

Violent Extremism in the Sahel: The Birth of a Third Generation of Terrorism?

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Summary

Are we witnessing a third generation of jihadism rearing its head in the Sahel? In the wake of the globalised movement of jihad in the 1990s, spearheaded by Afghan jihadists and propelled forward by Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, another trend has emerged in recent years with the advent of Daesh (also known as ISIS and ISIL) – a trend that is characterised by the territorialisation of the struggle and the revival of the Caliphate dream. These two movements have engaged in fierce confrontation in Sahel territory, which is segmented into several structures that were initially set up and run by individuals from the Maghreb and the Middle East. But, today, the doctrinal break-up with al-Qaeda – which advocates attacks against civilians – coupled with Daesh’s retreat have led to a total restructuring of jihadism in the Sahel, a jihadism that now relies on local recruits and is commanded by local leaders. In short, terrorism in the Sahel has a new face, so what are its main features and contours? What are its premises and doctrine? What are its aims and driving factors? And how does this third model stand out from those that preceded it?

I. Introduction

1. The war in Afghanistan and the birth of al-Qaeda

The wave of terrorism that the world faces today emerged as a globalised phenomenon in the 1990s with the transformation of the Afghan Mujahideen (Arab Afghans) into an international terrorist movement following the doctrinal impulse of several theorists including Abdellah Azzam, and under the operational leadership of Osama bin Laden.

The various extremist movements that had previously acted only at national levels found in jihad against the Soviet army, which had invaded Afghanistan, a cause

that allowed them to come together as an international contingent, under the same banner representing the struggle of Muslims against an "infidel" invader.

The end of the war in Afghanistan gave birth to a first generation of international jihadi fighters¹ under the banner of al-Qaeda². This first generation was indeed an outgrowth of the structure that had been built, blessed, and even formed by the US, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. During the First Gulf War, this structure would deviate from its initial loyalties and turn against its own creators and with them all the countries of the world, including

1. See my Policy paper "The 'Islamic State' Organization: A Continuation of al-Qaeda or an Emerging Rift?"

http://www.ocppc.ma/sites/default/files/OCPPC-PB1618vEn_0.pdf

2. Before the name "al-Qaeda", the organisation had different names, the best known of which is the one used in the February 1998 statement: "The World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders".

Muslims who did not adopt its own vision of Islam.

After the US intervention dislodged the Taliban from power and, with it, al-Qaeda's attempts to make Afghanistan its central operations base, al-Qaeda fighters dispersed into other fronts such as Bosnia, or returned to their home countries where their new mission was to fight their countries' regimes and even carry out attacks in countries allied to those regimes. These returnee fighters are behind the inception of new local groups affiliated with al-Qaeda, namely the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the Moroccan and Libyan Islamist combatant groups GICM and GICL, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), al-Qaeda in Iraq, and other smaller groups. While al-Qaeda took the form of several franchises scattered around the globe, the central organisation retained a certain capacity to coordinate international schemes, as evidenced by the attacks of September 11, 2001.

2. The invasion of Iraq and the birth of Daesh

A former Afghanistan fighter, Abu Mossaab al-Zarqawi would take advantage of the chaos that followed the US invasion of Iraq to form a terrorist group, initially linked to al-Qaeda, but which, over the course of events and under the influence of circumstances peculiar to Iraq, began to shape a doctrine of its own, mainly based on territorialisation and combatting Shiism. The organisation would, after the death of al-Zarqawi, become "the Islamic State of Iraq", then "the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant", before proclaiming itself "the Islamic State" (also referred to in the media as Daesh, ISIS, ISIL, or IS). This group, which had become not only a competitor to al-Qaeda but also its nemesis, announced in June 2014 the rebirth of the caliphate over a large swath of territory straddling Syria and Iraq.

The organisation recruits and attracts thousands of young volunteers to jihad, not only from Arab and Muslim countries like al-Qaeda does, but also from European and American countries, and among non-Muslim populations.

Relying on new theorists, the organisation developed a new discourse, a new doctrine, and new ambitions. It eclipsed al-Qaeda and brought about a second generation of jihadists, the majority of whom had never been to Afghanistan, never knew al-Qaeda, and their area of operations was limited to Syria and Iraq. Among this generation, the rate of female participation in jihad is

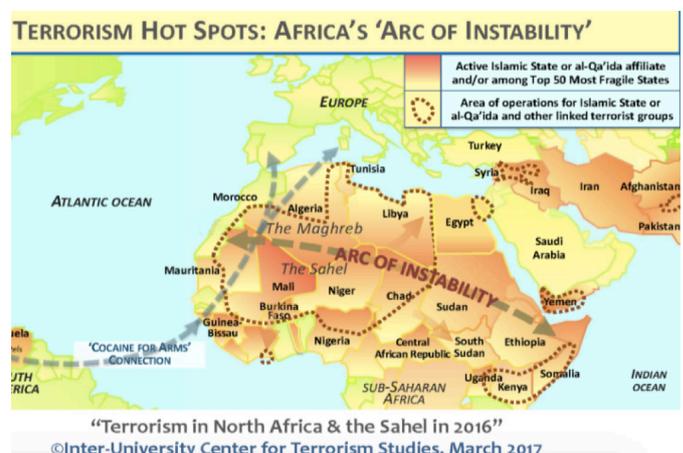
unprecedented, and unlike al-Qaeda fighters traveling alone to combat zones, second-generation fighters could travel with their families.

3. War between the two organisations in Africa

Africa was one of the stages of competition and even war between the two organisations. In various hotspots, Daesh attempted to make incursions by charming groups affiliated with al-Qaeda.

