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Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis

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Terrorists to Bounce Back in 2013

By Rohan Gunaratna

With the US coalition withdrawing from Afghanistan in 2014, a new global threat landscape is emerging in 2013. The Taliban, Al Qaeda al Jihad and a dozen like-minded groups located on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border survived a decade of global counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism measures. They are slowly and steadily returning to Afghanistan, re-creating the pre-9/11 sanctuary. With the US-led coalition's withdrawal, the Afghan security forces will fight back with limited success. The insider threat stemming from Taliban infiltration of Afghan army and police is affecting Western capacity building.

About twenty to thirty thousand fighters from two dozen threat groups are located on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, mostly in North Waziristan. They include the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani Network, Hezb-i-Islami, Pakistani Taliban, Al Qaeda al Jihad, Islamic Movement of Afghanistan, Islamic Jihad Union and Turkistan Islamic Party. In addition to operating in Pakistan and Afghanistan, some mount kinetic and influence operations overseas. Their media networks politicize, radicalize and mobilize Muslims, especially youth, to participate in or support their campaigns. The blowback of the US-led coalition's withdrawal will empower and embolden insurgent, terrorist and extremist groups worldwide.

The Context

Reminiscent of Soviet withdrawal in February 1989, the jihadists and Islamists are already celebrating the Obama administration's plans to withdraw. Calling it Islam's victory over the West, they hail it as a strategic defeat of the United States. While most of them will focus on reestablishing a Taliban-like state, others will return home to establish Islamic states in their home or in neighboring and distant conflict zones. With a number of threat groups and state interests com-

peting to advance their interests, by late 2013 and 2014 Afghanistan will most likely look like today's Syria.

In Afghanistan, entities, surrogates and proxies of Pakistan, the United States, France, India, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and other state players will intervene overtly and covertly. With no boots on the ground, militarized counter-terrorism—US drone warfare and special forces—will be insufficient to push back the Taliban's avowed return. While Pakistan will control developments in Afghanistan's Pashtun areas, Tehran will influence developments in Herat and surrounding areas bordering Iran. The regional warlords and transnational criminal organizations will compete to retain and expand their influence.

Developments elsewhere in the Middle East and Africa will compound the emergence of this new threat in South Asia. Although Al Qaeda al Jihad is based on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, it influences threat groups in North Africa, the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula. Groups from outside the region, notably the Middle East, are likely to return to Afghanistan and play primary and peripheral training and operational roles.

Although Western democracies perceive the Arab Spring as a victory, Middle Eastern threat groups received a boost from the uprisings, which, contrary to expectations, created a permissive environment for both democratic politics and violent extremism. The second- and third-order consequences of the West arming Libyan and Syrian fighters, destabilized the Maghreb and Sahel and the Levant and beyond. Muslims from the Caucasus to Southeast Asia are traveling to establish an Islamic state in Syria. The developments have already affected Jordan, a pillar of stability, and may eventually destabilize the

Gulf. International neglect of Tuaregs from Libya moving to Mali led to the creation of a third African hotspot in the Sahel after Somalia and Nigeria. Exploiting the new environment, Salafi-Jihadism, the ideology of Al Qaeda al Jihad, is spreading rapidly in Africa. The ideological and operational relationship between the Middle East and Asia is growing.

Recent Developments

The Israeli attack in Gaza in November 2012 increased global Muslim resentment and anger against the West. While most Muslims celebrated the United Nations General Assembly granting Palestinians nonmember observer status, the jihadists found no importance in the international recognition. As they are committed to an armed revolution, they questioned why people were celebrating. In discussions monitored by SITE intelligence group on the Ansar al-Mujahideen and Shumukh al-Islam forums in November 2012, jihadists argued that peaceful solutions are impossible and that only through jihad will Palestinians achieve statehood.

Such thinking, which is characteristic of Al Qaeda al Jihad, is steadfastly spreading throughout the Middle East. The Salafi-Jihadi ideology politicized and radicalized a segment of the population, especially the youth. If the recently established "Arab Spring governments" fail to meet the public expectations, violence against the new rulers may become the order of the day.

Africa is developing as a new epicenter of terrorism. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) expanded from North Africa to the Sahel. AQIM shared its expertise with Boko Haram (BH) in Nigeria. In November 2012, Abu Bakr Shekau, its leader, expressed BH's solidarity with associates of Al Qaeda al Jihad in Afghanistan, Iraq, North Africa, Somalia and Yemen. After Qaddafi's fall, North Mali has emerged as a training ground and a battlefield. Malians are supported

by European Muslims, especially French North Africans, including Algerians, Moroccans and Libyans. Al Shabab lost ground, but its ideology has spread to bordering areas of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. Like al Shabab, BH is likely to join Al Qaeda al Jihad in 2013. Unless stability is restored in Africa, the Al Qaeda movement's footprint will grow.

Most terrorist attacks use the gun and the bomb. But the emerging threat of terrorism confronting the world will not be confined to conventional terrorism. The threat from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism is on the rise. However, recent developments in Syria, Iran and North Korea increase the likelihood of a biological outbreak. In the spectrum of unconventional agents, anthrax and smallpox are favored by threat groups. With terrorists recruiting from a cross section of society, a dozen scientists and technicians became vulnerable to supporting or staffing terrorist weapons acquisition and manufacturing programs. Both securing government storage and research facilities as well as periodic screening of scientific and support staff is paramount to prevent proliferation. In the event of an outbreak, accidental or deliberate first responders should be vaccinated and immunized.

Likely Future Developments

The global threat landscape is likely to change dramatically starting next year. Functionally and regionally, developments in Afghanistan will be the most influential. The Salafi-Jihadists and a segment of Islamists consider Afghanistan "the mother of all battles." If the jihadists reconstitute Afghanistan for a second time, it will affect not only Western security but also will impact Asia's rise. Driven by success, returning fighters will reignite conflicts in Kashmir, Xinjiang, Uzbekistan, Mindanao, Arakan, Pattani, tribal Pakistan and other Muslim lands.

In the backdrop of Obama's pivot to Asia, battle-hardened fighters will threaten Asia. Seasoned to fight Western armies in Afghanistan, they will contest Asian armies, law-enforcement and intelligence services. Asian armies, twenty years behind Western militaries, will experience new threats from IEDs and suicide attacks. As in Afghanistan, returning fighters may bleed standing armies in existing and new zones of conflict. Committed to a generation-long fight, the strength of the foreign veteran is patience and resilience. They will serve in many roles, including fighters, ideologues, combat trainers and financiers.

The Bottom Line

Al Qaeda al Jihad, the core of the global terrorist movement, suffered massive degradation. Osama bin Laden was killed, but his associates and their new leader Ayman al-Zawahiri present a very real danger. Despite a smaller US footprint after formal withdrawal in 2014, the United States will still remain the tier-one target of both Al Qaeda al Jihad and the movement. Some associates such as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) present a comparable, if not a greater threat to the United States. Yemen, where AQAP is based, remains unstable. The Pakistani Taliban, as demonstrated in last year's Times Square bombing attempt, has developed anti-Western orientations. Several new groups influenced by Salafi Jihadism, such as al Nusra Front, have emerged in Syria, Egypt and Libya. In place of one single Al Qaeda, a multiplicity of anti-American, suicide-capable groups have emerged in the last 12 months. Like ordinary and organized crime, extremism and terrorism will remain long-term threats to the world.

Some actions by state and non-state actors aimed at countering the growing extremist and terrorist threat had unintended consequences.

The movie trailer "Innocence of Muslims" (released by a private U. citizen), US gov-

ernment overt and covert support for the Arab Spring, and announcing the US military pullout from Afghanistan all increased the threat of ideological extremism and its vicious byproduct, terrorism.

Of all threats, the most significant will emerge from Washington's lack of political will to sustain a US-led coalition presence. The failure to build a credible Afghanistan military, law-enforcement and intelligence capabilities before US withdrawal will create an environment of high threat reminiscent of conditions prior to 9/11. More than ever, a global strategy is needed before to better manage the existing and emerging security challenges in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

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Countries Covered in this Issue:

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Middle East – Egypt, Israel/Palestine, Libya, Mali, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Jordan & Lebanon

South Asia – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

Southeast Asia – Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand

Central Asia – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

East Asia Country Assessment: China

By Arabinda Archarya and Lynne Chua

Despite tough counter-measures, China continues to experience ethnic violence and rioting in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and acts of self-immolation in Tibet. Even though Beijing has always been conflating the issues involving Tibet, Taiwan and Xinjiang as part of the overall terrorist threat against the country, almost all the attacks, with few exceptions, were attributed to the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) which also goes by the name the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP). Beijing has also blamed World Uyghur Congress (WUC), a US based group for riots and other forms of unrest in Xinjiang and exiled Tibetan leader Dalai Lama for self-immolations in Tibet.

Throughout 1990s, China witnessed different forms of political violence including riots and terrorist attacks targeting government personnel, infrastructure such as public transportation systems and other ethnicities especially the Han Chinese. After a long period of inactivity, the threat re-emerged during the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Though the March 2008 attempt to bomb an aircraft was foiled, a number of other incidents took place in many parts of the country which China attributed to Uighur militants. At the same time there were wide spread riots in Tibet which was put down with force by the Chinese authorities.

Ethnic tensions and violence in Xinjiang was at its worst in July 2009 when riots between the Uighur and Han communities in Urumqi left approximately 200 people dead. The riots were sparked by an ethnic brawl in a toy factory in Guangzhou, where Uighur workers were rumored to have assaulted a Han female.

A number of incidents of rioting and small scale attacks were reported in 2011 as well.

On 28 February 2012 in the city of Yecheng, nine men wielding knives killed thirteen people in a local market. The police shot seven of the attackers while two were arrested. Local government claimed the incident to be a terrorist attack. On 29 June 2012, six Uighur men attempted to hijack Tianjin Airlines flight GS7554 from Hotan to Urumqi. At least ten passengers and crew were injured when hijackers tried to take control of the aircraft. Two of the six hijackers sustained injuries during the mid-flight fight and later died despite receiving medical treatment. Chinese officials claimed that the hijackers were Uighur separatists. On 12 December 2012, the Chinese court sentenced three men to death for the attempted hijacking of the airplane while another man was given a life sentence.



Attempted plane hijacking by six men was foiled in Xinjiang. Photo credit: Baitbykn

In August 2012, twenty Uighur were sentenced to imprisonment ranging between eighteen months to fifteen years for using the Internet to “spread separatism” in the Xinjiang region and for “plotting terrorist activities.” According to a report in the People’s Daily, the twenty were involved in five terrorist groups and were attempting to “incite ethnic hatred and provoke a so-called ‘holy war’ against the nation.”

In October 2012, Chinese officials stated that members of the East ETIM/TIP and the Istanbul based East Turkistan Educational and Solidarity Association (ETESA) had slipped into Syria to join anti-government forces. It was claimed that the ETIM or ETESA members slipped across the border from Turkey into Syria from May 2012 onwards.

It was the first time that the Chinese officials specifically mention the ETESA as a terrorist group. According to the Chinese official statement, these groups have been funding their activities through drug and gun trafficking, kidnapping and robbery, and providing training for "separatists, criminals and terrorists" that had fled Xinjiang. However, the ETESA countered the Chinese claim stating that the group has been legally formed in accordance with the Turkish government regulations with a mission to educate the Uighur youth both in Xinjiang and overseas. According to a number of assessments, branding of ETESA as a terrorist group is part of Beijing's campaign to label any form of dissent as separatist and even terrorist acts.

Assessment

Chinese authorities often link Uighur in Xinjiang to violent separatist or terrorist groups but experts familiar with the region have said China has exaggerated the threat in an attempt to divert attention from its domestic policies that cause unrest. This is evident from the nature of the incidents especially after the Beijing Olympics. The tactics used by the perpetrators lack sophistication and do not demonstrate organized acts of violence. Rather, the spate of violence could be a direct result of the heightened sense of mistrust and tension between the local Uighur and Han Chinese communities. The Chinese government have contributed to these tensions as well with its aggressive integration policies that are perceived by the Uighur as an affront to their community. These policies are seen to threaten or even replace the distinct

ethnicity, language, religion, and culture of the Uighur. The widening socio-economic divide between the Han Chinese and the Uighur has also contributed to the general feeling of marginalization and prosecution. By labeling these incidents as acts of terrorism and using responses such as crackdowns on the local Uighur populations, the Chinese government has further exacerbated and reinforced the level of mistrust between the state and the Uighur population.

While the discontent and perceived marginalization of the Uighur leading to acts of violence in Xinjiang could not be disputed, the capability of organized entities such as the ETIM/TIP is rather limited in China as they have minimum influence and access to the mainland. With ETIM's top leadership almost completely decimated, the group's ability to carry out attacks has come under severe stress. 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 United States (US) drone strike in Afghanistan. It is estimated that the ETIM has less than one hundred members. It also operates mainly outside of China—mainly in Pakistan. Groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and even Al Qaeda support the cause of ETIM. But these groups have priorities and problems of their own apart from the Xinjiang issue.

Similarly, both the WUC and ETESA use their overseas presence to further political efforts to mobilize the Uighurs. But there is as yet no evidence to link these groups to terrorist acts. The same is the case with the Tibetans; there is no indication that they pose a credible threat to the country. Some of the younger generation Tibetans are getting restive but they do not have any demonstrable capacity to carry out terrorist attacks. All that the Tibetans have managed to do is to indulge in acts of self-immolation to put pressure on Beijing for more autonomy and better living standards.

This makes a strong case for Beijing to be able to distinguish between protests against specific grievances which can be easily resolved and acts of terrorism or separatism. Beijing also needs to appreciate that, more often than not, extremism and terrorism take root due to marginalization and repression – perceived or otherwise. Despite government's heavy investments to develop the minority concentrated areas especially in Xinjiang and Tibet, riots, self-immolations and other sporadic acts of violence persist. This is likely to linger as long as the government fails to address minority concerns and grievances. The government must move towards engaging the local population and alleviate local grievances and address the deep sense of mistrust of the minority communities towards the government, the party and the state.

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Middle East and North Africa Country Assessments

By Nathan Cohen and Andrew Mitzcavitch

EGYPT

Egypt experienced a tumultuous first full year of democratic rule. Jihadists and disenfranchised Bedouins conducted numerous attacks in the Sinai Peninsula. In September 2012, the film "Innocence of Muslims" sparked angry demonstrations that resulted in the breach of the US embassy. However, Egypt's contentious politics, more than anything else, may undo the country's democratic gains.

The Rise of Morsi

After Mubarak's fall, Defence Minister Field-Marshal Muhammad Hussein Tantawi and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) governed Egypt on an interim basis promising free and fair elections. However, after numerous hasty and autocratic decisions by the SCAF, the public questioned its democratic sincerity. Protesters took to the streets in violent clashes and demanded for the promised elections. The June 2012 presidential election featured Muhammad Morsi, formerly a prominent Muslim Brotherhood (MB) official, and Ahmed Shafiq, a former Mubarak acolyte and SCAF ally. Morsi won and became Egypt's first democratically elected president. Morsi initially sought to reassure the liberals and Christians wary of an Islamist president by terminating his MB membership and promising to represent all Egyptians.

The neophyte president moved quickly to assert his power, both abroad and in Egypt. While Morsi's August 2012 visit to Iran demonstrated an Egyptian foreign policy significantly more independent of the US, his government nevertheless mediated a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in November 2012, much to the appreciation of the West. Domestically, Morsi advanced civilian control over the military when he replaced Tanta-

wi as Defence Minister and military chief with General Abdel Fattah al-Sissi, who is considered to be closer to Morsi than his predecessor. Morsi also removed Deputy Army Chief of Staff Sami Anan and the heads of each service. Morsi also revoked SCAF's previously declared constitutional amendment that had significantly reduced the authority of the President's office.

The Constitutional Crisis

While Morsi has attempted to consolidate his power, the contentious process of drafting a constitution may unravel his entire government. In March 2012, parliament appointed a constitutional assembly, which was responsible for drafting the document. Non-Islamists decried the assembly's overrepresentation of MB members and Salafists. Shortly thereafter, Egypt's judiciary dissolved the constitutional assembly. Members of parliament, Islamists and non-Islamists, then sought to appoint a more diverse assembly. However, liberals and Christians still denounced the Islamists for attempting to codify Islamism through the constitution, and the assembly's legitimacy was marred by walkouts and boycotts. The Islamists returned the charge that the boycotters were playing extrajudicial games and were preventing Egypt's stabilization.

Stuck at this impasse, Morsi issued a controversial decree on 23 November 2012 that temporarily granted him sweeping powers, removed Mubarak-era judges, and scheduled a referendum on the constitution for 15 December 2012. The decree sparked widespread condemnation and indignation among Egypt's non-Islamists, who accused Morsi of establishing an Islamist dictatorship. Hundreds of thousands of protesters crowded the streets of Cairo and elsewhere to demand the decree's nullification, only to meet counter-demonstrations by pro-Morsi supporters.

The protests turned violent, and on 5 December 2012, clashes between the two groups killed seven people and wounded hundreds more.



Protest in Egypt after President Morsi power grab 25 November 2012. Image Credit: REUTERS/Mohamed Abd El Ghany

The referendum on the constitution was held on 15 December and with a second round of voting on 22 December, Egypt's new constitution was approved by 63.8 percent of voters with an official turnout of 32.9 percent of the eligible voters. However, both supporters and opponents of the constitution complained of voting irregularities. Egypt's opposition coalition said that it will try to form a single political party in order to challenge the Islamists since they have dominated the ballot box over the past year. In a speech before parliament on 29 December, Morsi called on the opposition to work alongside the government to end the violence and revive the economy.

