

# Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis

Volume 6, Issue 1  
Jan/Feb 2014

## Annual Threat Assessment

### SOUTHEAST ASIA

Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore

### SOUTH ASIA

Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka

### EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA

China and Central Asia

### MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Egypt, Libya and Somalia



INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM RESEARCH  
S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

# ANNUAL THREAT ASSESSMENT

## Terrorism and Political Violence in 2013

### Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia has seen some of its insurgencies and conflicts diminish while others have continued unabated. In [Thailand](#), the restive south continued to see violence in 2013 while Bangkok witnessed a political crisis with protests against the government turning violent. In [Myanmar](#), reforms have moved forward but communal violence continues to plague the country and has evolved from targeting Rohingyas towards Muslim minority communities in general. [Indonesia](#) continues to face a potent threat from radicalization and concern has emerged over the role its “hard” counterterrorist approach is playing in fueling further extremism. [The Philippines](#), on the other hand, witnessed much progress in its peace process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, although some Moro factions and groups continue to oppose the peace process. [Malaysia](#), like Indonesia, continues to grapple with radicalization, while [Singapore](#) has remained alert for extremist elements.

### South Asia

The withdrawal of the NATO-led coalition from [Afghanistan](#) in 2014 remains the most prominent concern for the region and beyond. [Pakistan](#), meanwhile, remains embattled by sectarian violence and a resilient Pakistani Taliban, but has taken several steps in 2013 to increase its counterterrorist capabilities. In [India](#), multiple sources of insurgency and terrorism continued to affect various parts of the country, but the state’s capacity to address its security concerns has been hampered by the very nature of its political system. [Bangladesh](#), meanwhile, looks to be on unsteady ground after a wave of elections-related violence and with a continuing threat from Islamist extremism. Though [Sri Lanka](#) has not seen a terrorist attack since 2009, its progress towards reconciliation after the end of 26 years of civil war has been under intense scrutiny of the international community.

### East and Central Asia

[China](#) continues to face a potent challenge from its restive Uighur minority and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement. The five countries of [Central Asia](#) — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — remain concerned by the NATO withdrawal in nearby Afghanistan and by returning foreign fighters from Syria.

### Middle East and Africa

[Syria](#) continues to be in the midst of a protracted and violent civil war that looks to be intensifying even as a first round of

peace talks were held in January 2014. [Iraq](#), too, remains besieged by sectarian violence and constant attacks. In [Yemen](#), multiple insurgencies and a robust threat from Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula have hampered an already difficult political transition. In [Egypt](#), Morsi’s ouster has seen protests continuing to plague the country while the military attempts another political transition. [Libya](#), meanwhile, faces a persistent security challenge in its southern border region and the success of its transition after Gaddafi will depend on the militias which deposed the former dictator giving up their arms. In [Somalia](#), al-Shabaab has intensified its campaign against the government in the wake of a hardline faction emerging dominant.

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#### ABOUT CTTA

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# Global Threat Assessment

Rohan Gunaratna

The year 2013 has been the most violent since the beginning of the contemporary wave of terrorism. Although Al Qaeda's core has decreased in size, the group has become even more influential. With its extraordinary presence on the web, Al Qaeda is guiding its associates to fight back. With the western drawdown from Afghanistan in 2014, the Taliban-led terrorist sanctuary will likely be reconstituted once again, threatening global stability and security.

The threat of international and national terrorism is projected to grow in 2014. Half the countries in the world suffer from political violence and ideological extremism, and terrorism will remain a tier-one national security threat to the stability of most countries in 2014.

With Afghanistan and Syria emerging as the two most important hubs of global terrorism, the security of South Asia, the Levant and the Sahel is threatened. Just as the anti-Soviet multi-national Afghan mujahideen campaign formed the foundation of contemporary terrorism, the blowback from Syria is likely to produce the next generation of fighters – both guerrillas that attack government forces and terrorists that attack civilians.

Today, the conflicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India are the most violent conflicts. After South Asia, the Middle East – Syria and Iraq – and Africa – Nigeria and Somalia – are the most violent. Since 9/11, over a million combatants and non combatants have been killed or injured, mostly Muslims by terrorists and US-led coalitions to fight insurrections and terrorist campaigns.

According to the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan – suffered more than half of 2012's attacks (54%) and fatalities (58%). The next five most frequently targeted countries were India, Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen and Thailand. With increasing fatalities and casualties from 2012 to 2013, the threat is projected to escalate in 2014. With US-led coalition withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, the global threat of terrorism is likely to grow even further.

Since 9/11, counter-insurgency and counterterrorism efforts have had mixed results. Al Qaeda has weakened but the Al Qaeda family has grown in strength, size and influence. About 30-40 threat groups in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Caucasus are emulating Al Qaeda's ideology of global violence and methodology of suicide attacks. While the core of Al Qaeda led by Ayman al-Zawahiri has transformed from an operational to an ideological and a training organization, the

associate groups carry out a bulk of the attacks. Although the death of Osama bin Laden demonstrated that any terrorist can be hunted down, the death of the Al Qaeda founder did not reduce the growing threat.

The deadliest terrorist groups in the world belong to the Al Qaeda family, with the Taliban (both Afghan and Pakistan Taliban) leading the list. Others are the al-Nusra Front in Syria, Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and al-Shabaab. Al Qaeda's ability to influence associate groups was brought to international attention in the brutal attack on Westgate Mall in Kenya by al-Shabaab, previously known as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) of Somalia.

With the decentralization of the threat, Africa is emerging as a new epicenter of terrorism and extremism. The "Arab Spring" has transformed into an Arab nightmare with multiple Al Qaeda-linked groups emerging throughout North Africa and the Middle East. An Al Qaeda-associated al-Nusra Front has emerged in Syria. With 12000 Sunni and a comparable number of Shia foreign fighters in Syria, the threat to the west and the rest of the world will grow.

Stemming from the developments in Syria, the Shia-Sunni conflict is threatening to break out into a regional conflict. The Iran-backed Lebanese Hezbollah condemned the detainment of al-Wefaq Secretary General Sheikh Ali Salman Ahmed Salman by Bahraini officials, and called on human rights organizations and others to make Bahrain take full responsibility for any physical and psychological harm to which he might be exposed. According to the SITE Monitoring Service, Ali Salman was detained on 28 December 2013, on charges of inciting for religious hatred, and was released one day later and banned from travel.

The terrorists mounted their year-end attack in Volgograd, southern Russia, hitting a railway station and trolleybus on 29 and 30 December 2013. Aimed at sowing fear, Shumukh al-Islam, a top forum for Al Qaeda-affiliated propaganda, praised the timing of the attack. The SITE Monitoring Service reported the terrorists saying Russians are not safe "since their country continues to supply arms to the malicious combatant regime of the doomed apostate Bashar." From the Caucasus, the terrorists are traveling through Turkey to Syria to fight against the Bashar al-Assad regime.

Since the epicenter of global terrorism shifted to Asia after September 11, 2001, the sub region of South Asia is most violent. In India, ethno-political and left wing insurgencies and Islamist terrorism kill both Indians and foreigners.

Although Sri Lanka experienced no revival of terrorism since the Tamil Tigers were dismantled in May 2009, the terrorists are reorganizing themselves in Tamil Nadu in India. In Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and in the Maldives, a wave of communal or religious extremism affected Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

The SITE Monitoring Service reported that the Afghan Taliban's deputy leader for Paktika province of eastern Afghanistan, Abdullah alias Hammad, remarked the "most significant change" in Paktika in 2013 was US and ISAF forces withdrawing from many bases and remaining in only a few cities. This pullout was the result of strikes by the fighters, he claimed, and the Barmal and Marghay camps, which were "once considered "insurmountable," were destroyed. He added that civilian support to the fighters is what enabled them to succeed in taking control of most areas of Paktika. Of the 7,141 attacks in Afghanistan in 2013, 63 were suicide attacks and 27 were insider attacks. While 2,730 Afghan security forces personnel were killed and 5,169 injured, 2,168 guerrillas and terrorists were killed, according the Afghan Ministry of Interior.

In Southeast Asia, Thailand remains the most affected by violent conflict. The threat in Indonesia also remains significant, with about a dozen threat groups operationally or ideologically affiliated with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Although the peace process in the Philippines has stabilized the south, the threat from the Abu Sayyaf Group and New Peoples' Army, a leftist terrorist group is significant. In addition to the Moro National Liberation Front, breakaway factions of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Khalifa Islamiyah Mindanao (KIM) threaten the peace process. KIM is affiliated both with JI and other extra-regional groups, particularly Al Qaeda.

Developments in Afghanistan spilled over not only to South, Central and Southeast Asia, but also to Northeast Asia. The most violent group in China, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), is collaborating with the Al Qaeda family of threat groups such as the Pakistani Taliban, the Afghan Taliban, Islamic Jihad Union, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Emirate of the Caucasus and, more recently, the al-Nusra Front in Syria. Although ETIM is a medium-sized threat group of less than 100 fighters, it has attacked not only the Chinese government and society, but the security forces of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, and the US-led coalition in Afghanistan. While ETIM's aim is to create an independent Islamic state in Xinjiang, it also collaborates with like-minded threat groups towards creating a global Islamic caliphate. Although the UN, the US and several other governments have designated ETIM as a terrorist group, the ETIM and its political wing Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) operates through front cover and sympathetic organizations in North America, Europe, the Gulf and in Central Asia, disseminating propaganda and raising funds. After the terrorist attack in Tiananmen Square in Beijing on 28 October 2013, TIP released in Uighur an audio speech from its leader, Abdullah Mansour, calling the incident a "jihadi operation" and its executors "mujahideen." The terrorists drove their SUV into a crowd at Tiananmen Square, causing it to

crash and then burst into flames. Two pedestrians were killed and 38 others were injured. The speech translated by SITE Monitoring Service came in an 8 minute, 11 second video produced by the group's Islam Awazi (Voice of Islam) Media Center that was created by the Al Qaeda media committee. In 2013, ETIM conducted or inspired over 200 attacks in Xinjiang's Uighur Autonomous Region in northwest China.

Since 9/11, the global terrorist threat has been growing. According to the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), 8,400 terrorist attacks killed nearly 15,400 people in 2012. With 5,100 attacks in the first six months of 2013, START reported that "the wave of violence shows few signs of ebbing." Western-centric kinetic and lethal operations have failed to reduce the global threat. In a worldwide opinion poll conducted by Win/Gallup International, 24 percent of people worldwide said the US is the biggest threat to the world. In the coming decades, in parallel to developing tactical counterterrorism capabilities, governments should build strategic counter terrorism capabilities to erode the support base. The new frontiers in counterterrorism and extremism such as community engagement and rehabilitation should be considered.

With ever-increasing globalization, the world has witnessed the rise of ethnicity and religiosity. With identity becoming salient, government and community leaders should be trained and retrained to manage diversity. The failure to manage diversity has fragmented society and lead to inter-ethnic and inter-religious disputes. If not properly managed, intermittent disputes will break out into violent conflicts in the form of ideological extremism. Both insurgency and terrorism are vicious by-products of ideological extremism.

Government and community leaders should develop a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach. To prevent holistically and respond decisively to identity disputes, the leadership at all levels needs to be mentored and groomed. Unless governments take the lead and work with community leaders, societies will be threatened by the existing and emerging wave of ideologically motivated violence.

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## SOUTHEAST ASIA

# Myanmar

Iftexharul Bashar

In 2013, Myanmar saw a continuation of the political and economic reforms which began in 2011. While the country's political climate became more open, it faced difficulty in maintaining law and order due to communal violence, employing a response that was generally reactive.

The current wave of communal tensions which started in June 2012 in the western region of the country has already spread to the central and northeastern regions. In almost all the cases of political violence in 2013, small incidents have fuelled larger communal clashes that mostly affected Myanmar's Muslim minorities. Rohingyas in western Myanmar, however, remain the worst affected community as they are not even recognized by Myanmar as citizens per the Citizenship Law of 1982.

### Political Reforms

The opening-up of political space in Myanmar continued in 2013 with the government abolishing a 25-year-old ban on public gatherings of more than five people in January. Furthermore, in April 2013, the government allowed four private daily newspapers to be published, ending the state's long-held monopoly over the media. These political reforms were underscored by a significant improvement of Myanmar's relationship with the West. In February 2013, President Thein Sein embarked on his first European tour, and this was followed by the permanent lifting of European Union sanctions (except those on arms) in April 2013.

In July 2013, the EU also removed restrictions on Myanmar's access to the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). Some European human rights groups have criticized these developments as premature and have claimed that they reduce the leverage which the EU has on Myanmar. President Thein Sein also visited Washington in May 2013, and while US President Barack Obama praised the political and economic

**THE CURRENT WAVE OF COMMUNAL TENSIONS WHICH STARTED IN JUNE 2012 IN THE WESTERN REGION OF THE COUNTRY HAS ALREADY SPREAD TO THE CENTRAL AND NORTHEASTERN REGIONS**

**IN ALMOST ALL THE CASES OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN 2013, SMALL INCIDENTS HAVE FUELLED LARGER COMMUNAL CLASHES THAT MOSTLY AFFECTED MYANMAR'S MUSLIM MINORITIES**

progress of Myanmar, he criticized ongoing violence against Rohingya Muslims. In his July 2013 visit to the United Kingdom, President Thein Sein announced that Myanmar would release all political prisoners by the end of the 2013. Since the announcement, 198 individuals have been granted amnesty, but there is no reliable estimate of the number of political prisoners currently in detention.

Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) party have also been campaigning in 2013 for further political reforms, focusing on overturning Article 59(f) of Myanmar's constitution which bars Suu Kyi from contesting for the Presidency in 2015. In August 2013, however, Myanmar's parliament began a review of the country's constitution. The review could lead to changes that would make it possible for Suu Kyi to run for President in 2015 and might also define the future political role of the military. Currently, the military has a quarter of parliament's seats allocated to it which are filled by appointments made by the head of Myanmar's military. Given that a three-quarters majority in parliament is required to hold a national referendum on proposed amendments, any change to the constitution will necessarily be affected by the stance of Myanmar's influential military chief.

### Kachin Insurgency

The situation in the northern Kachin state remains volatile. The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) remains the only major rebel group that has not signed a ceasefire agreement with the government. In January 2013, the military launched an operation to take over the town of Laiza which was held by the KIO's military wing, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA).

Airstrikes were reportedly used to attack the KIA's positions and at least 85,000 civilians are believed to have been affected by

the clashes. However, the government and KIO reached an agreement in February 2013 to disengage and begin dialogue after Chinese-sponsored talks between the two in Ruili, southern China. China's role as a guarantor and mediator of the talks contributed significantly to their success, although peace remains elusive with the government and KIO at odds over contrasting demands.

### **Communal Violence**

The violence against Rohingyas which erupted in June 2012 continued in 2013, with at least 115,000 Rohingyas displaced and many desperately trying to flee Myanmar. Communal violence also evolved from solely targeting Rohingyas towards affecting other Muslim minority communities in Myanmar as well.

In March 2013, Meiktila in the Mandalay Region witnessed a communal riot between Buddhists and Muslims which left at least 43 people – mostly Muslims – dead. Furthermore, Lashio in the Shan State saw an outbreak of communal violence in May 2013, in which mobs burned down a Muslim orphanage, a mosque and shops. According to state media, at least one person died and four others were injured. Authorities imposed a curfew to bring the situation under control. Several mosques were burnt down and more than 12,000 Muslims were displaced. The government declared a state of emergency and sent in riot police to restore law and order.

Increasing awareness of the plight of Myanmar's Muslim community among fellow Muslims elsewhere in the world poses a significant threat because of its exploitation to rally dispersed radical elements. In April 2013, radical Indonesian ideologue Abu Bakar Ba'asyir renewed his call for armed jihad as the sole solution for ending what he claimed was the "genocide" of the Rohingyas. This demonstration of growing sensitivity to the Rohingya issue within the wider Muslim community – particularly among radicals – was reinforced in May 2013 by a failed attempt to attack the Myanmar Embassy in Jakarta,

## **INCREASING AWARENESS OF THE PLIGHT OF MYANMAR'S MUSLIM COMMUNITY AMONG FELLOW MUSLIMS ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD POSES A SIGNIFICANT THREAT BECAUSE OF ITS EXPLOITATION TO RALLY DISPERSED RADICAL ELEMENTS**

## **COMMUNAL VIOLENCE HAS ALSO EVOLVED FROM SOLELY TARGETING THE ROHINGYAS TOWARDS AFFECTING THE OTHER MUSLIM MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN MYANMAR AS WELL**

Indonesia. In the same month, clashes also occurred in Malaysia between Buddhist and Muslim Myanmar nationals residing there, killing two and leading to the arrest of more than 900 Myanmar nationals.

Breaking the trend of fewer bombings since the election of the Thein Sein government in 2011, a string of explosions occurred across Myanmar in October 2013. The blasts took place in Yangon, Saigang, Namkhan, Mandalay and Tuangoo. One person was killed in the blasts and six others, including a tourist, were wounded. At least four suspects are known to have been detained.

### **Looking Ahead**

2014 is an important year for Myanmar as it will take up the rotating chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). However, the developments of 2013 underscore the need for building state capacity in maintaining law and order. They also highlight the necessity for effective management of communal relations underpinned by a proactive approach to avoid further violence.

Myanmar has planned a key dialogue in April 2014 with insurgent groups that will be critical for an enduring political settlement to decades of armed conflict. With ongoing reform initiatives as well as upcoming elections in 2015, there are numerous opportunities for Myanmar's emerging political system to mature.

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## SOUTHEAST ASIA

# Thailand

Anton Chan

Attacks by separatist militants in the southern Thai provinces of Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and Songkhla continued largely unabated in 2013 despite attempts at dialogue between the government and one of the insurgent groups, the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN). Attacks continued to occur on an almost daily basis, and the Thai Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) reported a total of 5,926 deaths as a result of the violence in the south from 4 January 2004 to 31 December 2013, with 267 deaths in 2013. Dialogue with the BRN broke down in November 2013, and political instability in Bangkok over a proposed amnesty bill which would see charges against former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra dropped has also diverted the government's attempts to stabilize the restive south, in addition to creating a crisis of leadership and unrest in Bangkok itself.

### Tactics and Targets

The trend of attacks in 2013 has changed slightly from 2012, with a shift away from the targeting of monks and teachers. Instead, attacks have largely focused on security forces and defense volunteers, while civilians have also been victims. The most brazen attack of the year occurred on 13 February 2013, when up to 60 militants mounted an assault on a Thai military base in Narathiwat. However, security forces had been tipped off about the impending attack, and were prepared to repel the attackers. In the firefight, 16 militants were killed, with no casualties on the Thai Army side as claimed by official sources. Another significant development was the killing of Imam Yacob Raimanee on 5 August 2013. The assassination was a blow to the peace process because Raimanee was a prominent supporter of a negotiated end to the conflict and his murder occurred during a ceasefire between the government and BRN for the month of Ramadan.

