



Under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI

Africasec 8th edition

«Strategic issues and new terrorism sanctuaries»

Marrakech, February 10 – 11, 2017

OUTLINE

1 Emerging threats

The African continent has been viewed more and more as a dynamic continent. This perspective is based on different indicators and observations: Economic and demographic potential, growth, more and more integration is proven in worldwide trade, and political and geostrategic changes. This perception is closer to reality than it appears.

However, this virtuous dynamism is in itself accompanied by increased security threats and the emergence of new ones that might put into danger the continent's stability and growth.

The continent has become a priority target of these new threats whether they are the result of destabilizing maneuvers or the natural evolution. This exposure is due both to the elements of vulnerability that continue to burden the continent's countries and institutions, and to the new perception of Africa as a continent of future and huge potentials.

In certain cases, threats come from a double source. If we take terrorism and its numerous manifestations, we come to the conclusion that it is as much the result of deep seated fragilities that undermine the continent as it is sometimes the indirect result of geopolitical maneuvers expressing struggles for the domination of Africa and its resources.



Within these emerging threats, we find religious fundamentalism to be a true ideological base of terrorism and the outcome of the geographical expansion of these ideologies. We find also maritime piracy, which has become more and more a serious threat that prevents the viability of certain coastal zones, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea. Election violence has recently shown itself to be a genuine factor of instability.

Drug trafficking, which is not a new threat in itself, yet its new configurations and extensions are. As a result, in front of tracking down this drug trafficking in America, some African countries are becoming more and more a place of production by benefitting from corruption assimilated in these countries as well as the favorable natural conditions. The establishment and the increase of drug trafficking have harmful effects on countries to the extent it weakens the institutions and can influence elections and political development in general.

These new threats or rather new manifestations of old threats are of a sustainable nature. It is no longer possible to completely eliminate them by an individual State effort and in the short or medium term. They are by nature better resisting by adapting each time to developments. They benefit particularly from insufficient inter-State cooperation and the lack of effective collective mechanisms. They also derive from, sometimes, elusive nature of new information technologies that continue to offer, in a non-voluntary basis, to the different carriers of threats opportunities to escape and to resist the various efforts undertaken in this regard.

2 Assessment of terrorist threat

It is indisputable that in these historic times, terrorism remains one of the most threats to be urgently confronted and eradicated. In fact, terrorism constitutes a direct threat to the stability and the very existence of countries; it participates in defending the very foundation of coexistence by playing on the ethnic and religious strings in a continent where the majority of States still suffer from flaws related to national construction. Within this framework, terrorism is even the most enduring and threatening insecurity factor in the future. It feeds and strengthens itself on endogenous elements such as the marginalization of young people, shortcomings in social and human development, and weaknesses in national cohesion through the livelihood of ethnic and religious factors of division, etc.



In more concrete terms, terrorism continues to strike countries in the continent even though the number of deadly attacks has almost halved between 2015 and 2016 from 63 to 32. This decrease is due in particular to the decline in the number of attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram. But apart from the case of Nigeria and Cameroon, we can conclude that there was a general decrease in terrorist activity, which had reached high records in 2015. (See appendix)

Is this decrease going to be part of a lasting trend? Is it a mere momentary break or the beginning of an over lasting decline of terrorism phenomenon?

The debate over these questions will include the following elements:

- Nigeria and Cameroon have witnessed a decline in the number and intensity of terrorist attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram through, particularly, field efforts as well as coordination among countries in the region.
- Regional coordination mechanisms have also been strengthened at the institutional level, whether it is the African Union or regional and sub-regional organizations (ECOWAS...). Therefore, one finds that at the level of the AU, we begin to go beyond the stage of awareness to arrive to a more concrete stage through the adoption of several measures and mechanisms (AFRIPOL ...). West African countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso...) being targeted has prompted ECOWAS members to seriously consider the opportunity of establishing a counter-terrorism military force.
- In the last months, most of the deadly attacks in Africa have taken place in Somalia, Egypt and Libya.

3 Local expressions of terrorism

As a result, terrorism finds in Africa the very elements of its expansion. There is a very unsettling tendency towards the assertion of a form of local terrorism that draws on the same ideological and geostrategic dimensions as international terrorism, but which is accompanied by other more localized dimensions likely to give it greater force of adaptation.



Boko Haram is a concrete example of this **localized terrorism** which settles in its environment and which finds the ingredients for its strengthening and its evolving adaptation.

It is about a movement locally set in the shadow of a more peaceful homonymous movement preaching a hardline Salafism. In the case of Boko Haram, ideology is an outward sign that does not hide the existence of purely localized and national dimensions of its action.

As a matter of fact, Nigeria is a country known for a considerable development of sects and ethnic groups that are in a confrontational, sectarian and segmental dynamic. The lines of division are multiple, and one finds on top of it a religious division between Muslims and Christians, one also finds the existence of important religious minorities inside each of these religions (Shiism for example, which is already a target of pernicious actions of Boko Haram). The consequences of the colonial operations separating the north from the south are also not alien to this situation. Boko Haram is in some ways a product of this complicated environment.