The Return of the Military

The constitutional crisis has allowed the military to reprise its role as keeper of the peace and to protect its own privileges. Faced with stiff opposition from the liberals, Morsi has courted the military. Therefore, despite gestures of civilian predominance, such as Tantawi's removal, the constitutional draft backed by Morsi and the Islamists actually freed the military from any civilian oversight over its budget. Morsi also gave the military the power to arrest civilians in prepa-

ration for the constitutional referendum. The military adopted a neutral course between the two sides; however, it warned of "disastrous consequences" if the crisis continued.

Egypt enters 2013 on the edge. People speak of the return of SCAF governance or the entrenchment of Islamist rule. Optimists hope for a grand bargain between all concerned parties, Islamists, liberals, and the military. Only the last option can realize the aspirations of Egypt's revolution.

ISRAEL/PALESTINE

For most of 2012 the question in Israel was how can Iran's nuclear ambitions be stopped and whether Israel should take pre-emptive measures to bomb Iranian sites. In March 2012, nearly a thousand anti-war protesters in Tel-Aviv called on their leaders to value negotiations and be wary of unsuspected broad consequences from bombing Iranian sites. Ex-Mossad Chief Meir Dagan even said that it would be "stupid" to attack Iran. Ultimately, Israel seemingly ceded to US pressure and decided to wait for sanctions to work, but it has not ruled out a military option. In seeking to garner more international support Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu illustrated the Iranian nuclear threat while addressing the UN General Assembly in September 2012.

It is unclear how this international drama will unfold in 2013, but Israel's own nuclear capabilities are now in question. In December 2012, the UN General Assembly approved a resolution calling on Israel to open its nuclear program for inspection. Israel's responded by stating it will not cooperate with the non-binding resolution.

Living Conditions in Gaza

Living conditions in Gaza continued to worsen because of the Israeli imposed blockade. In June 2012, the UN Office for the Coordination of

Humanitarian Affairs in the occupied Palestinian territory published a fact sheet detailing the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip due to the blockade; most notable were the deaths. Then in August 2012, a UN report said "Gaza will no longer be 'liveable' by 2020 unless urgent action is taken to improve water supply, power, health, and schooling." The latest round of clashes has not helped the situation, but made the living conditions worse.

Clashes

Throughout 2011, the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and Gazan militants' engaged in a continuous cycle of tit-for-tat attacks that never escalated. The first two months of 2012 were relatively calm until clashes erupted on 9 March 2012 after an Israeli air-strike assassinated the secretary-general of the Popular Resistance Committees, Zuheir al-Qessi. Hamas did not participate directly in the fighting that left at least 25 Palestinians dead, mostly militants, and over 80 wounded. Although Gazan militants fired over 300 rockets at Israel, only eight Israelis were injured. IDF air-strikes were precise with maximum damage while Gazan militants' projectiles landed randomly and caused little or no damage. A ceasefire was reached on 13 March 2012 with the help of Egypt.

The ceasefire did not last long as attacks continued until November 2012 when Gazan militants blew up an Israeli army jeep on patrol along the Gaza boundary with an anti-tank missile, wounding four soldiers. Israeli forces retaliated intensely and five days of escalating violence ensued. Egypt started to mediate a ceasefire, but on 14 November 2012 an Israeli airstrike killed Hamas military commander, Ahmed al-Jabari. The result was eight more days of intense fighting that saw over 915 rockets hitting Israel while 429 rockets were intercepted by the "Iron Dome" (an anti-missile system launched by Israel in 2011 with the collaboration of the US). Only three Israelis were killed and 60 injured

while more than 155 Palestinians were killed and over 800 wounded from the Israeli bombardment. On 21 November 2012, Egypt once more mediated a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and the other militant groups. Unlike the conflict in March 2012, Hamas' direct involvement in the conflict garnered the organization much popular support. This was showcased on 8 December 2012, when more than 100,000 Palestinians gathered in the Gaza Strip, including Fatah leaders, to hear Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal at a rally marking the 25th anniversary of the armed Palestinian group.



Image Credit: Vox Nova

UN Vote on Palestine

2012 did not see any progress between Israel and the Palestinian Authority over the status of settlements as there have been no direct peace talks between both countries for over two years. Palestine has refused to talk while Israel expands its settlements and would only talk without preconditions. According to Israel there are two types of settlements, outpost settlements (illegal and unauthorized) and legal settlements. Palestine and the consensus view of the international community is that both types of settlements are illegitimate and an obstacle to peace.

With a lack of progress in the peace talks and on-going Israeli settlement-building, President

Mahmoud Abbas sought to upgrade Palestine's UN status while seeking recognition on the 1967 borders, including Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. On 29 November 2012 the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to accept Palestine as a non-member observer state. Palestine will now be able to gain access to UN agencies and international bodies, including the International Criminal Court. Less than 24 hours later, the Israeli government approved construction of 3,000 new homes. The result of Israel's settlement plan has brought doubt to its commitment to a two-state solution and widespread international opposition. Israel rejected the condemnations and vowed to press forward with the construction of the settlements even in the face of unprecedented isolation towards its settlement policy.

LIBYA



NTC chairman Mustafa Abdel Jalil shows his ink-stained finger after voting on 7 July 2012. Photo Credit Abdullah Doma/AFP/Getty Images

In October 2011, the National Transitional Council of Libya (NTC) became the de facto government with the death of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. The NTC struggled with enforcing its authority and failed to contain the violence by the revolutionary brigades that helped topple the ex-leader's regime. Frustrations with the slow government transition culminated in a series of protests across the nation in January 2012. By the end of the month a new electoral law was drafted and the first post-revolutionary elections were scheduled for July 2012. Elections were held on 7 July 2012 with only minor incidents between anti-election protesters and voters. The NTC was dissolved on 8 August 2012 as Libya's ruling council handed over power to the newly elected national assem-

bly. Though bringing democracy to Libya was not a smooth transition, on 14 November 2012 Libya's first elected government was sworn in.

Libya's government could not contend with the ongoing violence throughout the year. Forces loyal to the deposed regime and government troops clashed numerous times while rival militias fought for power, settled old scores and defended their new autonomy. A week of clashes between the African Tabu and Arab Zwia tribes in March 2012 at Sabha in southern Libya resulted in 147 people being killed and 400 wounded. With the government's failure to address tribal and economic grievances, the law and order in Tabu and Zwia tribes is now hangs on fragile ceasefires. Porous borders also posed a serious problem for the government with the rise of criminal activities cross-borders such as illegal immigration and trafficking of weapons.

On 11 September 2012, a crowd of several hundred Libyans surrounded the American consulate in Benghazi to protest the movie "Innocence of Muslims." As a pretext, militants used the anti-US protest in their pre-planned strike in order to breach the embassy compound. The consulate lacked the security usually found in other US diplomatic compounds and was easily overpowered by the assailants weaponry. After gaining entry to the compound, the main building put into fire. Militants later attacked the nearby annex. The siege resulted in the death of four Americans, including the American ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens from smoke inhalation.

Ansar al Sharia had claimed responsibility for the attack while AQAP said the attack was to avenge the killing of Al Qaeda commander, Abu Yahya al-Libi. It was also significant the attack took place on the 11th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Although disputes are still ongoing in the US about what exactly happened in the Benghazi US consulate attack, the Libyan authori-

ties have arrested 50 people. The interim government proceeded to disband all non-government affiliated militias while demonstrations held at the end of September 2012 called for having a national army and police force as well as the breakup of the militias. The newly elected government in Libya is still grasping with enormous challenges and 2013 will be no different. They will continue to struggle bringing the country under control and outside assistance is still required in order to help them get through this arduous process of stabilizing their country.

MALI

At the beginning of 2012, African countries aspired to replicate Mali's economic and political reforms that drew praise from scholars and activists alike. According to Freedom House, Mali was only one of a handful of African countries that qualified as "free." 2012 witnessed a severe regression for Mali in nearly every facet. A rebellion by the Tuareg, a traditionally nomadic people who predominate in northern Mali, sparked Mali's collapse. With a long and unsuccessful history of wars of secession the Tuareg renewed their efforts in early 2012. The Tuareg nationalist movement, under the auspices of the Movement for the National Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA), allied itself with regional Islamist groups and scored several victories over Malian military. The Malian military blamed the civilian government for its losses, and on 22 March junior officers launched a coup one month before scheduled presidential elections. On 11 December 2012, Mali's military placed the Prime Minister under house arrest and replaced him the day afterward, exacerbating Mali's already fragile state. Mali is now home to political instability, ethnic sectarianism and religious extremism.

The MNLA's Identity Crisis

2012 ended with Mali fractured into numerous competing factions, with no one, civilian or military, integrationist or secessionist, in firm control

over the entire country. The MNLA was the face of the Tuareg rebellion for the first several months. With its headquarters in Paris, the organization initially sought to portray itself as a secular group determined to fight for self-determination. Nevertheless, it partnered with groups such as Ansar Dine and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA). The latter two groups are violent Salafist groups with links to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Reports typically portray Ansar Dine as comprised of indigenous Tuaregs led by Iyyad Ag Ghali, a known kingmaker of Tuareg politics. MUJWA is a splinter group of AQIM, though its reason for splitting from the latter remains murky.

By March 2012, the difference in religious ideology between the two sides caused a public falling out, with one MNLA spokesman castigating Ag Ghali as a "criminal" determined "to establish a theocratic regime." The spat was short lived as the MNLA could not afford to isolate Ansar Dine, which has emerged as the most potent military force in northern Mali. In May 2012, MNLA and Ansar Dine agreed to merge and create an independent Islamic state. However, this arrangement proved ephemeral too, as religious and possibly tribal tensions resulted in violent clashes. Ansar Dine and its allies proved victorious and the MNLA's presence in northern Mali has all but dissipated, leaving it to awkwardly soften its demand for complete secession.

Filling a Vacuum: Ansar Dine and its Allies

Nature abhors a vacuum, and without the Malian state or the MNLA as viable governing authority, a group of violent Islamist movements seized control. Ansar Dine heads, though does not exercise control, over a nebulous coalition that includes MUJWA, AQIM, and opportunistic tribal militias. Foreign jihadists from across the globe augment their ranks. Along with the MNLA, Ansar Dine swept through Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal; three of the largest cities in northern Mali.

When its relationship with the MNLA soured, Ansar Dine, with MUJWA's assistance, evicted the MNLA from Gao in June. As Ansar Dine and MUJWA carved out their own zones of governance, they implemented a harsh and violent interpretation of shariah (Islamic law) foreign to Mali's Islamic heritage. At their hands, centuries old mausoleums of Sufi scholars were desecrated and civilians were executed.

International Drumbeats for Action



Negotiations between Ansar Dine & ECOWAS 18 June 2012. Image Credit: AFP

Saddled with an unpopular interim President (Dioncounda Traore), a neophyte Prime Minister (Diango Cissoko), and a still influential coup leader (Captain Amadou Sanogo), Mali's government finished 2012 weak and divided. Unable to oust the Islamists by themselves, the Malian government soon felt international pressure to accept help. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) attempted to solve the crisis in northern Mali diplomatically and militarily. Burkina Faso's Foreign Minister and ECOWAS mediator, Djibril Bassole, discussed a negotiated peace settlement with Ansar Dine's leadership in June. Militarily, ECOWAS proposed a 3,000 troop deployment based in the capital, the southern city of Bamako. The Malian leadership initially balked at the prospect of intervention, it eventually acquiesced. Non-regional actors such as China, the US, and particularly France, have offered

financial and logistical support for such an operation.

ECOWAS renewed its diplomatic efforts in the final months of 2012. Facing the prospect of an internationally backed intervention, Ansar Dine, the only primarily Malian group among the Islamists, softened its stance. It dropped its demand for nationally mandated shariah, focusing instead on its base in the Kidal region. It further promised to fight "terrorists" and "foreign movements," in a probable reference to former allies MUJWA and AQIM. In December, both MNLA and Ansar Dine agreed to ceasefires with Malian government. However, any optimism from these developments must be tempered by a reminder that in Mali all alliances are temporary and all agreements are ephemeral.

SOMALIA

In 2011, the coalition of the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG), the African Union Mission in Somalia, the Kenyan Defense Forces and allied tribal militias made unprecedented gains against al-Shabaab, a militant Salafist group that had controlled large parts of Somalia since 2007. However, the early days of 2012 provided much fodder to the pessimists. The TFG oversaw rampant corruption and experienced vicious infighting, epitomized by a January 2012 parliamentary brawl. Despite its eviction, or "strategic withdrawal" as al-Shabaab propaganda puts it, the group demonstrated its ability to conduct deadly attacks in the heart of Mogadishu. Furthermore, at the end of January, al-Shabaab banned the International Committee of the Red Cross (IRCC) from operating in Somalia, despite the persistence of a famine. Nevertheless, as Somalia ushers in 2013 it can certainly reflect upon the last year as one of progress. In 2012, al-Shabaab incurred more defeats, and a semblance of political stability took root.

Al-Shabaab's Endemic Losses

In 2012, al-Shabaab fought, and usually lost, against two opponents: the aforementioned coalition and itself. The battlefield losses and internal strife mutually reinforced each other. Throughout the year al-Shabaab fought a rear guard campaign against coalition advances, and while al-Shabaab succeeded in protracting the conflict, but it could not launch a successful counter-offensive. In February 2012, Kenyan and TFG forces seized Baidoa, a city that had once been al-Shabaab stronghold. Three months later, the same script played out in Afmadow and Afgoye, both of which were strategically important towns for al-Shabaab. Though al-Shabaab withdrew from these cities without sustaining losses, they have not been as lucky elsewhere, as numerous commanders and hundreds of foot soldiers died in 2012. Also, al-Shabaab found itself barraged both by coalition infantry and an increasingly assertive drone force operated by the US and Kenya.



AU & government forces just before entering Afgoye 25 May 2012. Image Credit: AFP

Al-Shabaab Turns on Itself

On 21 January 2012, a US drone killed Bilal al-Barjawi, a senior Al Qaeda fighter in East Africa who was the organization's liaison with al-Shabaab. His death negatively affected al-Shabaab's operational capabilities, and it also exacerbated the rivalries and factionalism within the organization. Senior al-Shabaab officials such as Hassan Aweys, Ali Rage, and Mukhtar Robow accused other al-Shabaab leaders, nota-

bly Ahmed Godane and several foreign fighters, for orchestrating al-Barjawi's death. Reports of such a rift had long circulated; the former group is considered more, though not entirely, devoted to a nationalist jihad, while the latter group is considered to harbor transnational jihadi aspirations.

On 9 February 2012, it appeared the transnational faction's ideology had won out when Al Qaeda emir Ayman al-Zawahiri announced a formal merger between Al Qaeda and al-Shabaab. While the two groups had previously collaborated and exchanged statements of praise, they had always remained distinct entities. The merger angered many in the nationalist group who did not accept Al Qaeda ideology. Hassan Aweys sought to downplay its significance, saying "Al-Shabaab and Al Qaeda are merely a small part of the larger Islamic group and Al Qaeda's ideology should not be viewed as the sole, righteous path for Islam."

The most public display of internal discord came from Abu Mansour al-Amriki, (aka Omar Hammami), an American al-Shabaab member who had risen through the organization's ranks to become a senior official. In a Youtube video uploaded in March, al-Amriki, a close ally of Mukhtar Robow in the nationalist jihadist group, warned that elements within al-Shabaab planned to kill him over "matters of the shariah and matters of the strategy." Reports surfaced soon thereafter that al-Shabaab arrested al-Amriki. The organization denied the arrest but incontrovertible evidence of al-Shabaab's internal dissension had been laid bare. This dissension combined with a pummeling at the hands of the coalition led to a stream of defections. Over the course of 2012, hundreds of al-Shabaab fighters surrendered to the coalition or simply abandoned their posts. The divisions came to a dramatic conclusion when a spokesman for Hizbul Islam announced the group's official split from al-Shabaab on 25 September. Hizbul Islam militia is commanded by Hassan

Aways who had joined with al-Shabaab in December 2010 at the urging of nationalist jihadist camp.

Is The War Won?

Al-Shabaab's losses provide encouragement for Somalia in 2013. Somalia's political progress bolsters these expectations. On 11 September 2012, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, an academic-cum-civil society activist, won the Presidential elections over the incumbent Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. This marked the first peaceful transfer of power in over four decades. However, Al-Shabaab can still wreak havoc as demonstrated by its (failed) assassination attempt of the recently sworn in President Mohamud. Furthermore, since its eviction from south and central Somalia, al-Shabaab has migrated northwards into the semi-autonomous state of Puntland. Corruption also remains rampant and warlords wield considerable influence. Therefore, while the success against al-Shabaab warrants guarded optimism the tougher obstacle of installing good governance remains a distant goal.

SYRIA, IRAQ, JORDAN & LEBANON

The originally peaceful uprising against Bashar al-Assad's regime had already degenerated into a civil war by 2012. As the year unfolded, levels of violence only increased as international attempts to mediate the conflict failed repeatedly. According to a November 2012 report of the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, a non-governmental organization based in London, over 40,000 people had died in the civil war, with the vast majority being civilians. While rebels and soldiers initially used small arms and mortars, 2012 witnessed the introduction of heavier weaponry. The government frequently used tanks, helicopters and fighter jets whereas some rebels have obtained advanced heat-seeking shoulder-fired missiles. However, the increase in fatalities has not led to a decisive

victory for either side. While the rebels have carved out areas of control in northern and western Syria, they have been unable to consolidate control over Homs and other large cities.

