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July 2013: Africa in Focus

Africa is rapidly emerging as a new base of operations and training for the militant jihadist movement. There are a number of hotspots and flashpoints in this largely impoverished continent, made worse due to political transitions in some of the countries as a result of the “Arab Spring.” One of the key challenges facing African countries is the lack of capacity to manage the threat from transnational terrorist groups that exploit porous borders and limited state control in remote regions.

The past few months have seen rapid deterioration in a number of countries—Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and to some extent, Egypt and Libya. Al Qaeda-linked groups operating on the continent have been actively involved in exploiting these situations in an attempt to secure an upper hand.

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in particular has expanded its geographic reach. Gunaratna explores the impact that AQIM's presence in Mali will have on the recent attempts to bring stability to a country that has been in turmoil since the renewed outbreak of violence by Tuareg rebels in 2012. He also examines how divisions within the Tuareg rebel movement will affect the current situation where a UN stabilization mission has begun its work facilitating an upcoming Presidential election.

Al Qaeda's newest franchise, the al-Shabaab group based in Somalia, has also appeared to have increased its geographical reach with attacks outside Somalia and a number of international recruits fighting for its cause. Alkaff deconstructs this transnational image of al-Shabaab to show the strong local orientation of the group. He also argues that foreign fighters in al-Shabaab have resulted in divisions within the group.

The status of Nigeria's current operation to flush its northeast of Boko Haram is not as clear as Nigerian authorities are making it out to be. Harjani investigates the broader counterterrorism strategy of Nigeria, and also examines the possible implications of an emerging refugee crisis.

Finally, the tension over oil revenues between the Sudans is harming the two countries and preventing them from moving forward. Haynal argues that the hazardous use of oil as a tool of leverage by both countries will only perpetuate their current situation of insecurity and facilitate transnational terrorist groups in need of space to train and operate from.

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An End in Sight? Challenges for Peace and Stability in Mali

Rohan Gunaratna

Despite the recent preliminary peace agreement between Tuareg rebels and the Malian government, significant challenges remain for the achievement of peace and stability in Mali.

On 1 July 2013, the duties of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) were formally handed over to a 12,600 strong UN peacekeeping force called the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). MINUSMA has two key aims – to implement the peace agreement signed between Tuareg rebels and the Malian government in June 2013 and to facilitate the upcoming presidential elections scheduled for 28 July 2013. The peace agreement – an important first step towards stabilizing Mali – called for an immediate ceasefire and created an eight-member commission to facilitate the transfer of areas under rebel control to the Malian government. However, the success of the peace agreement

and of MINUSMA in restoring peace and stability to Mali after the chaos that erupted in early 2012 will hinge on how it addresses the complexities underlying the conflict.

A Partial Solution

However, the peace agreement does not address the threat posed by Al Qaeda-linked terrorist groups which continue to maintain a presence in Mali. Ignoring their ability to influence the outcome of the conflict has the potential to render current efforts to stabilize Mali ineffective. This is because the Al Qaeda-linked terrorist groups want an Islamic state imposed over the entirety of Mali whereas the Tuareg rebel movement is



The Malian government signed a peace agreement with Tuareg rebels in June 2013.

Photo source: Africa News Update

<http://issakaadams.wordpress.com/2013/06/19/mali-conflict-malian-government-signs-peace-agreement-with-tuareg-rebels-911/>

primarily concerned with formalizing a secular separate state called Azawad carved out of northern Mali.

Of the various Al Qaeda-linked terrorist groups operating in Mali, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM: a franchise of Al Qaeda originating in Algeria) poses the biggest threat. Despite losses due to the French intervention that began in January 2013, including the death of senior leader Abdelhamid Abou Zeid in February 2013, AQIM's capabilities and reach in Mali have not been entirely decimated. Furthermore, the group is not an entirely "foreign" participant in the conflict. Since 2003, AQIM created a safe haven in Mali for its operations by embedding itself into the local population. AQIM members married Tuareg in northern Mali and the group recruited Malians into its ranks. However, locals turned against AQIM due to the extreme nature of Shariah (Islamic law) that it attempted to impose on areas in northern Mali under its control during 2012.