- In the Sahel, some organisations formerly affiliated with al-Qaeda, pledged allegiance to Daesh (Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi);
- In the Lake Chad region, Boko Haram switched loyalties to align itself with Daesh;
- In Libya, some factions were quick to pledge allegiance to the new organisation; and
- In Sinai, Ansar Bait al-Maqdis started calling themselves the Islamic State in Sinai.

Al-Qaeda appeared to be in a defensive position, trying to preserve its offshoots that were increasingly charmed by Daesh's new doctrine.



However, al-Qaeda seemed to withstand the assaults of its rival in Africa, even giving the impression that, overall, and in spite of certain appearances and circumstances, Daesh could not usurp al-Qaeda in Africa:

- Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi, whose allegiance to Daesh was only belatedly accepted, did not seem to weigh heavily against other al-Qaeda allies;
- The head of Boko Haram was quick to withdraw his allegiance to Daesh as soon as the organisation tried to name a new emir;

- Al-Shabab's loyalty to al-Qaeda has never been doubted;
- Daesh's attempt to settle in Sirte, Libya, did not last long due to a lack of sympathisers and a popular base; and,
- One of the tenets of Daesh's doctrine, the Sunni-Shiite conflict, found no place in Africa. (Some countries are home to both communities but no hostility has been reported so far.)

The defeat of Daesh in Syria and Iraq and the announced homecoming of foreign terrorist fighters – namely from Africa and especially from the Maghreb – has revived the idea of Daesh possibly settling in the Sahel specifically, and in Africa generally. The idea gave rise to another hypothesis: Could the return of foreign terrorist fighters strengthen the ranks of al-Qaeda instead of allow Daesh to settle in the region? Yet examining the timeline of al-Qaeda's evolution in the Sahel and in Africa reveals that al-Qaeda's doctrine itself only constitutes a backdrop to the Sahelo-African terrorist landscape, and a label used by groups that sometimes share no common traits with al-Qaeda, except for the use of terror. Sahelian terrorism shows an evolution marked by phases that can be linked to episodes of structural transformation. Several moments and events punctuate these transformations (see diagram below):

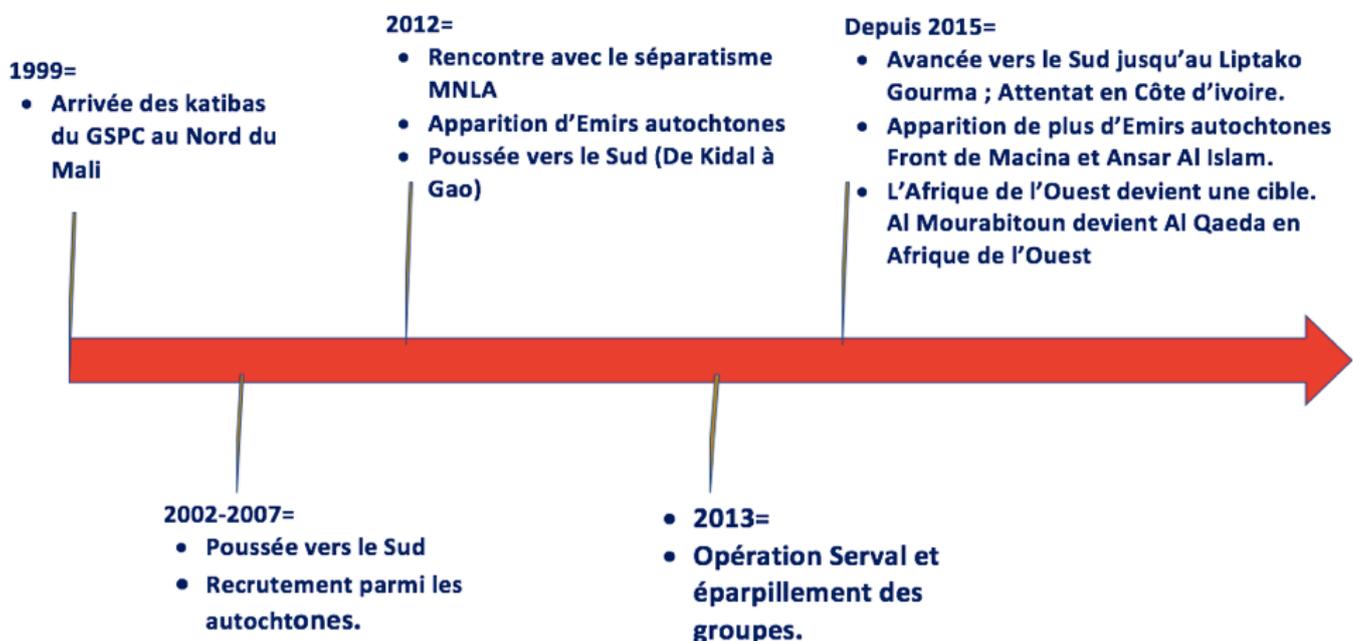
- During the first period, the terrorists in northern Mali were from the Maghreb, and so were the commanders and fighters.

- With massive local recruitment between 2003 and 2007, commanders still remained from the Maghreb but the fighters became mostly Sahelian.
- Today, violent extremism in the Sahel is led by Sahelian commanders and fighters.
- Elsewhere, even the formations claiming to be affiliated with al-Qaeda or Daesh are composed of African commanders and fighters.

The initial absence or gradual disappearance of the Afro-Arab and Maghreb component seem to reveal a metamorphosis of terrorism in Africa. Is it simply a transposition of the phenomenon from its Arab-Maghreb strongholds to the lands of sub-Saharan Africa, a real transformation that ushers in a new era of terrorism, or the birth of a new model?