**THE THAI INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS COMMAND (ISOC) REPORTED A TOTAL OF 5,926 DEATHS AS A RESULT OF THE VIOLENCE IN THE SOUTH FROM 4 JANUARY 2004 TO 31 DECEMBER 2013, WITH 267 DEATHS IN 2013**

In terms of tactics, 2013 saw insurgents moving towards complex attacks on security forces, with multiple stages and weapon types involved. For instance, on 27 September 2013, a bomb exploded along a mountain road in Rueso district, Narathiwat. Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) officers were dispatched, and were at the site when a second bomb was detonated in the mountains, causing rocks to tumble over the roadway and block the EOD team's route of egress. Insurgents then engaged the EOD team in a gun battle, and scattered spikes to cut them off. Four policemen were finally killed when a team of reinforcements was caught in the spikes and its vehicle overturned.

There have been further instances of insurgents luring security forces to a location to investigate an incident before attacking them. On 23 August 2013, reports of a shooting brought security forces to a site where a bomb was then detonated, killing five defense volunteers. In Bacho district, Narathiwat on 28 October 2013, an EOD squad was investigating reports of a roadside bomb. While the EOD team was disabling the device, a second bomb planted in nearby trees was detonated, killing three officers. Further investigations detected a third device which was successfully disabled.

The preferred improvised explosive device (IED) used by insurgents continues to be gas cylinders triggered remotely by wire or cell phone which are rigged to explode and scatter shrapnel. The ISOC is now promoting the use of gas cylinders made from resin instead of steel in an attempt to reduce the damage caused by traditional gas cylinder IEDs.

Violence in the south also entered new territory on 22 December 2013 when a series of blasts occurred in the Sadao district of Songkhla, an area seldom targeted by insurgents. Three Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs) were detonated at different times and locations, resulting in at least two deaths and 27 injured. A car bomb went off near Hotel Oliver in the town of Danok, and two other devices concealed on motorcycles exploded outside police stations in the towns of Sadao and Padang Besar. The casualties were all from the blast in Danok, a tourist town popular with neighboring Malaysians.

Furthermore, an unexploded bomb was discovered in a parking area near a police station in the international tourist hub of Phuket on 23 December 2013. The IED was concealed in a stolen pickup truck that had been parked at that location since 8 December 2013. Police discovered the IED during a sweep prior to year-end celebrations in Phuket and the device was subsequently defused. Tourist areas such as Phuket and the

Sadao district of Songkhla have traditionally not been targeted by militants in the south. Thai authorities claimed that the blasts in Songkhla reflected frustration over the stalling of peace talks due to political turmoil in Bangkok.

### Attempts at Peace

On 28 February 2013, it was announced that Lt. Gen. Paradorn Pattanatabut, Secretary-General of Thailand's National Security Council (NSC), had signed an agreement with Hassan Taib of the BRN to begin talks between the two sides. Three rounds of talks occurred in the first half of 2013, with the declaration of a Ramadan ceasefire for 40 days beginning on 10 July 2013 hailed as an important step forward in the peace process.

However, the peace talks have been in doldrums from the beginning. Despite initial enthusiasm, a number of issues continue to plague the talks. First and foremost is the concern over the BRN representing Muslims in southern Thailand in general and the insurgents in particular. Second, there seems to be little, if any, agreement within Thai governing institutions over how to deal with the peace negotiations. These are significant since the credibility of a negotiated settlement of the southern Thailand insurgency depends on how the parties involved perceive the legitimacy of the organizations or entities dealing with the problem.

In April 2013, the BRN put forth five principal demands with respect to peace talks: 1) Elevation of Malaysia's role in the talks from facilitator to mediator, 2) Acknowledgement of the BRN as the representative of the "Melayu Pattani" people, 3) Acceptance of third parties, including ASEAN, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and other non-governmental organizations as witnesses to the talks, 4) Release of all suspects and revocation of outstanding arrest warrants for alleged militants and 5) Recognition of the BRN as a liberation movement as opposed to a separatist group.

In response, Bangkok raised concerns as to whether Hassan Taib truly represented the insurgents fighting on the ground in the south. This was further intensified with the release of a YouTube video in August 2013 by purported members of the BRN which claimed that the violence would continue despite the ceasefire agreement. In fact, the ceasefire period was marred by accusations of violations from both sides, and ended with 29 deaths, including that of Imam Yacob Raimanee.

At the same time, the disagreement among various Thai government agencies continues to manifest more intensely. While NSC Secretary-General Paradorn Pattanatabut continued to endorse Hassan Taib as a legitimate representative of the insurgents with a statement confirming the same in August 2013, Army Commander-in-Chief Prayuth Chan-ocha has expressed less optimism on a number of occasions. Consequently, the government continues to be tethered by excuses that it needs time to make the necessary consultations to study what the BRN is demanding.

In spite of protests creating an unsteady situation in Bangkok, further talks were set to begin in early December 2013 with the prospect of introducing representatives from two other groups – the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO) and Barisan Islam Pembangunan Pattani (BIPP), which claims to be the current manifestation of the Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani (BNPP), an insurgent group formed during a previous stage of the conflict in the south during the 1960s. However, the talks were shelved after Hassan Taib released a statement in the first week of December 2013 claiming that the BRN would not return to the table until the government responded to its five initial demands and put peace negotiations on the national agenda. NSC Secretary-General Paradorn Pattanatabut blamed the delay on the BRN's dissatisfaction with the fact that other groups were going to be involved.

The inclusion of other groups undoubtedly indicates that the Thai government is not keen on meeting the BRN's demand that it be recognized as the sole representative of insurgents in the south. Presently, however, protests in Bangkok are overshadowing the situation in the south on the government's agenda and the likelihood of further talks while the political crisis in the capital continues is slim.

### Looking Ahead

The situation in Thailand remains tense going into 2014. Yingluck Shinawatra resorted to dissolving Parliament on 9 December 2013, and has called for elections to be held on 2 February 2014. The People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) under Suthep Thaugsuban continues to protest and cause disruptions. The opposition Democrat Party has also indicated that it will not participate in the upcoming elections which the ruling Pheu Thai Party is likely to win due to its large support base in rural areas.

The influential Thai military's stance also remains a question mark as it has refrained from openly supporting either side, although the military leadership has stated it is closely observing ongoing developments. Violent incidents have already marred the current protest campaign, and will likely continue the longer protestors stay on the streets of Bangkok. Another concern which may significantly affect the political situation in Thailand is the health of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, which remains fragile.

Meanwhile, the situation in the restive south is likely to remain the same in spite of attempts to resume peace talks in December 2013. Even if the situation in Bangkok were to be resolved allowing the government to refocus on the south, there are significant challenges ahead, including the government's response to the BRN's five demands and whether the peace talks can actually affect the level of violence on the ground. A change of regime may also bring with it a different approach to the conflict in the south, with the potential to improve the situation or inflame violence again.

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## SOUTHEAST ASIA

# Indonesia

Muh Taufiqurrohman

Key terrorist attacks in Indonesia during 2013 included the suicide bombing at the Poso police headquarters in Central Sulawesi on 3 June 2013, and smaller hit-and-run attacks on police personnel in Jakarta between 27 July and 10 September 2013. Several plots were also foiled, including the one to bomb the Myanmar Embassy in Jakarta in May 2013. Over 80 suspected terrorists were arrested, and 18 neutralized. More than 50 were tried and convicted, including members of Al Qaeda in Indonesia who had planned to attack police offices and the Buddhist community in Jakarta.

In general, terrorist attacks which took place in 2013 were not of a magnitude similar to the mass casualty bombings which occurred during the 2002-2009 period. Nevertheless, the attacks marked a further consolidation of the notable shift in targets that occurred during 2010-2011, from international targets ("far enemies") to Indonesian police and the Christian community ("near enemies"). In addition, the situation in Papua also flared up in 2013, with shootings of civilians and security forces by the Free Papua Movement (OPM) in the Jaya Wijaya area throughout the year, leading to the deaths of 11 civilians, 11 security forces personnel and 3 separatists.

### Counterterrorism Efforts

Detachment 88 has remained successful in its counterterrorism initiatives, reducing the capability of terrorist groups that planned major attacks against critical targets such as foreign embassies. However, a more comprehensive approach to address radicalization is still needed. With the implementation

## DISENGAGING IMPRISONED TERRORISTS FROM VIOLENCE AND SPREADING AWARENESS ABOUT THE NEED FOR TOLERANCE AND PLURALISM AMONGST THE WIDER COMMUNITY REMAINS AN IMPORTANT STRATEGY TO COUNTER RADICALIZATION IN INDONESIA

of its de-radicalization blueprint in 2013, the Indonesian counterterrorism agency Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme (BNPT) is poised to play a significant role. Disengaging imprisoned terrorists from violence and spreading awareness about the need for tolerance and pluralism amongst the wider community remains an important strategy to counter radicalization in Indonesia, particularly since houses of worship were among the targets of the two major terrorist attacks in 2013.

Counterterrorism successes in 2013 were, however, marred by reports of excessive force and allegations of torture in some instances, such as against a member of the Abu Roban cell in May 2013. While the police have argued that the need for force arises due to resistance by terrorist suspects, the fact that police personnel are increasingly being targeted could also explain a more heavy-handed approach on the part of the police. The danger of such an approach is that it fuels further attacks by groups or individuals for revenge. In fact, the perpetrators of the June 2013 suicide attack on the police headquarters in Poso claimed they were motivated by revenge for the arrest and trial of their fellows.

### Shift in Targets and Operational Structure

2013 has shown a further consolidation of the shift in targets that first became apparent in 2010. Prior to 2010, all major attacks were masterminded by the hardline faction of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Evidence from developments in 2013 has suggested that terrorists are now placing greater emphasis on targeting the Indonesian police and the Buddhist community. This was seen in the retaliatory attack on the police headquarters in Poso, Central Sulawesi on 3 June 2013 and a series of further attacks on police officers in Jakarta between July and September 2013.

The rise in the number of confrontations between police and terrorists also indicates the latter's decreasing capability to strike at international targets, but at the same time it is also a sign of the terrorists' resilience. Furthermore, the extent to which the plight of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar has made the Buddhist community in Indonesia a target for terrorists was seen in the foiled bomb plot against the Myanmar Embassy in Jakarta in May 2013 and a small-scale bombing of a Buddhist temple in Jakarta on 4 August 2013.

Terrorist cells have also increasingly taken on a different operational structure. While past attacks by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) involved small teams of select individuals, the last two years have provided evidence that terrorist attacks are increasingly

being perpetrated by radicalized religious study groups. Such study groups often have some kind of connection to Darul Islam, Jemaah Islamiyah and Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT). Nevertheless, they act much more independently, and are composed of mutual friends rather than individuals brought together by a leader – a factor that may contribute to greater operational flexibility. Furthermore, since the larger organizations which the study groups are linked to have less authority over attacks committed, it also increases the scope for plausible deniability of their involvement.

### Key Players

#### *Sigit Indrajid*

Sigit Indrajid confessed to having led the cell that planned the bomb attack on the Myanmar Embassy in Jakarta in May 2013. His cell included individuals unofficially linked to Negara Islam Indonesia (NII), Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Forum Umat Islam (FUI) and JAT who sought revenge against Myanmar's government and the Buddhist community in Jakarta for the treatment of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. On 21 January 2014, Indrajid was sentenced to seven and half years' imprisonment.

#### *Abu Roban*

Abu Roban, who was killed in a raid in May 2013, was leader of Mujahidin Indonesia Barat (Mujahidin of Western Indonesia). This group was established in late 2012 and comprised around 60 individuals operating across Bandung, Jakarta, Central Java, and Lampung. A number of its members were formerly of the Abu Omar group and were also linked to Komando Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (KMIT), a terrorist group based in Poso, Central Sulawesi.

#### *Santoso alias Abu Wardah*

Santoso is a military commander of JAT in Poso and alleged leader of a terrorist cell called Mujahidin Command of Eastern Indonesia. He is wanted for the suicide attack on the Poso police headquarters in June 2013. Santoso is believed to have been involved in a number of past attacks on police in 2011 and 2012. On 2 January 2014, a raid conducted by Detachment 88 on a hideout of suspected militants in Ciputat on the outskirts of Jakarta led to the deaths of 6 suspected militants who were linked to Abu Wardah's group in Poso.

## ARRESTS AND NEUTRALIZATIONS OF KEY TERRORISTS IN 2013 HAVE INDICATED THAT THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ABLE TO CRACK DOWN ON TERRORIST GROUPS WITH A FAIR AMOUNT OF SUCCESS

## AN OVERWHELMING “HARD” APPROACH TO COUNTER THE TERRORIST THREAT HAS ALMOST BECOME A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD. THIS IS EVIDENT FROM THE INTENSITY OF THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST DETACHMENT 88 IN 2013

### Looking Ahead

The arrests and neutralizations of terrorists in 2013 have indicated that the Indonesian government continues to crack down on terrorist groups with a fair amount of success. However, high-profile terrorists such as Santoso remain at large. In fact, Santoso's ability to evade capture has raised his reputation in the eyes of young Indonesian jihadists. This is a concern since it would allow his cell to recruit more easily even beyond Poso and be able to carry out attacks all over the country.

External conflicts such as the ones in Syria and Myanmar would also be exploited by Java-based radical and extremist groups to make emotive appeals for fundraising and recruitment. It may also be possible that the members of these groups might join the conflicts in those countries to gain experience. Evidence of Indonesians fighting in Syria, for instance, was confirmed in November 2013 with the death of Reza Fardi, a graduate of Pesantren al-Mukmin. There is also a possibility that radical and extremist groups might attack Shiites and Buddhists in Indonesia, given the rise of hate speech against these two groups witnessed in 2013.

The attacks in 2013 also proved that lack of early detection mechanisms and persisting radicalization would remain key challenges which must be addressed by the concerned agencies. In Indonesia, there is as yet no legal provision to monitor and prosecute individuals who engage in hate speech and spread radical and extremist ideology. This is an issue that needs to be addressed as a long-term strategy to combat the overall threat from terrorism in Indonesia. Besides, in Indonesia, an overwhelming “hard” approach to counter the terrorist threat has almost become a double-edged sword. This is evident from the intensity of the campaign against Detachment 88 in 2013. To avoid losing the gains made through the arrest and neutralization of terrorists, Detachment 88 needs to adopt a more transparent monitoring mechanism to handle cases of suspected extrajudicial killings and also reduce the trust deficit between the police and the public.

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## SOUTHEAST ASIA

# Philippines

Anton Chan

2013 saw a resurgence in the activities of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) faction under Nur Misuari. The Islamist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the break-away faction of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) remained active as well, with the former continuing to carry out kidnappings and the latter intensifying its efforts to derail the peace process in the south between the MILF and the government. The MILF continued its negotiations with the government in 2013 and there has been substantial progress with regard to the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB).

In addition, the long-running communist insurgency involving the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) continued in 2013 with attacks specifically targeting businesses. The devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan (locally referred to as Yolanda) in November 2013, however, saw the CPP's front in the Visayan Islands announcing a unilateral ceasefire that was later extended until mid-January 2014 in order to support relief efforts.

### Moro Insurgency

The government's deepening peace process with the MILF, which took a major step forward with the signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro in October 2012, has seen rival groups respond violently in 2013. From 9-28 September 2013, elements of the MNLF loyal to Nur Misuari attempted to occupy Zamboanga City and were repulsed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

The motivation for pro-Misuari MNLF elements to engage in such activity was likely to have stemmed from Misuari's dissatisfaction that the FAB would overtake the MNLF's own settlement with the government regarding the existing Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The MNLF peace agreement was first signed in 1996 and its implementation has been continually discussed between the

## SINCE THE END OF THE CRISIS IN ZAMBOANGA, IT IS UNCLEAR IF MISUARI'S MNLF FACTION WILL CONTINUE RESISTING THE ONGOING MILF PEACE PROCESS

government and the MNLF, with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation as a mediator.

### MILF

On 8 December 2013, the government and MILF signed the FAB Annex on Power Sharing, marking a significant step towards the finalization of a lengthy peace process that began in 2001. Progress since the signing of the FAB in October 2012 has been rather sluggish, with skeptics emphasizing the peace panels' difficulty in meeting deadlines. However, with only the Annex on Normalization left, it is likely that negotiations in 2014 will lead to the fulfillment of the major objectives of the FAB.

The MILF's armed wing has also cooperated extensively with the government's security forces throughout 2013, often providing intelligence and support against other armed groups through a structure known as the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AJAG). In 2013, the AJAG was tasked to provide security in areas under MILF control.

Yet despite closer security cooperation between the government and the MILF, there have been some cases where individual MILF commanders have acted in their own interests and contrary to the broader direction of their group. For instance, Malista Malanka, a senior MILF commander in Basilan province, has been accused by the AFP of protecting Abu Sayyaf militants in his area of operations, allegedly for financial benefits.

### MNLF

Although the MNLF has long been overshadowed by the MILF as the primary group leading the Moro struggle, it remains an important player due to its potential to act as a spoiler of the ongoing peace process with the MILF. However, it is important to note that only the MNLF faction led by Nur Misuari is opposed to the MILF peace process. Misuari's unilateral declaration of Bangsamoro independence in August 2013 signaled his intent to derail the MILF peace process and set the

## THE GOVERNMENT'S DEEPENING PEACE PROCESS WITH THE MILF HAS SEEN RIVAL GROUPS RESPOND VIOLENTLY IN 2013

stage for the Zamboanga crisis in September 2013. In the aftermath of the crisis, Misuari is now a wanted man and his faction's military strength has been depleted following its defeat in Zamboanga City by the AFP.

Since the end of the crisis in Zamboanga, it is unclear if Misuari's MNLF faction will continue resisting the ongoing MILF peace process. Furthermore, the fate of the Tripartite Implementation Review of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement hangs in the balance for two important reasons. First, the Review meeting scheduled for 16 September 2013 in Indonesia was postponed by Misuari using the ongoing crisis in Zamboanga as justification. Second, Misuari continues to be recognized as the sole representative of the Moro people by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which facilitated the 1996 peace agreement. However, the warrant for Misuari's arrest could complicate his future involvement in the peace process.

#### **BIFF**

The BIFF, a splinter group of the MILF opposed to the current peace process and the FAB, has been accused by the government of being responsible for at least 48 incidents from July to September 2013 within the territory it dominates in the North Cotabato, Maguindanao and Basilan provinces.

There had been some doubt in 2013 as to the direction and leadership of the BIFF due to its founder, ex-MILF commander Ameril Umbra Kato, reportedly being in ill health. Nevertheless, it appears that the group reorganized in the second half of 2013 under a new operational commander, Sheik Mohidin Animbang. Additionally, overtures of friendship appear to have been made to Misuari's faction of the MNLF, with attacks in North Cotabato by the BIFF during the crisis in Zamboanga that were seen as attempts to dilute the military concentration of force against Misuari's fighters in Zamboanga City. Although the BIFF's attacks subsided soon after the end of the crisis in Zamboanga, it remains to be seen if the group will continue to coordinate with Misuari's faction of the MNLF and combine their strength in future.