Al-Assad's Base of Support

The stalemate continues in part because of the resiliency of Bashar al-Assad's base of support. On a macro level, al-Assad continues to benefit from the steadfast support of Syria's Alawites, which accounts for roughly 12% of the total population. Significant elements of Syria's Christian population prefer the regime over the Sunni-dominated opposition as well. On a micro level, al-Assad's clique of trusted advisors and officials has demonstrated similar resilience. Though a July 2012 bombing killed several senior security officials, including al-Assad's brother-in-law Assef Shawkat and Defense Minister Daoud Rajha, it did not presage the disintegration of al-Assad's inner circle as many analysts predicted. The same can be said for the defections of Brigadier-General Manaf Tlass, Prime Minister Riyad Hijab, and the other senior officials. While their departure certainly weakened the regime, they were not the members of al-Assad's core. Indeed, al-Assad himself has characterized the defections as a "self-cleansing" process that guarantees the absolute loyalty of those who remain.



After a battle between government forces and rebels, Juret al-Shayah district of Homs 27 July 2012. Image Credit: AFP Photo/Shaaam News Network/HO

The Opposition

The Free Syrian Army (FSA) carries the closest resemblance to a formal "rebel" army. However, FSA leadership, based in Turkey and led by Colonel Riad al-Asad, exerts relatively minimal command over the autonomous militias in Syria. Therefore, despite the FSA's attempt to portray itself as an inclusive nationalist organization, reports have surfaced of FSA brigades targeting non-Sunni civilians. Complicating matters further was the rise of several Salafist and jihadist groups. Foremost among them is Jubhat al-Nusra (JN), which issued its first statement in January 2012. JN has taken responsibility for several large scale bombings and purportedly has connections to Al Qaeda in Iraq. Hundreds of foreign fighters, coming from Saudi Arabia, Chechnya, Afghanistan, and elsewhere have augmented the ranks of the revolutionaries, and especially the jihadists.

Meanwhile, the Syrian political opposition remains equally as fissiparous. The Syrian National Council (SNC), formed in 2011, was the primary political umbrella for the opposition. However, despite a January 2012 agreement to coordinate with the FSA, the two organizations quickly reverted to squabbling. The SNC also suffered from internal factionalism. The group's initial leader, Burhan Ghalioun, resigned in June 2012 after failing to unite the opposition. His successor, Abdelbaset Sayda, a Kurd, lasted only until November 2012 when he was replaced by George Sabra, a leftist Christian. With the SNC providing weak and divisive leadership, Syrian and international opponents to the al-Assad regime created a new political organization. The National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (NCSRO) was established in November 2012, and is led by Moaz al-Khatib, a former Damascene imam and dissident.

A Divided International Community

Cleavages within the international community have prevented any meaningful progression toward a peaceful resolution in Syria. On the one hand, Syria enjoyed continued diplomatic cover from Russia and China, who scuttled several UN resolutions condemning the al-Assad regime. Russia also provided the Syrian military with helicopters, anti-aircraft defence systems. However, by far its most ardent supporters have been Iran and Hezbollah. Both criticized the opposition vociferously and have reportedly sent their own troops into Syria. On the other hand, the Middle East's Sunni states indiscreetly pushed for al-Assad's removal. Saudi Arabia and Qatar played a leading role in financing and arming the rebels. Turkey has also supported the rebel movement, financially, logistically, and militarily. Prime Minister Erdogan's government wanted a more proactive Turkish policy to help the rebels; however domestic politics have constrained his options.

Meanwhile, Western countries have definitively sided with the rebels. Europe displayed more willingness to remove al-Assad, both the UK and France, along with the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, have recognized NCSRO as the sole legitimate representative of Syria.

A Bleak Future

Syria is a microcosm of many of the Middle East's unresolved issues: the geopolitical rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the religious tension between Shiites and Sunnis, the proliferation of jihadist groups, the Kurd's increasing assertiveness for autonomy, among others. 2012 saw a war of attrition that only exacerbated these tensions, and 2013 portends to be no different.

The Spillover

The effects of the Syrian war have spilled over

into surrounding countries. The plight of Syrian refugees has been one of the main consequences of the turmoil in Syria. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the total number of registered refugees and individuals awaiting registration is over 500,000. The bulk of Syrian refugees have sought shelter in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey.

IRAQ

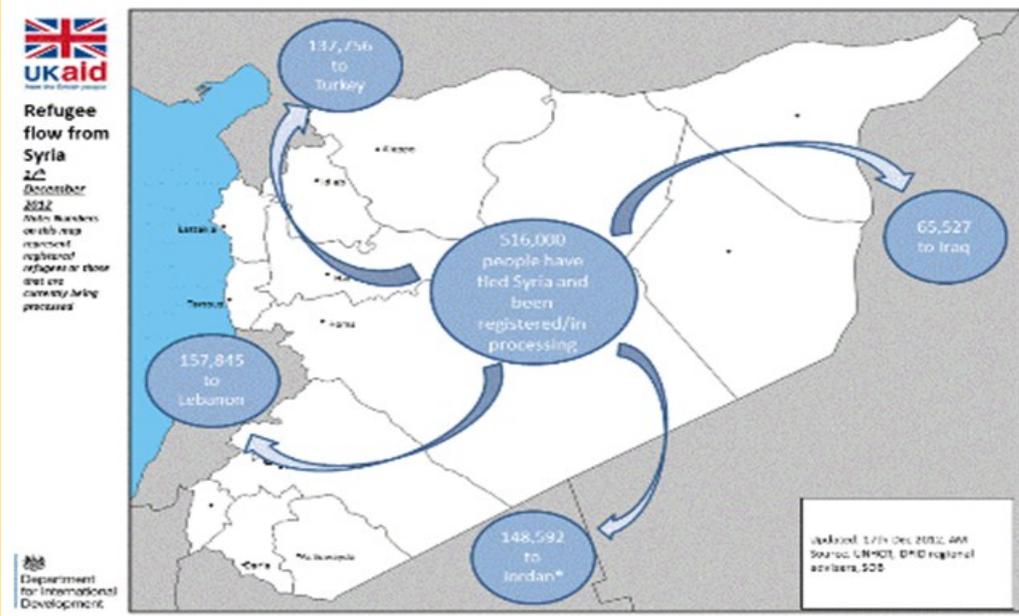
In early 2012, Syrian refugees trickled into Iraq but the pace sharply increased after August when most of the 70,000 refugees arrived. The influx of refugees has posed security concerns for Iraq. A new refugee policy was implemented that does not allow Syrian men of military age to cross over the border as they may be Al Qaeda operatives and fighting on the Syrian side has spilled over killing Iraqis. The US alleged in the latter part of the year that Iran was smuggling arms via Iraqi airspace into Syria. In December, Iraq's Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki denied the allegations, but said that they could not search all Syrian bound planes coming from Iran.

With the US occupation over, Shiite political leader Muqtada al-Sadr decided in January 2012 to dissolve the Mahdi Army. Dhiya al-

Asadi, the leader of the Ahrar Bloc (the party that adheres to al-Sadr), said "The Mahdi Army has now transformed into ideological project aimed at national unity and peace." Shi'ites and Iraqi security forces have been frequently attacked and targeted throughout the year by Sunni militants and Al Qaeda operatives. Al Qaeda's leader in Iraq, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, announced in July that new attacks are coming as Al Qaeda members are returning back to their strongholds. Al-Baghdadi dedicated almost half of his 33-minute speech to events in Syria in which he advised the Syrian rebels not to accept any rule or constitution, but shariah (Islamic law). Two days after his statement, a series of explosions in 18 different cities killed at least 107 people and injured more than 214. It was the deadliest day in Iraq in more than two years. News of al-Baghdadi's arrest circulated in early December, but it is unclear how this will affect Al Qaeda in 2013 or if this will help the Iraqi security forces manage the sectarian violence that is plaguing the country.

JORDAN

Political unrest has been constant in Jordan since the Arab Spring in 2011. However, demonstrations in Jordan typically did not seek



Refugee flow from Syria.

Image Credit: UNHCR, DFID

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/syria>

the regime's removal. Although King Abdullah II had fired his cabinet and made other reforms in 2011, demonstrations continued in 2012 protesting government corruption, rising prices, rampant poverty, and high unemployment. In 2012, the King dissolved parliament twice, but the people continued to demand real government reforms and not just government name changes. By late 2012, some protesters even called for the regime's downfall. It is unclear if this will become the common theme in 2013 and how the government will respond to the new protest demands.

The Syrian conflict has added another dimension to the problems that the Jordanian government was already facing. Almost 140,000 refugees have fled into Jordan. On several occasions Syrian and Jordanian security forces have exchanged gunfire as Syrian refugees crossed the border. Clashes with Islamist fighters trying to enter Syria through Jordan have also been reported. Jordan has also experienced several domestic challenges. In October, Jordanian security forces foiled an Al Qaeda-linked cell that was suspected in planning to carry out attacks in Amman.

LEBANON

By the end of 2011, Lebanon started to feel the spill-over effects from the Syrian civil war as the first wave of refugees started to cross into their borders. Over 150,000 refugees have fled into Lebanon so far. Furthermore, the Syrian conflict exacerbated Lebanon's sectarian tensions. Sunni Lebanese typically supported Syria's predominantly Sunni rebels, while Shiite Lebanese tended to back President al-Assad. Over the year pro-Assad and anti-Assad Lebanese exchanged kidnappings and regularly clashed with each other. Fighting never lasted long as the Lebanese army was repeatedly deployed to curb the escalation of inter-factional clashes. The most serious incident was the October 2012 car bomb that assassinated General Wissam al-Hassan,

the head of Lebanon's Internal Security Force who played a central role in the arrest of former Information Minister, Michel Samaha, for transporting explosives into Lebanon. Al-Hassan, "is believed to have proof of direct links between Samaha and senior Syrian political and intelligence aides."

The Lebanese government, which is dominated by the Shiite Hezbollah, has generally sided with al-Assad. The al-Assad regime enabled Hezbollah's rise through military training and financial assistance, as well as facilitating the flow of Iranian weapons into Lebanon. Hezbollah fighters have fought in the Syrian conflict, including Ali Hussein Nassif, a founding member of Hezbollah who died in Syria in October 2012. Despite the government's official condemnation, arms smuggling from Lebanon into Syria increased due to the high demand and lucrative profits.

Lebanon has become a potential hot zone and each incident could be the catalyst to engulf the region into further conflict. The Lebanese army in 2013 needs to keep the sectarian violence in check or the complex situation in Lebanon at any moment will spiral out of control, especially as the civil war in Syria continues.

South Asia County Assessment: Afghanistan

By Halimullah Kousary

There is a chance we will see the whole edifice crashing down spectacularly, either in 2014 or shortly thereafter.

- Bruce Riedel, cited in, Yaroslav Trofimov, "Our Man In Kabul?" The Wall Street Journal, 24 November 2012,

The above assessment, coming from Bruce Riedel, a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) official, who headed President Obama's administration's task force that recommended the surge of 33,000 US troops in 2009, escalating the fight in 2010 and 2011 could not be very far from the truth about Afghanistan. The surge had its own gains but these could be reversed. The surge helped the International Security Armed Forces (ISAF) wrest control of some key areas from the Taliban militants, reduced the level of violence in those areas and inflicted heavy casualties among the Taliban. The attacks by the Taliban, especially conventional fire-fight with the ISAF or Afghan security forces also declined in 2011 and 2012 from its peak in 2009 and 2010. However, the surge fell short of its main objective; to weaken the Taliban to the point where it

would be forced to consider negotiations with the Afghan government.

Analysts attribute this setback to the fact that most of the US troops were deployed in the wrong province in Afghanistan. According to Little America: the War within the War for Afghanistan, more than 50 % of the initial 17,000 troops ended up in Helmand province instead of Kandahar - a province of higher strategic significance being the spiritual home and breeding ground for the Taliban. Furthermore, the US and its allies failed to dismantle the Taliban's sanctuaries abroad that provide the Taliban with vital resources and training. This led to an increase in tensions between the Afghan government and ISAF forces. The US escalated drone strikes in the past two years, in South and North Waziristan Agencies of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan, but it overlooked the Quetta city. Though effective in killing some of the key leaders of many non-Afghan terrorist and insurgent groups, these strikes were not effective to reduce militant training activities or make a dent on the Haqqani Network or its sanctuaries in the southeast region.



The last batch of 33,000 surge troops left Afghanistan in September 2012 returning the US troop presence to pre-surge level of 68,000 troops.

Photo credit: Associate Press

<http://blogs.voanews.com/photos/2011/07/14/july-14-2011/>

Taliban

As ISAF forces wind down their operations, the Taliban has escalated the scale and scope of attacks which is grim a reminder that their determination and operational capabilities remain undiminished. The Taliban attack on Camp Bastion in Helmand in September 2012 is a good example. As many as 15 Taliban militants, armed with small-arms, rocket-propelled grenades and suicide vests, broke into the Camp and engaged US and British troops in a sustained fight. Six AV-8B Harrier jets of the ISAF were destroyed and two other jets along with six soft-skin aircraft hangars were significantly damaged. Camp Bastion is one of the biggest and tightly protected ISAF camps in Afghanistan accommodating 28,000 personnel mostly British nationals. Through this attack, the Taliban caused a loss of hundreds of millions of dollars and demonstrated their ability to organize and carryout such high profile attacks against the Afghan and ISAF forces. On 26 December 2012, the Taliban also claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on Camp Chapman – a US base used by the CIA.

The Taliban attacks in 2011 and 2012 reveal an increased use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), suicide attacks and importantly “green

on Blue” insider attacks. As of December 2012, the Taliban carried out 92 suicide and 46 “green on blue” attacks. Most of these attacks were in areas where the transitions (handing over security to the Afghan forces) are in place inflicting heavy casualties on the military and the police. According to Afghan security officials around 85 % of ANSF casualties were caused by IEDs during anti-Taliban operations. With these attacks Taliban would attempt to derail the training of the Afghan Nationals Security Forces (ANSF) by the IASF and fight the ANSF forces in the transitioned areas in the coming years.

Insider Attacks

The increase in the number of “green on blue” attacks has become a great concern for the ISAF forces. The first insider attack against ISAF forces was in 2007 and since then there has been increased recurrence of the same in various provinces. The escalation of insider attacks have created distrust among ISAF forces against their local hosts and essentially transformed day-to-day life in many ISAF forward operating bases. As many as 63 ISAF troops - mostly Americans- have been killed and more than 85 wounded in insider attacks in 2012 alone. The number of insider attacks reached a peak in August 2012 with 12 incidents in that



A customer tries on a US Army uniform at the Kabul market known as the “Bush Bazaar”, which is named after the former US president. Selling Afghan and ISAF Army uniform are banned but people can purchase it in many markets in Kabul and other major cities of Afghanistan. Taliban fighters dressed as US soldiers in two major attacks in the past four months, including one on Camp Bastion.

Photo credit: TIME/ Jason Motlagh

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2029137,00.html>

month alone.

The Afghan government blames insider attacks on foreign spy agencies and the Taliban while ISAF believes that majority of the attacks are carried out by the personnel of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP). The Taliban however, claimed responsibility for almost all the attacks stating that they either infiltrated their members into ANSF or recruited from within ANSF to carry out these attacks.

According to ISAF, 34 insider attacks were perpetrated by the Afghan National Army (ANA), 24 by the Afghan National Police (ANP) and four by unknown persons. ISAF argues that such attacks stem from cultural clashes and personal disputes between ISAF troops and their Afghan counterparts. For example, an ANA soldier, who carried out an insider attack in January 2012 killing four French soldiers and wounding 17 others in eastern Kapisa province, said that he acted alone in killing the troops and described his act as revenge against some US soldiers urinating on the corpses of Taliban fighters earlier in January 2012. Such an act is culturally and religiously unacceptable for Afghans and Muslims and received strong criticisms from not only by the Afghan people but also by the Afghan government.

If Taliban involvement in majority of these attacks is ruled out, then there would be a new dimension to the conflict, one that shows growing anti-ISAF sentiments in the ranks of ANSF which the Taliban are exploiting to their advantage. Taliban may not be planning and providing logistical support for many attacks, but they are fueling the motivation as such attacks are helpful to create disorder and lower the morale of the foreign troops. But given the distrust insider attacks can create among the ISAF forces, Taliban would strive to infiltrate ANSF ranks and files and they would try to ruin the ISAF mission of training ANSF in the future. Insider at-

tacks already had its effects on the training.

The Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan serve as fundamental enablers for the insurgency to maintain its momentum and greatest risk to sustainable security in Afghanistan. As the ISAF forces step back from combat role in mid-2013 and shift to training of ANSF, Taliban would try to reverse the gains of ISAF in the past three years through a campaign of IEDs, suicide and high-profile attacks. They would engineer increasing number of insider attacks and assassination of high ranking officials of the Afghan government to derail ISAF training of ANSF and par away what little experienced leadership exists in the government. And this would undermine the Afghan government's ability to defend itself after the ISAF withdrawal.

Key Developments in Afghanistan in 2012

Despite an overall deadlock in the Afghan end-game, three developments in 2012 hold the prospects of peace and stability in the country:

1. International community's readiness to assist Afghanistan financially and militarily (training of ANSF).
2. Pakistan's promised cooperation to facilitate the Afghan peace talks.

International and Regional Initiatives

In May 2012 at a summit meeting held in Chicago mandated a US \$ 4.1 billion fund to sustain the Afghan security forces - in terms of training, equipping, financing and capability development - beyond 2014. At the same time, the May 2012 Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement between Afghanistan and the US committed the latter to assist Afghanistan in its social and economic development even after the military disengagement. The US would also maintain the right to use the Afghan security facilities until 2014, beyond which time its role would be to train the Afghan army and security forces. In practice, therefore, American personnel and forces will

remain in Afghanistan until at least 2024. Some of the other partners in the ISAF like the UK, Canada and Australia will also remain engaged in one way or other, albeit in non-military missions.