Ansar Dine (Arabic: "Defenders of the Faith") led by Iyad Ag Ghaly is another influential actor in the Malian conflict which is supported by AQIM and also seeks to impose Shariah in Mali. The group is believed to have formed as a result of a conflict over leadership within the mainstream Tuareg rebel movement. Unlike AQIM, Ansar Dine is more local in orientation and also in its membership. Despite this, it displayed the extent to which it follows an extremist interpretation of Islam when it destroyed a number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Timbuktu. Ansar Dine considered these sites *haram* (forbidden in Islam) because they belonged to the local Sufi community.

Another Islamist extremist group that is also supported by AQIM and a key player in the Malian conflict is the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA). MOJWA is believed to be a breakaway faction of AQIM made up of its non-Algerian elements. MOJWA

joined Ansar Dine and AQIM in "hijacking" territories under control of Tuareg rebels over the course of 2012. The group is believed to be engaged in the trafficking of drugs and was commonly perceived as a criminal organization, although its administration of the northern city of Gao during 2012 showed that it cannot be portrayed as such.

Divisions among the Tuareg Rebels

In addition to AQIM, Ansar Dine and MOJWA, divisions within the Tuareg rebel movement are another factor which the peace agreement does not address and which can hamper the effectiveness of the current efforts to stabilize Mali. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), which led the latest phase in the long-running Tuareg rebellion in early 2012 and was party to the recent peace agreement, is an amalgamation of former Tuareg rebel groups as well as Tuareg fighters who participated in the Libyan conflict in 2011. The MNLA is mostly composed of Tuareg from the Ifoghas and Idnan clans and has a broader support base than previous rebel groups had throughout the struggle for Azawad.

Nevertheless, the limits to the MNLA's representation of the Tuareg are evident in the opposition it has faced from the Inghad clan which does not support the separatist cause. Furthermore, the MNLA leadership is to some extent also perceived by Malians as being "Libyan" Tuareg. Most of the MNLA leaders were recruited and integrated into Gaddafi's Islamic Legion and not a part of the Tuareg rebellion until the recent episode in 2012. As such, the MNLA's position as a key organization responsible for the peace agreement is not likely to sit well with the Tuareg clans it does not represent. Although the MNLA is in a position to speak with other Tuareg clans in Northern Mali, Jean-Paul Rouiller, director of the Geneva Centre for Training and Analysis of Terrorism (GCTAT), said "The MNLA will remain a factor of instability in the North. I do



MINUSMA troops receive their blue berets in Bamako, the capital of Mali.

Photo source: Blagoje Grujic, MINUSMA

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=45310&Cr=+Mali+&Cr1=#.UdIYM lmiSo>

not believe they ever will be in a position to guarantee peace and stability in the area once the French troops are gone.” Rouiller added that “they will not be any match for Ansar al-Din, AQIM or MOJWA fighters.”

In addition to its ability to overcome the divisions within the Tuareg rebel movement and limitations in its own capabilities, the MNLA’s position is complicated by its relationship with the Islamist extremist groups. Its relationship with Ansar Dine, in particular, has been complex and constantly changing. In May 2012, the MNLA and Ansar Dine announced a short-lived merger, which marked a departure for the MNLA from the secular nature of its agenda. Ansar Dine and MNLA parted ways with the latter supporting the French intervention in January 2013.

Conclusion

While the preliminary peace agreement between Tuareg rebels and the Malian government

represents an important step away from the chaos that ensued from the rebellion in 2012, there are important obstacles arising out of two key factors. The first is the continued presence of Al Qaeda-linked groups which supported the Tuareg cause but have a different end goal in mind, namely the imposition of Shariah across Mali rather than the creation of a secular separate state. The second factor is MNLA’s precarious position as the ostensible leader among the various Tuareg rebel groups and factions. With MINUSMA underway and a gradual French withdrawal taking place, the stability of Mali still hangs in the balance. This is because MINUSMA is primarily a stabilizing force unlike the French contingent which focused on containing the threat from Al Qaeda-linked terrorist groups.

