# Violent Islamist extremism and terror in Africa

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## Summary

This paper presents an overview of large-scale violence by Islamist extremists in key African countries. The paper builds on previous publications of the Institute for Security Studies on the nexus between development and conflict trends, and it seeks to provide an overview of the evolution of the associated terrorism through quantitative and contextual analysis using various large datasets. The focus is on the development and links among countries experiencing the worst of this phenomenon, especially Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Mali, Nigeria and Somalia, as well as the impact of events in the Middle East on these African countries.

RADICAL AND VIOLENT Islam is complex, and an explanation of its causality and evolution is inherently controversial and inevitably incomplete. This paper argues that one should distinguish between events in North Africa, where developments are closely related to and influenced by what happens in the Middle East, and the evolution in north-east Nigeria of Boko Haram, which has a character more closely resembling a sect. Somalia, the final country to be included here, finds itself somewhere between the situation in North African countries and that of Nigeria, in that al-Shabaab is more closely linked to events outside its immediate environment but does not form part of the trajectory of North African countries although the divided clan politics in Somalia resemble the factionalism currently evident in Libya.

## Afghanistan, Sudan and Bin Laden

The expulsion of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan in 1989 was the last hot conflict of the Cold War. The film *Charlie Wilson's War* dramatised the role of a Texas congressman in galvanising several hundred million dollars annually from the US to support an amalgamation of conservative Islamic rebels (the mujahideen) to defeat and eventually force the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. Funding from the US was matched, dollar for dollar, by funds from Saudi Arabia, who shared America's hostility towards the Soviet Union, but for different reasons. In this manner, the Americans and their allies helped neighbouring Pakistan and others in the region to fight and eventually defeat

the Soviet occupation.[1] Having bled the Soviet Union dry, the Americans left even as the Soviet-aligned Afghan government managed to cling to power far longer than anyone had expected before Kabul fell to the Taliban, at which point Osama bin Laden returned to Afghanistan from his base in Sudan.[2]

Bin Laden believed that it was largely US support that allowed corruption, abuse and nepotism to be sustained in the Arab world including in his homeland, Saudi Arabia. According to these extremist views, the establishment of an Islamist system of government in the Middle East and North Africa is based on God's command.[3] Bin Laden and his collaborators saw the US as 'the locus of Christian power' and as 'the force that … represented the greatest threat to Islam'[4] – a view reinforced during Operation Desert Storm in 1991 when the US-led coalition expelled Iraq from Kuwait, again with substantial financial and some military support from Saudi Arabia. The events in Kuwait were to prove decisive in the mind of Bin Laden, who plotted from Afghanistan a series of attacks that followed the previous attacks and bombings against US interests in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and elsewhere.[5]

> Like other countries in North Africa, Algeria was rife with dissatisfaction, which spawned the formation of numerous Islamist fundamentalist and extremist groups

Bin Laden was forced to relocate to Afghanistan after several years in Sudan, which, after a military coup in 1989, had become a refuge, meeting point and training hub for a number of violent radical Islamist organisations, including the Lebanese Hezbollah, members of Abu Nidal's organisation, Carlos 'the Jackal' and the Egyptian al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya. From Khartoum, Bin Laden established businesses, and directed funds and logistical support to various causes and organisations,[6] and Sudan was subsequently placed on the US list of state sponsors of terrorism in 1993, where it has remained ever since.[7]

Events were to play in his favour for, at the same time that Bin Laden returned to Afghanistan (he had travelled, fought and stayed there at various times previously), the battle-hardened Algerians, Egyptians and other jihadists, who had joined the holy war against the Soviets, returned to North Africa, where their radical views – and, to a lesser extent, those of fellow Muslim extremists from Bosnia and Chechnya – had a direct impact on the Front Islamique du Salut (Islamic Salvation Front, FIS) in Algeria and the violence that followed the annulled elections there in 1992.[8]

The brutal events in Algeria and their aftermath were to become a running sore that infected and re-infected the entire North African region.

## Algeria infects North Africa

Algeria has been brutalised by its bloody war for independence from France, which ended in 1962 with the establishment of the Front de Libération Nationale (FNL) government. According to Isabelle Werenfells, 'The post-colonial elite marginalized the religious wing of the independence movement and ignored its demands for a dominant role for Islam in the new social and political order.'[9]

**1993**

SUDAN IS PLACED ON THE US STATE SPONSORS OF TERRORISM LIST

The FNL consolidated its grip on power with a coup in 1965 but was forced to liberalise and institute a multiparty system to soak up disaffection in the wake of the economic contractions and hardships in the 1980s, which culminated in widespread rioting (particularly the so-called bread riots of October 1988) as Algeria's youth bulge expanded.

Like other countries in North Africa, Algeria was rife with dissatisfaction, which spawned the formation of numerous Islamist fundamentalist and extremist groupings in an economic environment that offered very few opportunities. Eventually, the postcolonial development model did not appear to offer any advantages over France's colonial regime. As Anneli Botha puts it:

> Something had to give and eventually efforts at political reform included the legalisation of the FIS in 1989. The FIS drew much of its support from the large pool of unemployed youth who were enthralled by the 'holy war' stories spread by the Algerian Afghans in mosques across the country.[10]

**Figure 1:** Fatalities due to terrorism in Algeria, 9/11 (USA) and rest of the world, 1990–2014 (stacked area graph)
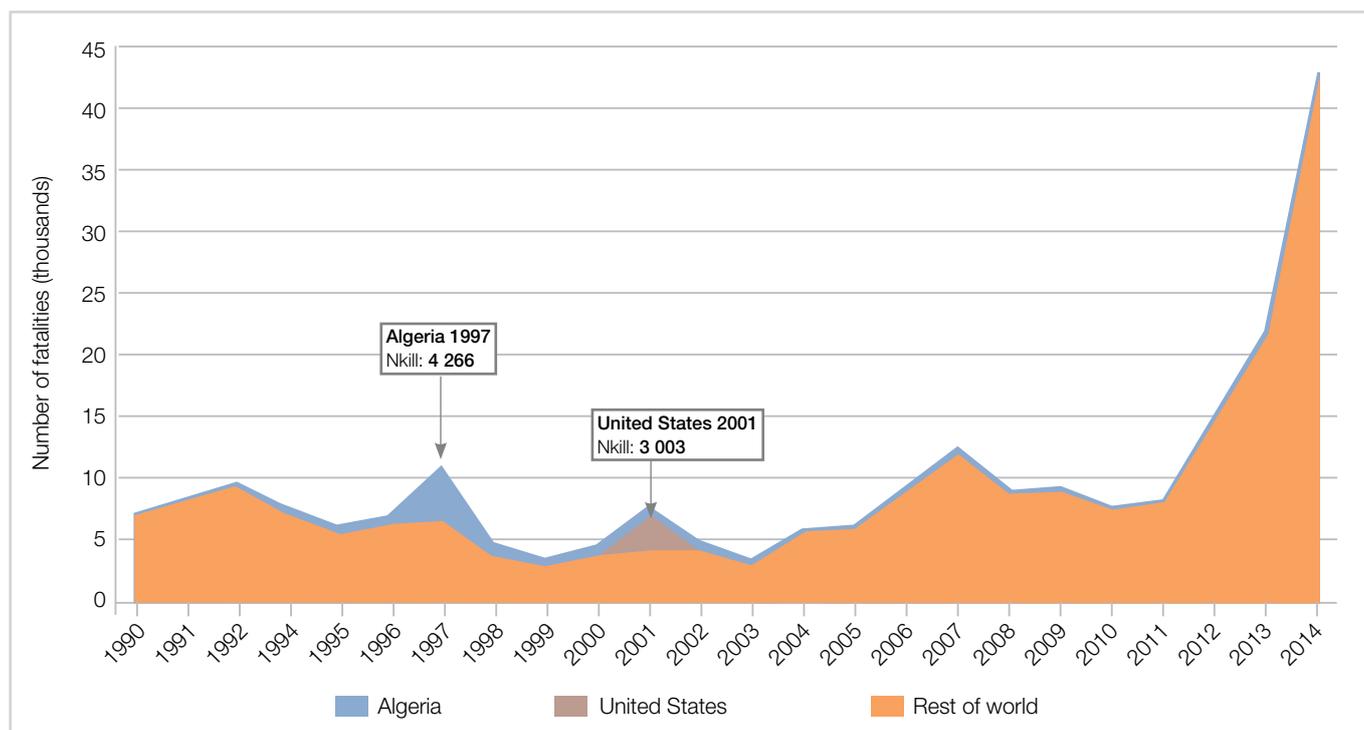


Note: Data for 1993 is not available.

Source: Extracted from Global Terrorism Database, 1970 to 2014, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland, www.start.umd.edu/gtd/, accessed 3 September 2015).

Having done well in local-government elections shortly after its legalisation, the FIS appeared to be heading for electoral victory in the second round of national elections, scheduled for January 1992. Alarmed by the surge in Islamist support, the military stepped in and their coup thwarted an apparent imminent victory for the FIS. The elections were cancelled. The Algerian military leadership instituted a national state of emergency and banned the FIS.[11]

Ironically, the FIS gained support from earlier efforts by the post-independence government to displace the still prominent role of France and French culture in Algeria by a concerted effort at Arabisation and Islamisation, thereby inadvertently supporting a subsequent national Islamist awakening. Algeria was, in those years, a close ally of the Soviet Union, and the recruitment of several hundred young Algerians to fight the jihad (holy war) in Afghanistan was for many a prelude to the jihad against the Algerian FNL.[12]

In the weeks that followed the annulment of the elections, the Algerian security agencies rounded up thousands of suspected FIS members and supporters, and interned them in tents deep in the Sahara. The country slid into a crisis that eventually claimed more than 100 000 lives. Deep fissures and infighting pitted the radical Groupe Islamique Armé (Armed Islamic Group, GIA) against the armed wing of the FIS, as well as against the government. The infighting, often orchestrated by the government, effectively emasculated most of the competing jihadist groupings as civil society eventually also mobilised against the terrorists.[13]

> Washington was very concerned that al-Qaeda was stretching its network from Somalia to Mauritania through the Maghreb – and with good reason

After a breakdown in negotiations with exiled factions of the FIS, the government decided on presidential elections in November 1995 and parliamentary elections in June 1997. Neither stopped a campaign of intensifying brutality very reminiscent today of those committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and Boko Haram in Nigeria. In 1996 Bin Laden revoked his earlier support for the GIA because of its worrying attacks on fellow Muslims and the high levels of civilian casualties.[14] These tactics also eventually split the GIA in 1998, leading to the formation of the Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, GSPC), the more prominent subsequent grouping.

A shadow of its former self, the GIA declared a ceasefire in 1997, ahead of the elections in 1999, which saw Abdelaziz Bouteflika elected as president of Algeria.[15] In the early years of his presidency, Bouteflika embarked on a successful campaign of amnesty and reconciliation. Violence declined even as relations between the Algerian government and the West improved, and by 2005 the GIA had practically ceased to exist, with most of its networks having been taken over by the GSPC, which, by 2001, had become the most dangerous armed group in Algeria.[16] During this period, the GIA was accused of being linked to organised crime and that it was heavily infiltrated by the Algerian intelligence, to the effect that Algerian forces succeeded in assassinating many of its leaders.

Washington was very concerned that al-Qaeda was stretching its network from Somalia to Mauritania through the Maghreb – and with good reason. As part of its strategy to expand regionally, the GSPC had established a training base in 2004 for new members from Chad, Sudan, Libya, Mali and Mauritania in the Tibesti mountains of northern Chad. Considerable engagement, coordination and interaction were happening between the GSPC and al-Qaeda, dating from the time that Bin Laden spent in Sudan. Eventually, the success of Bouteflika's 2005 Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation forced the GSPC to adapt. It had been losing ground since 2001 and, on

>100 000

LIVES LOST IN
ALGERIA'S CRISIS

23 January 2007, what was left of the GSPC announced that it had changed its name to al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), reflecting its open support for al-Qaeda.

That year would also see a change in its tactics, with the extensive use of suicide attacks and a large increase in casualties as terror attacks in Algeria once again increased. The GSPC also expanded operations in the region, including far southwards into Mali.[17] It has subsequently been active in a number of other countries, including Libya, Tunisia, Niger, Mali and Mauritania. Today it is a much less serious threat than some years earlier, although it retains regional tentacles, apparently including the provision of firearms training to Boko Haram.[18] Yet, as much as Algiers was able to put the lid on AQIM, other differences resurfaced, such as violence in the south of Algeria on the edge of the Sahara, between Berbers and Arabs.[19]

By 2015, stability has largely been restored in much of Algeria, although AQIM is still active (led by its long-standing leader Abdelmalek Droukdel) and a number of splinter groups operating in the southern regions bordering Mali and Libya, some of which originated from AQIM. In line with the broad trend elsewhere, factions within AQIM have recently shifted allegiance to the Islamic State, although Droukdel and his core group remain steadfast in their support of al-Qaeda.[20]

In retrospect, the GSPC/AQIM, with its extensive foreign network, media strategy and international fundraising, was ahead of its time, paving the way for other groups, such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, to expand on their original efforts. Its efforts to train terrorists in the region (from Chad, Sudan, Libya, Mali and Mauritania) would include several dozen members of the so-called Nigerian Taliban, the forerunner of Boko Haram.[21] Inspired by al-Qaeda, the GSPC/AQIM exported terrorism to the region even as its ability to influence developments domestically tapered down in the face of a concerted campaign by the government and its security agencies.