Does the terrorism taking place in Africa today follow the same principles and doctrine as the one in the Middle East and the Maghreb, or is it in the process of becoming a new and self-styled phenomenon? Is it still the expression of the same demands, or is it rooted in other causes and conjunctures?

Do the jihadists wreaking havoc in Africa today identify more with their counterparts from al-Qaeda or from Daesh, or is this another generation of extremist fighters altogether? (See Diagram 2.)



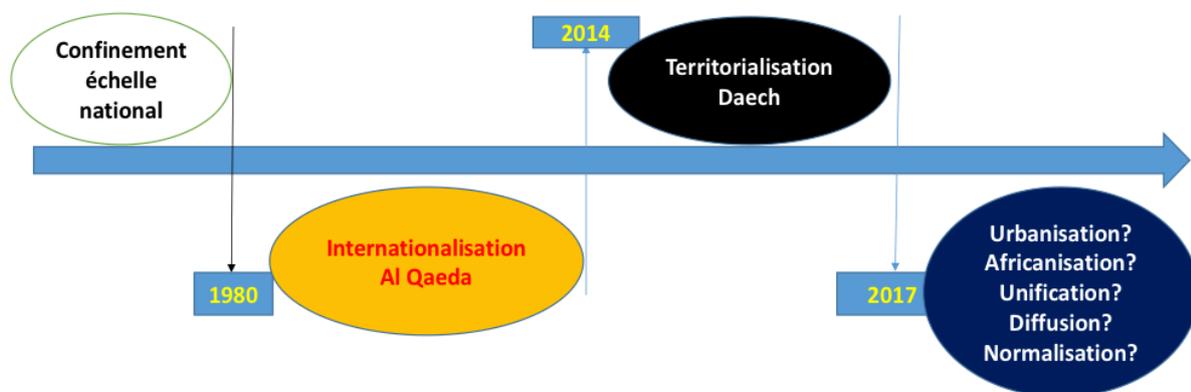
This paper attempts to answer these questions by examining the manifestations of current sub-Saharan terrorism and looking back at the various stages of its evolution. This analysis provides us with a possible conclusion; we may be faced with the birth of the third

generation of globalised terrorism. Is this possible? If so, what are its traits? What is its doctrine? What are its aims and driving factors? And how does it stand out from the jihadisms that preceded it?

Diagram 2

Moyen-Orient: « Etat Islamique » et Crise Syrienne. *« Etat Islamique » ou Daech.*

Périodisation du terrorisme



II. 1998-2007: The al-Qaeda Trend Takes Root in Northern Mali

1. First, there was the GSPC

Towards the end of the 1990s, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) announced the rallying of some surviving groups of the Algerian Islamic Armed Group (GIA) under this new acronym. This group was criticised for its method, close to "al-Hijra wa Takfir", based on a doctrine that allows the massacre of civilian populations. Hassan Hattab, who had become independent from the GIA since 1996, was named Emir of the GSPC in 1998.

That same year, 1998, bin Laden set up his international jihad structure known as the "World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders", which brought together – in addition to the members of the "Jihad Committee"³ created

by the same bin Laden in 1989 – the Egyptian "Jihad", the "Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan", the "Ansar", the Bangladeshi "Jihad", as well as the Algerian GSPC.

The year 2003, with the abduction in the Sahara of 32 European tourists, who remained in captivity for several months, marked the disappearance of the GIA and its replacement by the GSPC, and a shift southwards of terrorist activities, which, in Algeria, were more focused on the south-east of the Algiers metropolitan area and on the Kabyle region.

The most important element in the changes that terrorism will experience under the leadership of the GSPC is the involvement of the Malian territory. Indeed, the European hostages, kidnapped in February 2003 in Algeria, were released in Mali. Since then, GSPC's incursions into northern Mali became frequent.

In July 2005, a violent clash between the Algerian army and a small group of the GSPC on Malian soil, not far from the Algerian border, would reveal that Mokhtar Belmokhtar, whose operations had been reported since 1993 in the region of Ghardaia (where he had assembled

3. Il s'agit des organisations suivantes : La Jamaat al Islamiya égyptienne, le Djihad yéménite, Al-Hadith pakistanaise, la Ligue des partisans libanais, la Jamaat al Islamiya libyenne, Beit al-Imam jordanienne et le GIA algérien.

his Brigade of Martyrdom, or “Katibat Ashahada” in Arabic), had pushed further south and set up his headquarters in northern Mali in the region of Timbuktu. While some maintain that this Afghanistan veteran had managed to put his fraudulent activities and trafficking of various goods to service his relations with the local tribes in northern Mali, others rely on testimonies of relatives of Belmokhtar to underscore his opposition to any “haram” (religiously forbidden) product trade⁴. What many specialists, analysts, and people who knew the man highlight without much disagreement is his habit to form solid family links with the tribes by marrying into them⁵. In addition to the protection that these links offered to the terrorist group, the almost complete integration of Algerian fighters into the northern Malian community had also enabled the terrorist emirs to recruit local youth by attracting unemployed youngsters from the region. This incursion into northern Mali was not the work of Mokhtar Belmokhtar alone; other Algerian emirs adopted the same mingle-and-settle method in northern Mali.

This shift towards Mali was the work of the GSPC emirs who sought to split from the GIA to remain faithful to the mother doctrine: that of al-Qaeda. Almost all the leaders were former fighters in Afghanistan who believed that takfir (anathema) concerned only state institutions, considered ungodly and, therefore, cannot lead to the massacre of populations, which were powerless facing the violence of the regimes. It is because of this difference of opinion that the first initiators of the GSPC disagreed with the GIA, and later separated from it by the end of the 1990s⁶. This tolerance towards the populations that did not practice a rigorous Islam, added to a degree of financial generosity, had allowed GSPC leaders to gain allies among northern Mali populations. Thus, an al-Qaeda terrorist group established itself in northern Mali; its Emirs were Algerians, 90% of its troops were Algerian, and its doctrine was Maghreb-Middle Eastern.