#### **ASG**

The ASG continued to avoid confrontation with the AFP in 2013, and its primary activity remained kidnapping for ransom. The strength of the group has been severely diminished due to concerted counterterrorist action by the government for many years, and it has become more of a criminal gang than a terrorist group.

## **THE ASG'S KIDNAPPING SPREE IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE DUE TO ITS IMPORTANCE AS A SOURCE OF FUNDS TO SUSTAIN THE GROUP**

Out of the several kidnappings the ASG carried out in 2013, the abduction of the provincial treasurer of Sulu, Jesus Cabilin, from his home on 18 November 2013 was the most significant. On 15 November 2013, suspected ASG members also attacked a resort in Sabah, Malaysia, killing Taiwanese tourist Li-Min Hsu and abducting his wife. On the other hand, Jordanian journalist Baker Atyani was released in the southern island of Jolo on 4 December 2013 after spending 18 months in captivity, and Australian Warren Rodwell was also released by the ASG after having been a hostage for 15 months.

The ASG's kidnapping spree is likely to continue due to its importance as a source of funds to sustain the group. Furthermore, though it was known in the past for an agenda in line with the transnational jihadist movement, the ASG is unlikely to revive such an agenda. Nevertheless, it remains a formidable security threat, both to foreigners in the Philippines, and increasingly to wealthy or important locals as well.

#### **Communist Insurgency**

The armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the New People's Army (NPA), continued to carry out attacks throughout 2013, primarily targeting businesses to exact "revolutionary taxes" as a source of funding for the group.

The NPA attacked a number of business assets belonging to the branches of Dole Foods and Sumitomo Fruits Corporation, among others. It also engaged the AFP on several occasions throughout the year, but declared a unilateral ceasefire in Central Philippines in the wake of the devastating Typhoon Haiyan.

The Eastern Visayas Front of the CPP had originally declared a ceasefire from 8 November 2013 until 24 December 2013, but later extended it until mid-January 2014 without stating a specific date. Although the ceasefire has been marred by accusations of violations from both sides, there is the possibility that it could lead to a renewal of talks with the government through the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP).

#### **Looking Ahead**

The progress of the peace process under FAB, which has been supported by MNLF factions opposed to Nur Misuari, will likely be finalized in 2014. The challenge, however, will be to link the FAB to existing peace agreements with the MNLF and make the current peace process more inclusive to prevent a repeat of what happened in Zamboanga City during September 2013. As for the CPP/NPA, it remains to be seen if the current ceasefire will hold and whether it can be extended beyond Typhoon Haiyan-affected areas to pave the way for a renewed attempt at peace.

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## SOUTHEAST ASIA

# Malaysia

Anton Chan

Malaysia continues to grapple with the threat posed by former Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members, some of whom resurfaced in 2013. Furthermore, the Lahad Datu standoff – where militants crossed the border in a bid to settle a long-running territorial dispute by force – highlighted the potential for violence in Malaysia's porous border region with southern Philippines. Violence also marred the general election held in May 2013. Key concerns ahead include the impact of the peace process in southern Philippines on eastern Malaysia as well as persisting radicalization in the country.

### JI-Linked Terrorists Resurface

Former Malaysian Army Captain and known Al Qaeda affiliate Yazid Sufaat, who was previously detained under Malaysia's Internal Security Act from 2001-2008 for terrorist activities, was re-arrested on 21 February 2013 under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA, which replaced the ISA in 2012).

Sufaat was arrested together with two other individuals – Muhammad Hilmi Hasim, and Halimah Hussein – for facilitating the movement of Malaysians to fight in Syria. The individuals in question – Rafiz Mohamed Arif, and Muhamad Razin Sharhan Mustafa – were arrested in Lebanon en route to Syria in October 2012. Sufaat was initially able to overturn his detention on a technicality and was released on 20 May 2013. However, the prosecution appealed and he was re-arrested a week later. While 19 November 2013 was the date set for Sufaat and his accomplices' cases to be brought before a judge, the cases have yet to be heard.

Fadli Sadama, the last of four terrorist escapees from Tanjung Gusta prison in Medan, Indonesia, was recaptured in Malaysia in November 2013. He was originally arrested in Malaysia in October 2010 and deported to Indonesia where he remained incarcerated until he escaped with over 200 other prisoners in a jailbreak in July 2013. Fadli was recaptured during a raid on

**MALAYSIA CONTINUES TO GRAPPLE WITH THE THREAT POSED BY FORMER JEMAAH ISLAMIYAH MEMBERS, SOME OF WHOM RESURFACED IN 2013**

**THE BORDER INCURSION, WHICH WAS A BID TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE TERRITORY CLAIMED BY THE SO-CALLED SULTANATE OF SULU, INITIALLY TOOK MALAYSIAN SECURITY FORCES BY SURPRISE**

a house in the Klang valley in late November 2013. He has reportedly been returned to Indonesia, and Malaysian police are investigating how he was able to travel from Indonesia to Malaysia after escaping from prison.

Another prominent Malaysian terrorist, Zulkifli bin Hir (also known as Marwan), who was initially believed to have been killed by an airstrike of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in 2012 resurfaced in 2013 in Mindanao in the south. Evidence has also pointed to his involvement in a bombing on 26 July 2013 that occurred in Cagayan de Oro City in northern Mindanao which left six dead and 48 wounded. Marwan is likely to be receiving shelter from either the Abu Sayyaf Group or the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters.

All three individuals have links to the original JI group that was active in 2001 and subsequently pursued throughout the Southeast Asian region.

### Lahad Datu Standoff

On 11 February 2013, around 200 armed Philippine nationals claiming allegiance to the self-proclaimed Sultan of Sulu Jamalul Kiram III entered and occupied the town of Lahad Datu in Sabah, East Malaysia. The border incursion, which was a bid to take control of the territory claimed by the so-called Sultanate of Sulu, initially took Malaysian security forces by surprise.

Clashes erupted on 1 March 2013 after the intruders repeatedly ignored deadlines set by the Malaysian government for their peaceful dispersal. The situation escalated with the Malaysian security forces' use of air strikes and mortars targeting the intruders' positions. Ultimately, the standoff ended in June 2013. Malaysia detained over a hundred Philippine nationals involved in the incident, and eight militants were charged for committing acts of terrorism.

## THE INCIDENT INVOLVING YAZID SUFAAT HIGHLIGHTED THAT RADICAL IDEOLOGY CONTINUES TO FIND ADHERENTS IN MALAYSIA, WITH SOME INDIVIDUALS BEING MOTIVATED ENOUGH TO BECOME FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Thousands of Philippine nationals residing illegally in Sabah were deported in the security crackdown resulting from the standoff. Although Jamalul Kiram III died of natural causes on 20 October 2013, his daughter vowed to continue pursuing her family's territorial claims. The entire episode, which struck many observers as rather unusual, nevertheless highlighted the persistent challenge of managing a highly porous and contested border between the Philippines and East Malaysia.

### Election Violence

The opposition Pakatan Rakyat coalition put up a strong challenge to Prime Minister Najib Razak's ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition at Malaysia's 13th General Election on 5 May 2013. Although the BN won the election, allegations of foul play were made by the opposition over the issuing of false identity cards to foreigners and unexplained blackouts at selected vote-counting stations. The elections were also marred by numerous incidents of violence, including an IED explosion on 23 April 2013 which left one person injured. The country did, however, return to normalcy soon after the election results were released.

### Looking Ahead

The incident involving Yazid Sufaat highlighted that radical ideology continues to find adherents in Malaysia, with some individuals being motivated enough to become foreign fighters. The approach of the Malaysian authorities thus far, however, has been to hunt down potential terrorists rather than confronting the radicals and extremists motivating them. Malaysia will also continue to grapple with cross-border movements of terrorists and other illegal elements which might be aggravated if opposition to the peace process between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front intensifies, thereby driving its opponents to seek refuge close to or within Malaysian territory. Nevertheless, Malaysia has already announced increased security measures along its border with the Philippines after the Lahad Datu standoff.

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## CTTA IN 2014

### January: Annual Threat Assessment

Comprehensive analysis of key developments in 2013 from ICPVTR's regional and country desks, with projections for the year ahead

### February: Radicalization, De-Radicalization/Rehabilitation, and Community Engagement

First issue in the 2-part *Strategic Counterterrorism* series covering emerging trends in "soft" countermeasures to terrorism

### March: Southeast Asia in Focus

First issue in the 4-part *Regional Focus* series covering epicenters of terrorism and political violence

### April: The State of Al Qaeda

Annual assessment of the brand synonymous with transnational terrorism, covering the period from May 2013 to March 2014

### May: South Asia in Focus

Second issue in the 4-part *Regional Focus* series covering epicenters of terrorism and political violence

### June: Cooperation in Terrorism and Counterterrorism

Review of the relations between terrorist actors and how states and their respective counterterrorist organs are collaborating to combat terrorism, covering the period from July 2013 to May 2014

### July: Africa in Focus

Third issue in the 4-part *Regional Focus* series covering epicenters of terrorism and political violence

### August: Key Personalities

Review of individuals that have contributed significantly to the transnational threat of terrorism, covering the period from September 2013 to July 2014

### September: The Middle East in Focus

Concluding fourth issue in the *Regional Focus* series covering epicenters of terrorism and political violence

### October: Counter Ideology and Promoting Moderation

Concluding second issue in the 2-part *Strategic Counterterrorism* series covering emerging trends in "soft" countermeasures to terrorism

### November: Year-End Open Issue

Final issue of the year to address a free range of topics

For more information, or to pitch an idea for a particular issue in 2014, please send an email to [ctta@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:ctta@ntu.edu.sg).

## SOUTHEAST ASIA

# Singapore

Anton Chan

Singapore remained free from terrorist incidents in 2013, although it continued to employ its Internal Security Act (ISA) to detain persons suspected of involvement in terrorism-related activity.

### Detentions under the ISA in 2013

In his March 2013 budget speech, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean announced that Singapore had re-detained Abdul Basheer, a self-radicalized former lawyer, under the ISA. DPM Teo also stated that between November 2012 and March 2013, three individuals had been released from preventive detention under the ISA as they no longer posed a threat to Singapore's security. Singapore typically does not announce the number of individuals detained under the ISA, but it is believed that approximately 64 people are being held under the Act's provisions.

In September 2013, Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) revealed that a self-radicalized individual had been detained under the ISA. Asyrani Hussaini, who became radicalized by reading material on the internet, had entered Thailand illegally in an attempt to join insurgents fighting in the south of the country, but was unsuccessful. He then traveled to another unnamed country in the region where he was arrested and convicted for immigration offences. Upon his release, he was deported to Singapore and detained under the ISA in March 2013.

In November 2013, MHA announced that Masyhadi bin Mas Selamat, the son of former Singapore Jemaah Islamiyah leader Mas Selamat bin Kastari, was in Singapore's custody. Masyhadi had been living in Central Java, Indonesia after his father's arrest in 2003. Educated at a *pesantren* (religious boarding school) there, the 24-year-old Masyhadi eventually

**SINGAPORE REMAINED FREE FROM TERRORIST INCIDENTS IN 2013, ALTHOUGH IT CONTINUED TO EMPLOY ITS INTERNAL SECURITY ACT TO DETAIN PERSONS SUSPECTED OF INVOLVEMENT IN TERRORISM-RELATED ACTIVITY**

**THE ISA THUS FAR HAS ENABLED THE ARREST AND DETENTION OF INDIVIDUALS BELIEVED TO POSE A THREAT TO SINGAPORE WITHOUT THE SAME DEGREE OF PUBLIC OUTCRY THAT FORCED MALAYSIA TO REPLACE ITS OWN ISA IN 2012**

became a *pesantren* teacher. Indonesian police arrested him during his wedding and deported him to Singapore in October 2013. According to a MHA press release, he is "presently under investigation to ascertain if he has been involved in activities that are inimical to the security of Singapore."

### Looking Ahead

The ISA thus continues to be an oft-used tool in the Singaporean government's counterterrorist strategy, and thus far has enabled the arrest and detention of individuals believed to pose a threat to Singapore without the same degree of public outcry that forced Malaysia to replace its own ISA in 2012.

The Singaporean government is expected to continue to be able to monitor extremist elements that are increasingly turning to the Internet as they lack an organized presence due to diligent counterterrorist measures. However, the island nation remains a prime target for outside terrorist groups. Extremists from neighboring countries who have ventured to Syria or elsewhere to gain experience may also return to the region with ideas for a landmark attack on the country.

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## SOUTH ASIA

# Afghanistan

Halimullah Kousary

Afghanistan is passing through a critical juncture. Despite a decade-long military campaign against the Taliban, the end result of NATO's efforts in Afghanistan looks to be a stalemate.

### Handover of Security Responsibility

In June 2013, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) took over responsibility for security, while the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force is set to withdraw the rest of its 57,000 troops currently in Afghanistan (as of 15 January 2014) over the course of 2014. It is likely that a residual force of between 10,000 to 15,000 NATO troops – most of them American – will remain until 2024, but this hinges on the endorsement of the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) by the Afghan and US governments.

### Issues with the BSA

The agreement is currently pending owing to President Hamid Karzai's insistence upon the US ending raids on Afghan homes, and undertaking practical steps to restart the Afghan peace process between the Taliban and his government. In the event of these terms not being met, President Karzai indicated that he would likely delay endorsing the agreement until after the April 2014 elections and leave the matter to his successor.

By holding back his endorsement, President Karzai has acted contrary to the decision of the consultative *Loya Jirga* (grand council) convened on 21 November 2013, which called for immediate endorsement of the BSA on the basis that further delay could have serious consequences for Afghanistan, including the complete withdrawal of NATO forces. The Taliban have praised President Karzai for his stance against the US, but nevertheless did not show any inclination to negotiate with his government. This runs contrary to the argument that President Karzai's stance vis-à-vis the BSA would encourage the Taliban to agree to negotiation. The transfer of

**DESPITE A DECADE-LONG  
MILITARY CAMPAIGN AGAINST  
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**WHILE NEGOTIATED  
SETTLEMENT IS STILL SEEN BY  
THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT AS A  
VIABLE APPROACH TO END THE  
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BUT ALSO SINCERE  
FACILITATION BY THE US AND  
PAKISTAN**

responsibility for security to the ANSF has also not resulted in the Taliban halting their military campaign. This is because the Taliban's fight is not only against the foreign presence but also the current governing system and Afghan constitution.

### Taliban Resilient

Since June 2013, the 350,000-strong ANSF has conducted almost all ground operations against the Taliban across the country. Its efforts prevented the Taliban from recapturing areas they had lost to NATO forces in 2011 and 2012. However, the Taliban continued to carry out attacks, triggering a 14% increase in ANSF casualties in 2013.

On the other hand, the Afghanistan Peace and Reconciliation Program (APRP) claimed that a large number of Taliban fighters defected to the government with the transfer of security-related operations from NATO forces to the ANSF. The possibility that a number of these individuals were not actual Taliban fighters cannot, however, be ruled out. Their motivation in falsely claiming themselves to be Taliban could be to join APRP programs for the incentives that the government offers to participants.

### Progress on Negotiations

While negotiated settlement is still seen by the Afghan government as a viable approach to end the conflict, it requires not only the Taliban's consent, but also sincere facilitation by the US and Pakistan. The ineffectiveness of repeated efforts by the Afghan government to persuade the Taliban to negotiate can arguably be attributed to a lack of serious commitment on the part of the US and Pakistan.

Meetings held between the Taliban and NATO and the Afghan government since 2010 have not yielded tangible results. In June 2013, the Taliban opened a political office in Doha, the capital of Qatar, with the go-ahead of Pakistan and US, but refused to talk to the Afghan government in the absence of pressure from the US and Pakistan. The office was inaugurated with name and flag of the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan,” which was seen as a move by the Taliban to portray itself as having the same status as the Afghan government.

The US and Pakistan need to use their leverage – the US against Pakistan and Pakistan against the Taliban – to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. However, the only gesture in this direction made by Pakistan recently has been the release of low-profile Taliban prisoners from its jails. Rivalry with India continues to inform Pakistan’s view of the Afghan Taliban as a strategic asset and it appears unlikely that Pakistan will allow the group to lose its military or political influence in Afghanistan.

Pakistan would thus remain keen to ensure that the Taliban continue to be influential in determining any future government set-up in Afghanistan, while the US is more focused on finalizing the BSA and is hesitant to push the Taliban to join the peace process by mounting serious pressure on Pakistan. This is likely to have contributed to President Karzai’s condition that the US facilitates serious negotiation with the Taliban before his government signs the BSA. For the Afghan government, finalizing the BSA without including the above precondition would limit focus on assistance to the ANSF and while it would allow the US and NATO’s residual force to conduct counterterrorism operations focused on the remnants of Al Qaeda, the conflict between the Afghan government and the Taliban would remain.

### Looking Ahead

The government’s own efforts to move the Taliban towards negotiation have achieved little progress thus far. It therefore remains important for Afghanistan to keep the international

community engaged and committed as the country still has an aid-dependent economy and fledgling security institutions. The performance of the ANSF in 2013 is promising, but it still requires financial and material support from NATO forces to sustain itself against the Taliban.

In the meantime, fair and transparent presidential elections in 2014 are also critical to secure the credibility and legitimacy of the future government, which must undertake measures to curb rampant corruption and deliver required reforms. This would bring Afghanistan’s population closer to its government, and encourage it to play a supportive role in the conflict with the Taliban after 2014 if negotiation efforts do not work out.

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**RIVALRY WITH INDIA  
CONTINUES TO INFORM  
PAKISTAN’S VIEW OF THE  
AFGHAN TALIBAN AS A  
STRATEGIC ASSET AND IT  
APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT  
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OR POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN  
AFGHANISTAN**

## SOUTH ASIA

# Pakistan

Abdul Basit

On the internal security front in 2013, Pakistan continued to bear the brunt of terrorism in its northwestern tribal area which borders Afghanistan. The country suffered 5,207 deaths due to terrorism and militancy-related incidents in 2013 compared to 6,211 fatalities in 2012, registering a decline of 16 percent. Of the 5,207 killed, 2,921 were civilians, 650 security forces personnel and 1,636 militants. The number of suicide attacks in 2013 remained around the same. As many as 41 suicide attacks were recorded in 2013 compared to 39 attacks reported in 2012. However, the number of deaths due to suicide attacks increased during 2013, with 737 fatalities compared to 365 fatalities in 2012.

The increased lethality of suicide attacks during 2013 can be attributed to attacks targeting crowded election rallies of liberal-secular parties such as the Awami National Party (ANP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement and Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a consortium of anti-Pakistan militant groups, declared open war against these parties during the election period due to those parties supporting military operations against the TTP.