## The Islamic State gains headway

Itching to depose Saddam Hussein, the US invaded Iraq in 2003, 18 months after 9/11 under the pretext that the latter had weapons of mass destruction and supported al-Qaeda, despite significant evidence to the contrary. Having routed Saddam's forces in a matter of weeks, the Americans disbanded the Ba'athist and largely Sunni-populated security structures that had previously provided effective repression and security, leaving them unemployed, angry and often still armed. Iraq was left without an administrative structure, and insecurity mounted as the US elevated the long-suppressed Shia majority to power.

The Americans seemed to believe that alternative democratic systems would magically emerge from the Shia in Iraq despite the fact that the country had been under a brutal Sunni-dominated dictatorship for half a century (a period during which the Shia had been marginalised and denied a substantive role), to which they could then hand over control before departing. Instead, however, after the US invasion Iraq became a mess.[22]

Operation Iraqi Freedom provided breathing space for al-Qaeda as US military and intelligence assets were redirected from Afghanistan to Iraq. More importantly, insurgency against the Americans started shortly after the invasion by a group that, in 2004, pledged loyalty to Bin Laden and renamed itself al-Qaeda in Iraq. Within its ranks, al-Qaeda in Iraq had elements of Saddam's Ba'athist regime, including many who had served in the security forces and were intent on exacting revenge against the Americans, as well as re-establishing Sunni dominance.[23]

The relationship between al-Qaeda in Iraq and 'al-Qaeda Central' in Afghanistan became increasingly tense and fractured as the organisations competed and differed in tactics, strategy and belief systems. In January 2006 al-Qaeda in Iraq joined other Sunni insurgent groups to proclaim the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI).[24]

> The Islamic State had suffered limited successes against the overwhelming military power of the US in iraq

During his divisive tenure from 2006 to 2014, Iraq's longest-serving post-invasion prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, a Shia, did not try to straddle the divide between Iraq's Sunnis or its Kurds. Instead, Iraq experienced the rise of an armed Sunni insurgency that would almost capture Baghdad before the tide receded. By then, the last US soldiers had long left Iraq (in 2011), apparently in exchange for an agreement of support for al-Maliki from Shia-dominated Iran. To stay in power, Al-Maliki became increasingly dependent on Iran, which was involved in its own contestation with the US and rival Saudi Arabia. For their part, the Sunnis in the Iraqi army refused to fight their fellow Sunnis in the Islamic State or to support a government backed by their former Shia enemy, Iran. And, despite an estimated US investment of US$25 billion dollars to rebuild the Iraq military over the preceding eight years, they laid down their arms and fled rather than fight the Islamic State.[24]

The Islamic State had suffered limited successes against the overwhelming military power of the US in Iraq, but the protests that began in March 2011 in neighbouring Syria against

**Figure 2:** The evolution of global terrorism: fatalities in seven key countries (stacked area graph)
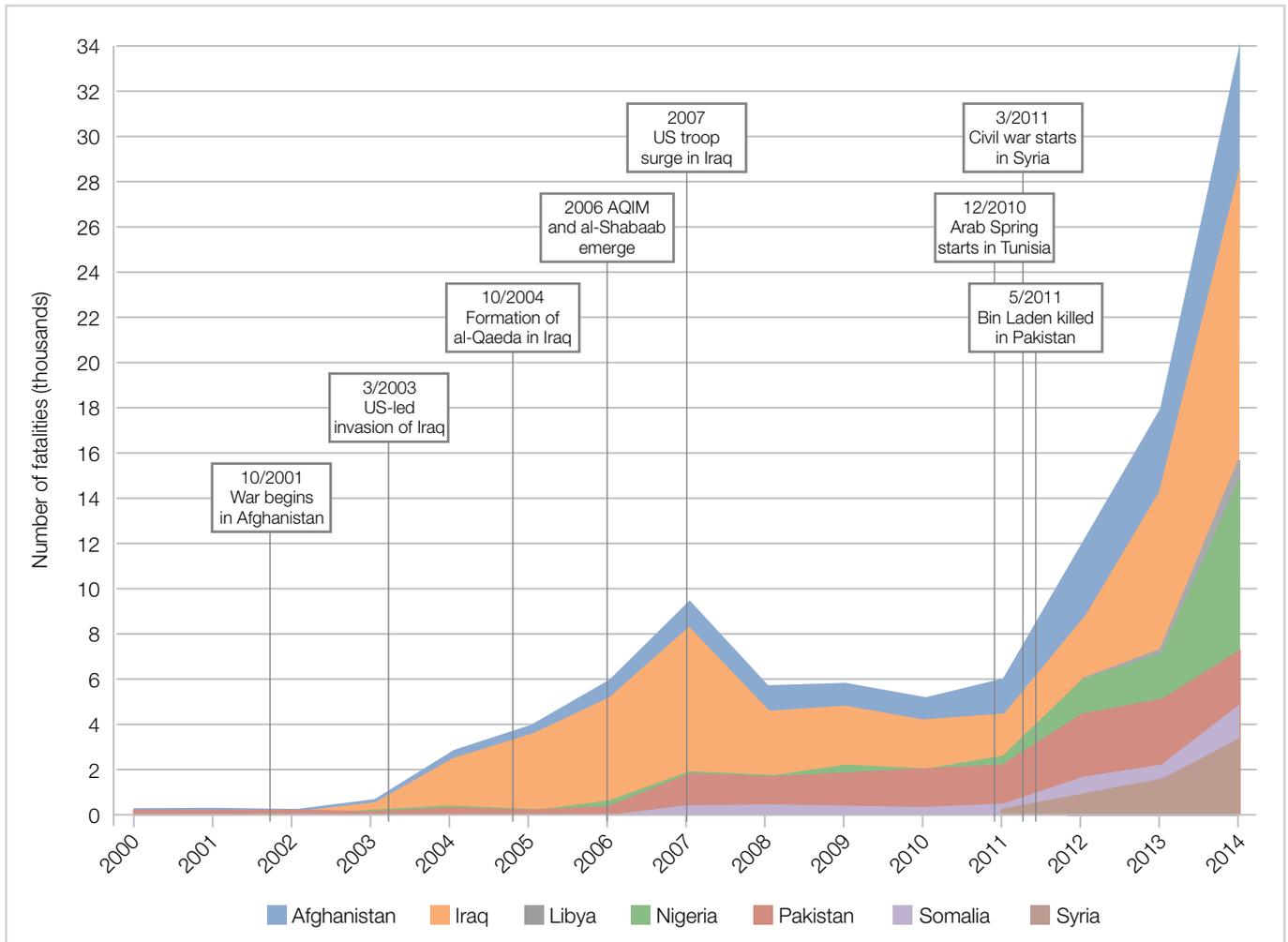


Source: Global Terrorism Database, 1970 to 2014, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland, www.start.umd.edu/gtd/, accessed 3 September 2015.

JUNE
2014

THE ISLAMIC STATE IN IRAQ AND THE LEVANT PROCLAIMS ITSELF TO BE A GLOBAL CALIPHATE

President Bashar al-Assad, part of the impact of the Arab Spring in the Middle East, provided the Islamic State in Iraq with new opportunities to expand its territory and operations just as the US drew down its forces in Iraq. In 2013 the Islamic State in Iraq announced that it would merge with its affiliate (the al-Nusra Front) fighting in Syria, a process that took several months to effect. In defiance of al-Qaeda, the Islamic State in Iraq was now to be known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, leading to a final split with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan/Pakistan.

In these developments, the impact of the Arab Spring came full circle. Events that had started as a popular movement in Tunisia at the end of 2010 spread across the region, reaching Syria, where a single family had ruled the country since 1970. Eventually a full-scale civil war erupted in Syria, which provided an opportunity for the spread of instability and terror from neighbouring Iraq, and the effective amalgamation of terrain under control of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant across the international border that had previously separated the two states.[26]

In June 2014 ISIL declared pockets of lands in Iraq and Syria as caliphate (literally, a Muslim empire led by a successor to the Prophet Muhammad) with its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as caliph.[27] As a caliphate, it claims religious, political and military

authority over Muslims worldwide, although mainstream Muslim groups have refused to recognise it as such, and it is inherently divisive and discriminatory against the Shia, among others. Unlike al-Qaeda, the Islamic State is intent on establishing a territorial state and, by July 2015, had gained control over large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria. For the Islamic State, 'theocratic legitimacy follows the seizure and administration of terrain'.[28] Its appeal is powerful, for it presents the ogre of an irresistible force – unstoppable and unforgiving in its march.

The confirmation, in mid-2015, that the supreme commander and spiritual leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, had been dead for two years provided a significant boost for the Islamic State. Shortly after the news broke, the Taliban announced that Mullah Akhtar Mansour would succeed Mullah Omar. On paper, al-Qaeda was subordinate to Mullah Omar as a result of a loyalty oath made by Bin Laden to Omar in the late 1990s, which was reaffirmed by al-Qaeda's current leader, Ayman al Zawahiri, in 2014. The death of Omar released all jihadists who had pledged allegiance to him, since neither the pledge of loyalty nor Omar's title of Amir al Mumineen (commander of the faithful) is automatically inherited by his successor. Through the death of Omar, the sole challenger to the caliphate that had been proclaimed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (as caliph) had been removed.[29]

Beyond their differences on strategy, tactics and personality, al-Qaeda and the Islamic State both pursue an Islamic state or caliphate in all current or former Muslim countries, to be ruled according to their radical interpretation of sharia law. More immediately, they seek to end US influence in Muslim countries and tend to the belief in a Christian–Jewish alliance that is conspiring to destroy Islam.[30]

## Tunisia – fragile but resilient

Compared with countries such as Algeria and Egypt, Tunisia had only a mere scattering of jihadist actors.[31] Shortly after elections in 1989, the Tunisian government banned the most prominent Islamic party, Harakat al-Nahda (the Renaissance Movement).[32] President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's government had embarked on an expansive programme to address the country's socio-economic challenges but, by 2010, however, it had run out of steam. Tunisia experienced a series of strikes and protests in the years leading up to the self-immolation of a poor Tunisian fruit seller, Mohamed Bouazizi, on 17 December 2010.

> Tunisians from all walks of life took to the street in rolling mass action that forced President Ben Ali to flee to Saudi Arabia within a matter of weeks

In a tense and volatile atmosphere, Bouazizi's act of supreme desperation and frustration ignited a raging veld fire. Tunisians from all walks of life took to the street in rolling mass action that forced President Ben Ali to flee to Saudi Arabia within a matter of weeks. This was the start of the Arab Spring uprising.

Despite having been at the heart of the Arab Spring in the first instance, Tunisia has managed to weather the fallout because, according to Isabelle Werenfells, 'Tunisian society is altogether more consensus orientated, educated and secular than most other Arab societies'.[33] A new governing coalition, led by the moderate Islamist party
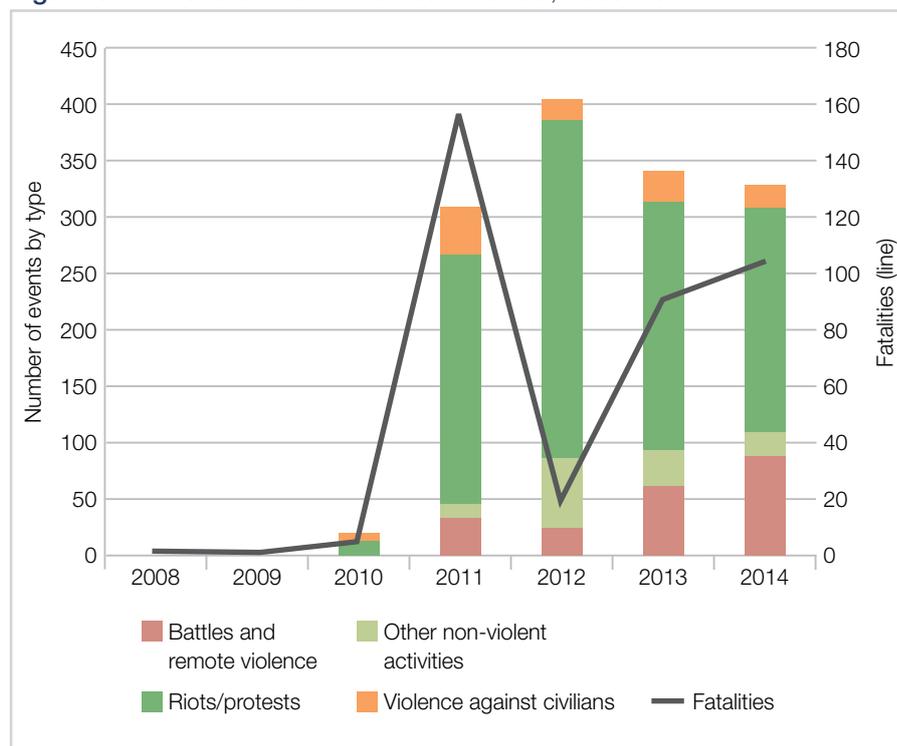
2014
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ARE EVENTUALLY HELD IN TUNISIA

**Figure 3:** Annual events and fatalities in Tunisia, 2008–2014



Source: Extract from ACLED version 5, All Africa 1997 to 2014, www.acleddata.com/data/version-5-data-1997-2014/, accessed 14 July 2015.

