahel or is it cyclical turmoil? On one hand, the first observation shows that dissent, the main factor in the birth of new groups, goes hand in hand with the expansion of the area infected by the terrorist phenomenon. Thus, a wider extension in West Africa (Senegal, Ivory Coast and other countries) or even to Central Africa could give rise to groups that will prevail, notably, Al Qaeda and, to a lesser extent, the Islamic State, taking advantage of certain local conditions, such as the junction with separatist movements like Ansar Dine. On the other hand, the gathering of States within structures that strengthen their capacities to combat terrorism could push terrorist groups to pool their forces and resources to increase their ability to do harm. This mutualisation would certainly not be expressed by a gathering of jihadists to constitute a single fighting structure (they are aware that they must retain the asymmetrical character of their wars), but would be manifested mainly by logistical support, shelter supplies or training.

b. Al Qaeda's tendency to dominate

The so-called Islamic State has taken advantage of its periods of success in the Middle East to attract several combatants and small groups from the Sahel region. It is thus noted that:

- Boko Haram announced its allegiance to Daesh in 2015, when it was booted out of its territory in northern Niger;
- A small AQIM faction in Algeria also announced its adherence to Daesh under the name of Jund Al Khilafa;
- Another mini-faction of Al Mourabitoun under the

leadership of Abu Walid Sahraoui also pledged allegiance to the proto Islamic state.

These adherences to the self-proclaimed Islamic State organization multiplied during 2015, at a time when pro-Al Qaeda groups were still under the effects of the Serval and Barkhane operations, which had scattered them across the Sahel desert. It was also the time when Daesh was at its peak and was multiplying the acquisition of territories.

«It is clear that the Al Qaeda trend now prevails in the Sahel and is likely to strengthen further due to several factors.»

As early as 2016, the weakening of French and African interventions and the first defeats of the so-called Islamic State, notably in the province of Al Anbar, consequently enabled the:

- Re-establishment and reorganization of pro-Al Qaeda groups in the Sahel;
- Halt of the movement to adhere to Daesh by Sahelian groups.

Al Qaeda now seems to be taking over the Sahel. AQIM, Al Mourabitoun, Ansar Dine, Shebbab and part of Boko Haram have remained loyal to Al Qaeda. As for Daesh, it has currently lost its stronghold in Sirte and a good part of its fighters among the Boko Haram ranks. In addition, less and less talk is heard about mini-groups that had pledged allegiance to Daesh, such as Abou Walid Sahraoui or Jund Al Khilafa.

It is clear that the Al Qaeda trend now prevails in the Sahel and is likely to strengthen further due to several factors. First, one of the main drivers of Daesh's ideology, which is the Sunni-Shiite conflict, has no relevance in the Sahel. The idea of Califat in North Africa and the Sahel refers more to the Ottoman Caliph as believed by Al Qaeda, and not to the Caliph Abbasid as Daesh believes. Finally, it is easier for foreign terrorist fighters who will return after the defeat of Daesh in Syria and Iraq to join Al Qaeda than to reconstitute Daesh in the Sahel.

2. The relationship between terrorist groups and organized crime: Hybridization

Hybridization is known as the crossing of two races or two species. It thus unites two elements, each with its own characteristics. The hybridization between organized crime and terrorism is in fact a cross between two phenomena, one motivated by material and pecuniary profit and the other motivated by political and ideological considerations. The phenomenon that will emerge when the merging - already noticed but not yet fully consumed in the Sahel - will mature, it will inherit dangerous characteristics from each of its parents. Organized crime will inherit the methods of blackmail, corrupt corporate prevarication, falsification and all mafia practices, and, through terrorism, it will inherit violence, savagery, modes of recruitment and conviction. The phenomenon that is developing of the terrorism / organized crime hybridization will be as intelligent as barbaric and as cunning as it is atrocious.

«Moreover, several tribes engaged in various trades and trafficking prefer to ensure their protection by armed terrorist groups rather than by the official security forces.»

The Sahel is today one of the areas where this hybridization finds the maximum conditions in which to develop. Both terrorists and criminal networks use the roads and trails in Sahel's ergs and deserts. The city of Agadez in Niger is known as the crossroads and the forced stopover of all traffickers and smugglers. It is also where terrorist groups replenish supplies and their various messengers encounter one another.

Moreover, several tribes engaged in various trades and trafficking prefer to ensure their protection by armed terrorist groups rather than by the official security forces. Terrorists simply get paid for the protection they provide, while official services have a tendency to hold them accountable from time to time. For organized crime networks and tribes living from illicit activities, the presence of terrorists is more desirable than that of States.

Interdependence between terrorist groups develops from these simple mutually rendered services and from the proximity on the ground (often provided in money, vehicles and food by mafia networks) and transnational crime networks (often secured by terrorist groups on their trafficking routes).

The stronger the relationship, the stronger the hybridization of terrorism to become a mafia-like activity, as well as organized crime that will itself resort to terrorist methods to confront the state security services. Alternatively, the trend among terrorists would be to have their own trafficking networks and the traffickers to have their own terrorist armed groups. Each of the activities will seek to grow its investments by hybridizing.