There was also no respite for the newly-elected government in the southwestern Balochistan province. Baloch militant groups continued their separatist struggle against the central government despite the appointment of a Baloch nationalist leader – Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch – as Balochistan's chief minister.

On 15 June 2013, Baloch insurgents attacked and destroyed the Quaid-i-Azam Residency in the Ziarat district of Balochistan. The Residency is a historical monument where Pakistan's founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah spent his last days. Baloch separatists also targeted the army's relief operations following a devastating earthquake which hit the Awaran and Kech districts of Balochistan in October 2013. Militants fired small arms and rockets on army vehicles carrying relief goods and in some areas torched relief items, including tents and food.

## PAKISTAN SUFFERED 5,207 DEATHS DUE TO TERRORISM AND MILITANCY-RELATED INCIDENTS IN 2013 COMPARED TO 6,211 FATALITIES IN 2012

## THE US DRONE CAMPAIGN IN PAKISTAN'S NORTHWESTERN TRIBAL REGION CONTINUED UNABATED DESPITE SEVERE OPPOSITION AND CRITICISM FROM ISLAMABAD, WITH AS MANY AS 22 DRONE STRIKES REPORTED IN 2013

### Worsening Sectarian Conflict

Sectarian militancy has emerged in recent years as the biggest internal security challenge for Pakistan. In 2013, incidents of sectarian violence between Sunnis and Shias in Pakistan declined to 120 from 173 in 2012. Notwithstanding the decline in the number of incidents, the death toll went up from 307 in 2012 to 506 in 2013. However, the banned anti-Shia Deobandi outfit Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) stepped up its campaign against the Shia community in Quetta, Karachi and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Also, during this year's Ashura – the tenth day of Muharram when Muslims commemorate the sacrifice of Prophet Muhammad's grandson Hussain – sectarian clashes erupted after a group Shia mourners attacked a Sunni mosque in Punjab's Rawalpindi district. The attack left 20 seminary students dead and about 68 others injured. The government imposed curfew in Rawalpindi for five days to defuse tensions following the incident. However, sectarian clashes spread to the Multan, Bhakkar and Chaniot districts in Punjab, the Kohat and Hangu districts in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province and to Karachi, the provincial capital of Sindh.

### Drone Strikes

The US drone campaign in Pakistan's northwestern tribal region continued unabated despite severe opposition and criticism from Islamabad. The Pakistani government has consistently protested against drone strikes, terming them a violation of its sovereignty and counter-productive in fighting militants and terrorists based in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

As many as 22 drone strikes were reported in 2013 compared to 46 attacks recorded in 2012. Three top Pakistani Taliban leaders – Hakimullah Mehsud, head of TTP, Waliur Rehman, deputy head of TTP and pro-Afghan Taliban militant commander Mullah Nazir were killed by drone strikes in FATA.

The killing of Waliur Rehman and Hakimullah Mehsud also coincided with the Pakistani government's efforts to hold peace talks with the Pakistani Taliban. The timing of Waliur Rehman and Hakimullah Mehsud's killings was controversial, and were perceived by Pakistan as efforts by the US to sabotage initiatives to hold peace talks between the Taliban and the PML-N government.

### **New Leader of TTP**

Following the death of Hakimullah Mehsud, Mullah Fazlullah, the leader of TTP's Swat chapter, was appointed as the new head of the organization. Fazlullah's appointment came after Mullah Muhammad Omar, head of the Afghan Taliban, intervened to break a deadlock between various factions during a meeting convened to appoint a new head for TTP.

By appointing Fazlullah as the head of TTP, the Taliban signaled to the government that the group would not confine its focus to FATA and would intensify its operations in KP as well. It could be possible that the TTP wanted to demonstrate its support in other areas of Pakistan. There is also the potential for TTP to expand its campaign to urban areas of Pakistan by utilizing its alliance with the Punjabi Taliban.

Furthermore, Fazlullah is a staunch opponent of peace talks with the government. When the PML-N government was preparing to launch peace talks with the TTP following the unanimous decision of the All Parties Conference (APC) held on 9 September 2013 in Islamabad, the TTP killed Major General Sanaullah Niazi in a bomb attack in KP's Upper Dir district. There is thus a strong likelihood that the TTP under Fazlullah will reject efforts made thus far to initiate a peace process with the government in order to seek revenge for Hakimullah Mehsud's death and cement Fazlullah's position as the new head of TTP.

**BY APPOINTING FAZLULLAH AS THE HEAD OF TTP, THE TALIBAN SIGNALLED TO THE GOVERNMENT THAT IT WOULD NOT CONFINE ITS FOCUS TO FATA AND WOULD INTENSIFY ITS OPERATIONS IN KP AS WELL**

## **THE NEWLY-ELECTED PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT FINISHED DRAFTING A NEW NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY WHICH FOCUSES ON INTERNAL SECURITY THREATS SUCH AS EXTREMISM AND MILITANCY**

### **New Counterterrorism Measures**

The Pakistani government took a number of steps in 2013 to enhance its institutional and legal capacities to tackle the threat of extremism and terrorism in the country.

#### *National Counter Terrorism Authority*

In March 2013, Pakistan's parliament passed a bill establishing the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) to integrate and coordinate counterterrorist initiatives of various law enforcement agencies in Pakistan. NACTA will present strategic policy options to the government to be considered and then implement by relevant stakeholders.

The new agency has a board of directors that, besides the Prime Minister, includes the Interior, Finance and Defense Ministers, the Chief Ministers of all provinces and the chiefs of the Inter-Services Intelligence, Intelligence Bureau, Military Intelligence and Federal Investigation Agency. An executive committee headed by the Interior Minister will assist NACTA in carrying out the board's policies and the government's instructions.

#### *National Security Policy*

The newly-elected Pakistani government finished drafting the new national security policy which focuses on internal security threats such as extremism and militancy. The policy is divided into three parts and has five layers, which are: to dismantle, to contain, to prevent, to educate and to reintegrate. It is based on China's security model in Hong Kong and former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's security policy in Malaysia to tackle terrorism and extremism.

The initial draft policy paper puts dialogue as the number one option to deal with militants. If talks fail, the government could pursue military action as a final resort. The new security policy thus proposes a shift from the sole reliance on the use of force to a multi-faceted counterterrorism approach.

#### *Formation of Anti-Terrorism Task Forces in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa*

On 18 October 2013, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif approved the formation of an anti-terrorism task force for the province of Punjab. The task force is intended to be separate from the

police. This is likely to be due to the failure of the Punjab Police's Counterterrorism Department (CTD) in identifying and arresting high-profile terrorists.

In the new setup, the CTD will be merged with the anti-terrorism task force. The force will be tasked with combating terrorism, extortion and targeted killing in the province. Similarly, the KP cabinet also approved the formation of an anti-terrorism task force, as KP is severely affected by militancy and terrorism, with up to 170 confirmed bombings in 2013. The initial strength of the task force is believed to be 1,000 and it will be led by the Inspector General of Police and comprise members of all law enforcement and intelligence agencies including the army, Frontier Corps and Frontier Constabulary.

### Looking Ahead

Ultimately, peace and stability in Pakistan will hinge upon three things: security in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of coalition forces in 2014, the nature and pace of normalization of relations with India and finally, how Pakistan deals with the evolving challenge of extremism and terrorism in its tribal regions.

With the withdrawal of coalition forces and the security transition in Afghanistan during 2014, there is a strong realization in Pakistan that any gains made subsequently by the Afghan Taliban will further boost the morale of the Pakistani Taliban. The Afghan Taliban are also likely to use a consolidated operational base to help their Pakistani counterparts due to strong ideological, ethnic, religious and financial linkages developed over decades and the support that was extended to them by TTP in their struggle against the foreign military presence in Afghanistan.

**ULTIMATELY, PEACE AND STABILITY IN PAKISTAN WILL HINGE UPON THREE THINGS: SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN FOLLOWING THE WITHDRAWAL OF COALITION FORCES IN 2014, THE NATURE AND PACE OF NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH INDIA AND FINALLY, HOW PAKISTAN DEALS WITH THE EVOLVING CHALLENGE OF EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM IN ITS TRIBAL REGIONS.**

## **IN THE NEW NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY, PAKISTAN HAS INDICATED ITS INTENTION TO REVIEW FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS ITS NEIGHBORS**

The official line of thinking in Pakistan also categorically rejects the notion that militancy in Pakistan will end automatically with the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan. Moreover, with a minimized US footprint in the region, Kashmiri militant organizations may resume their activities. While the political and military leadership has acknowledged that the internal security threat from militant organizations is a bigger threat than India, it will have to adopt a uniform policy against all militant factions on Pakistani soil. Normalization of relations with India is thus important to Pakistan's efforts to fight homegrown terrorism.

With regard to relations with the US – as an October 2013 report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) put it –“the relationship between the United States and Pakistan has been redefined repeatedly since Pakistan's independence in 1947. Today...there is a growing recognition in both countries that the relationship is one of mutual necessity: 'transactional' rather than 'strategic'.”

For the present, however, drone strikes will remain a thorny issue. While Pakistan's demand to end drone strikes is justified, without addressing US concerns over the presence of Haqqani Network sanctuaries in FATA and cross-border infiltration of militants from Pakistan into Afghanistan, Pakistan cannot compel or convince the Americans to stop drone strikes. Nevertheless, there are other areas – the CSIS report referred specifically to civilian aid, trade and economic cooperation – where the two countries can foster better relations going forward.

In its new national security policy, Pakistan has indicated its intention to review its foreign policy towards its neighbors. However, it is also important for Pakistan to devise bilateral and multilateral mechanisms at the regional level with respect to border security. Most of the 2400 kilometer long border with Afghanistan is porous, and it will be difficult to stop cross-border militant movements without having a bilateral border security mechanism in place with Afghanistan. Similarly, despite heavy fortification along the Line of Control in Kashmir, there has been cross-border infiltration of militants. It is important for Pakistan and its neighbors to exchange information so that they do not become hostage to the agendas of militant actors. Collective counterterrorist initiatives at the regional level in South Asia are also the need of the hour given the changing security situation in Afghanistan.

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## SOUTH ASIA

# India

Vikram Rajakumar

The threat from terrorism and insurgency in India remains complex, with a number of attacks and plots by different militant groups all over the country in 2013. Diverse sources contribute to the current threat, including the Maoist insurgency, insurgencies in the northeast and Jammu and Kashmir and extremist religious and ethnic groups. There were approximately 884 fatalities from terrorism and insurgency-related incidents during 2013 compared to 803 fatalities in 2012 (as per data compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, SATP), highlighting that the threat remains robust. This is despite a number of measures taken by the central as well state governments to counter or at least contain the threat. Unfortunately, a lack of consensus at the political and societal level, together with bureaucratic inertia and turf battles among different agencies involved, continues to degrade India's ability to fight the threat decisively.

There was a downward trend with lower numbers of fatalities from 2010-12 for the Maoist insurgency and the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir that was reversed in 2013. Fatalities from the Maoist insurgency decreased from a peak of 1180 in 2010 to 367 in 2012, but increased to 421 in 2013. For the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir, fatalities decreased from 375 in 2010 to 117 in 2012, but went up in 2013 to 181. On the other hand, the northeast returned to a lower number of fatalities in 2013 (251 as opposed to 316 in 2012), continuing the long-term trend that was interrupted in 2012 by an increase in violence in Assam.

In addition to the Maoist insurgency causing the most fatalities in 2013 compared to the other insurgencies and sources of terrorism, it also had the largest proportion of civilian fatalities

**A LACK OF CONSENSUS AT THE POLITICAL AND SOCIETAL LEVEL, TOGETHER WITH BUREAUCRATIC INERTIA AND TURF BATTLES AMONG DIFFERENT AGENCIES INVOLVED, CONTINUES TO DEGRADE INDIA'S ABILITY TO FIGHT THE THREAT DECISIVELY**

**THE SMALL NUMBER OF HIGH-PROFILE BOMBINGS PERPETRATED BY GROUPS LIKE THE INDIAN MUJAHIDEEN CONTRIBUTE AS SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE THREAT AS THE MORE NUMEROUS AMBUSH ATTACKS CARRIED OUT BY MAOIST MILITANTS WHICH CAUSE FAR MORE FATALITIES**

overall. 38% of the Maoist insurgency's fatalities in 2013 were civilians as opposed to 26% security forces personnel. For Jammu and Kashmir, 11% of fatalities were civilians compared to 34% security forces personnel, while for the northeast, 36% of fatalities were civilians as opposed to 8% security forces personnel. This highlights an important difference in the nature of the threat from the Maoist and northeast insurgencies – where civilians are the primary targets – as compared to that from the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir, where security forces are the main targets instead. In fact, the Maoist attack on a convoy of the Indian National Congress party on the campaign trail in the state of Chhattisgarh on 25 May 2013 was significant because it killed a senior leader of Congress and around 20 others.

The nature of the attacks perpetrated is also an important consideration. Islamist extremism accounted for less than 5% of terrorism-related fatalities in 2013, yet the small number of high-profile bombings perpetrated by groups like the Indian Mujahideen (IM) contribute as significantly to the threat as the more numerous ambush attacks carried out by Maoist militants which cause far more fatalities. For instance, the Bodhgaya bombings in July 2013, in which a series of ten low-intensity blasts took place inside the Mahabodhi Temple Complex in Bodhgaya, Bihar, were an important development. This is because the bombings targeted a religious place of worship and highlighted the possibility of the IM broadening its range of civilian targets to avenge the persecution faced by Myanmar's Rohingya Muslim community. The state of Bihar also emerged as new ground for Islamist militants in 2013. In addition to the Bodhgaya bombings in July 2013, Bihar's capital Patna was also targeted in October 2013. The Patna Gandhi Maidan (a historic landmark) and railway station were bombed a few hours before Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi was to address a rally on 27 October 2013. The bombings killed six and injured 83.

## Update on Insurgencies

### *Maoist Insurgency*

Three developments in 2013 are particularly noteworthy. First, internal strife between the Communist Party of India (Maoist) – which has been waging a low-level insurgency against the Indian government since 2004 – and splinter groups such as the People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI) and Tritiya Prastuti Committee (TPC) has continued, although whether this has significantly arrested the CPI (M)'s capabilities is debatable. Second, while the CPI (M)'s fighting strength has been waning over the past few years and it faced an increasing amount of desertions in 2013, its organizational structure remains intact and the group has expanded further into parts of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Finally, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Odisha remained the focal states for Maoist insurgent activity, with Jharkhand in particular witnessing an increased level of incidents and fatalities in 2013. The threat posed by the Maoist insurgency is unlikely to wane unless the central government and affected state governments cooperate to take advantage of the CPI (M)'s slipping cadre strength. Better coordination and oversight for existing programs to boost counterinsurgency capabilities could provide a much needed edge going forward.

### *Insurgency in the Northeast*

Although the insurgency in the northeast has shown a considerable decline in 2013 in terms of the number of incidents and fatalities, three key concerns remain. First, arms from Myanmar's United Wa State Army – a militant outfit seeking autonomy for the Wa people of northern Myanmar that is known for trafficking narcotics and weapons – continue to sustain the threat posed by groups in the northeast. Second, attempts at talks in Nagaland have reduced violence in the state in 2013, although violence continued to affect Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya. Third, the formation of splinter groups is likely to prolong the conflict by creating more actors with diverse aims that need to be brought together in the event of a negotiated settlement or ceasefire. For instance, in Assam, members of the Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC-B, itself a breakaway faction) split to form the United Achik Liberation Army in February 2013.

### *Insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir*

Prospects for a waning terrorist threat in the state of Jammu and Kashmir diminished in 2013. Although Lashkar-e-Toiba faced a setback due to elimination of key leaders, Hizbul Mujahideen reemerged to fill the vacuum. Infiltrators from the Pakistan-controlled region of Kashmir also affected the security situation in the state, with the Indian Army launching Operation Shala Bhata (named after a village in the Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir) in September 2013 in response, the first such operation since 2010. With incidents of terrorism increasing in 2013, the outlook remains uncertain. Some analysts are pointing to the escalation of incidents following the election of Nawaz Sharif in June 2013 as a sign of the Pakistani military and security establishment rejecting overtures Sharif made to India during election campaigning. However, this has

masked the need to investigate the resurgence of the terrorist threat in Jammu and Kashmir more deeply.

### **Indian Mujahideen**

The arrest of Yasin Bhatkal on 28 August 2013 was an important success for counterterrorism efforts targeting Islamist extremism in India outside Jammu and Kashmir. The arrest of Bhatkal has brought to the surface some important information about past bombings conducted by the IM as well as the future trajectory of the organization. Key concerns ahead include the apparent desire of IM to link up with Al Qaeda and the emphasis on targeting Buddhist temples and heritage sites in response to Myanmar's treatment of Rohingya Muslims. Although India's counterterrorism efforts over the past few years have succeeded in capturing IM leaders and disrupting some of their modules, the diffused organizational structure of the IM has allowed it to remain resilient. Furthermore, the group continues to recruit through emotive appeals using past events of Hindu-Muslim tension such as the demolition of Babri Masjid in December 1992 and the Gujarat riots in 2002. The IM will therefore continue to pose a threat, and with the BJP prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi apparently topping the IM's list of targets due to his alleged role in initiating the 2002 Gujarat riots, the outcome of the 2014 election may be closely tied to the IM's agenda ahead.

### **Looking Ahead**

India will continue to face a multi-faceted terrorist threat. Yet the counterterrorism response of the Center remains hostage to the dynamics of India's political system, with state governments fending off attempts by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs to consolidate its control over security matters. A case in point is the plan to implement a National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) along the same lines as its US namesake, which has faced repeated delays due to opposition by states which are concerned about the ability of the NCTC to override their authority during a terrorist crisis. Furthermore, India's counterterrorism strategy is still reactionary with little, if any, attempts to preempt attacks which requires intelligence coordination and some level of centralization of overall policies and the security apparatus. Given the persisting socioeconomic, ethnic and religious motivations for youth to join terrorist outfits, efforts must be directed at reducing grievances that are used by terrorist groups to recruit. Another key concern ahead is the Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) elections scheduled to take place in May 2014. A change in the ruling coalition may bring a different – and possibly contradictory – approach to the table where security matters are concerned. In addition, post-election relations between the Center and the states may change depending on how the results turn out. There is no clear indication at present that, should the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance lose to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance, India's terrorist threat will be managed better.

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## SOUTH ASIA

# Bangladesh

Iftekhharul Bashar

Bangladesh witnessed significant violence during 2013, particularly in the fourth quarter of the year. The deteriorating law and order situation has hurt the economy and affected peaceful conduct of the general election held on 5 January 2014. Two major factors that triggered violence in 2013 were the dispute between the ruling and opposition parties over the governing mechanism for the election period and the war crimes trial. Bangladesh has also seen a resurgence of religious extremism. With multiple issues and conflicting actors, the country faces a challenging security situation ahead.