In June 2012, the Indian government, in cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), organized an investment summit on Afghanistan in New Delhi to complement the efforts of Afghanistan's partners to promote regional economic cooperation. Meanwhile in July 2012, Japan hosted a donors' conference on Afghanistan in Tokyo in which more than 70 countries pledged \$16 billion for sustainable development of Afghanistan to ensure a smooth transition. In June 2012, Afghanistan became observer member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Other moots held on Afghanistan during the year included the RECCA-V (Dushanbe, March 2012), the Kabul Ministerial Conference under the Istanbul process (14 June 2012) and the Afghanistan- Pakistan-Turkey 7th annual summit in Ankara (December 2012).

Talks with the Taliban

In December 2012, the representatives of the Taliban, Afghan government and other Afghan factions met in Paris to hold talks on Afghanistan's post-transition future. The two-day closed door meeting was first ever contact between the Karzai government and the Taliban. It was arranged by a French think-tank Foundation for Strategic Research. The statements by Taliban envoys Maulvi Shahabuddin Dilawar and Naeem Wardak indicated Taliban's softer vision for the country's future. Taliban showed willingness to operate as a mainstream Afghan political faction if the current constitution was rewritten according to Islamic law. They were ready to govern alongside other Afghan factions after the end of the NATO combat mission in 2014. They were also ready to adopt the current American-financed army as their own. The Tali-

ban envoys also consented to retain many of the government institutions that has been put in place with Western assistance.

At the same time the exploratory peace negotiations which were suspended between the US and Afghan Taliban in Doha, Qatar in March 2012 were revived this year after the visit of Afghan High Peace Council Head Salahuddin Rabbani to Islamabad in November 2012. The preliminary contacts between the US and the Taliban broke down after the US failed to push through a proposed prisoner swap. The breakthrough came with the 16 November visit of Salahuddin Rabbani to Pakistan. He succeeded in persuading Islamabad to release Afghan Taliban commanders detained in Pakistan to facilitate peace talks to end the war. Pakistan released the first batch of about 13 mid-ranking Taliban commanders in November 2012. In a follow up, Pakistan released second batch of nine Taliban prisoners in December 2012. Pakistan promised to release more Taliban commanders including, Mullah Baradar, the former deputy chief of Taliban supreme leader Mullah Omar, subject to improvement in peace talks.

In the ultimate analysis, the burden of post-transition security and stability of the country is with Afghanistan. Stability and peace in the country depend on issues like good governance, socioeconomic development and national unity. It will be unfortunate if Afghanistan fails to exploit the goodwill of the international community and its huge economic assets and the prospects of all the warring factions together through peace negotiations. While working hard on improving governance, socio-economic development and national unity, Afghanistan should take advantage of the goodwill of the international community in the coming years.

South Asia County Assessment: Bangladesh

By Iftekharul Bashar

In 2012 Bangladesh continued to face complex challenges. Maintaining the law and order situation remained a key challenge. The confrontational domestic politics has reached a new height and increased insecurity in public life. The south-eastern region has witnessed a major communal violence. The developments that took place in 2012 reflect the weak capacity of the law enforcement agencies in managing the internal security. Bangladesh continued to cooperate with its regional and global partners in counterterrorism. An extradition treaty with India is underway. Bangladesh has also taken major steps to strengthen its legal framework and to meet international standards for countering terrorism financing. In February 2012, the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act, 2012, was passed in Parliament.

Confrontational Politics

A major challenge is emanating primarily from the unrest in domestic politics. The ruling party and

the opposition have different choices in the question of under which mechanism the next parliamentary election will take place.

The opposition led by Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is demanding restoration of the Caretaker Government system which was annulled in 2011 by the Awami League (AL) government. The move is being described by the opposition parties as a plot to rig the election. The BNP has threatened to boycott the elections if the Caretaker Government is not restored.

Confrontation between the political parties have escalated further leading to frequent street violence, countrywide shutdowns known as the *hartals*, vandalism and arson which has affected public life and businesses.

Later this year the country has witnessed violent protests by Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (BJI) and its student wing Islami Chatra Shibir (ICS). Some of its key BJI leaders have been arrested



Smoke rises from the remains of a Buddhist temple that was torched in Ramu in the coastal district of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, 30 September 2012.

Photo credit: Associate Press

<http://news.yahoo.com/photos/smoke-rises-remains-buddhist-temple-torched-ramu-coastal-photo-020258102.html>

under war crime charges. In 2010 Bangladesh established a tribunal to try those accused of war crimes committed in 1971.

Communal Violence

A major incident of this year was the communal violence in the country's southeastern region. On 30 September 2012, at least 12 religious shrines and 100 homes belonging to the country's minority Buddhist and Hindu communities were attacked by unidentified miscreants at Cox's Bazar and Teknaf in south-eastern Bangladesh. The violence was apparently triggered by a Facebook posting of a photo defaming the holy Quran.

The role of the local administration and police came under severe criticism. After the incident, Bangladesh government has withdrawn the Superintendent of Police in charge of Cox's Bazar district. The incident is a reflection of the capacity of the police to deal with rioting as especially outside the capital.

Though at least 300 arrests have taken place after the incident, the inquiry has not been able to come up with any satisfactory answer. On 13 December 2012 the High Court directed for a judicial enquiry into the attacks. As per the HC directive a three-member committee comprising two sitting or retired district judges and an official of home ministry will conduct an enquiry into the attack. The civil society organizations have urged the government to carry out a fully transparent investigation by forming a judicial enquiry commission.

Bangladesh has formed committees at the local level that will act as watchdogs authorized to take steps to prevent repeat of such violence and ensure peace and communal harmony in their respective localities. The committees, comprising members of all communities, will be formed at different tiers in the district.

Rohingya Issue



Image credit: The Economist

As Bangladesh shares a porous border with Western Myanmar, the communal violence that took place in the Rakhine state in June 2012 (and later in October 2012) has affected Bangladesh. The Rohingyas are trying to cross the border and intrude into Bangladeshi territory for shelter and a better life.

Since June to August 2012, at least 2,260 intrusions have been recorded by authorities in Bangladesh. Most of them have been sent back as the government has taken a stance against allowing Rohingya refugees inside its territory.

Though Bangladesh has never signed any kind of international treaty or convention for allowing and giving shelter to refugees, it has been sheltering Rohingya refugees since 1978 on humanitarian consideration. Currently 30,225 registered Rohingya refugees are living in Bangladesh in two different camps. However, the illegal immigrants outnumber the same in huge margins. According to an estimate, currently 418,000 Rohingyas are living in Bangladesh.

The communal violence in Myanmar is one of the major reasons driving illegal migration into Bangladesh. Facilities provided by the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are seen by the government and many locals as a factor incentivizing Rohingya immigration as well. Moreover, many young Rohingyas view Bangladesh as a gate-way to a better life in Western countries. But statistics show so far only 851 Rohingyas have been resettled in a third country.

On its own, Bangladesh is also facing tremendous challenges in terms of handling the influx of illegal Rohingya migrants. Already an overpopulated country, Bangladesh, cannot absorb the stream of immigration.

Failing to get legal employment, Rohingyas are increasingly getting involved in trafficking of narcotics and other criminal activities. As the Rohingyas are familiar with the border terrain, it is easier for them to procure supplies from Myanmar and sell it in large cities, such as Dhaka and Chittagong. The Bangladeshi government links the increasing flow of narcotics to increasing

influx of Rohingyas. The Rohingya women are especially being used as carriers.

The Rohingya crisis also has a deeper impact going beyond Bangladesh and Myanmar. Several jihadist groups operating in South Asia, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia (such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban, and the Jemaah Islamiah (JI)) seemed to be active in using the Rohingya issue to incite the community for jihad in the region. The 22 July 2012 letter of the jailed Indonesian Islamist cleric and leader of JI, Abu Bakar Bashir, is a case in point. Addressing the President of Myanmar, Thein Sein, Bashir threatened to wage jihad against Myanmar, if the government continues to harm Muslim Rohingyas.

Islamist Militancy

A number of militants have been arrested this year. The threat of militancy is gradually evolving. Several thwarted attempt shows that militant groups have been trying to organize themselves underground under different names.



Rohingya children outside an undocumented settlement.

Despite law enforcement response the radicalization of the urban youth continues. The recent influx of the Rohingya refugees from the neighboring Myanmar might encourage new recruitment by Bangladeshi militant groups.

Radicalization of the Youth

The activity of the banned Islamist outfit Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh (HTB) remains unabated in 2012. It remained active in spite of a large number of arrests that have taken place this year. The HTB is focusing on urban centers including Dhaka and Chittagong. The threat emanating from this global outfit has become a major concern for Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies. The outfit has managed to radicalize a small but significant segment of the urban youth, especially from the affluent class of the society. The propaganda capacity of HTB is higher than any of the other such groups in Bangladesh.

In November 2012, a 21-year-old Bangladeshi national was indicted by a US District Court in New York on charges of using a weapon of mass destruction and trying to provide material support to Al Qaeda. Quazi Mohammad Rezwanaul Ahsan Nafis was accused of trying to detonate what he thought was a 1,000-pound bomb by using his cell phone as a trigger. The bomb was inert. Nafis was arrested by the US federal authorities in a sting operation in October 2012. Nafis' arrest made headline news in Bangladesh with the concern that it would hurt the country's image of religious moderation. It is not clear whether Nafis had any links to Al Qaeda and according to the US authorities Nafis claimed that the plot was his own and was his sole motivation for the US trip. Nafis was a student of North South University in Dhaka before enrolling himself at the Southeast Missouri State University to study cyber security.

Countering Terrorism Financing

Bangladesh has taken major steps to strengthen its legal framework and to meet international standards for countering terrorism financing. In February 2012, the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act, 2012, was passed in Parliament. The Act is broader in scope and enables the Financial Intelligence Unit of Bangladesh to share information relating to the financing of terrorism. The government is going to introduce the 'Know Your Client (KYC)' criteria for the stock market investors. The KYC criteria are already in place for the banks. In July 2012, in a US panel probe report on HSBC, names of local banks came up. The US report mentioned Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd and Social Islami Bank Ltd as the two Bangladeshi banks with suspected links to terrorist financing serviced by HSBC. The Bangladeshi banks however has denied the allegations.

Though there has been an overall decline in the law and order situation, the operational threats of militancy remains under control. Bangladesh needs to revisit its approach in countering radicalization. The country needs to explore alternative ways of countering radicalization with more emphasis on creating new opportunities for the youth as well as engaging them in building social resilience against terrorism and extremism in all forms and manifestations. A major task for the year ahead will be to build the country's domestic capacity in strategic counter terrorism. Preventing radicalization as well as deradicalization of the extremist elements has been pursued on a priority basis. 2013 will be a crucial year for Bangladesh. It remains to be seen how Bangladesh sustains its achievements in counter-terrorism in a new and complex matrix created by the changing threat landscape in the country and beyond.

South Asia Country Assessment: India

By Uday Ravi

With two major attacks on urban centers in New Delhi and Pune, a lethal and strengthening Maoist insurgency, widespread terrorist incidents in the Kashmir valley and Northeast, security remained the critical national concern for India in 2012. There were approximately 750 casualties of terrorist/insurgent violence in 2012 – 246 civilians, 137 security force personnel, and 375 militants. While the reported number of casualties for 2012 shows a decrease compared to the previous years, it has nevertheless highlighted the fact that India continues to suffer from terrorist and insurgent violence which could challenge the stability of the country if not dealt with firmly.

Terrorism in Urban Centers



A car explosion near the Israeli Embassy in New Delhi. Photo credit: AFP/Getty Images

On 13 February 2012, a magnetic bomb attached to the Toyota Innova car belonging to the Israeli embassy in New Delhi exploded close to its embassy premises. The attack critically injured an Israeli embassy official who was sitting at the backseat of the car and the driver who were shifted to hospitals immediately. Two other civilians who were driving within the radius of the blast were also injured. The blast was carried out by a magnetic bomb by two men who rode a motorcycle. The attack was suspected to be a coordinated terror attack after a car bomb involving an Is-

raeli embassy vehicle in Georgian capital of Tbilisi was defused on the same day. The powerful bomb exploded and engulfed the car into flames at 3:16pm when it stopped at the traffic light intersection of Aurangzeb road and Safdarjung road. The site of the explosion, which is a high security area of New Delhi, is barely 500 meters from the official residence of the Prime Minister.

The bomb had been stuck to the rear of the car with a magnet and was actuated by remote control, as it exploded within seconds of the biker's taking off. In addition, after the police cordoned off the area and began searching for clues, they found a powdery substance which they initially suspected to be RDX but later said might be nitroglycerin. Preliminary investigation revealed that low-grade explosive material was used. Chemicals, including sulphur and potassium chlorate with sulphuric acid were used to detonate the blast. However, no wires or detonators from the bomb remained after it exploded. This technology is a crude way of assembling explosive material where an acid is used as a triggering mechanism to detonate a blast. No group has asserted responsibility for the attack and the police arrested an Indian journalist, Mohammed Kazmi, working for Iran's Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) based on inputs by intelligence agencies. Kazmi is believed to have planned the attack and lent support to two Iranian men who carried out the attack. In the aftermath of the attack, security was put on high alert in the capital and western embassies and missions took additional security precautions in the movement of their staff. Indian intelligence sources suspect an Iranian connection to this attack as it could be viewed as retaliation against the covert attempts to thwart Iran's nuclear programme which the western countries as well as Sunni Muslim countries fear that the nuclear programme will equip Iran with nuclear weapons.

Arrest of Abu Jundal and Fasih Mahmood

On 21 June 2012, the Special Cell of Delhi Police arrested Abu Jundal alias Abu Hamza at the Indira Gandhi International Airport after he was deported from Saudi Arabia. An Indian national, Abu Jundal is the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) operative who was present in the control room in Karachi instructing the ten terrorists to carry out the 26-28 November 2008 attacks on Mumbai at different landmarks. He was also instrumental in providing arms training to the ten terrorists and gave them lessons in speaking Hindi. Jundal was produced in the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate hours after he landed in New Delhi and the police obtained custodial remand of him for interrogation. He is being interrogated by the National Investigative Agency (NIA) for offences under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, the Explosives Act and the Passports Act. In addition, he has been charged for cheating and forgery under the Indian Penal code. Furthermore, he has been accused of treason and sedition followed by offences of culpable homicide and criminal conspiracy under Section 120 of the Indian Penal Code. Jundal is a prime accused in the 26/11 Mumbai attacks; Aurangabad arms haul case of 2006; German Bakery blast, Pune in 2010; Ahmedabad serial blasts of 2008 and foiled Surat blasts; the attack on the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) campus in Bangalore in 2005; and the Bangalore blast at Chinnaswamy Stadium in 2010. Abu Jundal is presently in custody of the Gujarat Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) and is being interrogated for his role in the blast that took place on Mumbai-Ahmedabad Karnavati Express at Kalupur railway station on 19 February 2006, leaving 14 people injured.

On 23 October 2012, Fasih Mahmood, a militant belonging to Indian Mujahideen (IM) was arrested at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport after he was deported from Saudi Arabia. He was immediately remanded to ten days police custody by a New Delhi court. Fasih is want-

ed by the Karnataka and New Delhi police for his involvement in the Chinnaswamy Stadium blast in Bangalore in April 2010 and the Jama Masjid blasts in New Delhi in September 2010, a few days before the commencement of the Commonwealth Games. He hails from Bihar and is believed to be one of the founding members of IM and was picked up by Saudi authorities in May 2012 and lodged in a Saudi jail for suspected terror links. The investigative agencies in India are interrogating Fasih.

Trial of Ajmal Kasab

On 21 November 2012, the lone surviving militant of the November 2008 Mumbai attacks, Ajmal Kasab, was hanged in the high security Yerawada jail in Pune after a four-year-long trial and he was buried inside the Yerawada jail. Kasab's hanging came just five days before the fourth anniversary of the brutal terror attacks that killed 166 lives and injured 300. The execution was a tribute to the victims and security personnel who lost their lives in attack that lasted three days.



The Supreme Court upheld the death sentence of Mr. Kasab. Photo credit: Reuters/CNN IBN/Handout/Files

Kasab was awarded the death sentence by the trial court in Maharashtra on 6 May 2010. It was upheld by the Bombay High Court on 21 February 2011, and confirmed by the Supreme Court on 29 August 2012. Earlier in October 2012, Kasab's mercy plea was rejected by the Union Home Ministry and the file sent to the President

of India for a final decision. Kasab had put a plea to commute his death sentence to life and with the rejection by the authorities; it brought to an end his legal options in fighting the case further.

Coordinated Bombings in Pune, Maharashtra

On 1 August 2012, a series of four coordinated low intensity bombings took place in Pune, Maharashtra. The bombs went off at J.M. Road – a busy commercial road which has theatres, eateries, and banks. The Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) were detonated from bicycles and dustbins. The explosions occurred near Balgandharva theatre, Dena Bank branch, a McDonald's food outlet and Garware Bridge. Pune police took into their custody an injured person who is suspected to have carried the bombs. He is believed to have carried one of the bombs in a cake box along with some sticky material, two detonators and a pencil cell. Police authorities confirmed that ammonium nitrate was used in making these bombs. The first explosion went off at Balgandharva Theatre where the suspected bomber was injured. The explosion outside McDonald's outlet went off in a dustbin while the blasts near Garware Bridge and Dena bank occurred from a bicycle which had a bucket with explosives strapped on it. Police cordoned off the entire J. M. Road area and forensic samples and evidences were collected from various sites. While arrests have been made, the police have confirmed that Indian Mujahideen was behind the coordinated blasts and the identities of the perpetrators are being confirmed.