Ennahda, initially worked to integrate violent Salafists into the political process but, after a number of attacks the militants were banned and forced underground.[34] Tunisia's larger jihadi grouping, Ansar al-Sharia, largely funded by foundations in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, was prohibited in 2013 and appears to be radicalising.[35]

Figure 3 presents a bar chart from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (ACLED), showing types of events and the number of fatalities in Tunisia from political violence from 2008 to 2014, including terrorism. Since the two axes are not synchronised, it is not immediately evident that the number of events is significantly higher than the number of fatalities.

Parliamentary elections were eventually held in Tunisia in 2014, with inconclusive results, leading to the formation of a national unity government. Terrorism, however, has been on a steady upward trajectory. Economic woes have fuelled radicalism among Tunisia's disillusioned and excluded youth. By 2015, about 3 000 Tunisians had gone to Iraq, Syria and Libya to join the jihadist ranks – the largest group from any North African country and the second such wave from Tunisia. About 500 are believed to have returned, with all the attendant risks.[36] In March 2015, attacks on the Bardo National Museum in Tunis and at a hotel north of Sousse in June were claimed by the Islamic State but were apparently executed by a local splinter group, Uqba ibn Nafi, originally loyal to al-Qaeda but having recently shifted allegiance to the Islamic State.[37]

From the ACLED data presented in Figure 3, it is evident that the jihadists in Tunisia have grown much more active since 2011, as both events (left-hand axis) and number of fatalities (right-hand axis) increased substantially. Most of the terrorists hold out in the mountainous regions along the border with Algeria and benefit from the open border with Libya, working to violently prevent a stabilisation of the new political system.[38]

+3 000

TUNISIANS JOIN THE JIHADIST RANKS IN IRAQ, SYRIA AND LIBYA BY 2015

## The Arab Spring facilitates terror in North Africa

The Arab Spring offered hope that countries in North Africa and the Middle East could follow a more enlightened pathway. Five years later, these dreams have faded. Instead, the Arab Spring opened up space for the expansion of the Islamic State from Iraq to Syria (as recounted earlier) and has destabilised large parts of the Maghreb. The result is a tight connection between violent extremists in the interlinked nomadic regions available in Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Libya and Mali.

In the period that followed the revolution, Tunisia appeared to stabilise while the dramatic knock-on events in Egypt eventually frustrated the demands of its oppressed people for greater political and economic inclusion. In Libya, events spiralled out of control and spread arms, instability and violence across the Maghreb with an as yet indeterminable end.

Algeria has generally been able to withstand the knock-on effect of the Arab Spring. Most analysts believe that this is because its population was traumatised during more than three decades of almost constant instability and war, during which the government also built up an extraordinarily large (and effective) security establishment.

**Figure 4:** Terrorism in Africa, 2011–2014
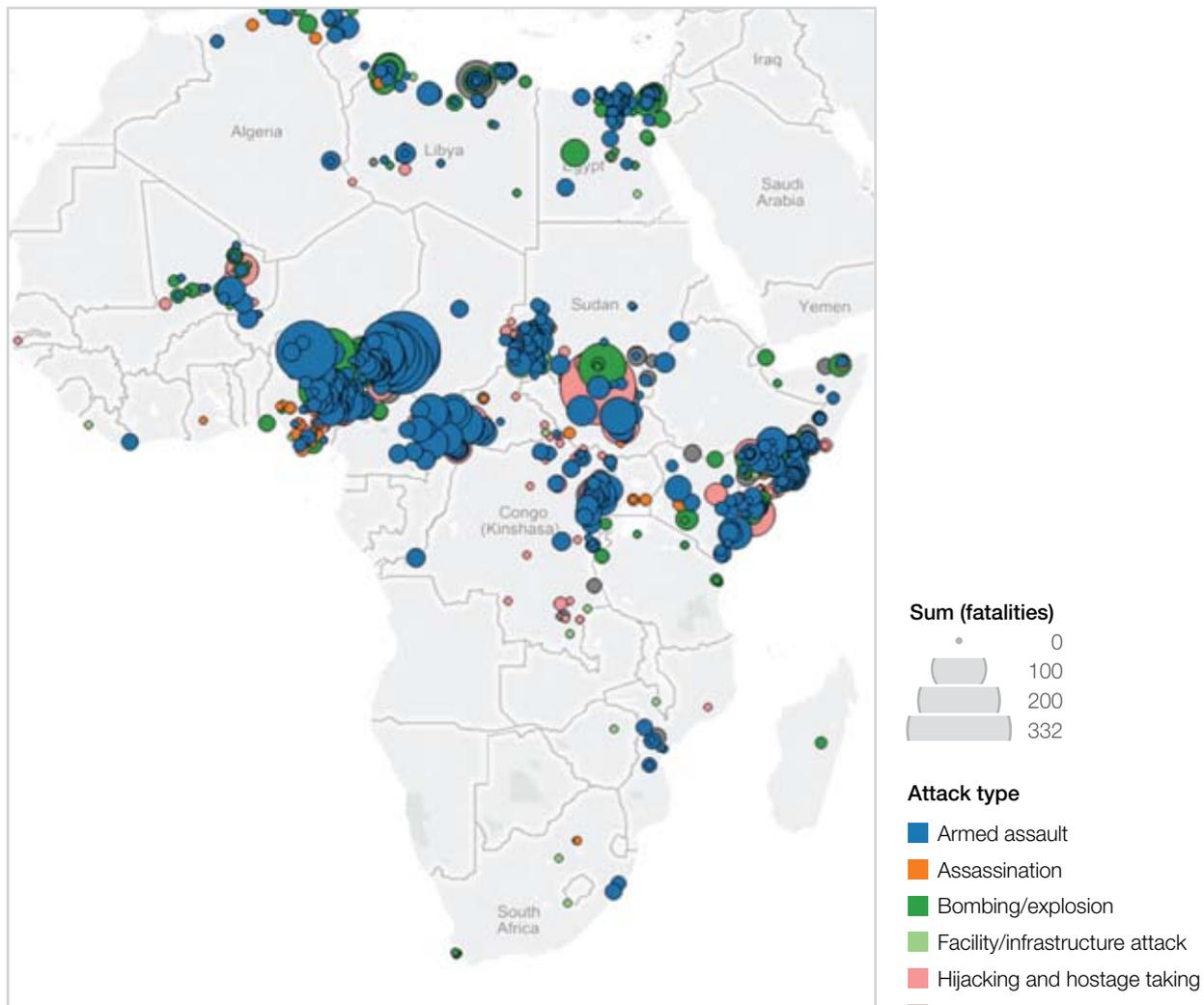


Source: Global Terrorism Database, 1970 to 2014, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland, www.start.umd.edu/gtd/, accessed 3 September 2015

But even Algeria was forced to compromise, and the government ended its state of emergency in 2011 as a demonstration of its more accommodating approach to frustration and rage.

Figure 4 presents all incidents of terrorism in Africa, as categorised and recorded by the Global Terrorism Database, for the period January 2011 to December 2014. This period corresponds with the start of the Arab Spring, in mid-December 2010, and provides an image of events (colour-coded) and fatalities (size of bubbles).

As well as in Tunisia and Egypt, the fallout from the Arab Spring also forced rulers from power in Libya and Yemen. Civil uprising erupted in Bahrain and Syria, and protests broke out in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and Sudan. Minor protests occurred in Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Western Sahara and Palestine. Further south, the weapons and Tuareg fighters that spread out from the civil war in Libya stoked a simmering conflict in Mali and Nigeria.

Like the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Arab Spring was able to displace existing authoritarian regimes in North Africa and the Middle East, but was unable to facilitate the emergence of more inclusive stable replacements. Instead, it created a vacuum that drew in and accentuated local and regional differences. Previously suppressed differences turned violent and armed conflicts have bubbled to the surface.

## Egypt and a new pharaoh

Many of the groups eventually associated with Islamist radicalism were originally established in Egypt, most prominently the Muslim Brotherhood, who's origins date back almost a century. After unrest in January 1977, the Egyptian government clamped down on political activities and took further repressive measures after the Camp David accords – events that culminated in the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981 by radical Islamist groups and the subsequent banning of the Muslim Brotherhood, among others.[39]

The massive crackdown on extremist groups by President Hosni Mubarak temporarily emasculated most extremist groups, whereas some, encouraged by the regime, joined the jihad in Afghanistan. The lull was short-lived, however, and violence by radicals increased in the 1990s, largely led by al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya and al-Jihad, both drawing ideological support from the Muslim Brotherhood (which had adopted non-violence). Linkages with al-Qaeda appeared, evident in the assassination attempt on President Mubarak in Addis Ababa in 1995. Eventually, the most prominent grouping, al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya, was forced to reconsider its strategy after support dropped off sharply in the aftermath of its brutal 1997 attack on tourists at Luxor.[40]

Therefore, although an estimated 1 000 Egyptian combatants were active in Afghanistan before 9/11, Egypt's domestic counter-terrorism efforts appeared to have kept a lid on jihadist violence inside Egypt (while, inadvertently, exporting extremists elsewhere) until a resurgence in 2003, which eventually shifted attention to the volatile Sinai Peninsula, where attacks by extremists continues to this day.[41]

Tension was therefore already high when the spark in Tunisia that ignited the Arab Spring of December 2010 spread to Egypt. Labour strikes had also been intensifying for several years in Egypt.[42] And it was in Egypt that social media became a hugely influential tool for mobilisation. The anti-Mubarak demonstrations in Cairo's Tahrir Square were organised through social media – and they started within just days of the

SOCIAL MEDIA BECAME A HUGELY INFLUENTIAL MOBILISATION TOOL IN EGYPT DURING THE ARAB SPRING

death of Bouazizi in Tunisia. Within just weeks, Mubarak was forced to step down, in February 2011, transferring his powers to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

The head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Mohamed Morsi, won the subsequent presidential elections (as the head of the Freedom and Justice Party), but, after a year of divisive rule and rolling mass protests, he was removed in a *coup d'état* led by army chief Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. A year later, Egyptians went to the polls again, this time to elect el-Sisi as president. These elections were held without the participation of the now banned Freedom and Justice Party, and, although el-Sisi garnered 10 million more votes than former president Morsi had in the previous elections, he had only one opponent and the elections were boycotted by others.[43]

> Besides being the historical home of the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt also plays a leading role in Arab nationalism

Order has been temporarily restored in Egypt in the wake of a widening crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood (which was first banned and then declared a terrorist group) but without the much-anticipated opening up of political and economic space that had sparked the uprisings in the first instance.[44]

In June 2015 a Cairo criminal court sentenced Morsi to death – one of several hundred Islamists similarly sentenced – in addition to claims of up to 1 400 people who have been killed in the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood.[45]

Levels of political awareness and socialisation are particularly high in Egypt – as is unemployment. Besides being the historical home of the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt also plays a leading role in Arab nationalism. A recent survey by the Pew Research Center found that an amazing '47% of Egyptians say they have participated in a protest at some point, the highest percentage among the nations surveyed.'[46] Egypt is also at the top of the list for the percentage of people who have been active members of a political organisation, who have phoned a radio or television show to express an opinion and participated in a labour strike.[47]

With notable exceptions, such as the assassination of Egypt's chief prosecutor, the Egyptian military and security services have generally retained effective control over most of the country, except for the Sinai Peninsula, which continues to serve as a smuggling route for weapons and supplies into Gaza and the West Bank. Much of the instability in the Peninsula comes from local Bedouins with long-standing grievances against Cairo. As Michael Horton puts it, 'Many Bedouin are denied citizenship, are prohibited from serving in the military and not allowed to own land.'[48]

The January 2011 uprising that toppled Mubarak temporarily accentuated the security vacuum in the peninsula, and violence and attacks increased. In November 2014 the largest branch of the local terror group, Ansar Bait al-Maqdis, proclaimed allegiance to the Islamic State, calling itself the Sinai Province (of the Islamic State) or Wilayat Sinai. In subsequent months its strategies became increasingly complex and bold, including attacks on heavily fortified bases. For example, on 1 July 2015 up to 300 militants simultaneously attacked 15 targets in the northern Sinai town of Sheikh Zuweid using a combination of suicide bombs, mortars, rocket launchers and anti-tank launchers, killing at least 21 members of the Egyptian security services.[49]
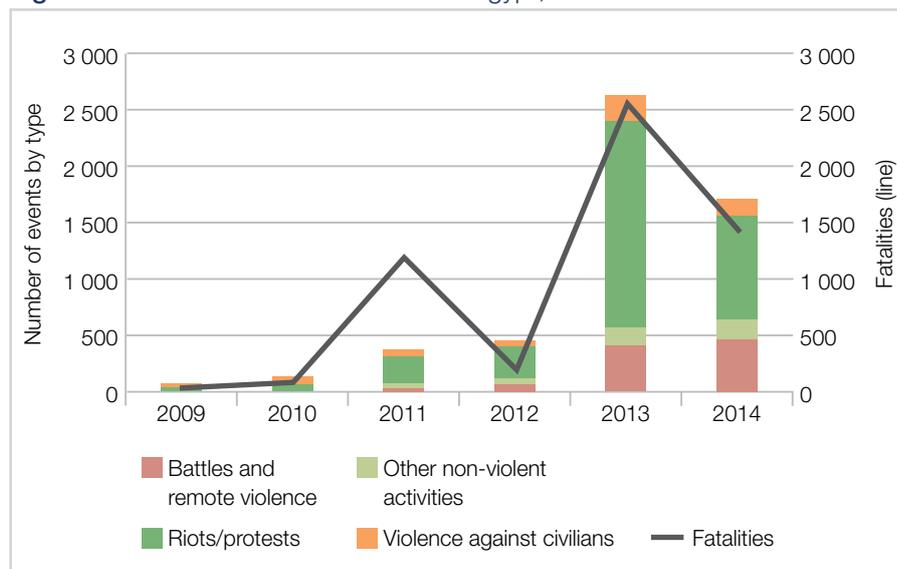
## 47%

EGYPTIANS WHO SAY
THEY HAVE PARTICIPATED
IN A PROTEST

**Figure 5:** Annual events and fatalities in Egypt, 2009–2014



Source: Extract from ACLED version 5, All Africa 1997 to 2014, www.acleddata.com/data/version-5-data-1997-2014/, accessed 14 July 2015.