4. See: Lemine Ould M. Salem, “Le Ben Laden du Sahara, sur les traces du jihadiste Mokhtar Bel Mokhtar”, Edition de la Martinière, pp. 42-45.

5. The most well-known four families that Belmokhtar married into in Mali are:

- A girl from a respected and very influential family of Sharifian decent.
- The daughter of a chief from Bérabich, a community of Arab origins that settled in northern Mali for centuries and controls the most important trades in the city of Timbuktu.

6. It is also for this reason that the GIA, which was a member of the first organisation established by Osama bin Laden in 1989, the “Jihad Committee”, was replaced by the GSPC in the “World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders”, another organisation established by the same Osama bin Laden in 1998.

2. The al-Qaeda trend asserts itself and the march south continues

On January 26, 2007, the GSPC changed its name to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The GSPC’s affiliation by allegiance to the “mother” terrorist organisation had already been confirmed since September 2006 by Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden’s senior lieutenant at the time. Until that time, the term “Maghreb” was generally accompanied by the adjective “Arab”. As if to stand out from the political name given to the region by the political leaders who initiated the creation of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), extremists would call the Maghreb “Islamic” and not Arab. Did they simply want to turn away from politics, or were there deeper reasons for this choice?

- One of the differences between Wahhabism and al-Qaeda is the supremacy that Wahhabism aims to give to the Arab element in Islam. al-Qaeda opposes this doctrine.
- It is also possible that according to al-Qaeda’s perception, the Maghreb does not correspond to the same space designated by the name Maghreb given to the area by the politicians. For GSPC emirs, the Maghreb extends to the Sahel where the populations are not all Arab.
- The name “Islamic Maghreb” instead of Arab Maghreb could reflect the emirs’ ambition since the creation of AQIM to extend their actions beyond what is commonly known as the Maghreb.

The relationship between GSPC and al-Qaeda, which until 2007 was informal, was becoming institutionalised. It should be noted, however, that this change of course, which officially put the GSPC under the banner of al-Qaeda, came after the GSPC had laid grounds in the Sahel and has established its bases farther and farther from Algeria: Another sign that reflected the ambition of the regionalisation of a scourge which three years ago concerned only Algeria⁷.

Despite the efforts of the GSPC emirs to recruit youth from local tribes, the jihadist structures remained dominated

7. As a reminder that it remained concerned with Algeria despite its allegiance to al-Qaeda and its more significant establishment in northern Mali, the GSPC perpetrated two major attacks in Algeria in 2007:

- April 11: The group claimed its first suicide bombing attack in Algiers on April 11. The attack that targeted the Government Palace in Algiers caused 33 deaths.
- December 11: Two suicide bombings in Algiers left 47 dead.

by Algerians both at the command and troop levels. Allegiance and name change could have therefore aimed to, among other things, increase the group's attractiveness by adopting a label that is more attractive than the GSPC which is supposed to concern only Algerians.

Despite differences over the targets of terrorism, the legal or non-legal means of financing (in Sharia law), and secondary jurisprudential issues, the dominant doctrine remained that of the mother organisation with the development of anti-West "fatwas" and the fight against both the near enemy, being the regimes considered impious, and the enemy far away represented by the Western powers that support said regimes.

The 2012 crisis in northern Mali allowed a better integration of natives into AQIM. The Tuareg people of Ansar Dine, who stand out from the MNLA separatists who advocate the liberation of northern Mali by jihad, would seal, in northern Mali, the alliance between the locals and emirs from Algeria. The trend towards the Sahelisation of terrorist troops is confirmed by the birth of the "Movement of Oneness and Jihad in West Africa" (MOJWA) and the terrorist expeditions progressing from the Algerian-Malian border towards the south, by drawing an area which now covers all of northern Mali.

Two major trends are sustained and they summarise the evolution of al-Qaeda's allies:

- The human element, which at the beginning was mainly Algerian, is more and more being "sahelised", at the command as well as the troops level.
- The terrorist-dominated area extends further south to Ménaka and threatens even Mopti south of the Niger River⁸.

Operation Serval was launched at the request of the Malian acting President. It lasted for one year and allowed to avoid the worst-case scenario: the capture of Bamako by the troops of Iyad Ag Ghali. It was subsequently replaced by Operation Barkhane. In 2014, Mali took a breather and the terrorist battalions that had suffered losses spread to neighboring countries, mainly Libya. Mali believed it was able to reshape and rebuild itself ... We will come back to this in the following chapters.

8. On January 9, 2013, an Ansar Dine battalion, supported by Katibat Abu Zeid, attacked Konna to head towards Sévaré and Mopti airport, while another, further north, arrived through the Mauritanian border and was heading towards Ségou, via Dia Bali. The terrorists were considering crossing to Niger through Markala. It was this attack that triggered Dioncounda Traoré, the acting president, to request a French intervention.

III. 2014-2015: The Advent of Daesh

In June 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed Daesh control over a territory straddling north-western Iraq and north-eastern Syria and announced the revival of the Caliphate, which had disappeared in the early 13th century. While it started with its conquests in Iraq and Syria, the new state was no less determined to return to the area controlled by the Caliphate of the time of the Abbasid⁹ (see map below). The area it aimed to control was from Afghanistan to the Atlantic, in addition to southern Europe, and the entire northern part of Africa.