Insurgency and Political Unrest in the Kashmir Valley

The insurgency in the Kashmir Valley has been on the decline – a trend since 2005. In 2012, there were approximately 101 casualties related to terrorism and insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir that included 16 civilians and 15 securi-

ty personnel. A total of 70 militants were killed in counter-insurgency operations in the region. Despite the decrease in insurgent violence, political unrest and turmoil still persist in the Kashmir valley. Incidents of opposition Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) walking out of the Assembly house and disrupting its functioning were rampant in 2012. Political dissatisfaction seems to loom large in the assembly house citing corruption scandals, poor governance and a lack of effective economic plan for the youth of the state, which is one of the major causes of resentment especially among the youth who have shunned militancy

As with the previous year, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has intensified the demand for the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) with the Union Home Ministry citing the decrease in militancy related cases and thereby asserting more control with the Jammu & Kashmir police. The AFSPA grants immunity to security forces in Jammu and Kashmir. The Army contends that the situation is relatively under control as a result of their widespread presence in the Kashmir valley. The lingering fear is that the Army's withdrawal might lead to a surge in militancy and terrorist groups might attempt to take advantage of the situation. However, no final decision has been taken by the Union Home Ministry and the debate is still ongoing with the authorities. In contrast, the Union Home Ministry announced on 30 October 2012 that six battalions of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), accounting nearly 6,000 soldiers, will be withdrawn from Jammu & Kashmir and deployed in anti-Maoist operations in several Maoist affected areas across the country.

In the first half of 2012, various ranks of police officers were targeted and killed by terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. The killings took place either by bomb blasts or shootings. The attack on Srinagar's Civil Secretariat in July 2012 which houses the office of the Chief Minister, cabinet colleagues and senior bureaucrats of

the state was considered a serious incident. Unidentified militants fired a rifle grenade which landed inside the Secretariat premises near the main gate. However, it was defused by bomb squads immediately.

The most significant threat by terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir was unearthed in July 2012 when Border Security Force (BSF), police and civilians detected a 400 meters long tunnel along the Line of Control (LoC), which is at present the International Border (IB) with Pakistan near the village of Chechwal in Rajpora area of Samba district of Jammu & Kashmir. According to details available, the tunnel was 20 feet below the earth with three feet to four feet diameter and was fitted with pipes probably for oxygen or fresh air. This was for the first time in history that a tunnel dug from Pakistan side towards India has been detected. The authorities examined whether the tunnel had already been used by the infiltrators or trans-border smugglers or was just being completed. After investigations, the authorities confirmed that the tunnel opens on the other side of the border at Lambriyal post of the Pakistan Army in Shakargarh area of Pakistan, about 150 to 200 meters across the LoC. This reflects the growing threat of infiltration emanating from the bordering districts and reinforces the Army's stand to maintain their widespread presence in spite of repeated calls for revocation of AFSPA.

Another highlight this year was the mass resignations of Sarpanches (village chiefs) in North Kashmir's Baramulla district due to threats on their lives by terror groups such as Hizbul Mujahideen (HM). The resignations were triggered when unidentified militants killed a 37 year-old village chief at his doorstep in Nowpora village of Baramulla and created fear psychosis among other heads of villages. The village chiefs were coerced to make their resignations public in local newspapers and dailies through paid advertisements. Although the state government and central government have assured the village

heads of adequate security and protection, it has not stopped the growing number of resignations.

There are significant differences between the government at the center and the state government in Srinagar about the steps to be taken to contain militancy in Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, it is imperative for the central and the state government to work together for a long term and sustained solution irrespective of political differences to cover all issues linked to insurgency and security.

The Maoist Insurgency

According to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the Maoist insurgency is the single biggest domestic security threat faced by India in the recent decade. The Maoists launched attacks against security forces, public and private infrastructure, as well as civilians. Commonly used tactics include shootings, abductions, vandalism, and detonating Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). At present, the Maoist insurgency continues to plague 141 districts across 16 states of the country.

In line with the previous years, 2012 witnessed an operational contraction in the Maoist movement on account of some of their leaders being captured, drop in the number of incidents leading to fewer fatalities on civilians, security force personnel, and Maoists as well. Compared to the year 2011, the fatalities in 2012 seem to have reduced by half. There were approximately 144 civilian deaths this year along with 106 security personnel. A total of 106 Maoist cadres were killed in counter-insurgency operations launched by security forces and police. However, the maximum number of incidents came from Maoist strongholds Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Odisha.

A trend in respect of Maoist violence in 2012 has been the increasing incidents of targeting and killing police officials (uniformed as well as non-uniformed officials) of all ranks. In addition, civilians who are suspected of being police informers are also not spared and are either killed or abducted. By doing so, the Maoists are instilling fear among the civilians in villages and are warning the villagers not to cooperate with the police. Moreover, rising threats to district police chiefs in Maoist affected areas were routine this year.

Security forces also carried out a number of successful counter-terrorist operations against Maoists in various states by capturing key area commanders, zonal commanders, and cadres belonging to the procurement, supply and distribution of arms and ammunition for the group. In addition, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the nodal agency responsible for tackling the Maoist insurgency have deployed an additional 4,000 constables along with 212 officers in the rank of Assistant Commandants for launching counter-terrorist operations in Maoist infested areas. The increase in deployment is intended to launch a major offensive and step up their operations against the Maoists in the next six months. Moreover, the central government is also considering the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technology to locate and eliminate the Maoists.

With various factions and sub-groups of the Maoists operating independently, it has led to a split in their ideology and their conducting of operations. This suggests that the internal cohesion of the overall group is weakening. Also, with decreasing cadre strength and local support to the movement waning, the seeds of disintegration have emerged – a time that is ripe for the security forces to launch a major offensive to significantly reduce the insurgency.

Insurgency in Northeast India

The insurgency in Northeast India is on a decline and this trend continued in 2012. There were approximately 300 casualties of insurgent violence in the Northeast region - 86 civilians, 18 security force personnel, and 196 insurgents were killed. The significant increase in the number of insurgents killed in counter-terrorist operations in 2012 compared to 2011 (119 insurgents killed) reflects the success of security forces in the region. Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya remained at the center of the violence, while there were stray incidents by rebel outfits in Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland, and Mizoram.

In a significant development, in August 2012, there was a mass exodus of Assamese workers in several Indian cities such as Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune and Mumbai. The incident came in the wake of clashes in Assam between members of the indigenous Bodo tribe and Muslims that has killed over 50 people and left close to 400,000 people in displacement camps. Under the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), the Bodos are demanding a separate state for their tribe and have indulged in intermittent violence often targeting workers from outside the state. The mass exodus was triggered by text messages threatening attacks on Assamese workers by Muslims in retaliation to the Bodo clashes in Assam. After strong assurances given by the police and government authorities, both from the center and state government, as well as political parties, a number of Assamese workers have now returned to their respective workplaces.

The official peace talks commenced in September 2011 between the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) continued into 2012. However, the anti-talks faction of ULFA headed by the military commander, Paresh Baruah, continues to pose a serious threat to stability and peace in North-

east India. Armed with massive weapons, they have continued to disrupt infrastructure that includes railway tracks, police stations, and government offices. The whereabouts of Baruah are still contested and he was suspected to be in China as security and intelligence officials managed to trace a few phone calls from a location in China. Baruah continues to reject peace talks without sovereignty on the agenda.

Meanwhile, the pro-talks faction of ULFA headed by Arabinda Rajkhowa have made demands to the Union Home Ministry to bring back Anup Chetia, ULFA's general secretary who is lodged in a Dhaka jail. Bangladesh has agreed to hand over Anup Chetia to India by the end of 2012 after the legal process is completed in their country. Although Chetia has completed his prison term, he is still held in jail in accordance with a Bangladeshi High Court directive in August 2003 to keep him in safe custody pending the government's decision to grant him political asylum in Bangladesh. India and Bangladesh do not have a formal extradition treaty but are bound by a pact for exchanging imprisoned nationals in each other's jails. While the peace talks have been going on in a cordial way, no breakthrough has been achieved so far and the charter of demands placed by the pro-talks faction is under consideration.

Another Northeast insurgent group, the Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) has been in the limelight this year for causing widespread violence in Meghalaya. Although security forces have been able to capture a few commanders, their unpredictable nature of striking at civilians and threatening extortion bids have been a cause of concern for the security forces.

While Bangladesh has relentlessly cracked down on Northeast insurgents, Myanmar and China are emerging as the new bases for the insurgent groups and it is imperative for New Delhi to seek more cooperation from these two countries to contain the situation.

The Road Ahead

India currently faces a multi-faceted threat from terrorism and insurgency. Although statistics show that the violence is decreasing, the threat perception is still high. The counter-terrorist efforts undertaken by New Delhi are still inadequate and timely implementation of institutions to address the problems are lacking. A case in point is the political discordance in implementing the National Counter-terrorism Centre (NCTC) – a nodal agency which will be responsible for tackling all terrorism related cases in the country. Prevention of terrorist acts requires reliable and timely information and this can only be achieved when a dedicated agency is created. Several state governments, particularly those ruled by non-Congress party, argue that with the special powers vested in the NCTC, it can assume command over any crisis or situation and act unilaterally which would undermine the authority of the state governments. As a result, the creation of the NCTC has been put on hold.

In addition, lack of resources (financial, manpower, and technical) as well as lack of adequate organizations conducting research on terrorism and insurgency further strengthens the gaps in India's security apparatus.

Therefore, New Delhi needs to comprehensively examine the underlying causes of extremism and develop socio-economic policies to address the root causes. Effective infrastructure development in the Maoist affected areas, Kashmir valley as well as the Northeast region and creating employment opportunities for the youth would reduce the likelihood of them indulging in insurgent activities. No matter how challenging the political circumstances are, the government must engage all stakeholders and bring them to the negotiating table to find a lasting solution to terrorist/insurgent activities.

South Asia Country Assessment: Pakistan

By Abdul Basit

Pakistan continues to grapple with a multitude of challenges on the political, economic, and security fronts. An acute energy crisis, deteriorating law and order and the reduction of foreign direct investment (FDI) has slowed Pakistan's growth leaving it among the slowest growing economy of South Asia. As 2012 drew to a close, Pakistan's struggle against the Islamist terrorists in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Baloch rebel groups in south-west Balochistan province continues. At the same time, ethno-political violence and sectarian unrest continues to undermine peace in Karachi - Pakistan's economic hub and Sindh's provincial capital.

According to open source data, there were as many as 1,322 incidents of terrorist attacks in Pakistan in 2012 compared to 1,966 incidents reported in 2011. However, despite the decrease in number of violent incidents, civilian casualties in terrorist incidents increased slightly from 2,738 in 2011 to 2,804 in 2012. Most of these incidents were concentrated in conflict-hit areas of Khyber Pakhtunkwa province (378), FATA (332), Balochistan (311) and Karachi (80).

Foreign Relations

Pakistan restored its good relations with the US. It has also made a steady progress with Kabul in kick-starting the stalled Afghan peace process. The head of the Afghan High Peace Council, Salahuddin Rabbani visited Islamabad in November 2012 following which on 16 November 2012, Pakistan released nine mid-level Afghan Taliban prisoners to facilitate peace talks. Islamabad also promised to release more Afghan Taliban prisoners detained in Pakistan, including Mullah Bradar the deputy of Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Umar. Pakistan's efforts to facilitate the peace process have been appreciated both in Kabul and Washington and a good start at rebuilding relations.

Despite slow progress on the Mumbai attack trials, Pakistan continued normalization of its relations with India based on trade liberalization and soft-visa regime. No major breakthroughs were achieved other than signing of soft-visa regime pact. However, both countries agreed to continue negotiations based on incremental and step-by-step approach on all issues.



Afghanistan High Peace Council head Salahuddin Rabbani (L) meeting Pakistan's Interior Minister Rehman Malik (right) in Islamabad on a three day visit 12-14 November 2012 to Pakistan

Photo credit: Associate Press

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/afghan-team-extends-visit-by-a-day/article4095576.ece>

Tactical Level

In 2012, Pakistan further consolidated the gains it made against the Taliban insurgent groups in FATA and KP's Malakand Division. Following its counter-insurgency doctrine of 'clear, hold, build and transfer,' the Pakistani security forces focused on the 'hold' phase. However, the areas affected by militancy in KP's Malakand Division or the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have yet to be transferred to civil administration. Additionally, resettlement of internally displaced person (IDPs) has been slow.

The Pakistani security forces did not pursue a new military front against the terrorist in North Waziristan Agency in 2012, due to the lack of resources and geographical constraints. The army operations focused on the following:

- a) Preventing the threat of home grown terrorism from spilling over into the country's main cities
- b) To block Taliban's re-entry into areas cleared of their presence
- c) To deny space for Islamist insurgent groups

to remerge elsewhere in the country

The continued pressure applied on the banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a conglomerate of anti-Pakistan Islamist groups, forced several of its leaders to relocate to border villages in Afghanistan. Currently, TTP's Swat chief Mullah Fazlullah and the Bajaur Agency chief Maulvi Abu Bakar operate out of Afghanistan's Kunar province. The October 2012 attack on Malala Yousafzai, a girl's education activist from Swat, was planned and executed from TTP's hideouts in Afghanistan's Kunar province. Throughout the year, the Pakistani security forces thwarted several attempts by the Afghanistan based TTP groups to enter FATA and KP's Upper Dir district.

However, the attempt to contain the terrorist threat from spilling over into main cities was only partially successful. In 2012, the TTP carried out several terrorist attacks in Pakistan's major cities with ease and accuracy. For instance, on 15 April 2012, more than 200 TTP militants attacked the Central Jail in Bannu, a southern district of KP, and freed around 384 prisoners, in-



Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants stormed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu Central jail on 15 April 2012 and freed around 400 militant detainees, including high profile militant commanders.

Photo credit: Reuters <http://tribune.com.pk/story/365865/brazen-attack-bannu-jailbreak-reports-suggest-inside-job/>

cluding several high profile Taliban commanders. Similarly on 16 August and 15 December 2012, TTP launched two coordinated attacks on Pakistan Air Force's (PAF) Minhas base in Punjab's Attock district and the Bacha Khan International Airport in Peshawar, the capital of KP. Also, in November 2012, the TTP suicide bombers targeted various Shia mourning processions during the Ashura, spiritual ceremonies commemorating martyrdom of Prophet Muhammad's grandson Hussain in 6th century. These attacks were in country's major cities like Rawalpindi, Karachi and Dera Ismail Khan. Such attacks not only renewed questions about the security of country's key strategic installations but also cast doubt on military's claims about the declining capabilities and weakening clout of the terror networks in FATA.

Similarly, the strategies to deny the TTP space to emerge in other areas was also only partially successful. In October 2009, Pakistan military carried out operation codenamed Rah-e-Nijat (Path to Salvation) and evicted the TTP from South Waziristan Agency (SWA). However, the TTP re-emerged in Karachi with a stronger local presence. The TTP militants have taken refuge in city's slums such as Quaid Abad, Sohrab Goth, Kaimaree, Orangi town and in the hills of Manghopir.

In Karachi militants of TTP's Swat chapter killed dozens of local elders and political figures who assisted the government in the operation against the group. These tribal elders were earlier relocated to Karachi to evade revenge attacks by the group. Two TTP commanders of Swat chapter Ibn-e-Aqeel alias Khog, and Sher Muhammad alias Yasin, were involved in the killings. There were also reports of rising number of incidents of TTP militants threatening music and CD shops owners in different parts of Karachi. Karachi police have arrested many TTP affiliated militants such as TTP's Karachi chief Bhadar from Sohrab Goth area of the city.

New Trends and Challenges

The biggest challenge to Pakistan's internal security has been its "failure to develop institutional response to growing threat of terrorism and extremism." In 2012, some progress was made on this front. The federal cabinet approved three key bills: the Anti-Terrorism Amendment bill 2012, the Fair Trial Act 2012 and National Counter Terrorism Authority Bill 2012.

The 'NACTA bill' has been tabled to reactivate the country's premier counter-terrorism authority which has been inactive since its creation in 2009. In the last three years, NACTA had six coordinators. Most of them either resigned or were fired by the government because of their differences with the federal interior minister, Rehmand Malik. The political appointments rather than merit based recruitment have raised serious concerns about the professionalism and effectiveness of the authority. There is a long list of NACTA's failed projects. After the cabinet's approval the NACTA bill will be taken to parliament for enactment. The real objective of creating NACTA was to have an autonomous body which could coordinate efforts of different agencies involved in counter-terrorism and develop a coherent strategy. However, the new bill proposes to place NACTA under interior ministry taking it away from the prime minister as stipulated in the original charter. This would downgrade NACTA to that of any other government organisation and might erode its autonomy.

The resurgence of sectarian militancy in 2012 has become the second biggest internal security challenge for Pakistan. The current wave sectarian violence is different in terms of ideology and geographical spread. Not only the number of sectarian attacks has increased, but there is also trend towards intra-sectarian violence involving various sub-sects among the Sunnis. In 2010 and 2011, there were 57 and 30 cases of sectarian violence respectively, whereas in 2012 as many as 161 sectarian attacks were recorded. The state's policy of banning sectarian or-

ganizations, arresting the top leadership and prohibiting publication of hate material spreading sectarianism has not been effective. The sectarian organizations have reappeared with new names and continue to pursue their agendas with impunity.

In interior parts of Sindh province a little known separatist outfit, the Sindh Desh Liberation Army (SDLA) or the Sindh Liberation Army, has emerged as a new challenge for Pakistan. In February 2011, the SDLA bombed several railway tracks in Sindh's Hyderabad, Sukkur and Nawabshah districts. However, the group became dormant after that. Since May 2012, the group has re-emerged. It has been involved in politically motivated assassinations and attacks on branches of the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) in different districts of Sindh.

The latest wave of SDLA attacks came in October 2012 after the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and its coalition partner in center and Sindh province the Mutahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) implemented the controversial Sindh Peoples Local Government Ordinance (SPLGO) without consulting other stakeholder of the province. Right after the announcement of the SPLGO, the residences of two Sindh provincial ministers and the Speaker of the Sindh Assembly in Garhi Yasin and Larkana were attacked on 9 October 2012. This compounds the challenge for the security forces.