Data from ACLED (see Figure 5) shows the rise in fatalities during the first year of the Arab Spring (2011), which forced Mubarak from office, the subsequent crisis until elections brought Morsi to power and the violent events that culminated in his overthrow in 2013. General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was elected to the presidency in 2014 amid ongoing riots and violence.

## Chaos in Libya

The Arab Spring was to have its largest regional fallout in Libya. Since the *coup d'état* that brought him to power in 1969, Muammar Gaddafi had ruled Libya with an iron fist. Trouble was brewing beneath the apparent calm surface however, even as Gaddafi's fellow leaders at summits of the Organisation of African Unity bowed and scraped in front of Brother Leader, as he was known. A number of young Islamists fled Gaddafi's repression in the 1980s and participated in the armed struggle in Afghanistan. Upon their return, some joined the GIA in Algeria but subsequently returned to Libya, disillusioned by the brutality and factionalism that they witnessed there.[50]

Veterans from Afghanistan subsequently founded the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG, or al-Jama'a al-Islamiya al-Muqatila bi-Libya), largely located around Derna and Benghazi. Their cells clashed with the Libyan security forces from 1995 to 1998. The LIFG apparently failed in three attempts on Gaddafi's life. The brutal response by Gaddafi's forces eventually neutralised the LIFG, with some of its leaders fleeing back to Afghanistan, from where they announced, in 2007, that they had joined al-Qaeda. In this, they were contradicted by the LIFG leaders in prison in Libya, who renounced violence, in exchange for which more than 400 of the group's members and sympathisers were released from jail. Ironically, the last were released on 16 February 2011, the first day of the Arab Spring uprising against Gaddafi and many would play a prominent role in the armed resistance during the subsequent battles.[51]

While one group of Libyans had therefore established links with al-Qaeda during the 1990s, a second group of Libyans left for Iraq after 2003 to fight the US invasion, eventually joining the Islamic State in Iraq. In fact, according to Wolfram Lacher,

**1000**

THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF SEPARATE MILITIAS IN LIBYA

'Libyans formed the second-largest group among seven hundred foreign fighters who joined … Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) between August 2006 and August 2007'.[52] Despite the country's small population, Libyans were making a disproportionately large (and negative) contribution to instability, murder and mayhem.

Initial protests against Gaddafi soon turned into a full-scale rebellion in the east of the country as the impact of the Arab Spring washed over the nation. Gaddafi's forces retaliated with characteristic brutality, involving widespread and indiscriminate violence against civilians. The advance of his forces eastwards to regain control over disputed territory was halted by NATO air strikes authorised by UN Security Council resolution 1973. The jumble of small, local armed groups that had banded together in a National Liberation Army were supported by anti-Gaddafi tribal militias who, after a stalemate of some months, stormed into Tripoli in August 2011.[53]

Gaddafi, who had by then fled the capital, was eventually captured and killed, in part due to the unilateral expansion of the air strikes by France, the UK and others, intent on using the opportunity to settle old scores and rid Libya of Gaddafi in whichever way possible. His demise left a country without institutions, as Libya had increasingly been ruled as a personal fiefdom by its mercurial leader for more than four decades.

With Gaddafi out of the picture, the coalition that had forced him from power split, leading to conflict over territory and resources. Instead of disarming and relinquishing control to the General National Congress (elected to power in July 2012), the various armed brigades consolidated their control over cities, oilfields and other assets. The looting of state arsenals provided a virtually limitless supply of weapons and ammunition for the various protagonists, leading to the destabilisation of large areas of the Sahel.

## Libya been ruled as a personal fiefdom by its mercurial leader for more than four decades

The primary task of the General National Congress was to come up with a new constitution within 18 months, a task that proved impossible, necessitating new elections in 2014, the results of which were disputed and annulled by the Supreme Court under threat of violence.[54]

Today, factionalism and exclusion are the defining features of Libya's violent, militarised and fractured politics. This phenomenon has seen the number of internally displaced people reaching half a million. After two elections, in 2012 and 2014, allegiance in Libya is roughly divided between two broad coalitions, although neither is cohesive or united, with two parliaments in two cities in consistent violent conflict with each another. In addition, various tribes control the south-western desert regions that border Algeria and Niger. By some counts, there are more than 1 000 separate militias in Libya, which, between them, control large swathes of territory.

The first, the Dignity group, is a largely secular grouping (of which the National Forces Alliance is the largest component). It generally answers to the House of Representatives in Tobruk and largely reflects the results of the 2014 elections. Militarily, its strongest element consists of brigades from the city of Zintan and is led by former Gaddafi general Khalifa Haftar. The latter prominently launched a military campaign, Operation Dignity (Karmah), to rescue Libya from a 'terrorist', Islamist threat, but with inconclusive results.[55]

## Today, factionalism and exclusion are the defining features of Libya's violent, militarised and fractured politics

The second group (the Dawn government/group) is clustered around the Justice and Construction Party (the Libyan wing of the Muslim Brotherhood) with the military support of the so-called Misrata brigades. In conjunction with various Islamist armed groups, the Justice and Construction Party launched its own counter-campaign, Operation Libya Dawn (Fajr Libya), and believes that the General National Congress in Tripoli, which reflects the outcome of the 2012 elections, is the legitimate legislature.[56] Unsurprisingly, it is within this broad grouping that support for al-Qaeda and Islamic State can generally be found in the form of Ansar al-Shari'a in Libya and members of the Council of Mujahideen in Derna, who are generally active in the coastal city of the same name in eastern Libya, as well as in Sirte and Tripoli.[57]

Originally, Ansar al-Shari'a in Libya appeared to support al-Qaeda but in October 2014 its largest factions pledged allegiance to the leader of the Islamic State, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, proclaiming Derna the seat of the Islamic State province of Barqa (the Arabic name for Cyrenaica). When al-Baghdadi recognised the pledge of allegiance, he announced the creation of three 'provinces' in Libya: Barqa, in the east; Fezzan, in the desert south; and Tripolitania (or Tarabulus), in the west.[58] When pressure on Derna intensified, the Islamic State brought in foreign fighters from Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and other Arab states – demonstrating their ability to shift forces across vast distances. Yet it is a testament to Libya's pushback against foreign influence (and its fractured

politics) that the local al-Qaeda-aligned militia, the Abu Salim Martyrs Brigade, made common cause with their opponents in the Dignity group to retake control of the city.[59]

Early in February 2015, Islamic State militants managed to capture part of the countryside to the west of Sabha and, later, an area encompassing the cities of Sirte and Nofilia, and a military base to the south of the two towns. During the same month, the Islamic State beheaded 20 Egyptian Christians in Libya, prompting air strikes by Egypt. Since then, the Egyptian president has pushed for a joint Arab military force to fight jihadists in the region.[60] During August, fighting intensified in Sirte, with Islamic State forces beheading people and hanging them on crosses.

The collapse of state authority in Libya has also allowed groups such as AQIM and Toubou rebels to act with impunity in the south.

Ongoing talks facilitated by the UN between the two main groups to form a Government of National Accord have thus far not been able to achieve an agreement, and the slaughter and chaos continues uninterrupted.

The events in Libya described above are depicted in the presentation of events and fatalities in Figure 6, using a separate axis for events and fatalities. The number of fatalities is consistently higher than the number of events, reflecting the deadly nature of developments. The number of remote violent events is consistently high. This is due both to the aerial assault by NATO from March to October 2011 (following UN Security Council resolution 1973), and the use of aircraft, artillery and suicide bombs by all protagonists since January 2013.

**Figure 6:** Monthly events and fatalities in Libya, January 2011 – August 2015
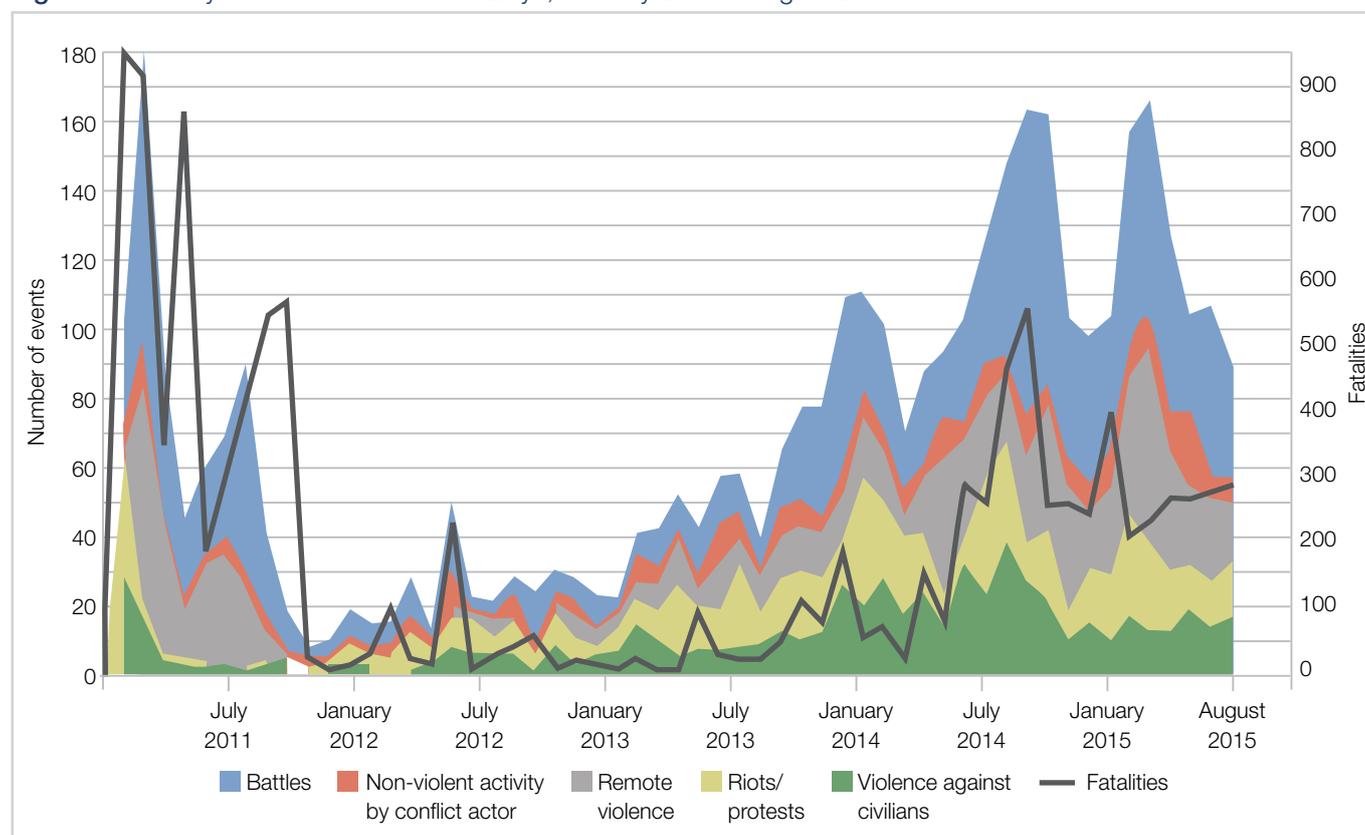


Source: ACLED version 5, All Africa 1997 to 2014, www.acleddata.com/data/version-5-data-1997-2014/, updated with Realtime data to 3 September 2015, www.acleddata.com/data/realtime-data-2015/ accessed 13 September 2015.

Today, Libya is the principal arms market in the region, affecting conflicts as far afield as Nigeria and Sudan. It has also developed a thriving trade in human trafficking. Nearly 85 per cent of the 170 000 migrants rescued in the Mediterranean in 2014 had set off from Libya and there is some suspicion that this has turned into a source of finance for the jihadists and others.[61]

Events in Libya have had an impact far beyond its borders, most prominently, but not only, in Mali. Leadership of radical violent Islamism would come from Algeria, particularly in the form of a one-eyed radical, Mokhtar Belmokhtar.

## Mali and the Islamic Republic of Azawad

Mokhtar Belmokhtar originally served in Afghanistan as one of the Algerians who had joined the jihad against the Soviets. He joined the GIA upon his return in 1993, operating in the Sahara and Sahel. From the GIA, he joined the GSPC. As recounted earlier, in 2006 the GSPC joined forces with al-Qaeda and changed its name to the al-Qaeda Organization for the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) the following year. Belmokhtar led the AQIM brigade in the Sahel until he was ousted in a bitter leadership struggle with Abdelmalek Droukdel (also an Algerian graduate from the Afghan Civil War) and other commanders at the end of 2012.