The map adopted by Daesh to show the areas to be conquered by the Caliphate



1. The illusion of Daesh's settlement in the Sahel and the Lake Chad region

In the Middle East, the differences between al-Qaeda and Daesh went beyond the simple doctrinal framework, to become an armed conflict. The two organisations killed each other's fighters and Daesh was joined by several groups that were previously affiliated with the al-Qaeda. This was mainly due to the fact that the latter, weakened by bin Laden's, was almost running out of resources, unlike Daesh, which was announced as a wealthy organisation, thanks to the money taken from Mosul's banks, as well as the revenues from smuggling oil from the wells under

9. The adoption of this map by Daesh at the time of the announcement of the caliphate spoke volumes about the caliphal reference of the organisation. Unlike al-Qaeda, which took into account the caliphal character of Turkish sultans and who believed that the last caliph was the Turkish caliph who fell in 1925, Daesh firmly believed that the Muslim caliphate fell with the Abbasid Arab dynasty. The map adopted by Daesh referred to the Abbasid empire and not to the Turkish empire.

its control. Moreover, the organisation seemed to have a certain appeal because of the victories it kept achieving.

This aspect did not take long to reach the extremist organisations of North Africa and the Sahel:

- In August 2014, Abu Bakr Shekau, Boko Haram's leader, pledged allegiance to Daesh and proclaimed the territory he controlled as a Daesh province (Islamic State's West Africa Province). As a first consequence of this allegiance, Daesh's propaganda techniques began to be adopted by Boko Haram, which published its first videos. Until 2014, Boko Haram was still connected to AQIM.
- In September 2014, a group of dissident AQIM terrorists announced the establishment of a new armed organisation called: "Jund al-Khilafah" (Soldiers of the Caliphate) in Algeria, pledging allegiance to Daesh.
- Gouri Abdelmalek, aka Khaled Abu Sulayman, announced taking the lead of this secessionist AQIM group, accusing AQIM of having "deviated from the righteous path". Addressing Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Khaled Abu Sulayman declared: "In the Islamic Maghreb, you have men who will obey your orders."
- On May 14, 2015, Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi, an associate of Mokhtar Belmokhtar in the jihadist group al-Mourabitoun, pledged allegiance to Daesh in an audio recording posted online by the privately-owned Mauritanian agency Al-Akhbar. The next day the leader of al-Mourabitoun published a denial and confirmed his group's loyalty to al-Qaeda. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi did not pay much attention to the allegiance of Adnan Abu Walid and did not publish a statement accepting his allegiance, an act which formalises the allegiance according to the organisation's practices.

2. Al-Qaeda regains control

With this series of allegiances that seemed like a declaration of the weakening, or even the end of al-Qaeda in the Sahel and the Lake Chad region, there was only one step left that some did not hesitate to take, especially after the organisation that had settled in Libya by taking over the city of Sirte appeared to have the means to settle in North Africa and the Sahel. This did not take into account the deep roots of al-Qaeda in both regions:

- Jund al-Khilafah soon disappeared after a few fights,
- Adnan Abu Walid had seen his allegiance almost rejected for lack of recognition from Daesh.

- Abu Bakr Shekau, disappointed by Daesh's appointment of a new emir on the West African province, soon withdrew his allegiance to the organisation to return under al-Qaeda's wing.
- Defeated and pushed out of Sirte, Daesh appeared increasingly unable to establish itself in North Africa and the Sahel; a region where it lacked popular support. Its Wahhabi rigour did not fit with the widespread doctrines, and its method of anathematising institutions and society, which enabled it to attack both institutions and people, did not find supporters among the societies of the region.

Daesh's setbacks in North Africa and the Sahel tied in with the losses it incurred in the Middle-East. Since the end of 2016, Daesh seemed to increasingly drop the notion of territorialisation that made it appealing, to turn into a simple ideological label used by individuals and small groups that commit attacks namely in Europe.

Two new developments can be seen in the Sahel: the decline of Daesh and al-Qaeda's reshuffle. The Sahel groups, that are affiliated with al-Qaeda, are actually more active and seem better organised.

"Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam Wa al-Muslimin" (JNIM) – in English "the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims – was established in March 2017 and is led by Iyad Ag Ghali, who has never hidden his alignment with al-Qaeda's aims and views. Earlier on, Abu Bakr Shekau had regained control over Boko Haram while al-Barnaoui, the Daesh-appointed emir, is no longer but a mere shell.

IV. Violence in the Sahel Today: Is It a Third Generation?

1. The Sahel's assimilation of jihad: a new group, a new set-up

On March 2, 2017, an image (see below) was posted on social media, showing Iyad Ag Ghali, the leader of Ansar Dine, surrounded by the representatives of four other jihadist organisations active in the Sahel, who are:

- Abu El-Hammam, the leader of the Saharan Emirate, AQIM's 9th military zone;

- Amadou Koufa, the leader of the Macina Brigade, the Fulani battalion of Ansar Dine.
- Al-Hassan al-Ansari, the second man of the “al-Mourabitoun” movement, led by the Algerian Mokhtar Belmokhtar;
- Abderrahmane Sanhaji, AQIM’s judge



The video, from which the snapshot was taken, announced the creation of JNIM, an alliance resulting from the merger of four groups already present in the region. It is the largest gathering of terrorists in the history of the region.