Homegrown terrorism phenomenon is more connected with the new manifestations of terrorism in the west revealed in particular by the different acts committed there by nationals or people living in these countries. It reflects one of the major security challenges in Europe and North America.

Africa has known this phenomenon long before. The Casablanca attacks in 2003 are manifestations of this homegrown terrorism. In the rest of the continent, this form of terrorism is unfortunately a phenomenon that is likely to spread more easily than one might think. The social situation of young people, the insecurity which continues to drag down the integration of certain demographic and ethnic categories, the secessionist movements, the indigence of educational systems and the weakness of cultural and religious shields, all these are fertile ground for terrorism and radicalization.

Another aspect of the expansion of this phenomenon in Africa lies in the geographical mobility of combatants. It was noted that during the attacks in the last two years, the perpetrators have come from many nationalities. Terrorist groups such as (AQIM, ISIS, Boko haram, Shabab) are still



powered by volunteers from several other African countries as well as from countries in Europe or Asia.

The issue of foreign volunteer fighters is closely related to the following major issues:

- Absence of an effective mechanism to control the movement of people across borders. On the one hand, the weakness of the intelligence services, and the lack of coordination allows terrorist candidates to circulate freely and legally cross international borders without being questioned. On the other hand, the permeability of the borders allows the terrorist movements to easily infiltrate its elements into the territories of third countries.
- The issue of the radicalization that strongly strikes African countries. Radicalization carries an internationalist ideology that crosses states and borders. The defended cause is not national or ethnic but rather universal. This mobility is in particular affiliated with the rise of Jihadism, which encourages fighters to have a universal vision of their action (the hijra).
- There is also a link with the shortage of economic prospects for young people left abandoned. Jihadism is also empowered by mercenaries. In front of unemployment and lack of financial resources, young people find a source of livelihood in the terrorist operations.

Geopolitical developments have made the problem of foreign terrorist fighters gain significant momentum. It is more and more about a high-risk factor that African states and institutions must take very seriously.

4 Fighters mobility and return

As a matter of fact, within the same framework, one of the most worrisome insecurity elements at the moment is the return of terrorist fighters. This question urgently arises as States and International coalitions have weakened terrorist movements calling on foreign volunteer fighters in Syria and Iraq led by ISIS.



The last year's attacks in France, Belgium, and Germany and also in Burkina Faso continue to demonstrate the imminent risks of jihadist fighters' return.

This issue has become more and more universal. It no longer concerns only Western European and North African countries but threatens the other African countries as well. Mobility and return patterns might be complicated.

Various elements indicate a convergence of thousands of foreign fighters who have fled Iraq and Syria to the Sahel region and West Africa. With the reverse of the situation in these two countries in disfavor of the IS and Al Qaida, it could encourage the fighters of the latter to flee towards Africa. Several elements support these hypotheses:

- The majority of these combatants are wanted and tracked down by their countries of residence and countries of origin. Their return to these countries might be very complicated. They would prefer the Sahel region where terrorist movements continue to benefit from safe bases.
- Libya continues to provide an entrenched territory for the Islamic state. This country, confronting a civil war, could be an ideal transit country for these fighters.

According to many observers, these fighters have already taken the road to Africa, notably through Yemen and then Somalia. This route carries major risks for East Africa and the Sahel. Indeed, Somalia and Kenya are already weakened by the activism of the group of Shabab. Ethiopia, Djibouti and even Eritrea and Uganda are likely to suffer the consequences of this geographical redistribution. Mali, Niger and Chad are likely to see the resurgence of terrorist and criminal movements that are already there.

As a matter of fact, these fighters could push these movements to reinvest criminal activities, particularly smuggling and drug trafficking, which could plunge these countries into destabilizing insecurity.

5 Morocco and antiterrorism

During the previous edition, we were able to study and outline the workings of the Moroccan strategy to combat extremism. Thus, with its



historical and institutional strengths, the Kingdom has been able to deal effectively with the destructive ideologies that target youth.

This strategy is being pursued alongside another security strategy to strengthen antiterrorism tools.

One of the dimensions of this strategy concerns an upgrading of the prison environment in order to prevent radicalization and to control the processes of deradicalization of prisoners. Theological bodies have thus been able to intervene and direct their actions in this environment. Whether it is the advice of the Ulema or the Rabita Mohammadia of the Ulema, an interesting work has been carried out in order to accompany and stimulate these processes of exit from extremism. This initiative has constituted in the training of prison officers on the follow-up of detainees adopting extremist speeches. Indeed, experience has shown that unaccompanied detainees present a great risk of moving to a higher level of radicalism and some join the terrorist movements as soon as they are released.

On the other hand, the Moroccan authorities have become aware of the need to adapt the antiterrorism tools with the metamorphosis of threats. The expected decline of ISIL in Syria and Iraq and the existence of a good number of Moroccan nationals and dual nationals among the ranks of this organization pushed Morocco to undertake a reorganization of the security services. The great novelty was in 2015 with the creation of the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigations. This organization, which is affiliated to the Directorate General for Territorial Surveillance, is responsible for prosecuting crimes and misdemeanors provided for in the article 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code, including, among other things, organized crime, arms smuggling and kidnappings.