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Tension between the Sudans: Not Just Oil, but a Lack of Foresight

Cleo Haynal

The use of oil as a tool in the rivalry between South Sudan and Sudan is harming both countries and opening the door to an increased presence of transnational terrorist groups.

On 29 June 2013, South Sudan's Vice President Riek Machar was scheduled to meet with Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir to discuss the future of oil that is pumped in South Sudan and refined and transported through Sudan. Since the independence of South Sudan in July 2011, the distribution of oil revenues has been a source of tension between the two countries. The economies of both countries depend almost exclusively on oil and are also mutually dependent in the process of getting petroleum to its buyers.

Both the Sudan and South Sudan governments see oil as a useful tool for gaining leverage over the other. However, this tendency harms both

countries with economic and political repercussions that impact regional security. The increased economic vulnerability of the two countries cripples their capacity to address rebel violence and the activity of transnational terrorist groups within their borders.

Socio-economic Predisposition to Unrest

On 9 July 2011, South Sudan became independent through a referendum that followed a thirty-year civil war which claimed the lives of an estimated 2 million people. It is the newest recognized country in the world and one of its most politically and economically vulnerable. South Sudan's political vulnerability stems from



The distribution of oil revenues has been a source of dispute since South Sudan became independent in 2011. Photo credit: Adriane Ohanesian, AFP

http://transitions.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/07/11/south_sudans_pipe_dreams



Both Sudan and South Sudan have attempted to use oil as a tool of leverage against the other.

Photo credit: Hannah McNeish, AFP

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-03-27/south-sudan-may-take-until-2014-to-reach-pre-shutdown-oil-output.html>

bringing together more than 200 different ethnic groups with no real political institutions in an area where several major transnational insurgent and terrorist groups operate. It is economically vulnerable due to its severe dependence on oil, with the World Bank calling it the world's most oil-dependent country. While South Sudan has vast natural resources and opportunities for diversification, they are mostly untapped and the local population still depends chiefly on food imports.

Since the separation of the two countries, the distribution of oil revenues that accounts for over 90% of their economies and which creates codependence between them has been a source of strife. In January 2012, South Sudan halted oil production accusing Sudan of stealing \$800 million in oil going through the Sudanese pipeline. It resumed production in March 2012. This year, it was Sudan's turn when it blocked oil transportation in response to what it claimed was South Sudan's support of insurgent groups fighting Sudan's government. Both countries have seen serious economic downturn since their secession. The use of oil embargos against each other serves only to further weaken both governments. It also increases discontent and opens up space for terrorist groups from neighboring countries to operate in.

A History of Sponsoring Terrorism

In 1993, the United States declared Sudan a state sponsor of terrorism and it is still considered as such despite what the UN calls "good faith progress". A country with a low population density and a history of sponsoring terrorist groups to act on their behalf, Sudan is an attractive place for terrorist, guerilla, and insurgent groups. It is well known that Bin Laden moved to Sudan in 1991 after his fallout with the Saudi Arabian government and that he established a base for Mujahideen training in Khartoum. Sudan has also played host to Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Abu Nidal Organization and has sponsored the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to fight the southern insurgencies before the secession. The Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) has also been operating on Sudanese territory since the end of the 1990s. In theory, its purpose was to fight the LRA, but in practice the group terrorized local populations.

During the early 2000s, the Sudanese government engaged in efforts to reduce the hold of the various groups operating in the country and in 2001, the UN lifted the sanctions imposed on the country. But the increased economic hardship at present combined with regional

turmoil has prompted the renewal of this safe haven for transnational groups. In South Sudan, more than 75% of the population is below 30 years old. Many have therefore lived knowing only a brutal civil war. Furthermore, more than half of the population lives below the poverty line. These youths have not seen their quality of life increase and will be quick to take up arms should the opportunity present itself.