The establishment of JNIM is an event that cannot be overlooked and whose significance must be highlighted:

- First, its composition calls for reflection. The merger of several groups is done under the control of a Sahel native, Iyad Ag Ghali. This is the first break with a tradition that has prevailed since the emergence of violent extremism in the Sahel: The big shots of jihad have always been from Algeria¹⁰. The man in power is now a Tuareg from Mali. Besides, he is surrounded by another native, Amadou Koufa, the emir of the Macina Brigade. The choice of Iyad Ag Ghali as the head of the new movement and the presence of Amadou Koufa reflect the integration of the movement into the local, social, and regional fabric, representing at least two ethnicities: the Tuareg and the Fula people.
- In the English translation of the group’s name “Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimin,” the word “support” is used to convey the meaning of “nusra” in Arabic. But, the word “support”, while conveying the meaning, does not capture the substance of Muslim religious thought. The stem “nsr” in Arabic means “victory”. The word “Nusra,” which contains this stem, is a derivative that means strengthening, supporting, and backing in order to achieve victory.

Thus, support here is for a specific goal, which is to defeat the enemy’s troops. Generally, this support is expected from God, but it is strongly recommended to Muslims to lend it to their brothers-in-arms. Several groups used this notion in their banners: al-Nusra Front in Syria; Ansar al-Islam in Burkina Faso; Ansar Bait al-Maqdis in Sinai; and Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia and Libya. However, it is the first time that the “support for achieving victory” has gone beyond a specific goal to address Islam and Muslims at large.

- Unlike Daesh which, upon gaining control over some territories, believed that establishing a caliphate is the beginning of success and victory, the Sahelians want to act towards achieving a victory that is not there yet. Time to establish a caliphate has not yet arrived for the Sahel’s jihadists.
- According to the new name, this support is provided by the Group not only to the jihadist but to Islam in general and to all Muslims. Is it to repair the divisions between the various Muslim factions (Sunni, Shia, al-Qaeda, Daesh, Wahhabi, Muslim Brotherhood or others? The whole takfiri aspect (institutions and society) does not seem to find a way to the principles of the new Group. Muslim populations, who need support to achieve victory, are spared the anathema¹¹ that only concerns institutions.

2. Other breakaways from the doctrines of Daesh and al-Qaeda

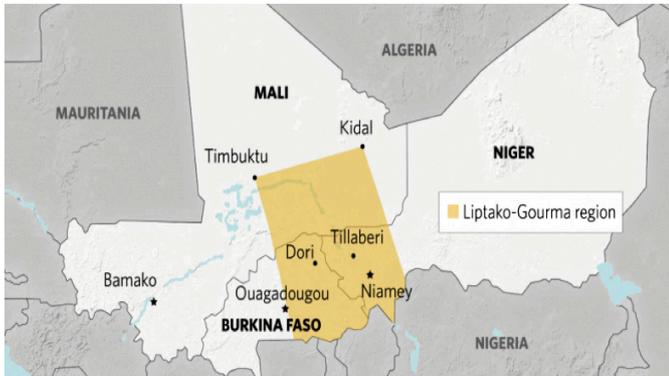
The new features that characterise JNIM Group are only part of the group’s divergence from al-Qaeda and Daesh practices. In addition to certain differences in terms of the composition and the doctrines (cited above), JNIM is trying to stand out from the two conventional terrorist groups, even if at a superficial level, it continues to proclaim itself to AQIM and al-Qaeda:

- Since its creation in March 2017, JNIM has not claimed yet any action outside the Sahel and West Africa. Certainly, it goes beyond the national and local dimensions without drifting into the internationalism advocated by al-Qaeda and Daesh. JNIM forges a regional identity (based on the areas covered by its actions at least). Even when it comes to this dimension, no action has been taken by the Group in

10. The absence of Mokhtar Belmokhtar, unless he is already dead at this time, shows the decline of the first emirs of the GSPC. Those present are set to be behind Iyad Ag Ghali.

11. In an interview given by Iyad Ag Ghali to the Yemeni newspaper “Al-Masra of Al-Qaeda”, the terrorist leader declares that “... It is about all Muslims rising against the enemy through seeking popular support and strengthening relations with al-Qaeda.”

the Sahel (barring the Grand Bassam attack)¹² despite its claims on the expansion of jihad in West Africa. Almost all the group's attacks today focus on the Liptako-Gourma triangle along the borders between Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso (see map below).



- Since its establishment, JNIM claims all its attacks (See image below). These are no longer the subject of Droukdal's (AQIM) or Ayman al-Zawahiri's (al-Qaeda) press releases. This could indicate a desire to emancipate from al-Qaeda and AQIM.
- In the interview given by Iyad Ag Ghali to the Yemeni newspaper "Al Masra" in April 2017, Iyad Ag Ghali mentioned some African countries as JNIM's enemies and refrained from mentioning any of the Maghreb countries. The difference from AQIM is very clear in this instance. JNIM does not operate in the Maghreb¹³, it focuses on the Sahel and some west African countries. As for the West, Iyad Ag Ghali considered France as enemy No. 1 of his organisation, while the US, Germany or the UK are considered enemies only because they help France in its "aggression" against the countries of the Sahel.
- In the same interview, Iyad Ag Ghali praised Jamaat Tabligh wa Daawa ila Lah, an organisation for advocacy and preaching deemed soft by the Salafi-jihadists of al-Qaeda as well as Daesh.
- Meeting or collaborating with Sahelian bodies is not an issue for him. Iyad Ag Ghali looks beyond al-Qaeda/Daesh divisions, emphasising that he is ready for mutual support and cooperation with any organisation or individual that shares the same objectives and has the same enemies as JNIM. In his response to a question about loyalty to al-Qaeda, he stated that they share some points of view, while focusing on the specificities.

12. The attack took place before the establishment of the Group.

13. However, it should be noted that Iyad Ag Ghali does only state historic figures from the Maghreb such as Tariq ibn Ziyad, Youssef ibn Tachfine or Omar al-Mokhtar, with whom he associates Sahelian jihadist figures of the 19th century, such as Osman Dan Fodio or Omar Tal – with no reference to the Middle East.