For many years, Belmokhtar funded his operations in the Sahel through ransom payments, and cigarette, drug and arms smuggling, which illustrates the extent to which organised crime had become intertwined with terrorism. These resource flows fuelled internal divisions within AQIM, contributing to his eventual ousting. Belmokhtar then formed a new group, al-Mulathameen (the Masked Brigade, also known as al-Mua'qi'oon Biddam – Those Who Sign in Blood), which operated across southern Algeria, northern Mali, and regions of Niger and Mauritania.[62]

> Belmokhtar funded his operations in the Sahel through ransom payments, and cigarette, drug and arms smuggling

Since the late 1990s, northern Mali had become a major refuge for AQIM and allied groups – 'a region where corruption and the proliferation of criminal networks created ideal conditions for the emergence of jihadist groups ...'[63] As central-government control from the capital, Bamako, faded on the road north-east to Timbuktu, organisations such as Ansar Dine (largely a Tuareg movement) established themselves over a vast area around Kidal, further north, and on the long unmarked border with Algeria. Through ransom payments for kidnappings, these groups were able to build capacity and solicit support, benefiting from the nomadic lifestyle of the Tuareg people, who straddle parts of Niger, Mali and Algeria.[64]

In September and October 2011, hundreds of well-equipped former members of Gaddafi's armed forces retreated into northern Mali to escape the NATO intervention in Libya as the country succumbed to anti-Gaddafi forces. Most were Malian Tuaregs who had served in Libya for several years. Belmokhtar now facilitated the establishment of the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and joined forces with Ansar Dine. Eventually, these forces provided the backbone to the separatist Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad – MNLA), which took control of cities and territories in the north, and then advanced south-west towards Bamako. The Malian government forces suffered a series of devastating defeats and, after the March military coup against President Amadou Toumani Touré, resistance collapsed, leaving the capital and the rest of the country defenceless.[65]

> There are reports that northern Mali served as a rear training base and refuge for other jihadists, including Boko Haram

With the Mali army defeated in the north, Ansar Dine and MUJAO turned on the MNLA, and drove it from all the major cities, laying the foundations for the short-lived Islamic Republic of Azawad before attacking targets in southern Algeria and advancing on Bamako.[66]

There are reports that northern Mali served as a rear training base and refuge for other jihadists, including Boko Haram. Eventually, the capture of Bamako was narrowly averted by French military intervention. Meanwhile, the region, including the African Union, was able to do little but stand by anxiously.[67]

A year later, a French-led military operation had driven the various groups from most northern towns and cities in Mali, forcing some to retreat to Libya, although remnants remain active in central Mali. The alliance that had temporarily occupied northern Mali collapsed, although ongoing conflict in the north continues to offer opportunities for jihadist fighters, who are now deeply embedded in local communities and the larger region.[68]

In 2013 Belmokhtar and his movement launched a series of attacks in southern Algeria (notably, his spectacular attack on a gas plant at In Amenas), as well as in Niger. These have served to underline his claim to leadership among the region's jihadists.[69] MUJAO and the Masked Brigade merged in August 2013 and Belmokhtar emerged as leader of al-Mourabitoun (the Sentinels), and head of the group al-Qaeda in West Africa two years later.[70]

Mali continues to remain unstable and violent as fighting continues between pro-government and secessionist forces. A 10 000-member UN peacekeeping mission and a peace deal brokered by Algeria and signed in June 2015 have not been able to end the conflict as rivalries between Tuareg clans resurface. In Mali's central regions, some of the Islamist militants (from Ansar Dine) displaced by the French have regrouped (as the Massina Liberation Front) to exploit the marginalisation of the Fulani ethnic minority, who extend from Senegal in the west to Sudan in the east.[71] Since the border with Algeria is still largely uncontrolled, fighters travel freely from one country to another.

## Boko Haram: Islamic State's West Africa Province

It is clear that events in the Middle East have had a direct impact in North Africa over several decades. Linkages between the Middle East–North Africa region and terrorism in Nigeria are much more limited, however. Although, as recounted earlier, the GSPC

**Figure 7:** Nigeria – Boko Haram events and fatalities vs others, January 2009 – August 2015
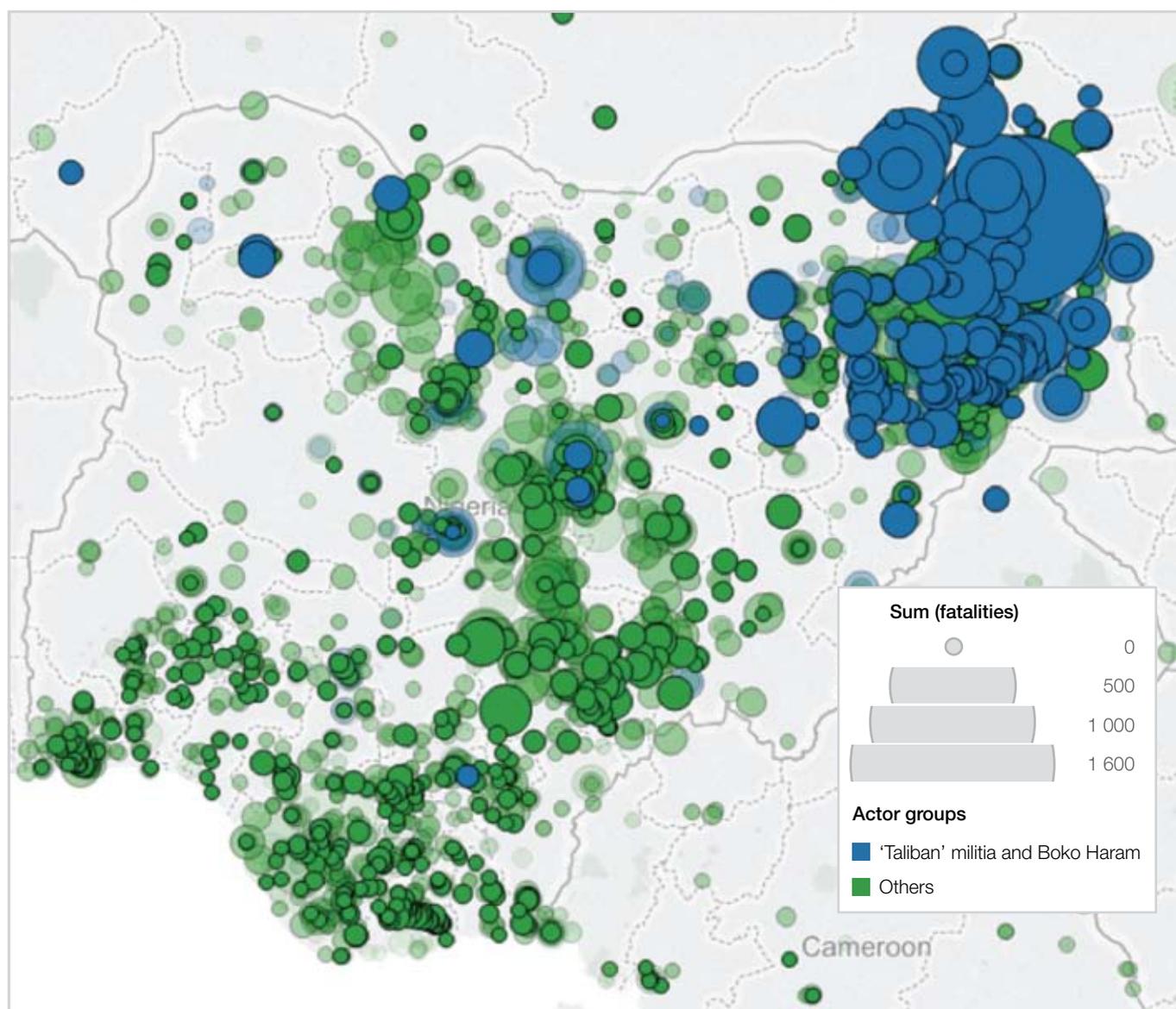


Source: ACLED version 5, All Africa 1997 to 2014, www.acleddata.com/data/version-5-data-1997-2014/, updated with Realtime data to 3 September 2015, www.acleddata.com/data/realtime-data-2015/, accessed 13 September 2015.

and AQIM have provided some training to Boko Haram, there has been collaboration in Mali, among others and recently reports surfaced indicating that a substantial number of Boko Haram combatants were involved in Libya and in northern Niger.[72]

Boko Haram is largely composed of recruits from the 10 million-strong Kanuri community, who ruled the Kanem Bornu Empire (1086–1846). It was partly to tap into this sentiment that Boko Haram declared itself a caliphate in 2014.[73] A recent study on regional extremist linkages would find that: 'Boko Haram has been able to build on relations of loyalty and support across borders, such as long-existing networks of trade, the influence of local big men, and the discontent of disenfranchised youths.'[74]

Successive bouts of widespread and intense instability have plagued Nigeria since independence from Britain in 1960, including the effort at secession by the Eastern Region as the Republic of Biafra (1967–1970), ethnic violence for control over the oil-producing Niger Delta from 1992 to 2009 and, since 2009, Boko Haram terrorism in the Muslim-dominated north. Figure 7 differentiates between political violent incidents and fatalities attributable to the Taliban Militia/Boko Haram and other organisations. It provides a graphic image of the extent of turbulence in Nigeria from January 2009 to August 2015.

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Nigeria at a lowly 136 out of 175 countries

Nigeria has many ethnic, religious and social fault lines, and its politics are loud, violent and fractured. Its 36 states are home to 250 ethnic groups, although the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo are the largest. Deeply entrenched corruption has affected the government's capacity to deliver in a country that has experienced more than 30 years of military rule since independence. Poverty levels are much higher in north-eastern Nigeria (where Boko Haram has established itself) than anywhere else and this reflects the socio-economic divide between the relatively underdeveloped and mainly Muslim north, and the wealthier, more prosperous and predominantly Christian south. In 2014 Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Nigeria at a lowly 136 out of 175 countries in the survey. Nigeria also suffers from all the afflictions associated with an oil-dominated economy.[75]

The immediate forerunner to Boko Haram can probably be traced to 2002 in Maiduguri when a young Salafist preacher, Mohammed Yusuf, among others, openly called for the establishment of an Islamic state and the introduction of Salafist interpretation of sharia law across Nigeria, and not only in the 12 northern states where it had been introduced in a half-hearted manner.[76] The dominant narrative then, as now, is the extent to which a Christian government in the south caused destitution and poverty in the north.

Yusuf was not the first cleric to clash with the authorities. Among many such confrontations were those in the 1980s, when followers of another Muslim cleric, Mohammed Marwa, clashed with the government in various states in the north, resulting in several thousand deaths, including that of Mohammed Marwa himself. There were other confrontations, including at the University of Ibadan (May 1986); clashes over Nigeria's membership of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in January/February 1986; the religious riots of March 1986 in Kafanchan, Kaduna, Zaria and Futua; and various other violent confrontations that occurred on an annual basis through the 1980s and in successive years.[77]

Analysing the underlying causes of Nigeria's instability, Abimbola Adesoj explains:

> Although almost all the crises have been subsumed under religion and explained by even some authors as religious factors, it is apparent that other extraneous and underlying factors like economic disequilibrium/inequality, envy, poverty among youths (who easily became willing tools in the hand of patrons), and the unhealthy contest for political offices have all played parts.[78]

Under Yusuf's leadership, a group of militant Salafists from Maiduguri established a small rural settlement of Kanama in the state of Yobe, severed their connections with the government (in a sense, making it a state within a state) and sought to realise religious purity within an isolated community. The group became increasingly violent and clashes occurred with the police, although these were bloodily repulsed by government troops. It would later transpire that elements of the Nigerian Taliban, as they were known in some circles, had been receiving combat training in the use of weapons from GCPC/AQIM in Niger. Others were in contact with al-Qaeda (who encouraged attacks on Americans in Nigeria), and training was also being provided in Mauritania and Algeria. Funding was forthcoming from Pakistan and London.[79] There is considerable speculation and limited evidence to support the widespread belief that Boko Haram was initially supported and protected by local politicians.[80]

Yusuf was twice arrested (in 2006 and 2008) on charges of incitement to violence and support of terrorism. He was released, after which he preached across northern Nigeria. His supporters came into increasing conflict with the police

because of their refusal to obey local laws. The situation came to a head in July 2009 when a violent encounter with the police triggered five days of riots in Bauchi. After Yusuf was captured and executed while in police custody, the violence spread to the states of Borno, Yobe and Kano. Several hundred of Yusuf's followers were detained and killed during these events.[81]

This confrontation is widely believed to have catalysed the transition of Boko Haram from a religious cult to a violent movement – and the difference between subsequent events and the many instances of previous waves of violence is that Boko Haram gained an increasingly urban character, and its nature became more extreme and tenacious.