### Elections-Related Violence

The crisis over the governing mechanism for the 2014 general election which escalated during 2013 has been brewing since the constitutional amendment implemented by the Awami League government in 2011. The amendment annulled the system in place since 1990 of having a nonpartisan caretaker government (CTG) to be in place during an election period and oversee the election itself. The CTG system had in the past facilitated peaceful transfers of power by ensuring free, fair and credible elections. With the CTG system gone, the alliance of opposition parties led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) boycotted the 2014 general election, claiming it would not be free and fair with the incumbent government in power.

This led to significant violence between the rival political coalitions before, during and even after the elections which returned the Awami League to power. Elections-related violence has claimed more than 250 lives and injured several thousands, including women and children. Since the election was boycotted by the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP, headed by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia who leads an alliance of 18 political parties including the Islamist Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami), the legitimacy of the present Awami League government is under scrutiny both domestically

## THE DETERIORATING LAW AND ORDER SITUATION HAS HURT THE ECONOMY AND AFFECTED PEACEFUL CONDUCT OF THE GENERAL ELECTION HELD ON 5 JANUARY 2014

and internationally. The United States, European Union and the Commonwealth did not send election observers due to the failure of the government to bring the opposition to the election.

The instability that arose in 2013 out of the crisis has also seriously affected the Bangladeshi economy. According to an estimate by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI, the apex trade organization of Bangladesh), strikes and unrest have cost the country more than US\$10 billion in 2013. The violence has also affected the Bangladesh's image abroad and the flow of foreign investment into the country.

### War Crimes Tribunal

On 12 December 2013, Islamist leader Abdul Kader Mullah was executed as per the verdict of Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT). Mullah was convicted for atrocities committed during the 1971 war of independence with Pakistan. A senior leader of the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (BJI), Mullah was the first person convicted by the ICT to be executed. He was initially sentenced to life imprisonment which provoked wide-spread demonstrations, popularly known as the Shahbag protests, demanding capital punishment. The protests resulted in an amendment of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act of 1973 which allowed appeals to an order of acquittal or order of sentencing. After Mullah's execution, the BJI and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) carried out acts of vandalism and arson, detonated crude bombs and instigated violent clashes across the country.

A tribunal to prosecute the genocide of Bengalis which occurred during the 1971 war of independence has long been a popular demand in Bangladesh, and a tribunal was set up in 2010 by the current Awami League government. BJI has been opposing the tribunal since some of its top leaders are among the individuals facing charges. BJI's campaign against the war crimes tribunal has resulted in serious incidents of violence. On 10 February 2013, for instance, 111 people including eight policemen were killed when BJI activists turned violent over the verdict of BJI stalwart Delwar Hossain Sayeedi.

### Online Radicalization

Online radicalization has intensified in Bangladesh during in the last few years despite efforts by the government to stem the spread of radical ideology. The extent of the threat posed by online radicalization is exemplified by the emergence in 2013 of a new group named Ansarullah Bengali Team (ABT), which

drew inspiration from Anwar al-Awlaki's (a radical American Muslim cleric of Yemeni descent known for inspiring attacks and plots across the world through his preaching) radical sermons available online. The case of the ABT highlights that extremists in Bangladesh remain connected to the broader jihadist movement.

Furthermore, members of the group were involved in attacks targeting Bangladeshi bloggers espousing atheist views and who had supported the Shahbag protests in February 2013 calling for the death penalty to be given to Abdul Kader Mullah. On 14 January 2013, ABT members attempted to kill blogger Asif Mohiuddin. The following month, Ahmed Rajib Haider, who had blogged in support of the Shahbag protests, was murdered outside his home. In March 2013, Saniur Rahman, another Shahbag activist, was the victim of a stabbing. The attacks highlighted the continuing tension between secular and religious elements in Bangladeshi society.

### **Hefazat-e-Islam**

Hefazat-e-Islam (Hel) is a coalition of Islamist organizations formed in early 2010 which is based in more than 25,000 madrasahs (religious schools) across Bangladesh. Hel's activities in 2013 have posed a major concern for the country's law enforcement agencies. On 5 May 2013, nearly 200,000 Hel activists brought Bangladesh's capital Dhaka to a standstill in a campaign initiated in response to the Shahbag protests. Hel's campaign intended to mount pressure on the government to accept a list of 13 demands, some of which involved changes to existing laws with a view to Islamize Bangladesh.

However, the protest campaign turned violent, with Hel activists attacking law enforcement personnel. The government responded by deploying the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB, the elite anti-crime and counterterrorist unit of Bangladesh Police) and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB). The RAB and BGB together with the police took control of the situation quickly and allowed protestors to disperse. However, the incident was picked up and distorted by extremist media. The head of Al Qaeda's media and preaching arm, Ahmad Farooq, issued a 7 minute 47 second-long audio clip urging Bangladeshi Muslims to revolt against their government and kill those who insulted the Prophet Muhammad, referring to incidents involving atheist bloggers.

### **New Anti-Terrorism Law**

In June 2013, Bangladesh promulgated the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance of 2013, allowing courts to accept videos, still photographs, audio clips, chat logs and conversations on social media websites as evidence. The amended law provides for a maximum jail term of 20 years and fine of 2 million taka (US\$26,000) for funding acts of terrorism. It also instituted capital punishment for terrorism and subversive activities, depending upon the gravity of the crimes. Furthermore, in October 2013, the Information and

Communication Technology (Amendment) Act of 2013 was passed. The amended law now considers destroying/misusing computer data with ill motives and hacking computers or intranets as cognizable offenses. In addition, any person illegally accessing a protected government computer system is liable for up to 14 years' imprisonment and a fine of up to 1 million taka (US\$13,000).

### **Regional and International Cooperation**

2013 witnessed further expansion of counterterrorism cooperation with regional and international partners. On 28 January 2013, Bangladesh signed an extradition treaty with India. The treaty was endorsed by the cabinet on 7 October 2013, paving the way for the exchange of convicts and individuals held in both countries.

Furthermore, on 22 October 2013, Bangladesh signed an agreement with the USA which aims to enhance counterterrorism cooperation between the two countries in terms of capacity building, information sharing, and increased exchanges between law enforcement agencies. It is a further indication that Bangladesh's relationship with the US has matured, with several new cooperative mechanisms initiated between the two countries in recent years, including the US-Bangladesh Defense and Partnership Dialogues.

### **Looking Ahead**

2014 will be a critical year for the country's peace and security. Due to persistent counterterrorism efforts thus far, there has been a significant decline in attacks and Bangladeshi terrorist/extremist groups remain weak and in disarray. Bangladesh has also strengthened its cooperation with regional and international partners and brought about major changes in its legal framework to ensure internal security. However, counterterrorism challenges ahead will be complex and multifaceted. The emergence of the ABT has underscored the fact that violent extremists can and do adapt to changes in the security environment. It also indicated that the new generation of violent extremists is taking to cyberspace to accelerate the spread of radical ideology and facilitate networking and training.

Above all, there is a clear sign that the gap is narrowing between local and global militant movements in Bangladesh. All these factors need to be taken into consideration. Bangladesh will need to continue its zero-tolerance policy towards militancy and strengthen its counterterrorism capabilities. It is also important that the country builds its non-kinetic capacity in countering radicalization, promoting moderation and creates more economic opportunities for youth so that they remain immune from radical indoctrination, especially via the internet.

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## SOUTH ASIA

# Sri Lanka

Iromi Dharmawardhane

There have been no incidents of terrorism in Sri Lanka since the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were militarily defeated in May 2009. However, a small number of cells comprising LTTE members and their supporters remain in the country's conflict-affected north, and there have been a few incidents of concern in 2013. Outside Sri Lanka, the LTTE's international network is still active and sheltered among supporters in the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, but is split into various factions. Nevertheless, it continues to run a disinformation campaign against Sri Lanka, particularly in countries such as Canada and the UK with significant concentrations of diaspora Tamils.

Anti-Sri Lankan sentiment in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu has also complicated Sri Lanka's relations with its neighbor India. The Tamil Nadu state government exerted considerable pressure on the central government in New Delhi in 2013 to support international efforts to investigate war crimes during Eelam War IV (2006-2009, the final phase of Sri Lanka's 26-year-long conflict with the LTTE), limit India's military cooperation with Sri Lanka and resolve issues relating to the detention of Indian fishermen.

Nevertheless, reconciliation initiatives have made strides in 2013. Elections were held in Sri Lanka's Northern Province for the first time since 1988, and the government pushed forward in its resettlement, demining and reconstruction programs as well. The country's progress on reconciliation will come under international scrutiny at the 25th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in March 2014, where the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanetham Pillay will present findings from her visit to Sri Lanka in August 2013 as well as a report on progress with respect to the implementation of Resolution 22/1 passed at the 22nd session in March 2013.

### Detainees with Satellite Phones

Sri Lankan prison authorities found 18 satellite phones in the Magazine Prison at Welikada (a suburb of Sri Lanka's largest

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## ANTI-SRI LANKAN SENTIMENT IN THE SOUTHERN INDIAN STATE OF TAMIL NADU HAS ALSO COMPLICATED SRI LANKA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBOR INDIA

city, Colombo) and 12 satellite phones in the Jaffna Prison (Jaffna is the capital of Sri Lanka's Northern Province) in June and August 2013 respectively. Investigations are still ongoing as to how these phones entered into the possession of detained LTTE cadres, who used them to communicate with pro-LTTE elements of the Tamil diaspora based outside Sri Lanka. The continued discovery of communications equipment among detained LTTE cadres is a concern given the incident which occurred at the Vavuniya Prison (Vavuniya is the largest city in Sri Lanka's Northern Province) in June 2012 when LTTE detainees held three prison officials hostage until security forces brought the situation under control. The Sri Lankan government accused LTTE elements outside Sri Lanka of remotely directing the incident via the satellite phones found in the detainees' possession.

### LTTE Cadres Escaping to India

Furthermore, in mid-2013, there were a number of attempts – both successful and unsuccessful – by LTTE members at large in the north of Sri Lanka to escape to the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu by boat. The fact that these remnants of the group are attempting to leave Sri Lanka to reorganize outside the country highlights that local conditions are unfavorable due to the counterterrorist initiatives of the security forces. However, it also underscores the importance of Sri Lanka working with countries known to have a LTTE presence – particularly India due to its proximity – in order to limit the ability of LTTE elements overseas to plan and execute attacks in Sri Lanka.

### Anti-Sri Lanka Protests and Attacks in Tamil Nadu

There were a number of anti-Sri Lanka protests and attacks targeting Sri Lankans in Tamil Nadu during March 2013. These incidents coincided with campaigns initiated by political parties in Tamil Nadu to pressurize New Delhi to take a strong stance against Sri Lanka at the 22nd session of the UN Human Rights

Council in March 2013. On 7 March 2013, a group of Naam Thamizhar Katchi (a pro-LTTE political party based in Tamil Nadu) activists attacked the sales office of Mihin Lanka (a low-cost airline owned by the Sri Lankan government) in Madurai, the third largest city in Tamil Nadu. Furthermore, from 8 to 11 March 2013, students across several educational institutions in Chennai (the capital of Tamil Nadu) demonstrated in response to police taking into custody eight students on a hunger strike protesting against alleged war crimes in Sri Lanka. In the subsequent week on 16 and 18 March 2013, there were attacks on Sri Lankan Buddhist monks at Thanjavur (location of the Brihadeeswarar Temple) and Chennai, in which members of Naam Thamizhar Katchi were also implicated.

In June 2013, 100 members of Naam Thamizhar Katchi also protested against Sri Lankan military personnel receiving military training at the Madras Regimental Centre based at Wellington in Tamil Nadu. They entered the Defense Services Staff College, Wellington unannounced and carried LTTE flags with them. In fact, there were a series of protests involving 15 pro-LTTE political groups based in Tamil Nadu since the two Sri Lankan officers began training at Wellington in May 2013. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha Jayaram also pressured the central government, which subsequently offered to transfer the two officers to the College of Defense Management located in Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh. However, the Sri Lankan government declined this offer and withdrew the officers from the course.

Despite her opposition to Sri Lankan officers training in India, Chief Minister Jayalalitha has also taken some decisive measures against pro-LTTE elements in Tamil Nadu. On her orders, police arrested more than 300 Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) party activists on 12 November 2013. The MDMK activists were arrested for blocking railways protesting for the total boycott of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) that was eventually held in Sri Lanka in November 2013.

## **SRI LANKA CAN ALSO BENEFIT FROM ADOPTING PRO-ACTIVE AND STRATEGIC DIPLOMATIC MEASURES WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POWERS SO AS TO HASTEN THE DISMANTLING OF THE LTTE'S INTERNATIONAL NETWORK**

### **Reconciliation**

Several key recommendations from the 2011 report of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (set up in May 2010 to investigate the failure of the 2002 Ceasefire and final phase of the conflict with the LTTE) were implemented in 2013. First, the Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) of the Sri Lankan Police set up a centralized database containing information regarding detainees in June 2013. The aim of the database is to ensure the right to information of family members/next-of-kin of detained suspects. Second, in August 2013, a commission was established by President Mahinda Rajapaksa to investigate into cases of missing persons, including abductions and disappearances, in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The commission is to produce an interim report by February 2014. Approximately 15,000 complaints were received from across the country, including 7,500 from the north and east.

Third, a major development was the elections held for the Northern Provincial Council in September 2013 for the first time since 1988. The elections had a relatively high level of participation (68%) and were won by the Tamil National Alliance, with CV Wigneswaran, a former Supreme Court judge, sworn in as Chief Minister. Fourth, a nationwide census was initiated in November 2013 to determine the number of lives lost and property damage from 1982 to 2009. The census concluded its collection of data on 20 December 2013 and is due to publish its report in March 2014. Fourth, 900 Tamil police officers and 1,500 Tamil-speaking Sinhalese police officers have been stationed in the Northern and Eastern Provinces as of December 2013. This has improved the ability of Tamil and Tamil-speaking Muslim residents to make statements to the police.

### **Looking Ahead**

The government of Sri Lanka has generally responded indignantly to the effects of the LTTE's disinformation campaign, which include unbalanced reporting and a disproportionate amount of attention being paid to the country post-conflict. However, in order to dismantle false narratives that could harm reconciliation efforts and continue to radicalize youth, it needs to pursue a strategic public relations campaign targeting international audiences. Sri Lanka can also benefit from adopting pro-active and strategic diplomatic measures with regional and international powers so as to hasten the dismantling of the LTTE's international network. On the domestic front, the government will need to engage more earnestly with the population in the areas of the north and east affected by the war. This not only would include addressing issues such as livelihood relief and food insecurity, but also examine local participation in the implementation of development programs, psychological counseling for victims of violence, and recruiting a sufficient number of Tamil-speaking government officials, especially hospital staff, to effectively serve the local population in the north and east.

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## EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA

# China

Nodirbek Soliyev

In spite of Beijing's enhanced security measures and economic programs, the situation in China's Muslim-dominated western province of Xinjiang remains tense with increased – but sporadic – outbreaks of violence in 2013. At least 92 people were killed and 25 others injured in violent clashes between Uighurs and the Chinese police since April 2013.

At the same time, the threat of Islamist terrorism from groups such as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) has persisted. While the ETIM has traditionally targeted Xinjiang, it recently carried out suicide attack in Beijing. The 28 October 2013 attack at Beijing's Tiananmen Square marked the first time the ETIM had struck in Beijing. There also was clear evidence in 2013 that the ETIM, which is based in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), is involved in the ongoing conflict in Syria.

### Unrest in Xinjiang: The Work of Terrorists?

On 23 April 2013, violence broke out in Xinjiang's Kashgar Prefecture when three community workers were attacked and killed by a group of Uighurs. 21 people were killed in subsequent clashes, including 15 police officers and local government officials and six Uighur assailants. Eight persons were apprehended by the police in connection with the violence.

The clashes between Uighur mobs and the Chinese police continued in June 2013 with two major incidents – one in the Turpan Prefecture on 26 June 2013 and the other on 28 June 2013 in the Hotan Prefecture – altogether killing 35 and injuring 21. Similarly, on 16 November 2013, nine Uighurs attacked a police station in the Kashgar Prefecture, killing two unarmed auxiliary police and injuring two.

There was violence in December 2013 as well, with two major incidents. One on 15 December 2013 resulted in the deaths of

**THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT HAS FRAMED THE VIOLENCE IN XINJIANG AS THE WORK OF TERRORISTS AND HAS ASSOCIATED SUCH VIOLENCE, WITH A FEW EXCEPTIONS, WITH THE ETIM**

**WHILE IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THE ETIM WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CURRENT WAVE OF UIGHUR VIOLENCE IN XINJIANG, THERE IS SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT ETIM MILITANTS ARE INVOLVED IN THE SYRIAN CONFLICT**

14 Uighur assailants and two policemen and another on 30 December 2013, when nine Uighurs with knives and flammable liquids attacked the police. Eight of the assailants were killed and one was arrested by the police.

The Chinese government has framed the violence in Xinjiang as the work of terrorists and has associated such violence, with a few exceptions, with the ETIM. It has also accused rebel groups in Syria of training about 100 Uighur Islamists since 2012. The government has claimed that these trained and experienced fighters are behind the unrest in Xinjiang. However, there has been no conclusive evidence to substantiate these claims yet. In fact, attacks have not featured explosives or small arms, with knives being the primary weapon used. This suggests a lack of sophistication which does not fit in with the claims of Uighurs receiving training in Syria to return and cause unrest in China.

### ETIM Threat

While it is unclear whether the ETIM was responsible for the current wave of Uighur violence in Xinjiang, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that ETIM militants are involved in the Syrian conflict. These elements are believed to have been fighting against the Assad regime with the al-Nusra Front and Chechen-led Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar (Army of Emigrants and Helpers, JMA). In July 2013, Chinese counterterrorism authorities arrested 23-year-old Memeti Aili, a member of the ETIM who was on his way back from Syria allegedly to carry out attacks in Xinjiang.

ETIM, based in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), is now a part of the global jihadist movement and its objective is to establish an Islamic state in Xinjiang. The ETIM's close ties with Al Qaeda, the Pakistani Taliban, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Jihad Union and Jund al-Khilafah are of particular concern, in addition to the group's resilience despite the US-led coalition forces' counterterrorism campaign in Afghanistan since October 2001. The ETIM's founder, Hasan Mahsum, was killed in 2003 by the Pakistan military. His successor, Abdul Haq, was killed in February 2010 by a US drone strike in Afghanistan. The group is currently led by Abdullah Mansour and has a few hundred fighters, most of whom are ethnic Uighurs.