3. After internationalism (al-Qaeda) and territorialisation (Daesh) come regionalisation and attrition (JNIM)

Terrorism in the Sahel has not so far produced any literature that defines a doctrine that can be compared to what the theorists of al-Qaeda or Daesh have produced. However, it can be deduced from the latest developments, events on the ground, modus operandi, and statements by some officials that the terrorist group(s) in the Sahel takes a different doctrinal direction compared to that taken by either of the two main terrorist groups that preceded it.

Although there is no literary foundation, a new jihadist doctrine is emerging. It is related to some sort of Sahelisation of the phenomenon. Even if it falls under the global jihad, it still develops its own specificities:

- Without giving up the idea of occupying a territory, the latter is not a priority for the Sahelian jihad. It is superimposed on states in the same areas occupied by the latter and considers alliance with the local populations an anchor in the region. Unlike Daesh and to a lesser extent al-Qaeda, JNIM believes that people are part of the fight against local regimes supported by the major powers (mainly France). This Muslim population needs support, and this is the main mission of JNIM: support Muslims (include Muslim populations) in the fight against the impious regimes, the allies of the enemies of Islam.
- In symbiosis with the population, JNIM intends to blend into them and carry out actions: both conventional confrontation in the countryside and rural areas and urban guerrilla in the cities (attacks and bombings against the symbols of the states and foreign powers). This level of blending tactics forces JNIM to limit its actions to the Sahel only, where it can benefit from this contribution. JNIM has never attacked targets outside the Sahel. It leads a conflict of attrition whose outcomes would be on the long run.
- Unlike Daesh or al-Qaeda, which claim to liberate populations from impious regimes, JNIM wants to stimulate populations against the regimes and wants to be the vessel of an Islamised and popular rebellion (see interview with Iyad Ag Ghali).
- JNIM is a regional organisation and makes of the Sahel and part of West Africa its favourite terrain. Even the idea of fighting against the distant enemy (the powers that help current regimes), is applied by JNIM in the Sahel and not elsewhere. Unlike al-

Qaeda or Daesh, the Sahelian organisation will not wage a war against this distant enemy as long as it

is not present in the Sahel. JNIM will not look for it elsewhere.

Image from "Al Masra" newspaper of Iyad Ag Ghali's interview



«المصري» تحاور الشيخ أبا الفضل إِيَادُ غَالِي

- أمير جماعة نصرة الإسلام والمسلمين بالمغرب الإسلامي -

● أجراه لصحيفة المصري: محمود أبو فراس

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الشيخ أبو الفضل إِيَادُ غَالِي - حفظه الله -

من ديننا ومن الاستراتيجيات الملبية والجبرية. وسبق أن أعلن الجهاديون مرارا استعدادهم لتحميد كل من يريد ذلك بغض النظر عن يكون ولا تزال هذه الدعوة سارية والله الوافق .

- المصري هل هناك من التكتلات القبلية والاجتماعية في مالي ما يمكن أن نشاركوا معه في مشروع الجهاد ضد العدو الفرنسي وعملائه أم أنكم الوجوديون في الساحة الثانية ؟

- المصري لم نطوي من المسلمين مساندتكم بشريا غير التبشير إلى مناطقكم، هل يعني ذلك الاكتفاء وهل أنتم بحاجة لتكادر المتخصصة ؟

نحن في حرب مع الصليبيين الفرنسيين

ومن وقف معهم، ولنا كل الحق شرعا

وعقلا أن ندافع عن أنفسنا ونحارب

عدونا خاصة الدول التي تدخلت بشكل

مباشر وسافر في احتلال أرضنا

مباشر وسافر في احتلال أرضنا

ويؤيدوننا وأعدائنا قلوبهم، ونرحب بكل من يريد التحاق بيذا الأغر من عموم

- فليس التزاوت والتصومات وإصلاح ذات البين. - إشراك الناس في الحكم والإدارة والاستعانة بهم في إقامة الشرع

- المصري هل هناك من التكتلات القبلية والاجتماعية في مالي ما يمكن أن نشاركوا معه في مشروع الجهاد ضد العدو الفرنسي وعملائه أم أنكم الوجوديون في الساحة الثانية ؟

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على ذلك وتعبيته لهم - الحرص على كسب الحاشية الشعبية وتحتن العلاقات معها والحفاظ عليها - اعتماد مبدأ حرب التصاريح في العمل العسكري مع استخدام أسلوب الحرب التكتالية الحيثيات أي التزاوت بين التطور والاختفاء بحسب العظيمة.

وقد وفق الله تبارك وتعالى ويبارك في هذه السياسة ونسأله المزيد من فضله. ويمكن القول - والله اعلم- أن الوضع العسكري شبه مستقر، على أن العدو الفرنسي ومن معه تمركزوا في المدن الكبرى مع بعض التمركزات والتعطيلات البرية والجوية. ومحاولة استعمار المعلومات وتجنيد الجواسيس والعملاء.

- المصري لكن القلتى كثير منهم يسوا فرنسين أصليين بل من الترتفة الجسدين .

نحن في حرب مع الصليبيين الفرنسيين

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”أن الداعي لهذا الإعلان أمور أهمها الاستجابة لله تعالى في أمره بالوحدة والاعتصام والجماعة، ثم ليؤتي الجهاد ثمرته على أرض الواقع بالاجتماع والاتحاد، ولإدخال السرور على المسلمين ودفعهم للجهاد .. ٢٢

إلى مصلحة الإسلام والمسلمين هي حافظهم نكل خير ودأبهم لتجاوز كل العقبات، ثم بلاء خط الرجعة وعدم الخشي بالخلاف إلى أكثر مما يستحقه، والتلاقي والحوار وشبان الآراء وشرح ملاحظات الأمور وخفاياها وانتظار التسامح بكم كل شيء. والله اعلم عند الله تعالى.