A Tough Neighborhood

South Sudan and Sudan share the unenviable 4th rank in the 2012 Failed State Index by Foreign Policy and Fund for Peace. Failed states – especially with a population density as low as that of Sudan – have been prime locations for sheltering terrorist groups. South Sudan borders six countries and Sudan borders seven. Many of their neighbors are faced with the presence of dangerous and ambitious terrorist groups. For example, the LRA from Uganda is still using South Sudan as a refuge. Similarly, Hamas is a declared ally of Sudan and Boko Haram is moving further east into neighboring Chad.

Throughout the civil war, porous southern borders helped South Sudan gain help from neighbors and escape the northern army. The Sudanese government is still vocal about its support for Hamas and there are suspicions that the country's eastern borders could allow al-Shabaab to escape NATO and African Union forces by moving further west. Contrary to the Ugandan government's claims, the LRA is far from defeated and will not be until its training camps in South Sudan are closed.

While paying lip service to international counter terrorism financing laws, neither Sudan nor South Sudan have the capacity or the political will for enforcement. Transparency International ranks Sudan as one of the three most corrupt countries in the world, giving it a score of 13 out of 100 in 2012.

Even where self-interest is concerned, there is a need for both governments to change their focus towards creating more deeply rooted institutions. This is the only way that both countries may become safer and more developed. By continuing to disproportionately emphasize oil revenues, the governments of both countries are forgetting the broader picture: economic diversification and governance have a better chance of guaranteeing state longevity. A continuation of the current situation will only serve to enable transnational terrorist groups to maintain their presence in both countries and contribute towards an enduring pattern of insecurity.

—
Cleo Haynal is an Analyst with ICPVTR.

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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.

Articles can be 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 issue. Please refer to the [guidelines](#).

Electronic copies of the articles (MS Word format) may be submitted to ctta@ntu.edu.sg

Deconstructing al-Shabaab's Transnational Jihadist Image

Syed Huzaifah Alkaff

Al-Shabaab appears to retain a strong local orientation despite being an Al Qaeda affiliate, although this may change given the current internal conflict between the various factions of the group.

Al-Shabaab has often been portrayed as a militant jihadist group with extensive international linkages, particularly since it became an Al Qaeda affiliate in 2012. However, it is not immediately clear whether al-Shabaab is actively pursuing attacks outside Somalia as part of an operational strategy embracing the tenets of the broader militant jihadist movement. In fact, it may be the case that al-Shabaab's cross-border involvement is mostly a response to external intervention by neighboring countries and the international community. Furthermore, despite the gain in strength from the recruitment of foreign fighters, the unintended effect of their involvement with al-Shabaab appears to have been a weakening of the group by causing internal divisions.

Crossing Borders to Retaliate

On 25 May 2013, al-Shabaab carried out two coordinated attacks on the Damajale and Adisugow police posts located on the Somali border with Kenya. Six people, including two policemen and four civilians, were killed. Al-Shabaab acknowledged over social media that it had taken two Kenyans as hostages. It is believed that the group was targeting the armory of the two police posts.

The coordinated assault on the two border police posts is the latest in a series of attacks targeting Kenya since its deployment of troops in Somalia to crush al-Shabaab as part of Operation Linda Nchi (Swahili: "Protect the Nation"). Operation Linda Nchi was launched in October 2011 by Kenya in response to the kidnapping of foreign tourists and aid workers in northern Kenya by

al-Shabaab. The operation also aimed to counter piracy that has adversely affected Kenya's shipping industry. Al-Shabaab has since retaliated against Kenya through a series of grenade attacks and shootings.