> By late August 2015, Boko Haram had killed 1 059 people in 75 major attacks in northern Nigeria since President Muhammadu Buhari assumed power

In 2010 Abubakar Shekau, Yusuf's former second in command, released a video proclaiming his succession to leadership of Boko Haram. Around this time, the organisation had been calling itself the Sunnah Group for the Call to Faith and Holy War (Jama'at Ahl al-Sunna li-l-Da'wa wa-l-Jihad), making no secret of its new militant approach.[82] Whereas the organisation had previously been very localised, under Shekau it now wants to 'expel the northern political and Muslim clerical establishment and rid Nigeria of all Western influences'.[83]

Several suicide bombs, assassinations and a prison break in Bauchi, which enabled close on 700 inmates to escape, ensued. The following year, on 26 August, Boko Haram detonated a car bomb at the headquarters of the UN in Abuja, killing 23 people and injuring a further 81. It seems that training for this attack was provided by AQIM and this has been the only large Boko Haram attack clearly aimed at an international target to date.

In 2012 Boko Haram was responsible for 47 attacks on schools, resulting in 77 fatalities and it undertook a series of coordinated attacks on military and civilian targets in northern Nigeria. The following year the Nigerian president, Goodluck Jonathan, declared a state of emergency in the three most affected states and assembled a joint task force – which was subsequently roundly condemned for its indiscriminate use of torture, arrest and extrajudicial killings.[84]

In 2014 Boko Haram emerged as a regional security threat as it launched attacks against targets in Diffa, in extreme south-eastern Niger, and northern Cameroon. The group even managed to capture the Nigerian military base at Baga, which served as the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force. Later that year, Boko Haram started taking control of rural territories in Nigeria's north-east and proclaimed a caliphate in August, with borders corresponding with those of the Borno Caliphate more than a century ago. The following year, in March 2015, Shekau pledged Boko Haram's allegiance to the Islamic State and proclaimed the Islamic State West Africa Province.[85] The group's attacks started to target Shia communities and, for its part, the Islamic State apparently encourages African jihadists who cannot travel to the Middle East to go to Nigeria instead.[86]

In recent months, Boko Haram has had to change its approach, as its prospects took a hammering, first because of the efforts by South African and Ukrainian private military

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THE NUMBER OF ATTACKS ON NIGERIAN SCHOOLS BY BOKO HARAM IN 2012

contractors, and then under the combined weight of a four-nation coalition of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, which has pushed the militants out of its captured territory. Boko Haram had to retreat and disappeared into the Sambisa Forest, along the border with Cameroon and Chad, and among the hundreds of islets separated by channels and hidden by tall grass in the Lake Chad region.

In response to the participation of Chad and Niger, Boko Haram targeted communities and security forces in those countries. Rather than trying to establish a caliphate in the Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states of north-east Nigeria, it has reverted to the use of terrorist tactics, such as suicide bombings and mass raids, including in the Chadian capital, N'Djamena, in June 2015.[87]

According to the Stefanos Foundation, by late August 2015, Boko Haram had killed 1 059 people in 75 major attacks in northern Nigeria since President Muhammadu Buhari assumed power. The majority of attacks, a total of 34, occurred in Borno State, where 551 people were killed; 112 people were killed in 19 attacks in Plateau State; and 86 were killed in eight attacks in Yobe. Other affected states were Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Gombe, Kano, Nasarawa and Taraba.[88]

Nigeria's response to Boko Haram has been brutal. Releasing a lengthy report in June 2015, Amnesty International found that:

> In their response to Boko Haram's attacks in the north-east, the Nigerian military have arrested at least 20 000 young men and boys since 2009, some as young as nine years old. In most cases they were arbitrarily arrested, often based solely on the word of a single unidentified secret informant. Most were arrested in mass 'screening' operations or 'cordon-and-search' raids where security forces round up hundreds of men. Almost none of those detained have been brought to court and all have been held without the necessary safeguards against murder, torture and ill-treatment.[89]

Commenting in 2012, Andrew Walker wrote that the Nigerian government's security agencies' response to Boko Haram has been

> … consistently brutal and counterproductive. Their reliance on extrajudicial execution as a tactic in 'dealing' with any problem in Nigeria not only created Boko Haram as it is known today, but also sustains it and gives it fuel to expand. The police's tactics have also made Boko Haram members harder to catch. The people of Maiduguri and Kano are, for the most part, more scared of the police and the army than they are of Boko Haram.[90]

Rather than a single hierarchical structure, Boko Haram is a complex of factions, cells and groups that owe limited allegiance to Abubakar Shekau and his core group of followers. At various stages, some factions, such as those of Mamman Nur and Khalid al-Barnawi, had ties to AQIM in Algeria, Ansar Dine in northern Mali, MUJAO, and possibly even to al-Shabaab.

Taking their cue from the Islamic State, Shekau and Boko Haram have exploited changing social dynamics and new technologies, exerting an influence that is vastly disproportionate to the group's true size and strength.[91] Like in Iraq, its success has largely been in proportion to the weaknesses of the Nigerian military. It is a hybrid between a terrorist and insurgent movement.[92] Measured by frequency of attacks and number of fatalities, Boko Haram has emerged as the deadliest terrorist group globally, with the number of deaths greater than those perpetrated in Syria or Pakistan. However, with the exception of the 2011 bomb attack on the UN compound, it has not targeted the US or others.[93] This may be about to change as the Nigerian state security agency reported, on 31 August 2015, that it had arrested Boko Haram members in Abuja, Lagos, Enugu, Kano and Gombe, which may indicate that Boko Haram is planning to spread attacks much further across Nigeria.[94]

> ## Measured by frequency of attacks and number of fatalities, Boko Haram is the deadliest terrorist group globally

Essentially, Boko Haram reflects the challenges that confront the Nigerian state. Thus, in the words of Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos:

> Many analysts like to speculate on the collapse of the Nigerian state. But Boko Haram also reveals the failure of the Muslim community to unify, develop, and organise a common response to modernity. In reality, the sect of Mohammed Yusuf is a challenge to both the Nigerian state and Islam.[95]

Unlike the groups in the other countries presented in this paper, Boko Haram evolved in a somewhat distinct manner. Whereas in North Africa secular-orientated governments variously allowed and then repressed the political expression of Islam, Nigeria has never had an explicitly Islamic political party that contested for national power. In many senses, Boko Haram is a religious and terrorist sect, not a suppressed political party with an alternative national political agenda and potential national appeal.[96] According to Pérouse de Montclos:

> Boko Haram is basically an indigenous uprising with a religious ideology, a political meaning, and some social

support locally, unlike transnational professional terrorist groups that can strike anywhere in the world. Obviously, the sect is not the armed branch of a party. It does not have a political program as such, and its members did not attempt to contest elections.[97]

Although it varies from country to country, jihadists in sub-Saharan Africa do not fully share the common Arab culture and socialisation of movements in North Africa. As Pérouse de Montclos puts it, 'Religious practices between these various groups are strikingly different, as are the relations with the lay populations in the areas where they operate.'[98] That said, all the movements discussed in this paper are heavily influenced by the transnational flow of the global Salafi jihadist ideology.

## Al-Shabaab

Contemporary extremist Islam in Somalia began as an underground movement in the mid 1970s in response to the repressive tactics of the secular Siad Barre regime, corruption, the failure of secular nationalist ideology to resolve the status of Somalis living outside the colonial borders, and economic pressures.[99]

Somalia has seen a number of radical Islamist groups appear and disappear in its troubled history. The rise of al-Shabaab and its interlinked desire for a Greater Somalia with an avowed Islamic identity, is in turn, partly explained by several centuries of war and invasion between Ethiopia and Somalia including the allocation of grazing land in the Ogaden by the British to Ethiopian Emperor Menelik in the 19th century. That this issue was not resolved is reflected in the series of border disputes and wars between these two countries as from 1960.[100]

Al-Shabaab (more fully, Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen, or the Mujahideen Youth Movement) can trace its origins to the Somali Islamist group al-Itihaad al-Islamiya (Islamic unity – AIAI), which was formed clandestinely in 1983 by Somalis who studied in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and subscribed to the programme of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Like the Brotherhood, the AIAI undertook a range of humanitarian

**Figure 8:** Annual events and fatalities in Nigeria, 1997–2014
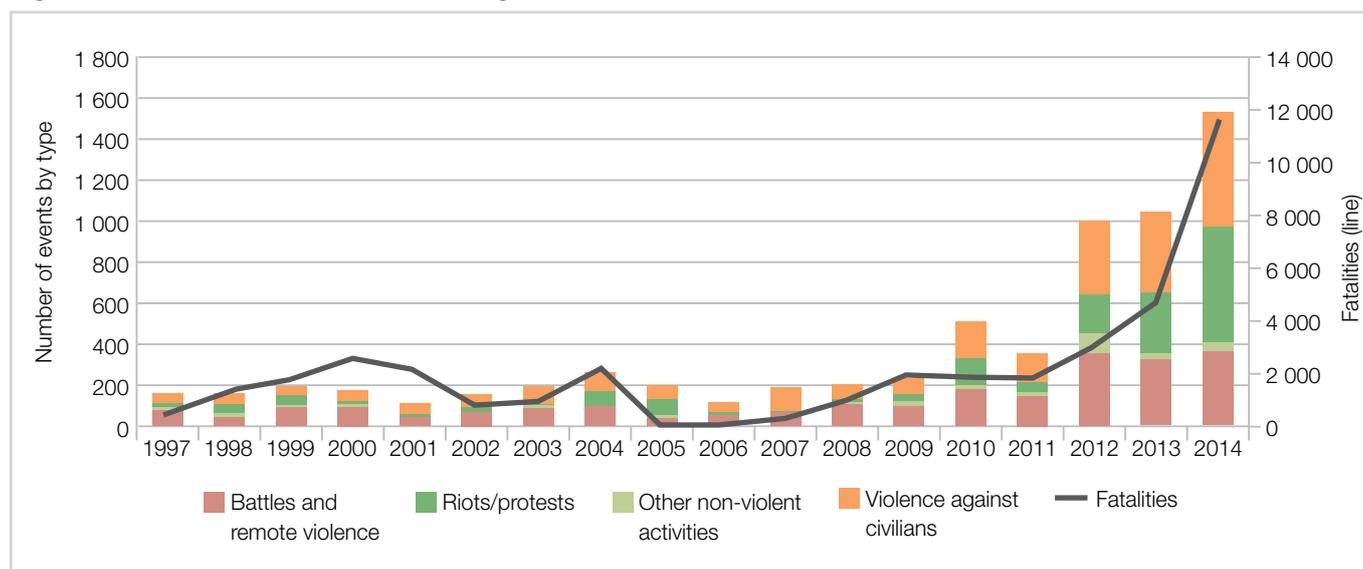


Source: Extract from ACLED version 5, All Africa, 1997 to 2014, www.acleddata.com/data/version-5-data-1997-2014/, accessed 14 July 2015.

and social support activities in south-central Somalia and in this manner built extensive support networks among local communities. Their intention was to rid Somalia of Barre (and his scientific socialism), and to create a Greater Somalia state in the Horn of Africa, thereby uniting all Somalis living in the Horn of Africa (including those in Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya).[101]

Barre actively pursued the dream of a Greater Somalia and invaded the Ogaden (in Ethiopia) in July 1977. When the Soviet Union abruptly shifted its support to Ethiopia, the tide turned very rapidly and with the support of some 11 6000 Cuban troops and 6 000 advisors, an air-bridge from Moscow and two South Yemeni armoured brigades, the Somali forces were pushed out of the Ogaden the following year. This and the extensive brutality of Barre's regime facilitated civil war. With the collapse of the Barre regime in 1991 amid widespread conflict between clans, the AIAI emerged as a tangible political force and as a successor threat to Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti with their large Somali populations.[102]

The AIAI was funded by the Somali diaspora and by wealthy Saudis, including Bin Laden, who, later, sent foreign militants to train and fight alongside the group after a number of its fighters had fled the country (partly due to the Ethiopian incursions in 1996 and 1997). The AIAI also fought with the mujahideen in Afghanistan in the late 1990s. Upon their return, small al-Qaeda cells managed to operate from Somalia '… to plan and conduct both the US embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, and the attacks on an Israeli hotel and airliner in Mombasa in 2002'.[103]

## Successive efforts by the international community proved unable to restore stability to Somalia

The hardliners in the AIAI eventually joined forces with an alliance of sharia courts, known as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), serving as its youth militia. The efforts to build the ICU as a way of coping with the lack of judicial institutions had been repeated a number of times since 1991, but failed each time. This time, the ICU and al-Shabaab managed to gain control over the capital, Mogadishu, in June 2006 after it defeated the US-backed Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism. The AIAI's leader, Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, went on to briefly become one of the key leaders of the ICU. These events and the threat to Ethiopian control of the Ogaden triggered intervention by Ethiopia, which re-entered Somalia in December 2006, eventually driving al-Shabaab and the ICU from the capital. The ICU subsequently splintered into several factions.[104]

The intervention by Ethiopia happened at the request of Somalia's transitional government, which had been set up in 2004 but increased support for al-Shabaab amongst many Somalis given their hostility against the Ethiopians. Like so many times before, US efforts (particularly support to the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism) were counter-productive. Together with competition from other factions, it drained the ICU but radicalised al-Shabaab, even as it retreated to the south, where it began organising its violent response, including bombings and assassinations on Ethiopian forces. Some political leaders of the ICU fled to Ethiopia's arch enemy, Eritrea, but their armed wing remained in Somalia. Al-Shabaab, now developed into a fully fledged insurgent movement, gained control over large parts of central and southern Somalia, and several hundred recruits to swell its ranks. It was also increasingly vocal about its support for al-Qaeda.[105]