However, its main mission is the fight against terrorism. It therefore becomes the specialized body par excellence to coordinate and unify security measures in this area. This new tool has, in a short period, been able to establish itself as an international reference in the fight against the terrorist phenomenon. Different institutions and states have not hesitated to testify to this effectiveness (UN, Belgium, France, Spain ...). In the field, the figures speak for themselves: 40 terrorist cells have been dismantled (21 in 2015 and 19 in 2016). According to the same official figures, a large majority of dismantled cells (36) had links with ISIL. 548 suspects were arrested and brought to justice (275 in 2015 and 273 in 2016).



The BCIJ is a real bulwark against the risks associated with the return of jihadist fighters. Thus, during this period his services were able to arrest 71 suspects returned to the country after having fought for ISIL and Al Qaeda in different conflict zones (Syria, Iraq, Libya ...)

These figures are a strong testimony to the effectiveness of this institution and the Moroccan strategy for the containment of terrorist risk. This effectiveness is not geographically limited to the national territory. Indeed, thanks to the contribution of the Moroccan services, especially the BCIJ, various services, in particular European, were able to avoid attacks or at worst to locate and arrest their perpetrators.

6 Climate Change and Conflict

If climate change is a phenomenon of universal dimension, its impact remains unequal considering various cosmopolitan factors (poverty, bad governance, population growth ...). Thus, Africa is considered to be one of the most vulnerable continents to the impacts of climate and environmental change for political, demographic and economic reasons (although the countries of the continent are responsible for less than 5% of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions). Climate change significantly alters people's living conditions (drought, unemployment, undernourishment, natural disasters, displacement of populations, impacts on the agricultural sector). This direct impact is a real stimulating factor both of insecurity and exacerbation of conflict. A great risk of the emergence of conflicts of different dimensions arises with acuity. The African community must also reflect on effective means of preventing and limiting the impacts of this climate change. Awareness was clearly expressed at the COP 22 Conference held in Marrakech. A summit was organized on the initiative of the King of Morocco and devoted to ways to limit the impacts of climate change in the continent. It is also urgent for international and African decision makers to stay the course and make this cause a priority of diplomatic efforts.



Appendix: List of deadly attacks that took place in Africa during the year 2016

Date	Place	Victims	Procedures and organizations
05/01/2016	Northeast of Nigeria	7 dead	Suicide bomb attack: BokoHaram
07/01/2016	Zliten in Libya	65 dead	An explosion near police training center: IS
15/01/2016	Somalia	52 dead	An attack on a UN camp: Chabab
15/01/2016	Ouagadougou	27 dead	An attack inside a hotel: AQMI
21/01/2016	Somalia	19 dead	Car bomb (Shabab)
22/01/2016	Egypt	9 dead	Bomb attack (IS)
25/01/2016	Cameroun	28 dead	Three attacks by Boko Haram
27/01/2016	Nigeria	?	Suicide bomb attack: Boko Haram
27/01/2016	Egypt (Sinai)	4 dead	IS
29/01/2016	Nigeria(Gombi)	10 dead	Suicide bomb attackby a teenager
31/01/2016	Chad	3 deadas well as terrorists	Boko Haram
31/01/2016	Nigeria (Maiduguri)	85 dead	Boko Haram
09/02/2016	Nigeria (Dikwa)	58 dead	Boko Haram
17/02/2016	South of Soudan	18 dead	Shootingof refugees
19/02/2016	Cameroun (Meme)	22 dead	Suicide bomb attack
13/03/2016	Ivory Coast	19 dead	An attack on a seaside resort (AQMI)
17/03/2016	Nigeria (Maiduguri)	25 dead	An attack inside a mosque



21/03/0/2016	Mali	An assailant was killed	An Attack on a UN base (Al Mourabitoune)
04/04/2016	Congo Brazzaville	17 dead	Shooting
09/05/2016	Somalia	5 dead	Shabab
17/06/2016	Nigeria	18 dead	Boko Haram
06/07/2016	Libya (Benghazi)	11 dead	Car bomb
08/07/2016	Nigeria	6 dead	Suicide bomb attack on a mosque
26/07/2016	Somalia	13 dead	Car bomb
31/07/2016	Somalia	6 dead	Car bomb(Shabab)
02/08/2016	Libya (Benghazi)	22 dead	Car bomb
21/08/2016	Cameroun	3 dead	Suicide bomb attack (Boko Haram)
25/08/2016	Somalia	7 dead	Commando raid (Shabab)
30/08/2016	Somalia	15 dead	Car bomb on a hotel (Shabab)
25/10/2016	Kenya	12 dead	Shabab
29/10/2016	Nigeria	9 dead	Boko Haram
24/11/2016	Egypt (Sinai)	8 dead	Car bomb
26/11/2016	Somalia	7 dead	Car bomb
11/12/2016	Egypt (Cairo)	26 dead	An attack on a Cathedral
11/12/2016	Somalia	29 dead	Shabab