Al-Shabaab's first transnational attacks were the bombings it carried out in Kampala, the Ugandan capital, in July 2010. The group had long identified Uganda as a target due to its deployment of troops to support the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and its provision of training for Transitional Federal Government (TFG) troops. The recent attacks targeting Kenya are can therefore be seen as continuing an established trend of al-Shabaab responding to external obstacles to its control of territory in Somalia rather than an expression of adherence transnational militant jihadist ideology.

In fact, al-Shabaab has been relatively consistent in issuing statements against external involvement in the Somali conflict. In a recent statement to Reuters, the group's military spokesperson said "Our aim is to expel the disbelievers from Muslim lands. Until that goal is achieved, the disbelievers will never find a safe haven in Mogadishu or in any other Muslim land. Not today, not tomorrow, not as long as a single Muslim is alive."

However, in December 2012 a privately-owned radio station in Somalia reported that al-Shabaab members were fighting alongside Boko Haram in Nigeria, but these claims have not been independently verified. If such reports are proven to be credible, they would indicate a departure from the current trend where al-Shabaab has

only carried out attacks outside Somalia in retaliation to external intervention. Nevertheless, it is true that some degree of cooperation exists between the two groups – in 2011, Boko Haram issued a handwritten statement admitting its links with al-Shabaab which also stated that its members had received training in Somalia.

The Mixed Results of Recruiting Internationally

In keeping with its name (al-Shabaab translates from Arabic as “the youth”), al-Shabaab’s primary targets for recruitment are Somali youth, who can be as young as eight years old. The group’s success in drawing recruits from this demographic is likely due to the fact that the younger generation perceives jihadist ideology more positively and is also less attached to the clan than their elders who have much more to lose by leaving the economic and social safety of clan hierarchy. Al-Shabaab has also recruited from camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Somalia and refugee camps in Kenya. However, al-Shabaab’s recruitment network gradually extended well beyond Somalia and its immediate neighbors. The group now operates

an active online recruitment campaign through social media that incorporates elements of Somali nationalism and Islamist ideology.

One of the key factors contributing to the success of al-Shabaab’s international recruitment drive has naturally been its status as an Al Qaeda affiliate. This gave the group a degree of legitimacy within the militant jihadist community and motivated foreign fighters to join in their struggle. Initially, international recruitment sought to acquire fighters from neighboring countries or Arab countries. As al-Shabaab grew in prominence, it also began to target the Somali diaspora communities in North America, Europe, East Africa, the Arab world, and Australia as well as non-Somali Muslims for recruitment.

This development had a significant impact on the strength in the group’s membership. In particular, al-Shabaab’s success in recruiting Americans set it apart from other Al Qaeda franchises. Since 2007, several Americans have traveled to Somalia to receive training and participate in al-Shabaab operations. US officials reported that many recruits were from the Somali community in Minneapolis, with some of the Somali-American



Somali men parading as members of al-Shabaab in the capital, Mogadishu, 2011.

Photo credit: Feisal Omar, Reuters

<http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2011/07/27/al-shabaab-recruited-dozens-of-americans-u-s-report/>



Omar Hammami, also known as Abu Mansour al-Amriki, was an American-born foreign fighter in al-Shabaab believed to have been killed by members of a faction within the group that he criticized over social media.

Photo source: Sabahi

http://sabahionline.com/en_GB/articles/hoa/articles/features/2013/02/25/feature-01

recruits even becoming suicide bombers for al-Shabaab. In May 2013, a District Court in Minnesota (Minneapolis is the largest city in Minnesota) sentenced four men of Somali origin to prison for supporting al-Shabaab.

Despite the gain in numbers from the recruitment of foreign fighters, the practice has not entirely worked in al-Shabaab's favor. This has been more apparent since the group's ouster from its operational base in Kismayo, a port city in southern Somalia. Internal divisions – particularly in relation to ideology and tactics – have been one of the most important consequences of foreign militant jihadists getting involved with al-Shabaab. One of the more high-profile examples was American-born Omar Hammami, also known as Abu Mansour al-Amriki, who criticized al-Shabaab for its mistrust of foreign fighters and lack of adherence to the ideology of the broader militant jihadist movement. Hammami was apparently killed in May 2013 by al-Shabaab fighters loyal to a faction that he had targeted in his criticism of the group on social media.