## As it lost territory to AMISOM, al-Shabaab has increasingly relied on suicide attacks against international targets

Aden Hashi 'Ayro', a veteran from Afghanistan, was al-Shabaab's first leader until he was killed in a US air strike in 2008. Under Hashi 'Ayro's successor, Ahmed Abdi aw-Mohamud Godane, al-Shabaab initially grew in strength. From 2009 to 2010 it managed to gain control of most of the towns in Somalia, including much of the capital, and was earning a sizeable income from various taxes. During this period, until it was again driven out of the capital in 2011, it established administrative structures, and appointed ministries and regional administrations, which concerned themselves above all with the implementation of sharia law.[106]

For many years, successive efforts by the international community proved unable to restore stability to Somalia, including the failed US humanitarian military intervention of 1992 (subsequently popularized in the movie *Black Hawk Down*). After the Americans withdrew, the UN took over the mission (UNOSOM I and UNOSOM II), but was similarly unsuccessful. The intervention by Ethiopia in 2006 proved to be a lightning rod for many Somalis, who harboured deep hatred of their neighbour. Eventually Kenyan troops also crossed into Somalia in 2011 to fight al-Shabaab, and, like the Ethiopians, later joined the African Union peacekeeping force in its mission in Somalia (AMISOM). As it lost territory to AMISOM, al-Shabaab has increasingly relied on suicide attacks against international targets in Somalia, and in countries such as Kenya and Uganda,

**Figure 9:** Annual events and fatalities in Somalia, 1999–2014
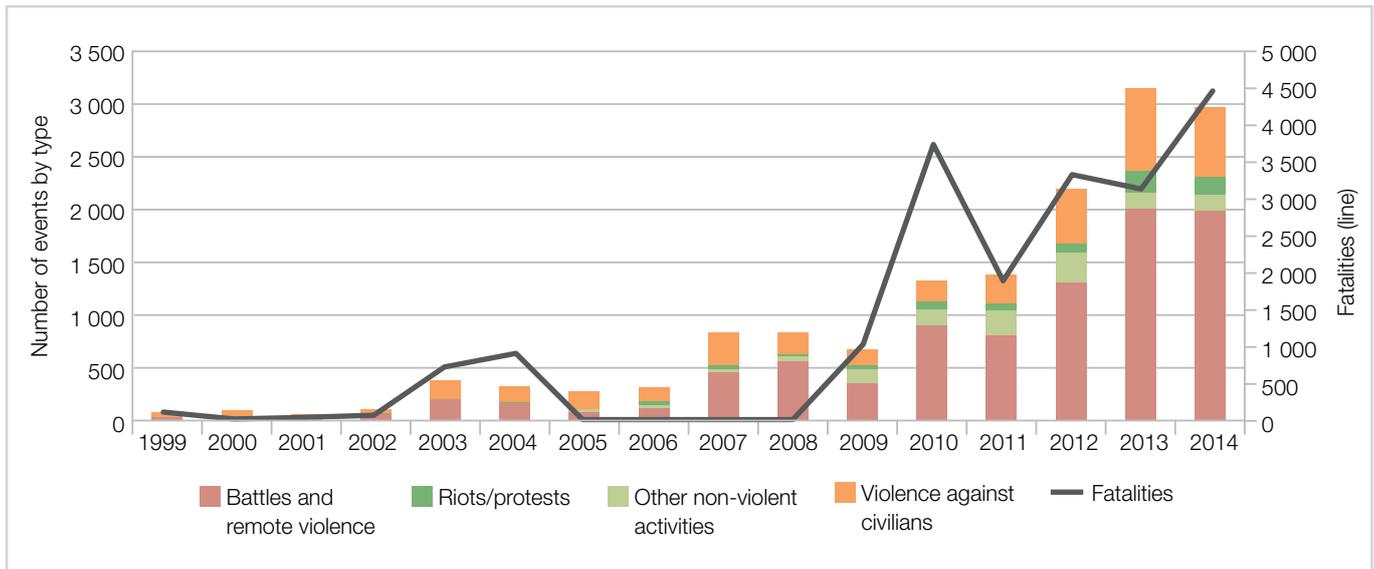


Source: Extract from ACLED version 5, All Africa 1997 to 2014, www.acleddata.com/data/version-5-data-1997-2014/, accessed 14 July 2015.

**Figure 10:** Events in Somalia by actor, January 2009 – August 2015
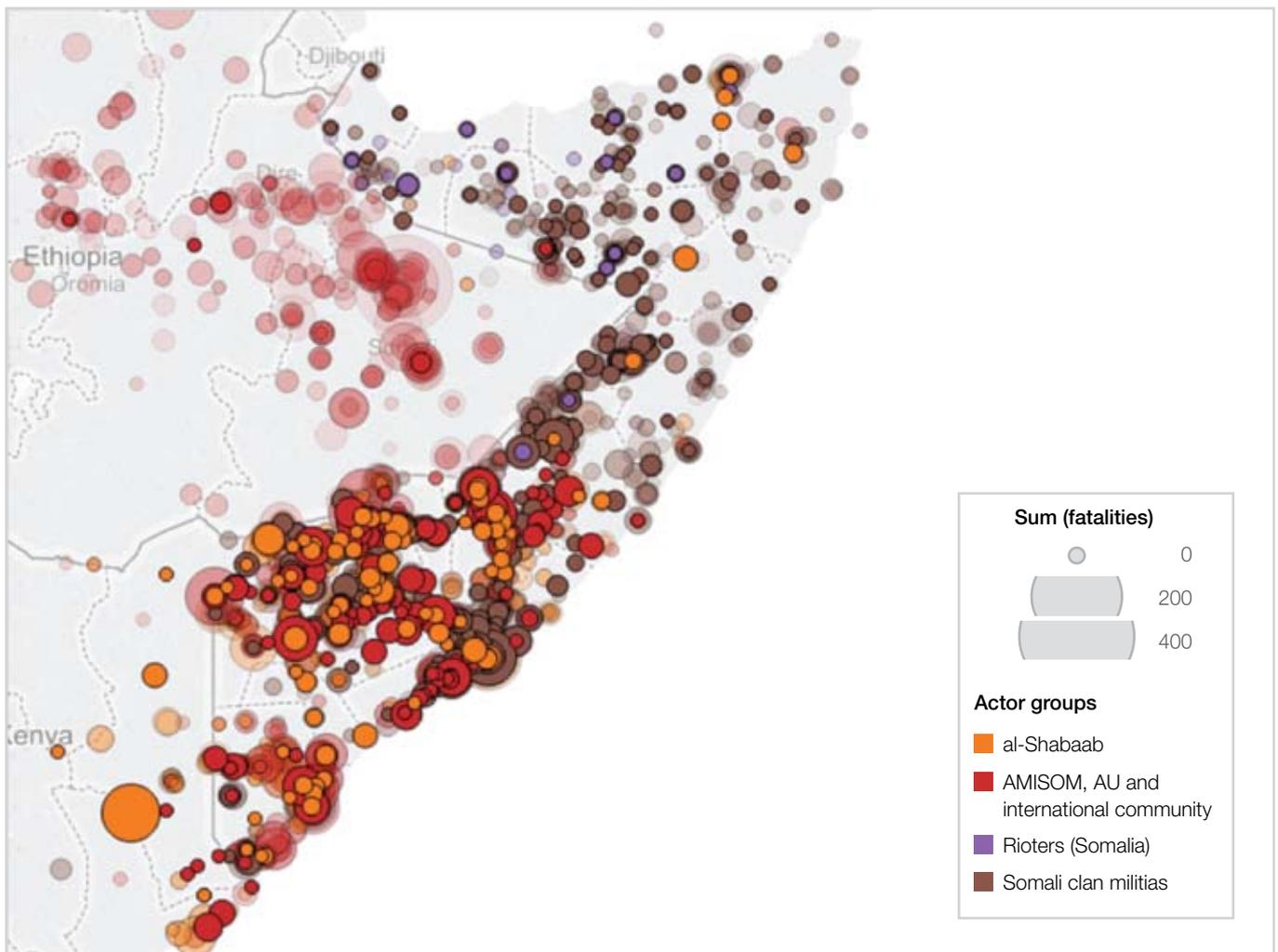


Source: ACLED version 5, All Africa 1997 to 2014, www.acleddata.com/data/version-5-data-1997-2014/, updated with Realtime data to 3 September 2015, www.acleddata.com/data/realtime-data-2015/ accessed 13 September 2015.

which provide troops to AMISOM, as well as kidnapping tourists. Its attacks in Ethiopia and Djibouti have been less successful.[107]

Apart from its loss of territory, al-Shabaab has had to contend with a serious internal power struggle, which was resolved on in June 2013, when Godane emerged triumphant. During these internal conflicts al-Shabaab's tactics have become ever more brutal, to the extent that support for the organisation among Somalis has declined significantly as it came to be dominated by an extremist fringe that has recommitted to the cause of the international jihad and the restoration of an Islamic caliphate in a Greater Somalia.[108] When Godane was killed during a US air strike, the new leadership (now under Abu Ubaidah) immediately pledged continued allegiance to the al-Qaeda leader, Zawahiri.[109] In this sense, al-Shabaab is quite different from Boko Haram, being more closely integrated into the global jihad than its Nigerian counterpart and copied al-Qaeda's use of suicide bombs at an early stage.[110]

Al-Qaeda operatives were reported to have used AIAI bases until the events of 9/11, after which the camps were dismantled and the occupants relocated to Yemen. In 2012, after years of being rebuffed by al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab was accepted into the fold by Bin Laden's successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and remains loyal to al-Qaeda rather than seeking to emulate the Islamic State.[111]

> Al-Shabaab is quite different from Boko Haram, being more closely integrated into the global jihad

The current Somali government of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud took power in September 2012. Ongoing operations by AMISOM and the Somali government have forced al-Shabaab out of much of its previously held territory and Somalia plans to hold limited elections in 2016. Al-Shabaab has apparently regrouped in the Galgala Hills of Puntland, outside the AMISOM area of operations, although it is still in control of large tracts of rural south-central Somalia.[112]

A string of particularly brutal and high-profile attacks, mostly in neighbouring Kenya, continue to keep al-Shabaab in the news despite the fact the group is under considerable pressure from AMISOM. These include the September 2013 attack by four militants on the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, which killed at least 67 people, and the June 2014 attacks on Mpeketoni, Kenya, and surrounding villages, during which close to 100 people were killed. These attacks, near the holiday island of Lamu, led to a collapse in tourism on Kenya's coast after foreign governments warned their nationals not to travel to the area. In

April 2015 al-Shabaab attacked the Garissa University College Campus, in north-eastern Kenya, massacring 148 people. In July they killed a number of quarry workers in the Kenyan town of Mandera, also close to the border with Somalia. That raid mirrored one in the same county in December 2014, in which 36 quarry workers died. On the same day as the Mandera attack, heavily armed militants attacked a convoy of passenger buses and their army escorts in the Lamu region.[113]

According to Moses Onyango, speaking on the response from the Kenyan government, the neglect and marginalisation of Somali communities in the north-east of Kenya provide fertile ground for radicalisation:

> At the municipal level, the government has profiled the Kenyan Somalis in Nairobi, and arrested them, and some of them have been deported back to Somalia. At the international level, the government has initiated construction of a wall between the border of Kenya and Somalia. And most recently, the government has also given a softer approach of offering amnesty to some of the Kenyans.[114]

In his analysis of the attack on the Westgate shopping centre, Paul D Williams quotes from the results of the inquiry by the Joint Committee on Administration and National Security and Defence and Foreign Relations. This listed the Westgate bombing as

> … the 28th terrorist attack in the country since Kenyan forces intervened in Somalia in October 2011. It concluded that a confluence of factors had left Kenya particularly vulnerable to such attacks: its porous border with Somalia; endemic corruption and poor levels of preparedness among its security officials; youth radicalization (with over 500 Kenyan youths recruited into al-Shabaab); the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; and the influx of more than 600 000 Somali refugees into Kenya. Overall, the inquiry lamented that despite relevant general information about an impending terror attack on such a target, there had been a 'nationwide systemic failure' on the part of numerous government departments, confusion among government agencies in responding to the attack, and disgraceful looting of premises within the mall by some Kenyan soldiers and police.[115]

Two years later, it would appear that some action was being taken by the Kenyan government in its intention to close the Dadaab Refugee Camp. But Kenya's massive crackdown on and relocation of some 4 000 terrorist suspects (Operation Usalama Watch) probably played directly into al-Shabaab's hands by its blatant scapegoating of ethnic Somalis in Kenya.[116]

## Conclusion

This paper has sought to weave an integrated – and necessarily brief and incomplete – overview of the evolution of violent Islamist extremism in some of the countries in Africa most affected by its terrorism.

In her extensive writings on this issue, Anneli Botha[117] reminds us that the factors that influence the threat and manifestation of terrorism include 'history and culture, the political system in place, a growing belief that the current secular regimes are unable to deal with poverty and corruption and the counter-terrorism strategies deployed'.[118]

Violent Islamist extremism has multiple causes. The explosive growth in recruitment and associated violence is because social, cultural, economic and political factors have come together in a perfect storm. These factors are primarily national, but cannot be separated from their regional and international contexts – nor from the appropriate historical contexts.