- المصري تصرون على الارتباط بالقاعدة والامارة الإسلامية في أفغانستان ونسبتم على ذلك في خطاب إظهار الكيان الجديد، وهناك من يتساءل وربما يولمكم ماذا تصرون على العالمية ولا تنجوا إلى القطرية كما هو الحال في سوريا ؟

لأننا لا نرى تقريبا بين العمل الجهادي القطري والجهاد العالمي وما يسعى القومية والتعاليق، وغيرها إن هي إلا أساليب وطرق لعبادة الله تعالى بالجهاد في سبيله والتحميد لمخلقة الرشيدة

لتظهر في وقتها - إن شاء الله تعالى - ومنها التاب ومنها التغيير حسب الظروف والمصيطات والله أعلم.

- المصري من هو عدوكم بالتحديد من هو عدوكم بالتحديد ؟

أشرت إلى بعض الجواب فيما مضى، وأريد تذكيرا على أن عدونا الأول هم أعداء المسلمين من اليهود والنصارى. وأما في هذه المرحلة فهي فرنسا العدو التاريخي للمسلمين في هذا الجزء من العالم الإسلامي، ثم من أمثالهم من الغربيين كإسبانيا والمانيا وهولندا والسويد ونموجهم. وكذا من انضم لهم من دول غرب إفريقيا مثل تشاد وإثيوبيا وساحل العاج وبوركينا فاسو والسنگال والتنجير وغيرها، ومن لحق بهم من أبناء هذه الأرض وباع نفسه للشيطان والله الوافق.

- المصري في البداية نرحب بالشيخ أبي الفضل إِيَادُ غَالِي الذي أتاه لنا هذه الفرصة لإجراء هذا الحوار .

- المصري الشيخ الفاضل لو تحدثنا عن مراحل سيرتكم الشخصية حتى يتعرف عليكم القراء بشكل أكبر .

أخوكم في الله تعالى إِيَادُ غَالِي بن أبي بكر المعروف بابي الفضل من مواليد سنة ١٣٧٨هـ الموافق ١٩٥٨م

ويمكن أن أخص أهم مراحل حياة أخيك على النحو التالي

مرحلة تأسيس وقيادة الحركة الشعبية لتحرير أزواد والتدريب العسكري في ليبيا ١٩٧٨م - ١٩٨٠م

مرحلة التدريب العسكري في سوريا والقتال في لبنان ضد اليهود المحتجين ١٩٨٣م - ١٩٨٤م

مرحلة العمل المسلح ضد نظام بامباكو ١٩٩٠م - ١٩٩١م

مرحلة المفاوضات مع نظام بامباكو ١٩٩١م والتي تمخضت عن أول اتفاق مع الحكومة الليبية برعاية الجزائر

١٩٩١م - ١٩٩٢م كانت مرحلة ترحيل لثلاثين ألف من مالي وانتقلت ما بين الحرب والسلام حتى استقر الاتفاق سنة ١٩٩٦م

١٩٩٨م - ٢٠١١م من الله علينا - له الحمد والشكر - بالاتفاق بجماعة الدعوة والتبليغ وكانت مرحلة مفيدة بسر الله تعالى فيها إتمام حفظ القرآن الكريم وزيارة التعريف في الله والتعرف على تلك شعبة لا شئت. اللقاء كعادنا العدماء

Resulting from the incursion of GSPC, an affiliate of al-Qaeda, into Mali; then being subjected to Daesh attempts of control, Sahelian terrorism has borrowed from both organisations some of their tactical and ideological elements. It is, however, in the process of breaking with the nature of the jihadist conceptions of the two organizations. A new generation may be emerging, breaking with the old ones. It relies on the rapprochement with the populations, repels rigorous applications of sharia to avoid exactions against the populations with whom it wants to build alliance, and restrains itself to limited regional areas far from any idea of globalisation.

This generation could attract fighters from the region and will not appeal to candidates from faraway places. It can also serve as a stimulus for the emergence of other similar African organisations. If the example of JNIM becomes widespread, the terrorism of the next two years will see the arrival of several regional organisations, namely in Africa, which do not proclaim affiliation with Daesh nor al-Qaeda.

The third generation will build on the aggregation of regional small groups, will be increasingly known among the populations, will use hybrid tactics ranging from war to guerrilla tactics, and will aim at actions of attrition against local regimes.

About the author, Abdelhak Bassou

Abdelhak Bassou is Senior Fellow at OCP Policy Center. He occupied several offices within the Directorate General of the Moroccan National Security where he was Borders' Division Chief from 1978 to 1993. He was the former Director of the Royal Institute of Police in 1998. He also served as the Chief of Regional Security (Errachidia 1999-2003, Sidi Kacem 2003-2005) and was also Head of the Central General Intelligence from 2006 to 2009. He also contributed to the output of several international organizations endeavors including the Council of Arab Interior Ministers from 1986 to 1992, where he represented the Directorate General of National Security in several meetings. Abdelhak Bassou holds a Master's Degree in Political Science and International Studies from the Faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences of Agdal in Rabat.

About OCP Policy Center

OCP Policy Center is a Moroccan policy-oriented Think Tank whose mission is to contribute to knowledge sharing and to enrich reflection on key economic and international relations issues, considered as essential to the economic and social development of Morocco, and more broadly to the African continent. For this purpose, the Think Tank relies on independent research, a network of partners and leading research associates, in the spirit of an open exchange and debate platform.

The views expressed in this publication are the views of the author.



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