Furthermore, the group is also currently facing a leadership struggle between factions which may alter its orientation towards transnational activity and the ideological tenets of the militant jihadist movement. This is because the al-Shabaab faction led by Sheikh Moktar Ali Zubeyr, also

known as Ahmed Abdi Godane, which is more inclined towards the transnational militant jihadist movement, has taken steps to eliminate its rivals. In addition, Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, who led a faction opposed to the involvement of foreign fighters and adopted a more nationalist orientation, appears to have surrendered to authorities in central Somalia. The exit of Aweys could possibly contribute further to the strength of the Godane faction and the influence of its ideological orientation on the entirety of al-Shabaab.

Looking Ahead

Al-Shabaab remains an Al Qaeda affiliate, although it is clear that its transnational activity in terms of operations and recruitment are driven towards achieving its objectives within Somalia. Should the faction promoting an approach more in line with the broader transnational militant jihadist movement come to dominate the group, the transnational geographical reach of al-Shabaab is likely to expand beyond merely responding to external actors' intervention in Somalia. The outcome of the current struggle between factions espousing different orientations will therefore indicate what the future direction of the group will be.

—
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Nigeria's Fight against Boko Haram

Manoj Harjani

As Nigeria continues a large-scale operation targeting the militants of Boko Haram in the northeast of the country, the duration of the confrontation remains a vital concern.

On 14 May 2013, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in the northeastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. This measure was taken in response to attempts by Boko Haram to impose territorial control in some areas of the northeast. Boko Haram has sought to create an Islamic state in Nigeria through the use of violence since 2009. The group is believed to have significant linkages with Al Qaeda through the affiliate groups Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and al-Shabaab. The counterterrorist operation which began once the emergency was declared is an effort of unprecedented scale aimed at ending the threat posed by Boko Haram and reducing its influence in the northeastern region it has operated in for years.

There are two aspects of the state of emergency and ongoing counterterrorist operation in the northeast which could potentially leave a long

term impact. First, it has been difficult to verify the success claimed by Nigeria's security forces in their current efforts against Boko Haram. This in turn presents difficulties in evaluating the mixed counterterrorism strategy adopted by Nigeria which attempts to incorporate both "hard" and "soft" approaches concurrently. Second, the potential for a refugee crisis is building and this is may become a protracted challenge that involves bordering countries as well.

Confronting Boko Haram

One of the most salient features of the operation by Nigerian security forces targeting Boko Haram militants has been an evolution of the tactics and strategies employed by both sides. Boko Haram's recent use of sophisticated weaponry has raised questions over the source of funding that paid for them, the manner in which they were procured, where training to use them was conducted and



Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in three states in northeast Nigeria on 14 May 2013.

Photo credit: AFP

<http://www.rferl.org/content/nigeri-as-jonathan-wins-presidential-election/9498323.html>



Youth in Nigeria's northeast have banded together to support government troops in their operations against Boko Haram.

Photo credit: AP

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/06/26/islamic-extremists-who-hit-police-institutions-now-targeting-civilians-in/>

by whom. Furthermore, there has been a transition since 2011 towards attacking targets outside the northeast and towards the use of suicide attacks. This was first seen in the suicide attack on the National Police Headquarters in Abuja in June 2011. More recently, on 19 February 2013, a French family was kidnapped in Cameroon, believed to be by Boko Haram, marking the first time the movement had operated past Nigeria's borders.

The evolving capabilities and tactics of Boko Haram have generated considerable speculation over the extent of the group's links with other militant jihadist organizations operating in the region, because Boko Haram has generally been perceived as a local movement within Nigeria focused on issues pertaining to the impoverished northeast region.