In 2012, the TTP was also seen active on social media, particularly on Facebook, using it for recruitment. Through its official media arm, Umar Media, the TTP took to Facebook to hunt contributors for their media work and the group's quarterly magazine Ayah-E-Khilafat (Sign of the Caliphate).

The TTP is politically savvy and adaptive. It has been working on changing its image so that it may not be seen as only as a resistance group to American invasion of Afghanistan and opposi-

tion group to Pakistan army's counter-terrorism alliance with the US. It is carefully cultivating its long term interests inside Pakistan. For example, in various statements it criticized the country's secular political forces and religious-political parties for paying lip-service to the cause of Islamization in Pakistan. The TTP is seen to be asserting itself as an alternative stakeholder for creation of an Islamic state in Pakistan through jihad. In December 2012, TTP offered a conditional ceasefire with the Pakistani government. One of the conditions was to allow TTP to open a front in Indian administered Kashmir and in parts of India. With this anti-India stance the group hopes to emulate mainland groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad focused on India broadly and Kashmir specifically. TTP's reaction to the hanging of Azmal Kasab who was one of the perpetrators of November 2008 Mumbai attacks could also be seen as group's strategy to diversify its agenda. The shift in TTP's policy signals that the 2014 endgame in Afghanistan will not let TTP out of business.

In February 2012, the US Congress Committee on Foreign Affairs held a hearing on Balochistan. Members of the US Congress, both Democrats and Republicans supported the Baloch right to self-determination. In September 2012, the United Nations also sent a Working Group to probe the cases of missing persons. Along with the international attention, the Pakistani Supreme Court's (SC) suo moto notice on enforced disappearances demanding production of all the missing persons has given a new dimension to the Baloch conflict.

Meanwhile, the insurgency has evolved from a crude-rural guerrilla-fight controlled by few sardars (tribal chiefs) to an urbanized middle class phenomenon. Led by a student-turned-guerrilla fighter Dr. Allah Nazar Baloch, bulk of resistance came from urban and semi-urban centres like Mekran, Gawadar, Kech and Panjgur districts.

South Asia Country Assessment: Sri Lanka

By Nadisha Sirisena

The Sri Lankan government has made strides with its reconciliation efforts, especially with the rehabilitation of former Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) cadres and the resettlement of all the displaced persons from the final phase of the war between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE which ended in 2009. However, 2012 saw mounting international pressure to implement the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) into the alleged war crimes committed during the final phase of the war, culminating in the adoption by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on Sri Lanka. There has also been a noted increase in activities of LTTE sympathizers and members abroad and this is seen to be a threat to Sri Lanka in the near future.

Concerns of the International Community

This year the international community's concerns about allegations of war crimes committed during the final phase of the war, resulted in the adoption of the resolution titled Promoting Reconciliation and Accountability in Sri Lanka, by the UNHRC on 22 March 2012. This resolution recognized that the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission's (LLRC) report contained constructive recommendations, and pointed out that there are shortcomings in terms of the government addressing "serious allegations of violations of international law". It called upon the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) to "implement the constructive recommendations in the LLRC report [...], requests [GoSL to] present a comprehensive action plan as expeditiously as possible." The LLRC was appointed by the President of Sri Lanka on



Map of Sri Lanka, demarcating the provinces.

Imagine credit: Maps of the World

<http://www.mapsofworld.com/sri-lanka/province-map.html>

15 May 2010, to focus on the causes of conflict, the effect of the conflict on the public and provide recommendations on national unity and reconciliation. The LLRC submitted its report to the President on 15 November 2011.

This resolution was roundly condemned by the Sri Lankan government and part of the Tamil Diaspora. The Sri Lankan government was of the view that it was an interference and detrimental to the reconciliation process. On the other hand the vocal segments of the Tamil Diaspora felt that the resolution is too lenient on the government and failed to give political powers to the Tamils in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

Second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Sri Lanka's human rights record took place during the UNHRC sessions in Geneva in November 2012. The Sri Lankan President's Special Envoy for Human Rights, Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe explained that the Sri Lankan Army was investigating into whether military personnel had committed atrocities during the final phase of the war in May 2009. He pointed out that former combatants, including Tamil child soldiers, have been rehabilitated and reintegrated into society, while demining of farm land continues. During the UNHRC UPR of Sri Lanka in Geneva, a total of 99 member states of the UN commended Sri Lanka for its progress in the resettlement of the IDPs and the development of the conflict-affected areas.

Meanwhile, the US, Britain, Australia and Canada called on the Sri Lankan Government to improve the remaining concerns about cases of abductions and disappearances, and to implement human rights action plans and to undertake transparent investigations into the violations of international humanitarian law during the conflict. Additionally, India stated that it will continue to assist Sri Lanka in its rehabilitation and resettlement efforts for IDPs and insisted on effective and timely implementation of the recommendations for the LLRC.

LTTE Activity in Sri Lanka and Abroad

The government continued its efforts to capture LTTE operatives in Sri Lanka and abroad. On 11 May 2012, a federal judge sentenced Karunakaran Kandasamy, a United States (US) citizen of Sri Lankan origin, to five years of imprisonment. Kandasamy pleaded guilty in 2009 to charges of conspiring to provide material aid to terrorist organization, the LTTE. The prosecutors had accused him of personally raising millions of dollars for the LTTE. Kandasamy also he came to Sri Lanka to meet with the LTTE commanders.

On 17 July 2012, the Sri Lankan police arrested Sinnatambi Pathmanathan, who was a former LTTE leader in Batticaloa area in the Eastern province, at the airport upon his return to Sri Lanka. Pathmanathan had fled the country in 2002. He had reportedly led several terrorist attacks in the East.

In October, the Sri Lankan Government commenced hearing cases of former LTTE members in two of the four special courts set up for that purpose. Justice Ministry Secretary Kamalini de Silva said that two courts have been established in Mannar and Vavuniya Districts to expedite the hearing of cases against LTTE suspects. She noted that two more courts are to be established in Anuradhapura and Colombo Districts for the purpose. In May 2012, the government informed the parliament that there were some 359 LTTE suspects in local prisons and 309 cases have to be heard.

Meanwhile, the internal rift caused by death of Prabhakaran, as LTTE leaders vied to control its networks abroad surfaced when a prominent LTTE leader and leader of the LTTE front Tamil Coordinating Committee (TCC) Nadarajah Matheenthiran alias Parithy was killed in Paris, France, on 1 November 2012. Police said that Parithy belonged to LTTE's Nediyanwan faction. Prabhakaran's death caused an internal rift as

people vied to control its networks abroad. The LTTE leaders Perimpanyagam Sivaparan alias Nediyan living in Norway, Father S. J. Emmanuel living in the UK, Vinayagam living in France and V. Rudrakumaran living in the US competed for funds, power and influence.

This year, there have been several protests and gatherings of Tamil Diaspora who are sympathetic to the LTTE. For example, there were protests in Geneva, during the UNHRC sessions in March. Also, there were protests during the London Olympics in August 2012 and British Sri Lankans in London held a peaceful demonstration against violent methods adopted by the LTTE sympathizers in the UK.

Human Smuggling

2012 witnessed a rise in human smuggling especially to Australia, which increased with boats originating from Indonesia with evidence that remnants of LTTE are involved in these operations.

One significant development was on 4 April 2012, when the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) of Canada confirmed that Thayakaran Markandu, a Sri Lankan, suspected to be the organizer of the MV Sea Sun, a human smuggling ship that brought 500 Sri Lankan asylum seekers to Canada in 2010, was arrested in France on 29 March 2010. He has been under

the police radar since June 2010, when he was arrested in Bangkok with the owner of the Sun Sea and two other Canadians of Sri Lankan origin.

About 250 Sri Lankans were detained in Indonesia while trying to leave the country illegally. Also, a group of 36 asylum seekers that included 28 Tamils returned to Sri Lanka on a special charter flight from London after the British Government rejected their asylum requests. The British court however granted a last-minute reprieve to 40 other asylum seekers.

Resettlement

The Sri Lankan government successfully resettled the last internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the final phase of the war. On 24 September 2012, the remaining group of 1,186 people belonging to 361 families left the Manik Farm camp and returned to their original hometowns in the Mullaitivu District. The resettlement in the northern province was delayed due to the de-mining operations in those areas. The military announced that it would continue to assist the resettled people to build their houses and restart their lives. The Manik Farm in the Northern Province housed nearly 300,000 IDPs just after the war ended in 2009.

The UN welcomed the closure of Sri Lanka's



A boat of asylum seekers from Sri Lanka at Christmas Island, Australia

Photo credit: Herald Sun/ Daniel Wilkins

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/ipad/did-smugglers-sink-the-boats/story-fnbzs1v0-1226415030875>

last Manik Farm camp in Vavuniya District. However, it is concerned about the 346 people who returned from Manik Farm to Kepapilavu in Mullaitivu District, as they were unable to return to their homes as their land was occupied by the military. On the other hand, the US stated that it remains concerned about the rushed resettlement of the final IDPs to close the Manik Farm camp in Vavuniya District, because of an absence of adequate facilities and basic services.

Rehabilitation

The rehabilitation of the 10,800 former LTTE cadres who surrendered during the final phase of the war was completed and they were reintegrated back into society. A few were chosen to represent Sri Lanka in rifle shooting for the South Asian Games in 2013. Also, the Sri Lankan Government took steps to recruit the former LTTE cadres who underwent rehabilitation into the Civil Defense Force. The Civil Defense Department recruited 300 rehabilitated LTTE cadres from each of the five Northern Province Districts - Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya.

In addition, on 22 June 2012, a Sri Lankan court ordered the authorities to rehabilitate former female political wing leader, Subramaniam Sivathai alias Thamalini of LTTE. Thamalini has

been in remand custody since her arrest by a special Police team on 27 May 2009 at the IDPs camp in Vavuniya District of Northern Province. She was charged with training LTTE cadres and establishing connections with LTTE members overseas.

Political Developments

On 21 May 2012, the former Army Commander General Sarath Fonseka was released on an unconditional presidential pardon granted by President Mahindra Rajapaksa. However, he is barred from political office for seven years and prevented from running for President.

The former international wing leader of LTTE and chief arms procurer of the LTTE, Kumaran Pathmanathan alias KP, during his address for the opening ceremony of an orphanage for girls, stated that the Tamil political parties in Sri Lanka should avoid 'confrontational politics' and be more realistic to help solve the problems faced by the Tamils.

On 15 August 2012, President of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa said that the Eelam project is still alive. "The aim of the Eelamists is to break the unity and trust among us and reduce the feeling for the country and make us criticize the motherland." He also added that, "On the



LTTE cadres who went through rehabilitation receive livelihood loans.

Photo credit: Colombo Page

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_12A/Jul30_1343663529CH.php

other hand, patriotic Sri Lankans should not allow those criticizing their motherland abroad or allow foreigners to criticize the country in their presence. We should not play into the hands of Eelamists.”

The Sri Lankan Government is considering repealing the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC), which was established under the 13th Amendment to the Constitution to devolve power. The Government is under pressure from both inside and outside to repeal the PCS since the 13th Amendment has become a threat to the unity of the country. Organizations and individuals supporting the Government have pointed out that the Constitution can be amended to decentralize the power and abolish the 13th Amendment since the Government has a two-third majority.

Cabinet approved draft amendments to the Convention on Suppression of Terrorist Financing Act No 25 of 2005, in keeping with the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to strengthen the Act. The Minister of External Affairs pointed out that primarily a legal framework is required to move forward to prevent financing terrorism. Only thereafter action can be taken to suppress financing terrorists. The proposed amendments will cover all uncovered areas.

Development in the Northern Province

Government is developing infrastructure in the Northern Province to set up massive industrial zones within a year, which will see the creation of hundreds of thousands of employment opportunities and bring development to the region on an unprecedented scale. The development of infrastructure in a few industrial zones in Actchaveli, Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar and Vavuniya began this year.

In conclusion, as Sri Lanka continues its efforts in reconciliation it still needs to find a political

settlement that will address the rights of all communities. Also, the government has to engage with the Tamil Diaspora as the President stated that despite the country having a concise foreign policy the threat of the pro- LTTE Diaspora in the West remains to be a massive challenge. As life in the north and east returns to normal with the resettlement of the IDPs from the final war and LTTE cadres who underwent rehabilitation. The primary concern for people in these areas will be providing for their families and gaining employment, there needs to be a sustained initiative to provide them with employment especially for the women-led households.

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South East Asia Country Assessment: Indonesia

By Rebecca Lunnon and Muh Taufiqurrohman

There were no major terrorist attacks in Indonesia in 2012. This was primarily due to the efforts of Detachment 88, Indonesia's counter-terrorism unit. However, some small-scale low impact attacks did take place which includes a string of shootings and bombings targeting the police. Several plots were foiled however including attempts in Bali in March 2012; attacks by Al Qaeda Indonesia led by Badri Hartono in Depok, West Java and by the Harakah Sunni Untuk Masyarakat Indonesia (the Sunni Movement for Indonesian Society (HASMI) cell in October 2012 in number places including Jakarta. Many members of the group led by Santoso who had established a paramilitary training camp in Poso and also had a cell for raising funds through hacking were also arrested.

In total, over 150 terrorist suspects were killed or arrested in 2012 including those involved in attacks in 2010 and 2011. However, a significant number of those arrested were subsequently released due to the failure on the part of the prosecution to produce actionable evidence.

At the same time the extent of radicalization remained high notwithstanding the expected deterrent effect of arrests and few high profile convictions. Individuals continue to be radicalized, and those who are arrested and convicted do not necessarily change their views. The prison system in Indonesia remained vulnerable not only for radicalization and recruitment but also in terms of overall security arrangements. For example in November 2012, one terrorist detainee escaped concealing himself in a burqa, and has since been suspected of a second attempt to bomb a police station in Solo.

The situation in Aceh, Sulawesi, Papua and Maluku continues to remain volatile with a number of attacks and attempts targeting law enforcement

agencies and even the civilians. While much of this violence has either been separatist and ethnic in character or for economic (Papua) and political (Aceh) reasons, sporadic violence in Sulawesi and Maluku, both historic sites of communal violence, is indicative of old wounds that have not fully healed. The recent discovery of a terrorist training camp in Poso, Central Sulawesi reflects the fact that terrorists are searching for susceptible regions which they can use as hideouts and reorganize. It is likely that terrorist and extremist groups could exploit old fault lines and stir up tensions in Indonesia. Overall, it appears that the Indonesian authorities continue to struggle to respond effectively to the key grievances in the problematic regions.

Targets

2012 marked further consolidation of the shift in targeting which began in 2010. While the 2002 and 2005 Bali bombings; 2003 JW Marriot bombing; 2004 Australian Embassy bombing; and the 2009 Ritz Carlton and JW Marriot Hotels bombings made use of suicide bombers and targeted Western citizens and assets, attacks in the last three years have been of a smaller scale and have primarily targeted police officers and other local persons and properties. These include September 2010 attack on a police station in Hamparan Perak, Deli Sedang in North Sumatra; suicide bombing of the Adz-Dzikro Mosque in the Cirebon Police Precinct on 15 April 2011; suicide bombing of the Kepunton Bethel Full Gospel Church in Solo on 25 September 2011; and smaller hit and run attacks on Indonesian police and civilians.

2012 also witnessed a string of shootings and bombings and attempts targeting civilians and property including August 2012 attacks on police officers and police stations in Solo. Meanwhile,

Poso in Central Sulawesi witnessed several attacks in which police and local Christian community was targeted. The attacks in Poso came at a time when the police were pursuing leads into a Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid's (JAT) paramilitary training camp near Tamanjeka hamlet in Masani village. Two investigating officers were also stabbed to death. Although there were plans to attack foreign or international interests, none of these moved past the planning stage.



Bomb blast scene in Kawua, Poso. Photo credit: Harian Mercusuar

One of the most significant issues was the use of the outer islands, in particular regions with historical grievances against the government and/or other ethnic/religious groups, to establish two of the largest paramilitary training camps in Indonesia over the last three years. It highlights the need for putting more emphasis on bringing regional violence under control and addressing the underlying issues. Failure to do so would provide an environment conducive to terrorist recruitment and training.

Counter-terrorism operations in general were successful in 2012, with no major attacks. Some concern however remains about the heavy-handed tactics that the police is alleged to be employing, as more arrests would not only allow police to glean more information from suspects, it would also help prevent retaliatory attacks.

Tactics

In 2011 there was a preference for targeted assassinations or shootings which was still appar-

ent which is indicative of the relatively weakened position of terrorist cells in Indonesia. It is also partly due to the fact that the use of small arms to kill targets is more practical, less costly and less time-consuming in terms of planning, preparation and training and less likely to be detected prior to an attack.

After targeted killings, the next most preferred tactic had been bombings. Throughout the year there were several bombings - mostly of low-scale in terms of casualties and impact and foiled attempts and an accidental explosion that led to the discovery of Hartono's group. While it is unclear whether the foiled attempts were isolated cases or parts of organized attempts involving suicide attacks, it is apparent that bombings will continue to be one of the preferred tactics for the terrorists.

The terrorists in Indonesia have also been trying to use new tactics to raise funds to sustain their organizations as well as to carry out attacks. An interesting development in this regard is the hacking of a multi-level marketing system to siphon off money to finance terrorist activities. There were also attempts to fund terrorist operations through robbery with the arrest of a cell in Bali that the police believed was scouting places to rob. Members of the cell were wanted in relation to the robbery of a CIMB Niaga bank in Medan, North Sumatra in 2010.