3. States fight against terrorist groups: between eradication and containment

States that are victims of terrorist acts are sometimes incapable of assuming responsibility for the defense and security of their citizens and allow other actors to intervene and try to restore order. The Sahel has had various interventions, whether initiated by states or supervised by regional or international institutions.

France has historically been present in the region to preserve its strategic interests. Since 1986, it has been militarily present in Chad through Operation Epervier, which ended in 2014. In January 2013, it also intervened in Mali at the request of the Government and as per UN Security Council Resolution 2085 to counter the extremism that was spreading in northern Mali. Operation Serval was generally considered a success in that it prevented the spread of jihadists. As early as January 2013, French troops were able to take back Gao and Timbuktu, and by the end of the month they were able to enter Kidal, which was the last main town controlled by the rebels.²¹ However, it has not been able to remedy the underlying causes of the phenomenon. Within this context, in 2014 France launched Operation Barkhane in the Sahel. Mobilizing a troop of 3,000 men, it concentrated its action in the north of Mali and Chad. In order to achieve its objectives, France relied on its strategic partnership with the G5 Sahel countries.²² Aligning with the countries of the region is a deliberate choice since it provides protection from accusations of French interference.

The French President traveled to Abuja, Nigeria on 14 May 2016 to attend the Regional Summit on Security, where Sahel heads of state were present.²³ One of the

main summit conclusions is to fight against Boko Haram in Nigeria's northeastern province and in the Lake Chad basin. Moreover, his participation suggests the signing of advanced defense agreements following discussions between the French and Nigerian presidents.

With regard to the United States' role in the region, one conclusion that can be made is that its relationship is traditionally and primarily a security-based cooperation. The United States has no hegemonic pretensions in the region and only became interested in it in the 1990s as they saw no strategic interest before.²⁴ They consider that it is Europe's responsibility to ensure stability in the region. Within this context, they are allied with France to fight against AQIM and Boko Haram by contributing an 8,500-person troop.²⁵ The alliance with France allows the United States to become indirectly involved in the region and not to reproduce the mistakes of the past. Still, the United States has a rapid intervention troop based in Spain that allows them to intervene in North Africa or the Sahel if the need arises.²⁶ They also have Africom, based in Germany, to intervene in Africa and to coordinate with regional organizations.²⁷

The states of the Sahel and West Africa sometimes develop joint forces to fight terrorism, either through initiatives by the African Union or the United Nations. This is the case of the United Nations Integrated Multidimensional Mission for Stabilization in Mali (MINUSMA), for example. On other occasions, these forces are established through simple initiatives by a few countries, such as the Mixed Multinational Force (FMM) between Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon to fight Boko-Haram.

«The Maghreb veterans of Daesh and Jabhat Annousra will be more likely to return to Libya or the Sahel than to their respective countries or to another hotbed of tension.»

However, Morocco is beginning to play a considerable role in the region from an economic, cultural, religious and security point of view. Thus, the United States maintains a privileged security cooperation relationship with Morocco

21. Laub, Zachary, and Johathan Masters. "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)." Council on Foreign Relations, 27 Mar. 2015. Web. 28 July 2016.

22. The G5 Sahel countries are comprised of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. They aim to provide common solutions to security threats in the region.

23. "Boko Haram « reste une menace », Affirme Hollande à Abuja." Le Monde.fr. N.p., 14 May 2016. Web. 21 July 2016.

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26. Eaglen, Mackenzie. US Military Force Sizing for Both War and Peace. 2015.

27. "About the Command." United States Africa Command. Web. 28 July 2016.

in the region. In November 2013, Morocco hosted the 2nd Regional Ministerial Conference on Border Security, in which the United States was also present alongside the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region. In the Rabat Declaration,²⁸ the countries represented at the conference agreed to establish a Regional Border Security Training and Training Center in order to confront the threat from jihadists.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it would be analytically rash to suggest an end to terrorism's evolution in the Sahel and West and Central Africa, at least over the medium and long term, for several reasons. On one hand, the dismantling of Daesh and the announced returns of the Maghreb fighters and the few Africans who fight within these ranks is a factor to be taken into consideration. The Maghreb veterans of Daesh and Jabhat Annousra will be more likely to return to Libya or the Sahel than to their respective countries or to another hotbed of tension. Whether they opt to reconstruct Daesh in Africa or return to Al Qaeda would be a determining factor in terrorism's future in the Sahel. The resolution of the Libyan issue is also an influential issue for the development of terrorism in the Sahel. The more that a solution is slow in coming, the more that terrorism becomes rooted in the country and reinforces the future development of the scourge in the Sahel region. The evolution of the G5 Sahel initiative to combat terrorism is also a major factor. Aid from the European Union and the United Nations is trying to move the project forward in order to make it a potent strike force against terrorism in the Sahel. Nevertheless, in order to be more effective, should regional forces with more resources become involved?

28. "2ème Conférence Ministérielle Régionale sur la Sécurité des Frontières (Rabat, 14 November 2013) Déclaration de Rabat." *Diplomatie.ma*. N.p., 14 Nov. 2013. Web. 26 July 2016.

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