For the Nigerian security forces, one of the new tactics employed is the restriction of mobile phone services in the states affected by the emergency. This has served to hinder communication between Boko Haram militants, but has also meant that the primary source of information on the current state of the counterterrorist operation has been the Nigerian authorities. Independent verification of the

Nigerian authorities' claims therefore remains problematic.

Meanwhile, reports continue to be issued from Nigerian authorities regarding gains made in their efforts against Boko Haram. However, the group appears to be maintaining its ability to carry out attacks and it is therefore clear that its operational capacity has yet to be severed completely. On 18 June 2013, suspected Boko Haram militants opened fire on a school in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state. Maiduguri had been the focus of operations by the Nigerian Special Forces, and the ability of the militants to strike there was of particular concern. Boko Haram also struck on 23 June 2013 in the towns of Bama and Gwoza which are located in Borno state near the border with Cameroon. Members of the group distributed leaflets warning Christians and civil servants in these towns to leave within seven days or risk losing their lives. On 30 June 2013, further attacks were carried out in seven communities in the Gwoza area of Borno state. Reports indicate that Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and petrol bombs were used by the militants, leaving 15 dead.

However, the emergence of youth vigilante groups against Boko Haram points to an

unprecedented degree of support on the ground for the Nigerian government's counterterrorism operation. These vigilante groups are armed with rudimentary weapons but have been successful in capturing Boko Haram militants and turning them over to the authorities. Many of the groups arose in response to Boko Haram's targeting of schools and now help Nigerian security forces to identify militants at checkpoints. Boko Haram has responded by declaring that it will exact revenge on locals collaborating with security forces, and has attempted to target vigilante groups in attacks on checkpoints. Although the emergence of a groundswell of youth support for the Nigerian security forces in their operations against Boko Haram is a positive development, there are concerns over the vulnerability of the youth members of vigilante groups now that Boko Haram is targeting them and reservations should the government decide to arm them.

Despite the focus largely being on the ongoing counterterrorist operation, attention also needs to be devoted to assessing the other facets of Nigeria's counterterrorism strategy. While the operation in the northeast represents a "hard" approach involving the arrest and neutralization of terrorists, Nigeria has also undertaken a "soft" approach through preparations for an amnesty program. In April 2013, President Jonathan

announced a committee to develop a framework to offer amnesty to Boko Haram militants. While it appeared as though the counterterrorist operation which began in May 2013 would undermine the work of this committee, the Nigerian government has insisted that it remains committed to seeing the process through. Boko Haram's rejection of the amnesty program notwithstanding, it is not entirely clear whether such an initiative would address the root causes of the conflict, particularly if it attempted to merely duplicate the current amnesty program for militants in the Niger Delta.

An Emerging Refugee Crisis?

An unintended consequence of the upscale of Nigeria's counterterrorist efforts, however, has been the increase in the potential for a refugee crisis. The three northeast states where a state of emergency is currently in place all share porous borders with other countries. Niger lies to the north of Yobe, while Cameroon borders Adamawa to the east. Borno presents a more complicated situation since it borders not only Chad and Cameroon and part of its border is within Lake Chad. There is considerable debate at present over the current number of refugees, with conflicting reports preventing an accurate assessment of the situation. According to UN



Nigerian refugees in Cameroon, May 2013.

Photo credit: AFP

<http://www.voanews.com/content/nigerian-refugee-exodus-spreading-to-cameroon/1684000.html>

reports, approximately 6,240 people have crossed the border into Niger (as of 20 June 2013) and approximately 3,085 people into Cameroon (as of 24 June 2013). However, reports from Nigerian authorities indicated that for the refugees fleeing into Niger, only a small proportion of the total number are Nigerian citizens. For those who arrived in Cameroon from Nigeria, the Nigerian ambassador to Cameroon confirmed a lower number of 1,500 instead.