New Faces of Terrorism in Indonesia

In 2012, there were several prominent but new individuals leading the groups or cells involved in terrorist acts including Hilman Djajakusumah, Rizki Gunawan, Badri Hartono, Santoso and Abu Hanifah.

Hilman Djajakusumah, the leader of a JAT cell, led four men planning to rob the Bali Money Changer on Jalan Sriwijaya, Kuta and a jewellery store on Jalan Uluwatu, Jimbaran. They also planned to bomb Cafe Lavidia Loca in

Denpasar. On 18 March 2012, police killed Hilman Djajakusumah and his men before they could carry out their plans. Hilman's presence in Bali also demonstrate the interest that terrorists continue to have to target places of tourism importance.

Rizki Gunawan, a former member of Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) with links to the JAT and his accomplices raised IDR 7 billion (\$726,000) for jihad through hacking websites of investment companies. Out of the amount, Rizki Gunawan donated IDR 500 million (\$51,000) to fund military training organized by the JAT in Poso.

Being a former member of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), Badri Hartono led Al Qaeda Indonesia where he trained bomb makers. His group comprising members skilled in bomb-making such as Fajar Noviyanto and Anggri Pamungkas trained various others including terrorists in Jakarta and Poso to make bombs and manufacture rockets. Had his operatives in Jakarta - Muhammad Thoriq and Anwar - not made a mistake which caused a premature explosion, Badri Hartono's group would have carried out suicide attacks on the national parliament building and police SWAT headquarters in Kelapa Dua, Depok, West Jakarta; a police post in Salemba, Central Jakarta; Detachment 88 headquarters and offices of Buddhist communities in Jakarta.



Santoso alias Abu Wardah. Photo credit: Indonesian National Police.

Santoso alias Abu Wardah is a military commander of JAT in Poso and the commander of the Mujahidin Command in Eastern Indonesia. He is wanted by police for his involvement in the shooting of police officers at the BCA bank in Palu on 25 May 2011 and other terrorists attacks such as the shooting of villager

Noldi Ombolado in Poso on 28 August 2012; the murder of two police officers in October 2012; the Poso bombings on 9, 22 and 29 October 2012; and the attack on a Poso police office on 15 November 2012.

On October 2012 the Police foiled an attempt on the American Embassy in Jakarta, the American Consulate in Surabaya, the Plaza 89 building, the Freeport office in Jakarta and police SWAT headquarters in Semarang, Central Java. The attacks were planned by HASMI led by Abu Hisbah, Tim Hisbah and Abu Hanifah. Both were arrested by the police before the group could carry out the attacks.

Outlook 2013

While the Indonesian government have been able to pre-empt terrorist groups before they could carry out deadly attacks, it has not been successful in addressing separatist violence, communal conflict and growing intolerance in the society. These issues have created the environment that terrorist groups use to their advantage, in order to garner community support and avoid detection and pursue their goals of (ultimately) bringing down the secular Indonesian state.

The Mujahidin Command of Eastern Indonesia, an alias for a cell led by Santoso, and Tim Hisbah is likely to remain active in Indonesia in the near future. It is assessed that the group would continue to conduct military and explosive training in Poso and could carry out attacks on the police and other local targets.

Santoso's ability to evade arrest has given him an elevated status among young Indonesian jihadists, proving to be a strong attraction for them to join his force in Poso. The government needs to isolate Santoso from militants from outside Poso that have already expressed an interest in moving to Poso (berhijrah) and waging jihad there.

Radicalism and jihadi ideology also continues to spread across Indonesia, and is further fanned by the general increase in intolerance that has become increasingly apparent in 2012. The ability of terrorist cells or groups to continue to operate and spread their ideology is an evolutionary development; these entities are increasingly acting alone, with no solid operational links to a single terrorist group. This means that if these entities are intercepted, the impact would only be limited to the immediate individuals or the cell which would leave other cells/groups to which they are ideologically linked free to continue their activities.

This is further compounded by the absence of legal provisions that would enable authorities to prosecute those who conduct recruitment and preach hatred. Despite the relatively “unconnected” nature of the groups, there are still very important ideological and personal ties linking members of different cells. Many of these links can increasingly be traced back to the JAT. The JAT has skillfully avoided designation as a terrorist organization (within Indonesia) by en-

suring it runs a significant above ground program. However, there is no question about its role in terrorism, with a number of JAT members being implicated in terrorist activities, even if their participation has not been under the group’s name. The JAT will likely to continue in this manner as it has proven quite successful for the group.

There is an urgent need to complement Detachment 88’s efforts with a comprehensive counter-radicalization approach to stop indoctrination and recruitment. Indonesia needs to focus on engaging the community to garner its support for various counter-radicalization measures. This is very important particularly in the context of widespread opposition to the Indonesian Anti-Terrorism Agency’s suggestion to introduce a system of certification for Islamic preachers. Without community acceptance such measures could be counterproductive and further alienate members of the community, especially those that are more disposed to radicalization.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The CTTA: Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis is now open for contributions from researchers and practitioners in the field of terrorism research, security, and other related fields.

Topical areas of interest are terrorism and political violence, organized crime, homeland security, religion and violence, internal conflicts and all other areas of security broadly defined.

Article length could be anywhere between 1,000 to 2,000 words. Submissions must be made before the 15th of every month for editing purposes and for inclusion in the next month’s edition. Please refer to the [guidelines](#).

Electronic copies of the articles (MS Word format) may be submitted to the Associate Editor, Nadisha Sirisena at the following address:
issirisena@ntu.edu.sg

South East Asia Country Assessment: Malaysia

By Muhammad Saiful Alam Shah Bin Sudiman

Malaysia was in the spotlight in 2012, after the news of its citizens being involved in terrorist activities abroad came to the forefront.

In February 2012, the Armed Forces of the Philippines killed a Malaysian citizen Zulkifli bin Hir, a.k.a. Marwan, a senior member of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), involved in a series of bomb attacks in the southern Philippines since 2006.

In October 2012, two Malaysian youths aged 21 and 28 respectively were arrested at Beirut's Rafik Hariri International Airport. Both were suspected to be having links with the Al Qaeda terror network and were trying to enter Syria to join the civil war in the country or carrying out attacks in Lebanon. Earlier they attempted to enter Syria through Turkey but were not successful. They were later charged with plotting to carry out terror attacks in Lebanon. Malaysian authorities claimed that the duo had no direct links with militant Islamic groups in this region or with members of JI or Darul Islam. According to the Lebanese officials investigating the case, the youths were recruited into Al Qaeda in 2007 by another Malaysian, identified as Mustapha Mansour and were previously arrested in 2007 and sentenced to imprisonment during which they met Jamal Al Badawi, who was accused of being behind the October 2000 bombing of USS Cole, in Yemen.

On 14 December 2012 another Malaysian - Mohammad Noor Fikrie - was killed by the Philippines police in Davao City. His Filipino wife was arrested shortly thereafter who revealed that they were initially planning to bomb a passenger bus for extortion. The Middle East-trained bomb-making expert was shot as he threatened to detonate a bomb in his backpack at a crowded park in southern Davao. According to the police he was apparently targeting a church or foreign aid workers helping victims of typhoon Bopha.

A Strategic Shift?

It has always been held that though not a target in itself, Malaysia was being used by terrorist and extremist groups and individuals as a transit point, safe-haven, or as a source for recruitment and logistics including financing. However, the incidents involving Malaysian citizens attempting to carry out attacks abroad would suggest a shift in strategy and reinforce the concern that the country remains exposed to significant degree of radicalization.

This is particularly problematic in view of the repeal of the Internal Security Act (ISA) by the government in September 2012. Though there is no direct connection between the repeal of the ISA and the incidents described above, there is a concern that the annulment of the Act could reduce the operational counter-terrorism capabilities of the concerned agencies to a great extent. The ISA was held to be the most important instrument that kept terrorists at bay, as evidenced by the absence of terrorist attacks in Malaysia. This is however not to discount the deterrent effect of the new legislation – The Security Offences (special Measures) which replaced ISA.

South East Asia Country Assessment: Philippines

By Nadisha Sirisena

In 2012, the Government of the Philippines continued to strengthen its counter-terrorism efforts with the Abu Sayyaf Group and the New People's Army. The government achieved a landmark peace deal with the Moro Islamic Liberation front, as they signed the "framework agreement". There was an increase in tensions in the South China Sea between China and Philippines as a month long stand off took place in early 2012, with both sides tittering on the verge of military confrontation. This issue also caused trouble during the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), resulting in failure to come to an agreement in a joint communique.

Moro Islamic Liberation Front

On 15 October 2012, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), signed a "framework agreement" with the Government of Philippines, creating a road map to end long drawn conflict and create autonomous region in Muslim-majority Mindanao for the various ethnic groups collectively known as the Bangsamoro, with more power, more territory and more control over resources.

The framework agreement proposes a multi-step process to create Bangsamoro new Muslim-administered region to replace Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). As part of the road map detailed in the agreement a 15 member Tansion Commission would draft a new law within the next three years which will then be incorporated into the Philippines constitution. Broadly, the agreement proposes to achieve the following:

- Creating a new, larger autonomous area
- Increasing development and fair sharing of natural wealth
- Increasing number of Sharia courts for Muslim residents
- Guarantying human rights
- Gradual decommissioning of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF), the armed wing of the MILF
- Creating a Bangsamoro police force to maintain law and order in the autonomous region

There are concerns that the government and the MILF approach the agreement with competing priorities and different constituencies.



The framework peace plan signed by the chief of negotiators of the government and of the MILF, and witnessed by President Benigno Aquino and MILF leader Murad Ebrahim on 1 October 2012,

Photo credit: Associate Press/Bullit Marquez

<http://www.unpo.org/article/14993>

Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement

The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM) was formed when the MILF expelled a senior but rogue commander, Ameril Umbra Kato, whose actions have jeopardized the peace process in the past. In August 2012, the BIFM launched a series of attacks against military detachments in Central Mindanao, followed by sporadic fighting for weeks. These attacks were perceived as an attempt to derail the peace process. However, the BIFM has been quiet since the signing of the framework agreement.

Abu Sayyaf Group

In early February 2012, there was an unprecedented US supported drone strike targeting Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) operatives in the Southern Philippine island of Jolo. This marked the first time such a strike was used in South East Asia. The strike killed 15 Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah operatives, including three most-wanted terrorist leaders – Zulkifli bin Hir (alias Marwan), Gumbahali Jumdail (alias Doc Abu), and Mumanda Ali (alias Muawayah). It was reported that the airstrike was launched by a drone that tracked the sensor planted at the ASG hideout. In addition to the drone strike the Armed Forces of Philippines continued their ground operations against ASG. In a gun battle with the ASG in July 2012 in Basilan, the AFP sustained their largest casualties, resulting in the death of ten soldiers and nine ASG operatives, while 17 soldiers and five ASG operatives were injured.

In 2012, the membership of ASG has significantly reduced in numbers. This year the military conducted successful operations capturing sub-leaders of ASG, further weakening the group. However, remnants of the group still pose a threat as they continue to clash with troops and indulge in kidnap-for-ransom operations. There were a few high profile kidnappings this year including, the kidnapping of a Jordanian journal-

ist and 2 of his Filipino camera men in August 2012.

The military had stronger operations and better civilian cooperation, as the government implemented its 2011–2016 Internal Peace and Security Plan (IPSP). The IPSP recognizes that achieving lasting peace, security, and economic development requires a “whole of nation” approach, including increasingly transferring internal security functions from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to the Philippine National Police (PNP). The Philippines government hopes the framework deal would encourage the MILF to join forces against the remnants of the ASG and other radicals who are believed to be hiding in Southern Mindanao. As the Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin stated, “This will really isolate groups like the Abu Sayyaf.” The international community’s support for the peace process was partly due to its counter-terrorism policies. The framework agreement increases the incentives for the leadership of the MILF to ensure that its members are not protecting terrorists. Under the framework agreement, the MILF are committed to deactivate armed guerilla units “beyond use.” Moreover, the peace with MILF will alienate other radical groups and will make it difficult for regional groups like Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT) to seek refugee and organize/participate in training in Mindanao.

CPP/NPA/NDF

The New People’s Army (NPA) which celebrated its 43rd anniversary this year, stated that there are more people drawn to the path of revolutionary armed struggle in the face of the worsening socio-economic crisis and rapid deterioration in the people’s standard of living under the Aquino administration.

In 2012, the NPA continued to recruit child soldiers. On 2 August 2012, the AFP’s spokesperson stated that there is strong evidence of the

NPA's recruitment of children. In June 2012, the troops rescued three minors between the ages of 10-12 after an encounter with the NPA. A 16-year old girl and her brother were also rescued in October 2012.

In June 2012, the NPA intensified its attacks against government troops in Mindanao. The AFP released a statement urging the NPA to revive the stalled peace process. The peace process came to a halt in February 2011, as the NPA demanded the government release most of their detained rebels, whom they claim are covered by the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees. However the government insists that there should not be any preconditions for the peace negotiations.

Tensions in the South China Sea

In early 2012, the Philippines and China had more than a month long stand-off over the Scarborough Shoal, near south Luzon. This began in April 2012, when Chinese ships prevented the Philippine navy from detaining Chinese fishermen who were allegedly caught poaching at the Scarborough Shoal. Both countries claim the uninhabited shoal. The standoff reignited concerns about the potential for a conflict in the

South China Sea, one of the world's busiest sea lanes.

This confrontation between the two nations had a negative impact on the Philippine economy and challenged the stability of the of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, met with their Philippine counterparts. Though the meetings resulted in broadening the military alliance between the US and the Philippines, and expanding economic and cultural ties, Mrs. Clinton stated that the US will not take sides on the competing sovereignty claims in the South China Sea.

On 11 May 2012, China and the Philippines resumed diplomatic contact with hopes to ease the tensions over the territorial dispute on the South China Sea. The spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry stated that it has noted the efforts made by Philippine Foreign Ministry to ease tension and requested that Philippines respect China's sovereignty over the disputed territory.



Map of the South China Sea.

Source: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

<http://www.intellasia.net/tensions-increase-in-south-china-sea-dispute-163152>

Political Developments

On 13 July 2012, in its 45-year history, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers failed to issue a joint communiqué at the end of the summit over the South China Sea dispute. Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei and Malaysia, have all made claims on areas of the South China Sea. While China claims almost the entire South China Sea as its territorial waters. China insisted that the summit was not the appropriate place to discuss this issue.

In conclusion, the Philippines need to continue its efforts to improve its relations with China and find a lasting solution to the territorial dispute in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, the framework agreement between the MILF and the Government road map must go through the proposed roadmap and result in an mutually acceptable and binding peace agreement. It would increasingly involve more political player and make clear how the tough questions would be dealt with. Hence, as the peace agreement gains in credibility, spoiler such as BIFM would lose support. The AFP and police should continue to strengthen their counter-terrorist activities against the ASG and NPA.

South East Asia Country Assessment: Singapore

By Muhammad Saiful Alam Shah Bin Sudiman

Singapore remained free from any form of terrorist activity in 2012. The city-state has been relatively steady in its stance and approach towards countering terrorism and extremism. Additionally, its ability to foresee and anticipate future threats and trends made it possible for the agencies to pre-empt the same with appropriate counter-measures.

In October 2012, Singapore announced the detention of two senior members of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) - Abd Rahim bin Abdul Rahman (Abd Rahim) and Husaini bin Ismail (Husaini) - under the Internal Security Act (ISA), "for their involvement in terrorism-related activities." Both trained in Afghanistan in Al Qaeda training camps and were part of the plot to target domestic and foreign assets in Singapore before they fled the country in December 2001. Later, Husaini worked with Mas Salamat Kastari in the 2002 plan to hijack an aircraft from Bangkok and crash it into Singapore Changi airport. Abd Rahim and Husaini were arrested in Malaysia and Indonesia respectively and deported to Singapore.

Singapore also released two ex-JI members and one self-radicalized youth after a couple of years in detention and after having successfully undergone religious counseling. The government also allowed the Restriction Orders (RO) against seventeen JI members and one Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) member to lapse based on the determination that these individuals "had been cooperative and responsive to rehabilitation efforts and no longer required further supervision under the RO regime." This is a testimony of the success of government's efforts to counter radicalization and reduce the threat from terrorism and extremism.

UPCOMING EVENTS

International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience 2013

26-27 March 2013

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) are jointly organizing an International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience in Singapore on 26-27 March 2013. This conference is in conjunction with the 10th year anniversary of the RRG, a voluntary group of Islamic scholars and teachers formed in 2003 to assist in counseling and rehabilitating terrorist detainees in Singapore.

This two-day event will bring together 20 distinguished local and foreign speakers and an estimated 400 participants and invited guests. The Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, will grace this event as the Guest of Honor and deliver the opening address.

South East Asia Country Assessment: Thailand

By Muhammad Saiful Alam Shah Bin Sudiman

In 2012, southern Thailand continued to experience bouts of violence as in the previous years with small-scale bombings, arson, shootings including execution-style assassinations and even beheadings. According to the statistics compiled by the Deep South Watch, between 4 January 2004 and 30 November 2012, 5,473 persons have been killed and 9,693 injured in the ongoing violence in the restive southern provinces of Thailand.

Major attacks

The deadliest incident in 2012 was a series of bomb attacks staged on 31 March 2012. Just before noon, a car bomb exploded on Ruam Mit Road, a busy commercial area in Yala. A second explosion followed at the same spot within half-an-hour, which was believed to have targeted rescue workers and onlookers. 12 persons were killed and more than 100 injured in both the bombings. Within short time, a car loaded with explosives went off in an underground garage of Lee Gardens Plaza Hotel in Hat Yai, killing four persons. The explosion was so strong that it ignited a gas line that started a huge fire in the hotel and adjacent shopping centre. More than 400 people sustained injuries due mostly to smoke inhalation, and flying glasses. Another attack took place in Mae Lan District in Pattani, where a motorcycle bomb injured a police officer.