In 2013, the ETIM engaged in an extensive propaganda campaign online. It published the e-magazine "Islamic Turkistan" and videos produced by its media arm Islam Awazi were often released through various extremist websites in multiple languages. There also has been evidence to suggest that the ETIM is actively training women and children in Pakistan's North Waziristan region to carry out attacks. In April and July 2013, Islam Awazi released videos showing the military training of women and children. It is likely that women are being trained for suicide operations based on ETIM's close relationship with Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Female suicide bomber training camps first were established in 2010 by Al Qaeda and Taliban in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area. Since then, women trained in these camps have struck both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Prior to 2010, no female suicide attacks were reported in the two countries.

### Addressing Radicalization

The first case of a Han Chinese fighter in Syria was observed in 2013. Yusuf al-Sini (born Bo Wang), a Han Chinese convert to Islam, was featured in a YouTube video released by the Mujahedeen Brigade in the Land of Sham in March 2013. Turkey reportedly arrested and handed him over to the Chinese government in August 2013. This case potentially poses a new area of concern for the Chinese government to address. As it was an unprecedented case, there is very little known about such radicalization at present. In order to prevent further cases of radicalization of Han Chinese to the level of engagement in

**THERE ALSO HAS BEEN EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT THE ETIM IS ACTIVELY TRAINING WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN PAKISTAN'S NORTH WAZIRISTAN REGION TO CARRY OUT ATTACKS**

**CHINA'S RESPONSE TO THE UNREST IN XINJIANG HAS WORKED AGAINST ITS GOAL OF MAKING THE PROVINCE MORE STABLE AND SECURE. UIGHURS WILL CONTINUE TO BE EXPLOITED BY RADICAL AND EXTREMIST PROPAGANDA UNLESS A MORE NUANCED APPROACH IS TAKEN**

militant activities, Chinese security analysts need to further study this case and find out what immediate and root factors were behind it.

Furthermore, China's response to the unrest in Xinjiang has worked against its goal of making the province more stable and secure. Uighurs will continue to be exploited by radical and extremist propaganda unless a more nuanced approach is taken. Since 2009, the heavy presence of police and paramilitary forces in the province has helped to reduce the number of incidents and the scale of violence, but has also been a source of grievance for locals. This is because the government's push to ensure security in Xinjiang has inadvertently suppressed peaceful protests, giving radical and extremist groups an opportunity to radicalize the Uighur. This was evident in the 28 October 2013 suicide attack at Beijing's Tiananmen Square. The ETIM recruited local Uighurs – a 33-year-old man, his wife and 70-year-old mother for the attack. However, it is not clear if they were trained to carry out the attack, which killed five people (including the three perpetrators) and injured at least 38 others.

### Looking Ahead

Violence in Xinjiang has often been a response against Beijing's policies in the province, which have mostly conflicted with the Uighurs' desire to preserve their identity. One of the most significant challenges ahead will be the careful calibration of the government's response to the unrest in order to prevent further cases of radicalization. In addition, China needs to recognize that economic development without meaningful redress to the Uighurs' grievances will be ineffective. Going forward, China will also have to gauge the impact of the NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014 on the capabilities and opportunities of ETIM in order to adjust its counterterrorist response accordingly.

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## EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA

# Central Asia

Nodirbek Soliyev

The primary concern of Central Asian countries with respect to the threat from Islamist terrorism remains the impact of the NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan scheduled to take place in 2014. This is because Central Asian terrorist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), Jund al-Khilafah (Soldiers of the Caliphate, JAK) and Jamaat Ansarullah in Tajikistan (JAT) continue to operate in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region in spite of counterterrorist initiatives by NATO coalition forces. Their persistence can be attributed to the support of Al Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani Network and local tribes in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). These groups have also absorbed the ideology of their benefactors, with many adopting a more transnational outlook.

Central Asian militants are also travelling to Syria in increasing numbers to join the fight against the regime of Bashar al-Assad. The number of Central Asians fighting in Syria has grown dramatically since the initial reports of their presence in May 2013. At present, it is believed that around 450 to 500 Central Asian militants are in Syria, with the majority from Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. Some of these experienced and battle-hardened militants have returned to their respective home countries and were found to be engaged in terrorist activities. This is particularly challenging for the Central Asian states, as they now need to mitigate the consequences of the conflict in Syria.

In order to address the threat from transnational terrorism more effectively, Central Asian countries need to establish preventive measures and strengthen counterterrorism cooperation at both the national and regional level. Where enhancing the region's response is concerned, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

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**SINCE KAZAKHSTAN DOES NOT SHARE ITS BORDER WITH AFGHANISTAN, OPPORTUNITIES FOR MILITANTS BASED OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY TO CARRY OUT ANY ATTACKS IN KAZAKHSTAN CAN BE ASSESSED TO BE RELATIVELY LOW**

(SCO) and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) are key platforms that need to be utilized further. At the bilateral level, Russia has also taken steps to ensure security in the region following the NATO withdrawal in 2014 by strengthening its military presence in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Russia extended its lease at Kyrgyzstan's Kant Airbase to host its Air Force units, and in October 2013, the Tajik Parliament ratified an agreement with Moscow to prolong Russia's 201st military base presence in Tajikistan until 2042.

### Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan continues to face a potent threat from Salafist-influenced extremist groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (HTI) and Tablighi Jamaat, which are primarily responsible for spreading extremist views and radicalizing a population that has traditionally been secular. Salafist networks in Kazakhstan are believed to be sustained by violent separatist movements based in the North Caucasus. In order to effectively fight this threat, Kazakhstan adopted a new counterterrorism strategy in October 2013, incorporating both "hard" and "soft" approaches.

JAK is another key group that remains active despite the death of its *emir* (leader) Moezeddine Garsallaoui, who was killed by a US drone strike in Pakistan's FATA region in October 2012. The group is believed to have between 200 and 300 active fighters, although estimates of its strength vary considerably. In addition, JAK is known to be receiving ideological and logistical support from Al Qaeda and the Haqqani Network based in North Waziristan in Pakistan. There is thus a strong likelihood of JAK consolidating itself operationally in the wake of coalition forces withdrawing from Afghanistan in 2014.

However, since Kazakhstan does not share its border with Afghanistan, opportunities for militants based outside the country to carry out any attacks in Kazakhstan can be assessed to be relatively low. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that JAK is actively conducting online campaigns to radicalize individuals inside Kazakhstan with the intention of carrying out “homegrown” attacks in the country.

### **Kyrgyzstan**

Kyrgyzstan experienced riots throughout 2013 that were motivated by a long-running dispute over ownership of the Kumtor gold mine. Given that the mine contributes more than a tenth of the country’s GDP and over half of its annual exports, the economic impact of the riots was significant. Furthermore, ethnic tensions between the Kyrgyz majority and Uzbek minority persisted in 2013, and were further complicated by clan loyalties that have historically caused tensions between the country’s northern and southern regions. These divisions are emphasized by differences in language and socioeconomic status – the urbanized Russian-speaking northern region has traditionally enjoyed political and economic dominance over the more rural south.

The southern region of Kyrgyzstan has also witnessed an increase in the spread of extremism fuelled by the active presence of radical groups. On 19 February 2013, five HTI members were detained in the city of Jalal-Abad, and police seized extremist literature and printing equipment from the suspects’ homes. Youth from the Jalal-Abad and Kyzyl-Kiya provinces are also believed to have been recruited by the IJU to fight in Syria alongside Islamist opposition forces. On 17 April 2013, officials reported that approximately 15 Kyrgyz from the Osh and Batken provinces had left the country to participate in the Syrian conflict. A side effect of this has been a greater risk of returning fighters engaging in terrorism. For instance, in August 2013, Kyrgyzstan’s State Committee for National Security (SCNS) detained three IJU members in the southern

## **ETHNIC TENSIONS BETWEEN THE KYRGYZ MAJORITY AND UZBEK MINORITY PERSISTED IN 2013, AND WERE FURTHER COMPLICATED BY CLAN LOYALTIES THAT HAVE HISTORICALLY CAUSED TENSIONS BETWEEN THE COUNTRY’S NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN REGIONS**

## **TURKMENISTAN, DESPITE BEING AN IMMEDIATE NEIGHBOR OF AFGHANISTAN, HAS REMAINED UNAFFECTED BY TERRORISM, WITH NO RECORD OF A SUCCESSFUL TERRORIST ATTACK OR ATTEMPT TO DATE**

province of Osh. Two of the detainees were citizens of Kyrgyzstan while the other was identified as a Kazakh national. According to the SCNS, they had travelled from Kyrgyzstan to Syria to join the Syrian opposition and were sent back to Kyrgyzstan to plot a series of terrorist attacks in the Kyrgyz cities of Bishkek and Osh on the eve of the 13th summit of the SCO.

### **Tajikistan**

Tajikistan continues to face a threat from the IMU. On 14 January 2013, two IMU members attacked a traffic police checkpoint in the Sughd province, killing one police officer and injuring another. In a counter-operation the Tajik security forces detained nine IMU members and killed one. On 21 September 2013, security forces arrested 10 IMU members in the capital Dushanbe. The detainees – all Tajik citizens – were plotting to carry out a series of attacks in Dushanbe during the Presidential Elections in November 2013. The detained leader of the group, Alamurod Makhanov, is believed to have received military training in FATA in Pakistan. He was on Tajikistan’s most wanted list since the 2010 bombing of a night club in Dushanbe in which seven people were injured.

Furthermore, terrorist and extremist groups are found to be recruiting from the Tajik diaspora in Russia. On 16 October 2013, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) arrested three members of the IMU in the Sverdlovsk region of the Ural Federal District. Two of the detainees were identified as citizens of Tajikistan. Several Tajik members of HTI were also apprehended in Tajikistan and Russia throughout the year. On 5 February 2013, the Moscow City Prosecutor’s Office indicted a 32-year-old Tajik citizen Nabijon Bobojanov for distributing HTI’s extremist literature at a mosque in Moscow.

There are also reports that Tajik nationals have been participating in the Syrian conflict. Initial evidence of this phenomenon surfaced in May 2013 when the Tajik media reported that citizens of Tajikistan had travelled to Syria in order to receive training. In October 2013, officials in Dushanbe claimed that 190 Tajik nationals were fighting in Syria alongside Islamist opposition groups.

## Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan, despite being an immediate neighbor of Afghanistan, has remained unaffected by terrorism, with no record of a successful terrorist attack or attempt to date. Nevertheless, Turkmenistan has focused on improving security along its border with Afghanistan, particularly to stem the drug trade which is a principal source of funds for financing terrorism in Afghanistan. The country also took steps to strengthen its capacity to counter money laundering and terrorist financing by amending existing legal regulations.

Nevertheless, Turkmen nationals were found to have been involved in extremist activity outside their country. On 3 March 2013, the Federal Security Service of Russia (FSB) detained a Turkmen national for his involvement with the Turkish Islamic organization Nurcular in Saint Petersburg. Nurcular was banned as an extremist organization in Russia in 2007. Furthermore, reports of Turkmen nationals getting involved in the Syrian conflict are emerging. On 14 Jun 2013, video footage of five men arrested near Aleppo by the Syrian government forces was released on YouTube. The footage identified the five men as Turkmen nationals, including Ravshan Gazakov, who was believed to have been the leader of a squad of Turkmen militants.

## Uzbekistan

Extremist groups such as HTI have remained resilient in Uzbekistan, cultivating support and continuously attempting to recruit and expand. HTI has been particularly active in targeting the Tashkent and Fergana provinces through female activists. On 25 February 2013, 15 female members of the HTI's women wing were arrested in the Fergana province. The detainees were identified as close relatives of imprisoned members of HTI and IMU. According to Uzbekistan's law enforcement agencies, this group of women met regularly to discuss means of supporting the activity of extremist organizations. HTI's international leadership is believed to have supplied them with funds and extremist literature through a branch in southern Kyrgyzstan.

In light of NATO's imminent departure from Afghanistan in 2014, Tashkent is particularly concerned about the potential for militant activities spilling over from Afghanistan. Nevertheless, it appears unlikely that IMU will redirect its efforts towards

## CENTRAL ASIAN MILITANTS HAVE DELAYED THEIR PURSUIT OF ESTABLISHING ISLAMIC STATES IN THEIR HOME COUNTRIES UNTIL THE TALIBAN'S VICTORY IS ACHIEVED IN AFGHANISTAN

Uzbekistan in the near future. The loss of sanctuary in Afghanistan has effectively cut the group off from Central Asia. Furthermore, the IMU has floundered since the death of Tohir Yuldoshev, one of its key leaders, in August 2009 by a US drone strike in FATA in Pakistan. Since its move to Pakistan, the IMU has paid less attention to Uzbekistan and has focused more on targeting coalition forces in Afghanistan and the government of Pakistan in order to secure and maintain local support of Al Qaeda, the Taliban and other militant groups operating in FATA under the same agenda.

Statements uploaded by the IMU in recent years suggest that Central Asian militants have delayed their pursuit of establishing Islamic states in their home countries until the Taliban's victory is achieved in Afghanistan. The IMU and IJU have been active in conducting numerous assassinations in northern and north-eastern Afghan provinces such as Takhar and Kunduz which are predominately populated by Uzbeks and Tajiks. Their concentration of activity in these areas suggests an eventual plan to infiltrate from northern Afghanistan into their home countries.

## Looking Ahead

Central Asian militants are likely to remain in their sanctuaries located in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, and continue to pose a significant threat to both Central and South Asia. The IMU, IJU and JAK's ties with Al Qaeda and the Taliban remain intact. The Pakistani Taliban has also supported these groups materially and ideologically. Central Asian militant groups have strengthened by their experience of fighting coalition forces in Afghanistan, and have gained significant advances in tactics and strategy formulation as a result of their participation in engagements and cooperation with other militant groups operating in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.

Central Asian militant groups continue to indoctrinate their respective target populations through robust propaganda efforts especially focusing on "leaderless" terrorism. Suicide attacks by women are a noted trend that is expected to continue along with *fidayeen*-style attacks that Central Asian militant groups have increasingly carried out while operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The repetition of these tactics in the home countries of Central Asian militant groups is a possibility that cannot be ruled out. In the meantime, IMU, IJU and JAK will continue to follow Al Qaeda and the Taliban, consolidating their transition into the transnational jihadist movement.

However, Islamist Central Asian militant groups remain limited in their appeal among their own countrymen. Muslims in Central Asia are averse to the militant groups' dogmatic insistence of an Islamic state. Nevertheless, the need to promote moderation and efforts to de-radicalize extremists remains, with many Muslims in Central Asia lacking knowledge of how extremists are misusing Islamic concepts and thus rendering them susceptible to indoctrination by extremist propaganda.

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## MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

# Syria

Syed Huzaifah Alkaff

The Arab uprisings continue to affect Syria, which is presently embroiled in a civil war that has become a playground for the global jihadist movement. According to unofficial estimates, the conflict has already claimed between 100,000 and 135,000 lives in the short span of time since it began in March 2011, and the violence continues unabated. The international community and the United Nations have failed thus far in many attempts to mediate between the regime of Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian opposition, which is composed of heterogeneous groups ranging from Islamists of extremist and moderate orientations to secular factions. At the same time, Al Qaeda has moved in to exploit the situation, lending both ideological and financial support to extremist Islamist militant factions fighting against the regime and against the secular factions of the opposition. On the other hand, the Assad regime has persisted in holding on to power with support from Iran and from the Lebanon-based Hezbollah, with external pressures being warded off as much as by a willing ally – Russia – as by the recalcitrance of the international community led by the US despite reports of the use of chemical weapons on civilians. There is also no certainty of peace and stability in the country if Assad steps down.

### Humanitarian Crisis

According to the UN, as of December 2013, about 9.3 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria. There are also about 6.5 million internally displaced persons, while 2.3 million Syrians have been displaced to neighboring countries. Early in 2013, the UN's World Food Program (WFP) reported that it was short of more than half of the 4 million rations that were needed to feed the hungry in Syria due to the difficulty of getting supplies into the conflict zone as security conditions were deteriorating. As the year progressed, the WFP has scaled up in providing monthly food assistance, but it is still insufficient. While the fighting continues, the number of those in need will likely rise. In fact, the conflict has caused long-term vulnerabilities by reducing economic activity and crop production, creating higher prices for essential goods. Food security in Syria has been seriously undermined as a result of damage to infrastructure together with massive population displacement. Because of this, more than half of

**THE SYRIAN CONFLICT IS NO  
LONGER A CLEAR CASE OF  
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the population now lives in poverty. Overall, the fighting in Syria has reached unprecedented levels of horror and destruction with reports of chemical weapons being used by both sides.

### Atrocities

It is now increasingly evident that both sides in the civil war have committed what could be termed as war crimes against civilians. Footage of the victims of chemical weapons attacks and graphic details of executions, brutal torture and other types of inhuman treatment of captives held by both sides have flooded news websites and social media networks. The Assad regime put on a show of destroying its stockpile of chemical weapons and production facilities under strong pressure from the international community and especially in view of an eminent US military strike. However, no one is sure if the regime continues to hold on to chemical weapons and if some of these materials have fallen in to the hands of the opposition. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is responsible for overseeing eradication of the Syrian government's chemical weapons program, certified that all of the Assad regime's unfilled munitions were destroyed by 6 December 2013. However, chemical stockpiles still need to be removed from the country. Out of an estimated 530 tons, less than 10 percent has been shipped out of the country as of January 2014 and there are concerns that the prevailing security situation will hamper the process.

### Evolution of the Conflict

The conflict in Syria started with protests against the government's corruption and human rights abuses. It subsequently evolved from a peaceful popular movement into an armed rebellion that has since witnessed sectarian and communal violence. The Syrian conflict is no longer a clear case of one side fighting another. Within both the forces supporting Bashar al-Assad and the opposition forces are numerous factional disputes and internal conflicts. Countries within the region and the international community at large also became involved in the conflict both directly and indirectly.

Most importantly, many foreign fighters – especially jihadist elements – have become deeply involved in the civil war. As a result, Syria has now emerged as one of the so-called “battlefields of jihad” that jihadist elements are exploiting to sharpen their skills which could then be used to target other countries. An estimate by the London-based International Center for the Study of Radicalization (ICSR) published in December 2013 indicated that as many as 11,000 foreign fighters from 74 countries have gone to Syria since late 2011 to

participate in the conflict. The ICSR report also indicated that the number of foreign fighters from western countries was on the rise in 2013, and was around 18 percent of the total number of foreign fighters in Syria at present.

Returning foreign fighters pose one of the most significant security challenges ahead for countries that have seen large numbers of their nationals travel to Syria. This is because of the potential for already radicalized individuals to be further indoctrinated by their experience on the “frontline of jihad” and also for their experience leading them to become rallying points for extremist elements within their home countries.

### **Multiple, Conflicting Actors**

Fighting in support of the regime of Bashar al-Assad side are Syrian Armed forces, Shabiha (pro-Assad militia) and Hezbollah (Lebanon-based Shiite paramilitary group, classified as a terrorist organization by the US and other countries). It is also reported that Iran and Russia are lending their support to the Assad regime although they have openly ruled out sending arms or troops to the country. Hezbollah’s involvement in the conflict provided a boost to the Assad regime, although it has complicated the group’s relations with long-time ally Hamas in their combined anti-Israel effort. Relations between the two groups, which traditionally have transcended their sectarian differences in view of presenting a united front against Israel, have cooled over the course of 2013.