Given the previously discussed difficulty in making an accurate assessment of the success of the current counterterrorist operation targeting Boko Haram, there is no clear indication of the duration of the current confrontation. The danger of a protracted counterterrorist operation is that it will fuel more individuals in Nigeria's northeast to flee to bordering countries. This raises two important concerns – one, whether these countries have the capacity to support the incoming refugees and ensure that their basic needs are met, and two, the likelihood of refugees to engage in acts of crime and terrorism.

The bordering countries of Niger and Cameroon are not in an ideal position to support refugees – their capacity to cater to the basic needs of refugees is hampered by their own economic difficulties. Furthermore, international aid and humanitarian agencies are likely to make up for only a part of the remaining required logistical capacity. Therefore, there is an unavoidable lacuna in the provision of basic humanitarian needs for the refugees. Deprivation endured on their part can contribute to conditions ripe for radicalization although it is difficult to gauge the extent to which Boko Haram has support among those fleeing the northeast of Nigeria.

Independent assessments of the current state of Boko Haram and its capacity to carry out attacks are important for the current and future management of refugees. Attending to the humanitarian needs of the population in areas

under emergency rule and in border areas can be a vital cog in the “soft” aspects of Nigeria's counterterrorism strategy. The Nigerian security forces can take advantage of the present opportunity to build on the emerging support on the ground that it is currently benefitting from through a restoration of normalcy. But perhaps the most important factor of all is the duration of the operation – Boko Haram appears to be more resilient than Nigerian authorities' reports have portrayed, and this will only contribute towards an enduring confrontation.

Manoj Harjani is Associate Editor, *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis*.

CTTA'S NEW WEBSITE

CTTA has launched a website at www.cttajournal.org as an additional platform to reach out to our readers and contributors.

The website features content beyond the theme for each month's issue and also has an archive of past issues and contributors.

Contributions to the CTTA website are accepted on a rolling basis. Please refer to the [submission guidelines](#).

For more information, please [visit the website](#) or send an email to ctta@ntu.edu.sg.

Recent articles on the CTTA Website

[*Counterterrorism in Malaysia after the ISA Repeal: Assessing Capacity to Combat Threats*](#)

Sean Yap argues that the new measures introduced to replace the repealed Internal Security Act are capable of ensuring that Malaysia's capacity to combat terrorism has not been severely undermined.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM RESEARCH

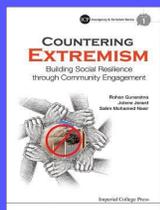


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The International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) is a specialist center within the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

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.

STAFF PUBLICATIONS



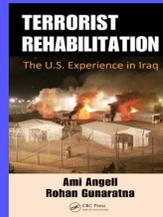
Countering Extremism
Rohan Gunaratna,
Salim Mohamed Nasir
and Jolene Jerard
(Imperial College Press,
2013)



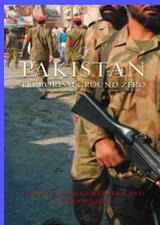
**Ten Years After 9/11:
Rethinking the Jihadist
Threat**
Arabinda Acharya
(Routledge, 2013)



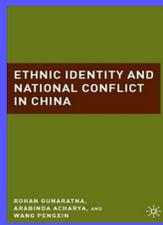
**The Terrorist Threat from
Thailand: Jihad or Quest
for Justice?**
Rohan Gunaratna and
Arabinda Acharya
(Potomac Books, 2013)



**Terrorist Rehabilitation:
The US Experience in Iraq**
Ami Angell and
Rohan Gunaratna
(CRC Press, 2011)



**Pakistan: Terrorism
Ground Zero**
Rohan Gunaratna and
Khurram Iqbal
(Reaktion Books, 2011)



**Ethnic Identity and
National Conflict in China**
Rohan Gunaratna,
Arabinda Acharya and
Wang Pengxin
(Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)



**Targeting Terrorist
Financing: International
Cooperation and New
Regimes**
Arabinda Acharya
(Routledge, 2009)