Though the attacks were unconnected and largely dispersed, the fact that all the four-bombings took place within a short time span raised concerns about an escalation in the militant activity in the southern provinces. Most attention however was on the bombing of the hotel in Hat Yai. The attack in a hotel in Hat Yai, a city which is the commercial hub of the south is of particular concern especially since there were few attacks in the city since the insurgency resurfaced in Janu-

ary 2004. Some analysts described it as a sign of escalation of the violence beyond the traditional restive areas in the south. Others saw the attack as targeting tourism and as an attempt to undermine government efforts to restore normalcy. There was also speculation that the attack in Hat Yai could be criminally motivated – to divert government’s attention from drug and ransom-for-kidnapping activities in the area.



Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra inspects the blast site at Lee Gardens Plaza Hotel and shopping mall in Songkhla's Hat Yai. A car bomb in the hotel's underground carpark killed three people and wounded several hundred. Photo credit: AFP/Getty images.

Targets

Increasingly, civilians are bearing the brunt of the long-standing conflict and violence irrespective of one's ethnicity, religious affiliation, social status or age group. According to Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) statistics, between 4 January 2004 and 30 September 2012; 2,056 of those killed were Buddhists and 2,697 were Muslims. This indicates that the death-rate is higher in respect of Muslims, especially Muslim civilians. This is not to suggest that there is a deliberate attempt to kill Muslims in higher number. In most of the cases Muslims, mostly local residents, were killed because they happened to be present at the scene of an attack or they have been deliberately killed because they either cooperated with the government agencies or perceived to be

spies by the militants. Buddhists, especially monks and school teachers have also been targeted as they are perceived to be the symbol of Thai government's attempts at forced assimilation which the militants are fighting against.

Keeping with this trend, 2012 also witnessed intensified series of attacks on civilians. On 31 October 2012, an 11-year-old boy was shot and killed in an ambush with his father in the district of Yala, an attack that also left his nine-year-old brother in a critical condition. In December 2012, a militant indiscriminately shot at villagers who were having breakfast at a tea shop in Narathiwat province in which four persons including an infant were killed and a 10-month-old boy was injured. State-run educational institutions were not spared as well. Militants hold the view that government schools are a main element in state's attempts to impose Buddhist culture on the Malay-Muslims. Thus, the teachers and other school personnel are being perceived as the representative of the Thai government thus making them a legitimate target. Targeting of the state-run schools have become so intense that about 1,200 schools in the three provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala were forced to be closed while security for students and teachers was being assessed.

According to the report of the Deep South Watch, civilians not employed by the state accounted for 49.8 per cent of casualties followed by soldiers (16 per cent), insurgents (10 per cent), and sub-district chiefs (kamnan), village chiefs and assistant village chiefs (3.3 per cent). It was also observed that violent incidents in the first six months of 2012 have shown a downward trend - fewer than two and half per day from an average of almost three per day in 2011. However, the causality rate has increased with 1,647 in the first six months of 2012 surpassing the 2011 total of 1,464. Simply put, every incident has resulted in higher rates of casualties. This could be a matter of concern as it could be an indication of increasing sophistica-

tion and lethality of the attacks.

Government response

Despite lack of success, the Thai government continues to take a number of initiatives to restore normalcy and bring the militants to the mainstream. Though Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra could not deliver her promise to introduce some form of autonomy that would let the local citizens to have a substantial say in the administration, the government undertook a number of initiatives to bring development and restore confidence. In October 2012, the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (SBPAC) signed a memorandum of understanding with Narathiwat and Pattani municipal authorities and TK Park to establish centres of knowledge and learning which would help bridge divided communities by incorporating the diverse cultures of the area and alleviating mutual misunderstandings. This was a build up on the TK Park in Yala which was set up in 2007 and has been perceived to be a successful initiative.

In August 2012, the SBPAC was tasked to hold informal talks with militant groups especially with the Runda Kumpulan Kecil (RKK), the group that is believed to be most active and most violent. According to the government sources, it was not a negotiation but a dialogue involving both the sides to achieve peace and normalcy which would also enable Bangkok to implement development and other projects in the restive region. In addition to the talks at the local level, Thai government officials have reached out to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to help develop ideas for peace in the southern provinces since 2010. However, the matter was sidelined at the foreign ministers meet in Djibouti in November 2012 where the discussion focused on situations in Syria, Somalia, Palestine, Myanmar, Mali and the African Sahel region. Nonetheless, negotiation as an option is gaining increasing acceptance from all the stakeholders involved in the conflict, though beginning negoti-

ation with the separatist groups in the south is easier said than done. Most of the groups appear fragmented with too much fluidity in membership. Most of the top leadership of the groups is outside the country, thus having lost their control and influence over the cadre operating on the ground. The best option for the government would be to identify and negotiate with community leaders who command the respect and confidence of the local population. The Thai government could also consider external mediation to break the ice.

Conclusion

Insurgency in southern Thailand should not be seen as jihadist or religious in nature; it has never been. It is about social, cultural and economic injustice. Thai government and the army must acknowledge that in the absence of a formal enabling and amicable environment in the restive provinces, all the initiatives to restore peace in the area are always heading towards a dead end. A military solution has proven futile to restore order and the more of such methods employed, the higher would be the chances for the unrest to stretch its longevity. The repeated extension of the much disliked Emergency Decree (the Thai cabinet renewed the Emergency Decree for further three months on 18 December 2012) has become rather counterproductive in terms of restoring confidence on the government and its efforts to win the hearts and minds in the southern provinces. It is time that the government seize the initiative and act not only to alleviate concerns and feelings of marginalization and repression on the part of the people in southern Thailand and stop what has so far been a local conflict from assuming regional and even international dimensions.

GLOBAL PATHFINDER

The ICPVTR Terrorism Database – Global Pathfinder - is a one-stop repository for information on the current and emerging terrorist threats. The database focuses on terrorism and political violence in the Asia-Pacific region – comprising of Southeast Asia, North Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and Oceania.

Global Pathfinder is an integrated database containing comprehensive profiles of terrorist groups, key terrorist personalities, terrorist and counter-terrorist incidents as well as terrorist training camps. It also contains specific details and analyses of significant terrorist attacks in the form of terrorist attack profiles.

For further inquiries regarding subscription and access to the Global Pathfinder database, please email Ms. Elena Ho Wei Ling at the following email address: isewlho@ntu.edu.sg

Central Asia Country Assessments

By Nodirbek Soliyev

In 2012, Central Asian countries witnessed an increase in violent radicalization. As the US prepares to withdraw from Afghanistan, countries in the region are increasingly concerned about post-2014 scenario in Afghanistan and its implications for Central Asia. Any insecurity or instability in Afghanistan could have negative impact on neighboring countries causing an expansion of terrorist activities in the region.

KAZAKHSTAN

Following a series of terrorist attacks in the country in 2011, Kazakhstan strengthened its efforts to address religiously-motivated terrorism and extremism this year. The Kazakh security services have succeed in foiling 24 terrorist attacks. A total of 79 terrorism-related incidents and 25 cases of extremism were reported in 2012. These include 21 June killing of a traffic police officer by three terrorists in the city of Aktobe; 11 July explosion at a private house in the Tausamal village of Almaty province which claimed 8 lives including 4 children. Furthermore, about 200 suspected companies and individuals were investigated for involvement in money laundering and financing of

terrorism.

Since the beginning of 2012, the Kazakh authorities have clamped down on unregistered/ clandestine religious organizations and charities under the provisions of the October 2011 law "On religious activities and religious associations." A re-registration of various religious organizations was also undertaken. The law requires all the 4551 religious institutions to be re-registered. As a result, about 3,330 of these institutions have been re-registered. According to the government, the purpose of the re-registration is to identify and eliminate non-existent or dubious ones. The Kazakh interior ministry also investigated as many as 600 cases involving distribution of extremist literature with a view to eliminate clandestine channels of such distribution. The authorities have seized 25,000 books, 34 computers and over 2000 digital information carriers.

Despite various counter-terrorism and extremism measures adopted by the Government of Kazakhstan, 2012 witnessed a growing trend of radicalization and the growth of religious extremist views among Kazakhs, especially the youth.



Map of Central Asia.

Source: The Afghanistan and Central Asia Research Information (ACARI)

<http://www.indiana.edu/~afghan/maps.html>

Since April 2011, the radical Islamist groups in Kazakhstan have become more active than ever before. The government is concerned about growing activities of radical extremist organizations Jund al-Khilafah (Soldiers of the Caliphate, JAK) and Hizbut-Tahrir al-Islami (HTI). There is a strong likelihood of an increase in operations of these groups, especially in the wake of returning Islamist militants from the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, after the withdrawal of ISAF forces from Afghanistan in 2014.



Jund al-Khilafah. Source: Kazakhstan Today.

Jund al-Khilafah is the most radical Islamic militant group in Kazakhstan. JAK was formed by Kazakh nationals in the Afghanistan-Pakistan area in 2011. It has links with Al Qaeda and the Haqqani Network in Pakistan. According to the Kazakh National Security Committee (KNB), JAK currently poses “a significant threat” to the country’s national security. In 2011, the Government of Kazakhstan banned JAK after it claimed responsibility for the bombings in Atyrau on 31 October 2011. The group also carried out terrorist attacks in Taraz city on 12 November 2011 which resulted in the death of seven people. In 2012, JAK did not carry out any terrorist attacks in Kazakhstan, but the group was involved in a terror attack in Toulouse, France on 22 March. In October 2012, Moezeddine Garsallaoui (a.k.a. Abu Moez al Tunisi or Moez al Kayrawani), the leader of JAK was killed by a US drone strike in Pakistan’s tribal region of North Waziristan, along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Reportedly, he was a Swiss citizen of Tunisian origin and a senior trainer of Al Qaeda.

Hizbut-Tahrir al-Islami is the Salafist-influenced radical Islamist group. It aims to create a worldwide Islamic caliphate. The Government of Kazakhstan banned HTI in 2005. In 2012, the activity of the group has increased in Western and Central Kazakhstan due to spread of Salafism in neighboring Russian republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. HTI has also close ties with militants in Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan and Russian North Caucasus. The cells of the group in South Kazakhstan, Almaty and Astana have increased their activities in alliance with the HTI cells in other Central Asian republics. The North and East Kazakh regions, where majority of the Slavic population reside, have remained relatively free from the influence of the radicalization.

KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan has been stable since the inter-ethnic clashes in Osh and Jalalabad regions in June 2010. However, the situation in the southern part of the country continues to be tense due to the spread of extremist views and intensification of religious radical groups in this region.

In 2012, the most significant threat to the internal stability of Kyrgyzstan in 2012 came from jihadists. According to the Kyrgyzstan National Security Committee (GKNB), eight religious radical groups currently have their cells in Kyrgyzstan. These groups are Al Qaeda, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), East Turkestan Liberation Organization (ETLO), Harakat al - Tawhid al-Islami (the Islamic Unification Movement), Hizbut-Tahrir al-Islami (HTI), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and the Taliban.

In 2012, the Kyrgyz security forces carried out a number of counter-terrorism operations against these radical extremist groups, seizing about 7,700 extremist publications. Approximately 176 persons suspected of religious extremism were arrested. Throughout 2012, a total of 204 cases,

involving religious extremism, were reported in Kyrgyzstan. In more than 80% of cases, the extremists are associated with HTI or to groups it is associated with.

HTI remains the major threat group in Kyrgyzstan with its extensive networks both in the north and south of the country. On 20 March 2012, ten members of HTI were detained in southern Kyrgyzstan. The police found extremist literature, drugs and improvised explosive devices in the house used by the HTI members. On 19 November 2012, the Naryn Court sentenced a 28-year-old man to six years in prison for being a member of HTI. The suspect was arrested in September 2012 while distributing extremist literature in the northern Kyrgyz city of Naryn. On 10 November 2012, the Kyrgyz security forces detained an active member of HTI during anti-terrorism operations in the Kyrgyz city of Karakol. An electronic data carrier with extremist materials were found in the detainee's house.

Zhaishul-Makhdi (ZM), one of the HTI-related radical extremist groups in Kyrgyzstan, has intensified its activities in 2012. ZM was established in Kyrgyzstan in 2007 and consists of mostly local residents. The group aims to overthrow the Kyrgyz government and create an Islamic caliphate. On 7 February 2012, Kyrgyz security forces arrested Daniyar Kadyraliyev, an active member of ZM, in the Kyrgyz capital city of Bishkek. During a counter-terrorism operation, the security forces also captured one Kalashnikov gun with six cartridges stores, 312 ammunitions, components of improvised explosive devices and ammonite bombs.

There is a growing trend of radicalization of Kyrgyz youth through the internet. The self-styled "Internet Imams" in their online lectures are calling the youth for jihad (holy war) against the Kyrgyz government. According to the Kyrgyz officials these imams are mostly followers of ideology of Kharijites. Kharijites (Arabic for "those who split off or depart") is reactionary Islamic extrem-

ist sects who refuse to compromise with those who differ from their ideology.

TAJIKISTAN

The situation in Tajikistan remains tense. In July 2012, the Tajik military forces clashed with armed groups in Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province, along the border with Afghanistan. The two days of intense fighting followed the killing of Abdullo Nazarov, the chief of the Tajikistan National Security Committee (KGB) in Badakhshan. Reportedly, the violence caused the deaths of more than 200 military personnel and civilians. The Gorno-Badakhshan clashes created concerns in the region about the possibility of new civil war in the country.

The Government of Tajikistan has arrested and tried members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (HTI). On 11 May 2012, Zilmurod Eshonkhonov, regional commander of IMU and two of his associates were arrested in Tajik province of Khatlon. In April 2012, 34 alleged members of IMU were sentenced to jail.

HTI is active in Northern Tajikistan. According to the Government of Tajikistan, a total 56 of HTI-related cases have been reported in the northern Tajik province of Sughd over the first half-year of 2012. The Tajik Security Forces were arrested seven alleged HTI members in Sughd in September 2012.

Overall, the security of Tajikistan remains fragile with a concern of more instability into post-2014 Afghanistan.

TURKMENISTAN

Turkmenistan is perceived to be the most politically neutral country in Central Asia. There have been no terrorist incidents in the country, thus far. Bordering with Afghanistan, Turkmenistan remains as a transit corridor for drug smugglers

to transfer narcotics from Afghanistan to Russia and Europe. Therefore, the Turkmen government has increased its efforts against the threat of terrorism and narcotics as well as terrorism financing and money laundering.

In its efforts to counter-terrorism financing and money laundering, the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) of Turkmenistan has been cooperating with the FIU of China, Turkey, UK, the UAE, and British virgin islands throughout the year. In February 2012, the Turkmen FIU and financial monitoring personnel attended in the training on AML/CFT co-organized by the United States Department of the Treasury.

UZBEKISTAN

There are no terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan in 2012. However, in light of the US troop's departure from Afghanistan in 2014, the Government of Uzbekistan is particularly concerned about terrorist and extremist activities spilling over to Uzbekistan. The Uzbek authorities believe that the US military withdrawal may lead to instability and insecurity in Afghanistan and that it will become a sanctuary for global terrorists. As a result, militant groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) will intensify their activity.



Usmon Ghazi, the IMU leader.
Source: The Long War Journal.

The IMU used to be Central Asia's most violent militant group until the US invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001 forced the group to run and take shelter in the tribal areas of Pakistan

which gave it the time to recuperate. With the support of the local tribes, the IMU could reorganize itself with advanced training and logistics.

On 3 August 2012, the IMU announced the death of its leader Abu Usmon Odil, in a statement released on the Uzbek-language website, Furqon.com. Odil was reportedly killed in a US drone strike launched on 29 April 2012, in Pakistan's North Waziristan, the headquarters of the Al Qaeda-linked Haqqani Network. The IMU website also reported that Usmon Ghazi had succeeded as the new leader of the group. However, there is no official verification of his real identity. The Uzbek intelligence officials believe that Usmon Ghazi is not the terrorist's real name. His real name is known only to a few close friends. Ghazi is suspected in drug smuggling and the illegal sale of arms.

The IMU's ties with Al Qaeda remains intact. At the same time, an "indigenized" branch of the group continues to attract recruits amongst the Muslim diaspora communities from Germany and other European countries. In January 2012, the UN and US listed Mounir Chouka and his brother Yassin Chouka as international terrorists. The Choukas are German citizens of Moroccan origin and senior members of IMU. They produced several propaganda videotapes encouraging German Muslims to move Pakistan and join the jihad (holy war).

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM RESEARCH



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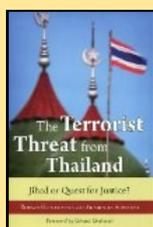
Website: www.pvtr.org

The International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) is a specialist centre within the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

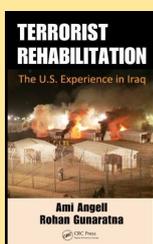
ICPVTR conducts research, training, and outreach programs aimed at reducing the threat of politically motivated violence and at mitigating its effects on the international system. The Centre seeks to integrate academic theory with practical knowledge, which is essential for a complete and comprehensive understanding of threats from politically-motivated groups.

The Centre is staffed by academic specialists, religious scholars, as well as personnel from the law enforcement, military and intelligence agencies, among others. The Centre is culturally and linguistically diverse, comprising of functional and regional analysts as well as Muslim religious scholars from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.

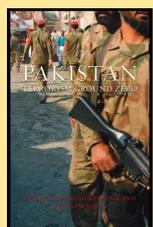
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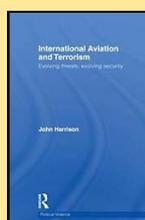
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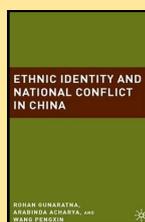
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