On the other side are the Syrian opposition groups, the character and organization of which largely remain opaque and in flux as the conflict progresses. As far as an ideological spectrum of the opposition can be constructed, it can be said that the Free Syrian Army is on one end holding a staunchly secular nationalist outlook while the Islamic Front (formed in September 2013 and made up of Salafi-oriented rebel groups), Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) are on the other end, with the latter two linked to Al Qaeda. Western and Islamic powers have been selective in their support of factions of the Syrian opposition that most closely resemble their best interests in the country and the region. For instance, the Free Syrian Army has been supported by western countries while the Islamic Front is known to be receiving support from Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

### **Al Qaeda’s Involvement in Syria**

ISIL and JN are arguably the most active of the opposition militant groups in Syria and both continue to attract a significant proportion of the foreign fighters traveling to Syria. However, there are important distinctions between ISIL and JN that have become clearer as 2013 progressed. First, JN is the official Al Qaeda affiliate in Syria as per an audio statement by Al Qaeda’s leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in November 2013. ISIL’s involvement in Iraq has been carried out by the group’s leader in defiance of Zawahiri, and tensions between JN and ISIL have simmered during the year over attempts by ISIL to subsume JN under its wing. Furthermore, JN is distinguished from ISIL by

having a Syrian-dominated leadership, whereas ISIL is the opposite with a leadership dominated by non-Syrians, which follows from its origins as the affiliate of Al Qaeda in Iraq.

There have been conflicting reports regarding JN and ISIL which have made it challenging to even distinguish between the two groups. In some parts of the Syria, the groups have cooperated under a common banner, and in others they have maintained a presence distinct of one another. There have also been reports that JN is increasingly cooperating with other Islamist factions within the Syrian opposition that resent the ISIL as outsiders to the conflict. This has been intensified by ISIL’s emphasis on setting up an Islamic state in areas under its control rather than cooperating with other opposition factions to defeat pro-Assad forces. In this aspect, JN’s leader Abu Mohammed al-Golani made a statement in December 2013 that his group had no desire to rule, but was primarily working towards the removal of Assad.

### **Looking Ahead**

There is still a long way for the conflict in Syria to come to a logical conclusion. The initial objective of the conflict has long been diluted with multifaceted violence. The conflict has also affected not only Syria and its neighbors, but also the whole world due to the involvement of foreign fighters. The fact that instability in Syria has assumed transnational dimensions should urge the international community, irrespective of ideological, political or regional considerations, to come together to help resolve the issue as soon as possible. Even if the regime of Bashar al-Assad is defeated by opposition forces, the opposition itself is divided into such disparate factions that it is unlikely that Assad’s ouster will mean an end to the conflict. The contributions of external players on both sides, whether in terms of funding or political support, have also debilitated the odds of a quick conclusion of the conflict.

The peace talks which were held in Geneva during January 2014 ended with little real progress, but also marked a significant step forward in the use of dialogue to mediate the conflict. Although further talks are scheduled for February 2014, the level of violence in the country continues to climb, and as long as the more hardline elements of the opposition such as ISIL and JN reject the notion of participation, the talks may be doomed to fail since they are also the most active rebel groups.

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## MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

# Iraq

Andrew Mitzcavitch

2013 has been a turbulent year for Iraq. According to Iraq Body Count, nearly 9,500 civilians died in 2013 as a result of violence across the country. When compared to 2012, during which around 4,500 civilian deaths were recorded, it is clear that there has been a sharp increase in fatalities, with 2013 recording the highest number since 2008. Sectarian tensions continue to be the primary source of violence in Iraq, although anti-government protests throughout the year also contributed noticeably. According to data from the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, Baghdad Governorate was the worst affected in 2013. This is largely due to a targeted campaign of Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI, Al Qaeda's branch in the country) in Shiite-dominated areas of Baghdad. While estimates differ over which month saw the highest number of fatalities, there is nevertheless a clear indication that they peaked in the middle of the year during the May – July period as anti-government protests took a turn for the worse and added to a tally already increased by the intense waves of sectarian violence.

With elections due in April 2014 – first since the US withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 – fears over escalating violence remain. The ISI remains active in perpetrating attacks and will continue to figure prominently as a source of the terrorist threat. The Syrian refugee situation in the country is another key challenge. The UN's Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported that there were nearly 213,000 registered Syrian refugees in Iraq as of 30 December 2013. Progress in the peace talks that got underway between the Syrian government and opposition forces in January 2014 will thus have a crucial role to play in the management of not only the refugee situation, but also of cross-border movements of Islamist militants.

### Anti-Government Protests

Protests by Sunnis against the Shiite-led government in Baghdad – which began in December 2012 after the raid on the home of the then Finance Minister Rafi al-Issawi (a Sunni and opponent of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki) – continued throughout 2013. One of the major grievances fuelling the protests has been the continuation of counterterrorist measures introduced during the American occupation of Iraq, which protestors believe are being used by the Maliki government to target Sunnis. The Sunni-led protest movement against the government is also driven by tribal politics, with tribal heads leading the protests partly out of a long-running desire to resist interference by the central government in their affairs. Individuals that lost their jobs, privileges and social status due to de-Ba'athification make up another important bloc of support among the protestors. Yet, in spite of the protest movement

seeing diverse – and even formerly conflicting – groups of people coming together, the range of interests represented has also resulted in differences over strategy and desired outcomes.

The political impact of the protests has been significant as they have created new cracks in the ruling coalition while deepening existing ones. In January 2013, Sunni and Kurdish ministers boycotted a cabinet session in a show of support to protestors. In the same month, prominent Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr (leader of the Sadrist Movement) came out in support of protestors, blaming Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki squarely for the unrest. In the face of these challenges, the government responded by releasing approximately 3,000 detainees in February 2013 and raised the salaries of Sunni militiamen belonging to the *Sahwa* (which fought on the government's side against Al Qaeda). Furthermore, the government's supporters also responded with counter-protests in the Shiite-dominated southern provinces.

A major concern arising from the protests however, has been the incidence of violence, with several clashes breaking out between security forces and protestors. On 23 April 2013, government forces raided a prominent sit-in at Hawija in the Kirkuk Governorate, killing approximately 50 protestors and injuring around 110. Unrest flared across the country for the next five days as a result and was estimated to have claimed as many as 300 lives. The incident at Hawija also marked a turning point – not only did a section of the protest movement turn violent in response to the government's actions, but it also led to a general intensification of sectarian unrest across the country.

The effects of this intensification were felt for the rest of 2013 and will continue to have an impact going forward. On 30 December 2013, a protest encampment at Ramadi in the Sunni-dominated Anbar Governorate saw clashes between protestors and Iraqi security forces, which claimed that ISI militants were being sheltered by the protestors. At least 10 people were killed and the violence spread rapidly to the nearby city of Fallujah. In a bid to ease tensions, security forces temporarily withdrew from the Anbar Governorate, but the vacuum was quickly filled by the ISI, which occupied parts of both Ramadi and Fallujah in the first week of 2014. Local tribes subsequently offered their cooperation against ISI and security forces began an operation to flush out militants from Ramadi in the second week of January 2014. By 23 January 2014, there were reports of some progress in the military operation, with security forces securing Khalidiya which lies in between Ramadi and Fallujah. However, Iraq's Ministry of Displacement and

Migration reported that more than 140,000 have been displaced by the latest round of unrest, adding to the million people already internally displaced in the country.

### **Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant**

One of the most significant developments with regard to the ISI has been the expansion of its operations into Syria via the border region it dominates. A new identity – the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) – was announced by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISI in April 2013, clearly indicating the group's broader geographical focus. In Iraq, the ISI/ISIL has primarily been active in the Anbar Governorate which is majority Sunni and has a very porous 605 kilometer-long border with Syria. The group has used its base in Syria as a springboard for its operations within Iraq, where it has waged a destabilization campaign against the Shiite-led government and its forces and Shiites in general through jailbreaks and suicide attacks.

A report by the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War in September 2013 documented the increasing number of VBIED attacks and jailbreaks in Iraq by the ISI/ISIL in 2013. The sophistication and high degree of lethality of these attacks poses a significant challenge to the nascent capabilities of the Iraqi security forces. Furthermore, major jailbreaks such as the one at Abu Ghraib in July 2013 have added to the strength of the ISI/ISIL, boosted its capabilities and have weakened public confidence in the Iraqi security forces. Security forces checkpoints were also routinely targeted by militants wearing explosive belts or driving VBIEDs, while IEDs planted along major roads remained an important tactic in 2013.

With its occupation of parts of Ramadi and Fallujah in the Anbar Governorate in early January 2014, the ISI/ISIL has signaled its intention to realize a long-running desire of having a region of control that renders the border between Iraq and Syria obsolete. In addition to its debilitating campaign in Iraq involving attacks on Shiites and security forces, which will most likely intensify in 2014 ahead of elections in April, the ISI/ISIL has now become a major actor in the Syrian conflict. In December 2013, the BBC reported that the ISI/ISIL was also attempting

to recruit Syrian nationals, signaling a shift from being primarily composed of non-Syrian fighters. Should the group manage to integrate itself more deeply into northern Syria with local recruits, there is a strong possibility that it will become a spoiler to the ongoing peace talks in Syria which began in January 2014.

### **Kurdish Factor**

The Kurds in Iraq's north have strengthened their position considerably amidst the chaos in the rest of the country created by burgeoning sectarian conflict and the impact of the civil war in Syria. In 2013, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) intensified preparations to begin exports of oil and gas independent of Baghdad-controlled pipelines via Turkey in early 2014. The potential for economic independence from Baghdad is a long-desired goal of the KRG, but its realization will likely embroil it in a conflict with Iraq's central government.

One of the principal reasons for the KRG's adventurism has been its ability to maintain security in spite of being in close proximity to the Syrian conflict. But this is likely to change. On 29 September 2013, ISI/ISIL militants carried out the first attack in six years in Erbil – the capital of the autonomous Kurdish region – when a series of VBIEDs were detonated, killing at least six. On 3 November 2013, Kurdish security forces arrested two ISI/ISIL militants in the Akre district of Dohuk Governorate. These events have fuelled concern within the KRG that ISI/ISIL militants may move into the disputed areas bordering the autonomous Kurdish region and the rest of Iraq as military operations intensify to flush them out of the Anbar Governorate.

### **Looking Ahead**

Iraq needs immediate international assistance in order to contain the ISI/ISIL, particularly from the US and from regional allies that have an interest in bringing stability to the region. However, counterterrorist initiatives against the group will be meaningless without a political process to address Sunni grievances and the dismantling of ISI/ISIL sanctuaries in northern Syria. At present, the outlook is bleak given that the ISI/ISIL appears firmly entrenched in Syria and that political consensus in Iraq looks unlikely to emerge in time for the April 2014 elections. Furthermore, the possibility of Shiite militias re-emerging to fill the gaps that the Iraqi security forces cannot may very well tip the entire country into an all-out sectarian war.

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## MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

# Yemen

Andrew Mitzcavitch

Yemen in 2013 continued to grapple with security concerns stemming from the separatist insurgency in the south, sectarian clashes in the north and the threat from Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its affiliate Ansar al-Sharia. The country's capacity to address these concerns effectively has been hampered by a difficult political transition since Ali Abdullah Saleh handed over power in February 2012 after more than three decades as president. Since his election, Saleh's successor Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi has focused on successfully conducting the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), a core part of the political transition aimed at securing consensus for a new constitution and the future political and administrative structure of the country.

The NDC, which began in March 2013 and concluded in January 2014, has faced a number of setbacks during its ten months of deliberations. Most crucially, several factions from the restive southern region of the country either boycotted it from the start or withdrew their participation at some point. This has raised doubts as to whether the resolutions produced by the NDC will settle the long-standing grievances of southern Yemenis. Furthermore, as a December 2013 report from the Washington DC-based Atlantic Council put it, "without making progress on the economic front a priority, the democratic transition process risks derailment and its leadership a complete loss of credibility, which could result in renewed conflict."

The operational capability and discipline of the Yemeni military have also affected the country's ability to effectively manage its

### YEMEN IN 2013 CONTINUED TO GRAPPLE WITH SECURITY CONCERNS STEMMING FROM THE SEPARATIST INSURGENCY IN THE SOUTH, SECTARIAN CLASHES IN THE NORTH AND THE THREAT FROM AL QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA AND ITS AFFILIATE ANSAR AL-SHARIA

security challenges. Reform of the military and security apparatus is another core part of the political transition, and the restructuring initiated by President Hadi in December 2012 continued throughout 2013. The two major military factions during the 2011 uprising – the Republican Guards, led by former president Saleh's son Ahmed Ali and the First Armored Division led by Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar – were dissolved in a bid to centralize military power and end the politicization of the military. Despite this, tribal and political party affiliations continue to influence the military's leadership and make-up, and corruption remains a significant problem as it has caused disgruntled soldiers to attack their commanders on several occasions.

#### Separatist Insurgency in the South

Large demonstrations in support of Hiraq (also known as the Southern Movement) and its agenda of secession have been a consistent occurrence in 2013, as has the use of force by Yemen's security forces in quelling them. During protests in the southern port city of Aden coinciding with the first anniversary of Saleh's ouster on 21 February 2013, at least four were killed in clashes that erupted when security forces attempted to disperse the crowd. In response, Hiraq called for a campaign of civil disobedience in the southern governorates. A number of clashes between security forces and armed members of Hiraq subsequently occurred across cities in southern Yemen – particularly in the Hadhramaut and Aden governorates – during the last week of February 2013 before Hiraq called off the campaign.

Frequent clashes have also occurred throughout 2013 between members of Hiraq and its rival Islah, the largest Islamist party in Yemen. On 11 February 2013, violence broke out during demonstrations marking the second anniversary of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak's ouster, causing two deaths and injuring at least 30. A series of attacks on Islah offices across southern Yemen also occurred on 23 February 2013 as supporters of Hiraq held Islah responsible for security forces attempting to break up its demonstration organized to mark the first anniversary of Saleh's ouster on 21 February 2013.

The security challenge presented by the insurgency in southern Yemen is complicated by the number of different factions operating under the Hiraq banner. Furthermore, AQAP also operates in the same region – particularly in the Abyan and Hadhramaut governorates – increasing the complexity of the threat. Yemen's security forces have alleged the infiltration of Hiraq by AQAP elements, although there has been no independent verification of this claim.

## Tihami Movement

The western coastal region of Yemen has witnessed increasing violence in 2013 that has largely been attributed to the Tihami Movement (TM). The TM has sought to advance its goal of an autonomous region in western Yemen through the use of violence in response to what it claims is the economic and political neglect of the region by Sana'a. On March 8 2013, Tihami gunmen stormed the criminal investigation headquarters in the Al Hawak district of the Al Hudaydah Governorate in a bid to free four detainees. A similar attack on a police station in Al Hudaydah City (the capital of Al Hudaydah Governorate) occurred on 2 April 2013, killing four and injuring at least ten. President Hadi initially blacklisted the Tihami Movement following the incident, but reversed his decision and vowed to resolve the grievances of people in the western coastal region through dialogue. However, this approach appears to be faltering as the TM intensified its demands in October 2013, threatening to resort to piracy in order to achieve its goal of autonomy.

## Sectarian Clashes in the North

Sectarian conflict in the northern governorate of Sa'dah has centered on the presence of Salafis allied to the Hashid tribe in a region dominated by Shiites belonging to the rival Bakil tribe. For the most part of 2013, the ceasefire agreement that was achieved in late 2012 between the Houthis, a Zayidi Shia insurgent group, and their Sunni Salafi neighbors, who are loyal to the government, limited violence between both groups. However, at the end of October 2013, clashes broke out between both groups. Houthi rebels have accused the Salafis of igniting strife by bringing thousands of foreign fighters to Damaj, which lies in the mountainous Sa'dah Governorate, while the Salafis have said that the foreigners are students in the country. Over 100 people were killed before a ceasefire agreement was brokered by the government. However, the ceasefire was broken by the Houthis a day after it was achieved. Sporadic fighting continued into 2014.

## Assassinations and Attacks on Infrastructure

Assassinations and attempted assassinations on security or army officials were a persistent problem in 2013. Over 100 officials were killed – more than double the number for 2012. Most of the attacks were unclaimed and carried out by gunmen on motorbikes, while many were also carried out with explosives. Ansar al-Sharia has been suspected in most of the unsolved attacks, but it could be a case of convenient labeling since some attacks may be rooted in domestic political infighting. Ansar al-Sharia's goals are to create instability to render the ongoing political transition a failure so that they can take control and implement rule by Islamic law. Yemen's main source of foreign currency is from oil and gas revenues and this important source of income for the country has been repeatedly targeted either by Ansar al-Sharia militants or by local tribesmen. The attacks by tribesmen are often carried out because of some compensation issue, land dispute or to

pressure the government to free relatives. Tribesmen have also attacked power lines in the Ma'rib Governorate and on one occasion caused a key power station to shut down, leaving large parts of the country without electricity.

## Drone Strikes

US drone strikes have been a blessing and a curse for the Yemeni government. There was an escalation in the US drone campaign in Yemen during the first month of 2013 and over 20 suspected militants were killed. At the same time, there were anti-American demonstrations against the killing of innocent civilians by drone strikes and there was also a sit-in in front of the Rada'a district (in the Al Bayda'a Governorate located in central Yemen) government administration building. News surfaced at the end of January 2013 that the second-in-command of AQAP, Said al-Shihri was confirmed to have died in late 2012. He had previously been reported dead numerous times, only to resurface again. On 17 April 2013 another AQAP leader, Hamid al-Radmi, was killed by a drone strike along with four other militants while they were driving in their vehicle in the town of Wessab in Dhamar Governorate.

Drone strikes continued infrequently until another escalation in August, when over 35 suspected militants were killed. However, protests erupted in the south eastern Hadramaut Governorate demanding that the government stop the drone attacks after a botched attack killed 13 civilians. On 22 October 2013, Human Rights Watch released a 96-page report which stated that six "unacknowledged" US military drone attacks on targets in Yemen may have violated international law. The organization also said that 82 people, 57 of whom were civilians, were killed in the attacks, one of which took place in 2009 and the other five between 2012 and 2013.

## Looking Ahead

Yemen will continue to have security concerns with the separatist movement in the south, sectarian clashes in the north and Ansar al-Sharia ahead. A lack of trust between the diverse ethnic and religious groups in the country appears to be one of the main obstacles hindering peace in the country, so much hinges on the implementation of the proposals agreed upon by the NDC. Basic needs of Yemenis plagued by poverty and food insecurity are also another major challenge given the limited economic capacity of the country. It is not entirely clear whether US drone strikes in Yemen will end, but their use needs to be calibrated more carefully else future attacks risk provoking civilians towards extremist groups and away from the government.

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## MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

# Egypt

Andrew Mitzcavitch

In 2011, President Hosni Mubarak resigned as president and turned over his power to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. This was considered as if the hopes of the people for a transition to a new era of democracy were at hand. With a low turnout at the elections in June 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood won and Mohammed Morsi emerged as the first democratically-elected leader of Egypt. However, Morsi came into office presiding over a divided country and he was unable to unite the people after the election because of poor economic conditions and political unrest. In July 2013, the Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces Field Marshal el-Sisi ousted Morsi after four days of massive protests calling for Morsi's resignation over repressive measures and high levels of unemployment. Violent protests against the move broke out subsequently and have continued into the present.

### Government Meltdown

On 25 January 2014, mass anti-government demonstrations across the country coincided with the second anniversary of the uprising against Hosni Mubarak. At the crux of the protests were the policies of now deposed president Mohammed Morsi, whose policies were seen by the opposition and the media as being too Islamist. The demonstrations lasted for several days and over 52 people died from clashes between protesters and police. President Morsi imposed a state of emergency in several cities and local authorities issued curfews in an attempt to deal with the growing violence.

Mass demonstrations returned in February 2013 and there were rallies in Cairo's Tahrir Square with several thousand people demonstrating against the recent wave of violent anti-government protests, while hundreds demonstrated calling for accountability and justice from the country's leaders. Protests continued in March and on 22 March 2013, violence broke out between anti-Brotherhood protesters and members of the Islamist group. About 200 persons were injured during the clashes that took place across Egypt at several Muslim Brotherhood offices.

## THERE WERE MIXED REACTIONS INTERNATIONALLY TO THE MILITARY INTERVENTION IN EGYPT

## ON 3 JULY 2013 AFTER ONLY ONE YEAR IN OFFICE, MORSI WAS OUSTED BY THE MILITARY AND DETAINED IN AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION, AND THE CONSTITUTION SUSPENDED

In April 2013, sectarian violence between Muslims and Christians raised its ugly head when a group of Christian children drew on a wall of a Muslim religious institute in the town of El Khusus, roughly 15 miles north of Cairo. Violence lasted for a couple of days leaving several people dead and dozens of people wounded and arrested. Sectarian violence between Sunnis and Shiites also occurred in 2013, when residents of Zawiyat Abu Muslim town in Giza province on the outskirts of Cairo surrounded a prominent Shiite's home after learning that he was hosting a religious gathering. The residents beat the guests and threw petrol bombs at the house. Four Shiites were injured in the attack and succumbed to their injuries.

Mounting demonstrations across the country demanding Morsi's resignation culminated on 30 June 2013, when millions of protesters descended on Cairo at Tahrir Square. Due to the nationwide protests, the military issued Morsi a 48-hour ultimatum to resolve the political crisis or they would intervene. On 3 July 2013 after only one year in office, Morsi was ousted by the military and detained in an undisclosed location, and the constitution suspended. The reason given by Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces Field Marshal Abdul Fattah el-Sisi was that the president "failed to meet the demands of the Egyptian people." Not only was the president removed from power, but the military put most of the presidential staff under house arrest. The military did not take over fully, but appointed the country's top judge Adly Mansour as interim president along with a vague mandate promising new elections.

### International Reactions

There were mixed reactions internationally to the military intervention in Egypt. Middle Eastern countries such as Syria, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates praised the removal of Morsi because of their opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood.

European countries such as the United Kingdom and Germany, on the other hand, denounced the military intervention as a subversion of the democratic system. The African Union suspended Egypt from all activities following Morsi's overthrow "as mandated by the relevant AU instruments." The United States decided to be more pragmatic and voiced concern about the military intervention with appeals for a speedy return to democracy, but it also understood that transition to democracy would be difficult in the circumstances following Morsi's ouster.

### **Egypt in Transition**

Shortly after President Morsi's removal, the Muslim Brotherhood called for a "Day of Rage." On 5 July 2013, at least 30 people were killed and more than 1,000 wounded when clashes erupted between supporters and opponents of the ousted president. On 14 July 2013, Egypt's public prosecutor Hisham Barakat froze 14 Islamist leaders' assets including the Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Badie and his deputy Khairat al-Shater. Arrest warrants were issued by the prosecutor's office for nine high-ranking members of the Muslim Brotherhood, including Badie, for inciting violence. Supporters of ousted President Morsi rallied on 27 July 2013 in Cairo, but security forces attacked them, leaving at least 72 people dead and 748 wounded. On 14 August, 235 people, including 43 police personnel, were killed when security forces raided protest camps set up by supporters of Morsi across the country.

On 10 September 2013, the Minister of Religious Endowments Mohamed Mokhtar Gomaa announced that unlicensed clerics will not be able to preach in mosques. The strategy was to remove radical elements. In addition, on 23 September 2013, the government banned the Muslim Brotherhood, crippling the Islamist movement in Egypt. In October 2013, there were over 50 deaths and over 200 injuries from clashes that occurred during demonstrations across Egypt. The fighting was either between supporters of ousted president Morsi and security forces or between opponents and supporters of Morsi. The government issued a new law to quash pro-Morsi rallies by banning political gatherings without a police permit.

### **Violence in North Sinai**

Violence in the Sinai re-emerged with intensity after the removal of President Morsi. There is now a growing concern about

hostile responses by former jihadists who gave up violence. Islamists could use Morsi's removal in their rhetoric to justify armed struggle against the democratic government based on the fact that the country experimented with democracy but failed. A major operation against Islamist militants in North Sinai on 7 September 2013 killed several people and wounded at least 30 others. Small operations continued for the remainder of the year netting bomb-making weapons, small arms and fundamentalist literature.

### **Looking Ahead**

President Morsi had an uphill battle when he came into power as he had to pacify the people who voted for him and then the rest of the population that did not adhere to the Muslim Brotherhood's agenda. The military may have removed a perceived short-term problem, but in doing so it could also have tarnished the future of democracy in Egypt. It is still unclear when the new elections will be held, but whoever gets elected will inherit a divided country. Hopefully, the new leadership can learn from past mistakes. Egypt does have serious security concerns in the Sinai Peninsula and a cohesive and competent government is needed in order to take control over the area and eradicate the militants who have taken refuge there. Moreover, Egypt occupies a very significant position in the Middle East which necessarily mandates a strong political leadership backed by a united society if Cairo hopes to use its influence to help stabilize the region.

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## MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

# Libya

Andrew Mitzcavitch

In 2012, Libya went through a government transition as the National Transitional Council of Libya handed over power to the newly elected national assembly on 8 August 2012. The new government was sworn in on 14 November 2012. Despite the transition however, Libya's main security concern has been dealing with the militias that were so useful in the removal of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. The challenge was to get the militias to lay down their weapons and bring them under government control.

### The Militia Conundrum

At the start of 2013, Libya looked for outside assistance in their attempt to stabilize the country. A week after a one-day visit to Tripoli on 31 January 2013 by Prime Minister David Cameron, the UK agreed to help train the Libyan military, especially its navy and air force, and help establish bomb disposal units. However, the agreement was of little help to what was actually occurring on the ground. The United Nations Security Council's Group of Experts on 9 April 2013 published a 94-page report on the alarming rate of proliferation of illegal exportations of weapons from Libya that violated an arms embargo. More than 12 countries were named, including Syria, Egypt and Mali.

Since the deposing of Gaddafi, an assortment of militias have nestled in and taken control over their respective zones throughout the country. The new government has not been able to control the militias and their activities. Former rebel fighters now have turned against each other and against the government for a variety of reasons, mostly political and issues involving control of territory.

Assassinations, kidnappings and attacks at security checkpoints and at police headquarters have become a common occurrence throughout 2013, and most of the attacks have gone unclaimed. In early March 2013, there was a clash between former rebel fighters from nearby Zuwara and others

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from Zintan involving the issue of who should guard the Mellitah oil and gas complex near Tripoli, resulting in a number of casualties. The Libyan Army had to come in and gain control in order to identify the entity that could take charge of security at the complex.

Furthermore, on 28 April 2013, an unknown group of at least 200 armed men in pickup vehicles loaded with anti-aircraft guns, surrounded the foreign ministry building and demanded that there should be a ban on officials who had worked for the deposed Muammar Gaddafi government from holding senior positions in the new administration. It is unclear what effect this had on the government, but on 5 May 2013, a law banning anyone who held a senior position during Muammar Gaddafi's 42-year rule from government service was passed to the joy of hundreds of people who filled Tripoli's main square to celebrate the passage of the bill.

One of the first signs that the people were rising up against the militias and showing that they do not want them around anymore occurred on 3 May 2013 when a pro-government demonstration organized through social networks was held in Tripoli's main square. The Libyan army was deployed after clashes took place between the protesters and unarmed supporters of the militias. On 8 June 2013, at least 25 people were killed and around 70 others wounded in clashes between protesters and the Libya Shield Force in eastern Benghazi. The Libya Shield Force is made up of militias operating with the Defense Ministry's approval in that area. The demonstrators were calling for the disbanding of the militia groups to rebuild the country's army because they believe that stability could only be achieved through a proper army and police.

On 2 July 2013, an unknown group entered the Interior Ministry building dressed in fatigues and demanded that the minister resign because of his dependence on the Supreme Security Committee (SSC), which is composed of militiamen instead of the police and army. The following day, Justice Minister Salah

al-Marghani announced that the government is coming up with plans to dissolve the militias and have a national army and police only. Several clashes in early November 2013 between rival militia fighters on the government payroll in Tripoli were the catalyst for the announcement by the SSC on 21 November 2013 that they will cede to the people's demand for all militias should disarm. Militias tied to the SSC then began to turn over areas of control to the army such as the Mittiga Airbase in Tripoli. The good news was short lived, however, as on 25 November 2013, at least nine people were killed and 49 wounded from clashes between the Special Forces of the army and members of the Islamist group Ansar al-Sharia in east Benghazi. The fighting started when troops pursued a suspect into an area where Ansar operates its own checkpoints. According to a statement posted online, Ansar al-Sharia blamed the army for starting the violence because they had opened fire on an Ansar patrol.

Other incidents that had international significance were the car bomb attack at the French embassy in Tripoli on 23 April 2013, the attempted bomb attack of an Italian diplomatic car in the central Zawiyat Dahmani area in Tripoli on 11 June 2013, the grenade attack at the Libya Al-Hurra TV station building in the eastern city of Benghazi on 13 June 2013 and the bombing at the Egyptian consulate in Benghazi on 17 August 2013. But the most significant incident would be the raid conducted by US forces in Libya on 5 October 2013 to apprehend top Al Qaeda figure Abu Anas Al-Libi who has been under US indictment for his alleged role in 1998 bombings of US embassies in East Africa. This was followed by the early morning kidnapping of Prime Minister Ali Zeidan on 10 October 2013 by gunmen believed to be Islamist militants or former rebels. The prime minister was then released a day later in the afternoon, after which he claimed that his abduction was an attempted coup by his opponents in the General National Congress (GNC) and not by Islamist militants. He signaled an imminent crackdown and stated that he would take firm action against his abductors.

## Looking Ahead

Libya continues to be on a turbulent but steady path towards democracy. For the most part, the people are behind the government and some militias have started to give up arms and join the government. If this trend continues, then Libya could be a success story in democratic transition following the Arab Spring. However, Libya's most serious concern ahead is its security situation. There are three main concerns going forward. First, the situation in Libya's southern border region is unstable. Clashes between government forces, local tribes and forces loyal to Colonel Gaddafi have left almost 100 people killed during January 2014. The dispute between local clans has simmered from Gaddafi-era policies that favored Arab tribes at the expense of the African-origin Tabu tribe. Continued clashes will render Libya's border region vulnerable and harm the already unsteady political transition. Second, the trafficking of weapons from Libya is a major challenge as arms have fallen into the hands of militants in neighboring Algeria and Mali and as far as Syria. Third, assassinations and abductions of political and military figures remain a potent security problem as they fuel retaliatory attacks that often lead into drawn-out clashes. The deaths of civil society activists and political figures also pose a serious obstacle to efforts towards establishing the rule of law.

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**THE SITUATION IN LIBYA'S  
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## MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

# Somalia

Syed Huzaifah Alkaff

Somalia continues to be confronted by Islamist militancy causing heavy civilian casualties and displacements. The Al Qaeda-affiliated Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen – commonly known as al-Shabaab – continues to plague the country's stability in spite of losing most of the territory that it once held across the country in 2012. African Union forces and troops from neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia have been assisting Somalia to combat the group, but al-Shabaab has shown resilience and has continued carrying out attacks within Somalia and also beyond its borders in 2013.

### Targets and Tactics

Al-Shabaab has employed sophisticated suicide and guerrilla attacks on a number of occasions in 2013 as part of its overall campaign to disrupt the transition towards normalcy in government-controlled areas of the country and undermine the Somali security apparatus. A suicide bomber targeted the offices of the president and prime minister in the capital Mogadishu on 29 January 2013 and on 18 March 2013, a car bomb was used in a failed attempt to assassinate Khalif Ahmed Ilig, a senior Somali intelligence official. In April 2013, al-Shabaab attacked Mogadishu's main court complex using a combination of suicide bombers and car bombs, killing at least 30. On 3 September 2013, Somalia's president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud escaped unhurt when a car bomb targeting his convoy exploded in the southern town of Merca. These attacks all underscored al-Shabaab's ability to pursue high-value targets and penetrate highly secure areas under government control. They also highlighted the strong intelligence-gathering and planning capabilities of the group.

Al-Shabaab has also actively targeted the foreign diplomatic, military and aid presence in Somalia. It attacked a UN compound in Mogadishu on 19 June 2013, killing at least 22. On 12 July 2013, a suicide bomber rammed a vehicle rigged with explosives into an African Union peacekeeping convoy in Mogadishu while a building housing Turkish embassy staff in the Somali capital was attacked on 27 July 2013. In October

## AL-SHABAAB HAS ALSO ACTIVELY TARGETED THE FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC, MILITARY AND AID PRESENCE IN SOMALIA

## AL-SHABAAB POSES A THREAT THAT EXTENDS FAR BEYOND SOMALIA

2013, al-Shabaab targeted African Union peacekeepers once again in a suicide attack on a café in Baladweyne, close to the Ethiopian border. At least 16 people were killed and 33 injured in the blast. The targeting of foreign civilians also prompted some nongovernmental organizations to wind up operations – in August 2013, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF, or Doctors without Borders) announced it would be pulling out of Somalia.

One factor that is likely to have contributed towards the intensity of al-Shabaab's campaign of violence has been the dominance of its hardline faction in 2013. The internal struggle that has plagued the group since the death of its founding leader Aden Hashi Farah Ayro in 2008 came to a head in June 2013 when rival factions attacked each other in Barawe, a town in southeastern Somalia. Ahmed Abdi Godane, the current leader of al-Shabaab and part of its hardline faction which emerged dominant from the internecine struggle, managed to isolate clan-oriented factions of al-Shabaab during the first half of 2013 in order to steer the group further towards a transnational jihadist agenda and centralize its leadership. The increase in attacks by al-Shabaab during the second half of the year could therefore be attributed to Godane attempting to cement his reputation as undisputed leader and prove the worth of his strategic vision for the group.

### Transnational Reach

Al-Shabaab poses a threat that extends far beyond Somalia. Besides opening its doors to extremists from around the world to partake in its militant campaign in Somalia, the group has also made its presence felt in neighboring countries with attacks outside Somalia's borders since 2010. Supporters of the government have been prime targets, especially those who have participated in African Union peacekeeping missions in Somalia. Uganda was the first country to be targeted, with suicide bombings in Kampala (the capital of Uganda) in July 2010.

Similarly, al-Shabaab has targeted Kenya due to Nairobi's deployment of troops in Somalia as part of Operation Linda Nchi ("Protect the Nation"). In early 2013, al-Shabaab demanded that Kenya release all Muslims held on terror charges within three weeks, failing which it threatened to kill

Kenyan soldiers in its custody. However, the Kenyan government refused, claiming that none of its soldiers were held by al-Shabaab and al-Shabaab executed a Kenyan army soldier after the ultimatum expired. In February 2013, al-Shabaab gunmen shot dead seven people in an attack on a mosque in the north-eastern Kenyan village of Malaley near the Kenyan border with Somalia. Al-Shabaab also urged Kenyan Muslims in March 2013 to boycott Kenya's presidential election and wage jihad against the Kenyan military for sending its soldiers into Somalia. In August 2013, four Kenyan police officers were shot dead after 40 alleged al-Shabaab militants attacked a police post in the county of Garissa near the Somali border.

On 21 September 2013, al-Shabaab carried out an attack on the Westgate mall in Nairobi. At least 68 people were killed while 170 others were injured in a four-day siege. Heavily-armed militants entered the mall through multiple entry points. The Westgate mall siege was the most lethal terrorist attack in Kenya since the 1998 attack by Al Qaeda on the US embassy in Nairobi. In response, Kenya carried out an airstrike on the camp in Somalia where the Westgate mall attackers had trained in October 2013.

Al-Shabaab has also carried out attacks in Ethiopia. On 2 January 2013, the Ethiopian National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) revealed that 15 al-Shabaab militants were arrested by police after a 20-day sting operation. The group of militants were plotting attacks in Ethiopia and planning to set up cells in the eastern town of Harar and in Kemise in the northeast. In March 2013, NISS detained eight members of al-Shabaab believed to be planning to abduct foreigners working for the UN World Food Program and the UN Development Program in return for ransom.

### **US Counterterrorist Efforts**

In October 2013, there were several attempts by the US targeting al-Shabaab's leadership. In one attempt, the US Navy's SEAL Team Six conducted a raid targeting a Kenyan of Somali origin known as Ikrima. He was believed to

be one of the commanders of al-Shabaab in Somalia. The mission, however, failed as the SEALs were attacked and forced to withdraw to avoid civilian casualties. In another attempt, at least two senior members of al-Shabaab were killed in a US drone strike on the outskirts of Jilib in the Middle Jubba region north of the port of Kismayo. US officials confirmed the strike, saying an alleged explosives expert by the name of Ibrahim Ali was killed in the operation. Abu Mohamed, an al-Shabaab spokesperson, said that the group's top explosives expert known as Anta was killed in the incident.

### **Looking Ahead**

Al-Shabaab remains an Al Qaeda affiliate, although it is clear that its transnational activity in terms of operations and recruitment are driven towards achieving its objectives within Somalia. The ascendance of the transnational jihadist-oriented faction within al-Shabaab at the expense of clan-oriented nationalists is a significant development going forward. The intensification of attacks in the second half of 2013 appears to confirm the ongoing consolidation of Godane within the group. More activism on al-Shabaab's part both in Somalia and abroad is likely in the near future. This, together with the fact that many Westerners of Somali origin, especially those from the US, are joining the group projects a rather gloomy outlook for Somalia and the international community at large.

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