> The explosive growth in recruitment and associated violence is because social, cultural, economic and political factors have come together in a perfect storm

Seen from an external perspective, three successive waves of violent Islamist extremism are discernible in North Africa's recent history. The first followed the return in the early 1990s of battle-hardened Algerians, Egyptians and other jihadists from Afghanistan, who sought to replace secular-orientated governments with 'true Islamic' governments in line with the thinking of al-Qaeda and other extremists. The result was a wave of terror in North Africa, leading to particularly high levels of violence in Algeria where the Afghan Arabs could join and reinforce existing groupings, such as GIA.[119]

A second, more muted wave of terror followed after the US invaded Iraq in 2003, an event that provided 'a recruiting bonanza at a time when the terrorists needed it most'. The invasion largely rescued al-Qaeda from irrelevance and facilitated the rise of the Islamic State.

The impact of the Arab Spring would unleash a third wave, which spread much further to include large parts of the Maghreb, particularly following the ousting of Gaddafi in Libya in 2011. This weakened authoritarian control in many North African countries and in Syria, where President Bashar al-Assad was able to withstand popular pressure but lost control over large parts of the country. These developments, together with the withdrawal of US forces in neighbouring Iraq, created a security vacuum that propagated the rise of the Islamic State to its current pre-eminence over al-Qaeda.

The rise of the Islamic State has, in turn, emboldened movements such as Boko Haram to expand their horizons and seek the establishment of similar 'self-governing' terrains – although this was already evident in the Sahel and in Somalia, where nominal allegiances continue to be to al-Qaeda rather than the Islamic State.

With the possible exception of Tunisia, the Arab Spring has therefore proved to be a false dawn, if measured by how political and economic inclusion have failed to advance. Instead, the blowback from the War on Terror, and the invasion of Iraq in particular, the regional impact of the collapse of central state control in Libya and counter-terrorism in Egypt may have set political and economic liberalisation in North

THE RISE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE HAS EMBOLDENED MOVEMENTS SUCH AS BOKO HARAM

Africa back several years. Without fail, US interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Somalia have exacerbated local situations and facilitated the spread of violent Islamist extremism.

Seen from an internal, as opposed to an external, perspective, a different narrative emerges when violence in North Africa is situated in a context where post-independence authoritarian governments introduced secular policies either as part of their programme of action or as an effort to soak up discontent when economic growth and job opportunities faltered. Poor Muslims generally appeared to lean the other way. Ömer Taşpınar encapsulates this sentiment succinctly: 'When the mosque is the only outlet for mass politics, the outcome is predictable: the Islamization of dissent. As dissent turns Islamic, what naturally follows is the politicization of Islam.'[121] Throughout history religion has been used and abused as a reaction to poverty, marginalisation and exclusion – as an explanation and source of refuge and hope as well as a tool for mobilisation. Islam is no different. In the process local leaders have been able to instrumentalise Islam and direct explanations towards the historical enemy, Western influence and modern-day secularism, as a single-causal explanation for their dire domestic circumstances.

The rise of Islamist terror globally, and particularly in North Africa, is a reflection of global developments. Western support for regimes with repressive domestic policies (such those of as Saudi Arabia and Egypt)[122] have come full circle. The impact of a globally networked world allows local issues to be presented as part of a global narrative, hence providing an additional lease of life and salience to domestic drivers of discontent. Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State present the image of globally networked (albeit competitive) movements that instigate and coordinate their respective activities, however loosely, and both have the US most prominently in their sights.

Five interrelated but somewhat contradictory trends will determine the spread of Islamist terror and its future in North Africa.

The first is that the wars in the Arabian Peninsula are becoming more deeply internal and sectarian. As the struggle between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State for control of the leadership of the global jihad deepen, and as the divides between Shia and Sunni Muslims become starker, it is the Middle East that will inevitably be most seriously afflicted. Attention and violence will turn inward: 'The two groups are now locked in a battle for supremacy and for the loyalties of unaffiliated groups and the members of existing organizations.'[123] Planning sophisticated coordinated terror attacks in the US or elsewhere (the far enemy) will play second fiddle to defeating a local faction closer to home (the near enemy) in the deeply factionalist tradition of violent Islam.

As much as the Islamic State has been able to reshape the map of the Middle East, its strategy is essentially sectarian and self-defeating as it pits Sunni against Shia. So, its future is more likely to be shaped by this internal dynamic than any other. Divergences between these two organisations on their views on indiscriminate violence, particularly against fellow Muslims, may eventually see al-Qaeda disavow the Islamic State (in the same way that Bin Laden disavowed the GIA in Algeria because of its violence against fellow Muslims). This divergence would usher in the start of sometimes open conflict between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.[124]

Not all jihadi movements have jumped on the Islamic State bandwagon. In the Sahel, where veteran Algerian jihadist Mokhtar Belmokhtar split from the AQIM to establish Al-Murabitun/al-Qaeda in West Africa (AQWA), both AQIM and AQWA remain loyal to Zawahiri, the leader of al-Qaeda, as does al-Shabaab in Somalia. These loyalties are in contrast to the efforts by Boko Haram to create an Islamic State in West Africa. Therefore organisations nominally loyal to both al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have sought to hold territory in Africa.

## The rise of Islamist terror globally, and particularly in North Africa, is a reflection of global developments

A second trend is that there has been an influx of foreigners joining the recent war in Iraq and Syria, including large numbers from North Africa. Blowback is inevitable, even if by just a small number of returning combatants.[125] Just as the return of fighters to Algeria from Afghanistan, who had fought with the mujahideen against the Soviet occupation, fuelled a wave of terror and instability, the return of nationals from Syria and Iraq is inflaming tensions in North Africa, Europe and the US. Quoting the Analytical Support and Monitoring Team of the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, a UN Security Council report notes that

> there are approximately 25 000 foreign terrorist fighters from more than half the countries in the world involved with listed al-Qaida affiliates such as Al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham, among others. Although the phenomenon is not new, these numbers are higher than ever, in particular in Iraq and Syria, with the problem growing in Libya as well.[126]

The largest number of African combatants in Iraq and Syria are from Tunisia, with smaller numbers from Algeria, Morocco,

Libya, Egypt, Sudan and Somalia. [127] Tunisia will inevitably face huge problems with Islamic terror in the years that lie head, as will many other countries.[128] Writing in 2008, Botha noted that 'Whereas the terrorists involved in 9/11 were mostly Saudis and Egyptians, most of the attacks in Europe have been carried out by North African groups such as the GIA, GSPC, GICM [the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group] and allied groups in Libya and Tunisia.'[129] Events in North Africa have not yet fully run their course. For example, in Mauritania, AQIM has been staging attacks since 2005. A court there recently sentenced three men to long prison terms for having joined a local cell of the Islamic State in October 2014.[130]

None of these trends should obscure the reality that violent jihadism is increasingly regionalised - yet the ability of either the Islamic State or al-Qaeda to manage a terror network with affiliates in Africa, Asia and the Middle East is limited. The schisms and infighting within and between these groups reflect this reality, which should not detract from the motivational impact of local groups seeking to associate themselves with a global brand.

A third factor is the role of the Internet and a globally interconnected world, which has turned every country into a potential terrorist recruitment pool. The spectre of so-called lone-wolf terrorism, self-radicalisation and the concept of a 'leaderless revolution' mean that the demonstration effect of events in one location reverberates globally. Many disillusioned and frustrated young people are in search of purpose and meaning. Without jobs or prospects, the appeal of an apparent clear cause, such as that of Islamic State, is powerful and seductive. The US invasion of Iraq and its steadfast defence of Israel direct most attention towards Washington and its allies, as does the history of France in countries such as Algeria. Previously the Islamic State would not have been able to connect with potential recruits in the Cape Flats, outside Cape Town (or elsewhere), nor would they have been able to contact the Islamic State. But, now, the World Wide Web means that direct connections can be established (in a process known as peer-to-peer recruitment) and every potential recruit can also connect with local sympathisers who could help motivate for intent to become action, even if only by strengthening particular views.

These potential relationships have become something of a game-changer in global terror and insurrection.[131] But not all recruits are youngsters in search of meaning, nor do all of them contact either al-Qaeda or the Islamic State. Many simply feed off the supply of radical material available on the Internet. Unlike the situation a few years ago, the Internet, and applications such as Twitter, Facebook and others, has come to be recognised as key to the spread of radical ideology, incitement to terror, violent propaganda and recruitment.

Social media played an important part in facilitating and coordinating the Arab Spring protests, leading to the downfall of autocratic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere. Young activists were able to use Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to publicise regime excess, and to call people to, and coordinate, action. In the same way, and using the same tools, the Islamic State has been able to build a sophisticated global propaganda machine that raises its profile, recruits soldiers, incites lone-wolf attacks and boosts its image to vastly exceed its real threat. For a period, the Islamic State virtually dominated the news. It used graphic images of extreme violence, including beheadings, to 'awaken potential recruits to the reality of the jihadists' war and to intimidate enemies by showing the price they would pay for their involvement'.[132]

## Africa has considerable potential to increase its relative share of the terrorism scourge

In the fourth instance, the ready supply of desperate and poor people provides a potentially limitless supply of conflict labour. Africa, with its large population of extremely poor people and its deeply held views on religion, has considerable potential to increase its relative share of the terrorism scourge.[133] In a region where youth unemployment is high, earning possibilities low and advancement in traditional structures difficult, membership in a self-funding armed movement that offers opportunities for social advancement is extraordinarily attractive.[134] Much of what Botha wrote in 2008 on Egypt applies broadly to North Africa: 'The poor economic situation propels people towards religious conservatism. Conservatism has manifested itself throughout society, from university students to the government to more radical organisations.'[135]

A final factor that will determine the spread of radical Islamist violence is the reaction from Arab countries and those further afield such as Russia and the USA. Recently army chiefs of staff from Arab League countries drafted a protocol for a new joint force to intervene in Middle East conflict zones. The force aims to collectively fight militants in the region, from the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria to the Iranian-backed Houthi militias in Yemen.[136] Beyond inevitable disagreements on details such as where to base the force's headquarters, the central question is not militarily, but political. How will these countries transform politically away from the closed, corrupt and elite systems that currently reflect their politics whilst managing stability?

Radical Islamist violence is front and foremost a political and developmental challenge. Whilst security responses are important, the future evolution will be determined by evolution in the political trajectory of countries in the Middle East and their supporters elsewhere.

In the view of Wolfram Lacher of the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 'if Algeria was central to North Africa's jihadist movement in the past, Libya is where their future lies. … With the ongoing conflicts preventing any rebuilding of the state, Libya's role as the epicentre of North African jihadism is set to grow in coming years.'[137]

The fear is the entrenchment of a self-funding and sustaining war economy in Libya (and, by extension, in the Sahel, including northern Mali), where violence has been privatised and driven by proceedings from organised crime. This is the current situation in Syria and Iraq, where the Islamic State is able to sustain its war through exploitation and pillage. Although there are limits to the resources that can be extracted in this manner, events in Somalia serve as a warning that even a failed economy can sustain conflict for decades.

As much as Libya presents many dangers and challenges, it underscores the importance of maintaining stability in Algeria, which is under pressure from within, and now also suffering from the economic impact of a depressed oil price. The imminent succession challenge to an elderly and sickly Bouteflika could, in this context, prove disruptive. Under current conditions, a crisis in Algeria would reverberate throughout the region, including in Tunisia and across the Mediterranean into southern Europe. Although Algeria's police-state-type security structure may appear to provide stability, it is also the reason for its fragility. In the view of Karim Mezran: 'Without real avenues for inclusive governance and urgently needed political and economic reforms, the system will remain closed, potentially leading to civil unrest as internal pressures grow.'[138]

Yet although the need for further political liberalisation is strong as part of a comprehensive counter-radicalisation strategy, many governments are in a catch-22 situation, since previous efforts at greater political freedom (and, inevitably, secularisation) often opened the doors to manipulation by radical groups and posed even more severe challenges to human security.[139]

Taşpınar makes a compelling case for the need to distinguish between ways of combating terrorism and political radicalisation. Taşpınar argues that there is no point in denying that counter-terrorism requires all the traditional measures, such as 'utmost vigilance in safety measures, intelligence gathering, law enforcement, interagency coordination and, when necessary, the use of force'.[140] Unlike with terrorism,

however (where non-coercive measures generally are of limited use), political radicalism is generally a precursor to terrorism and allows space for non-coercive measures. Terrorists are able to exploit radicalised societies and 'this enabling environment can be altered most effectively by focusing on relative deprivation and human development'.[141] Although terrorism is not necessarily caused by socio-economic problems, there is a clear correlation between relative deprivation (the awareness and politicisation of absolute deprivation) and radicalism, Taşpınar argues.

> Good governance, respect for institutions and inclusive economic growth is the best defence against radicalisation

With its large Muslim population and massive development challenges, Africa will inevitably be part of this unfolding story. Weak states are unable to provide adequate social and economic services, and grassroots Islamic organisations step into this vacuum to provide goods and services in crucial areas, such as healthcare, education and housing. In doing so, they magnify the weakness of the state and open the field for the rise of Islamic networks with their own political agendas. And, as Taşpınar argues, 'repressive political systems exacerbate these dynamics'.[142]

The positive changes in Africa's growth prospects during the last decade signify a structural transformation in the fortunes of the continent, including prospects for greater stability. But will Africa be able improve on its governance and grow fast enough? Eventually, good governance in Africa, a respect for institutions, as opposed to individuals, and inclusive economic growth will prove to be the best defence against radicalisation, as will respect for the rule of law and functioning criminal-justice systems.

Meanwhile, the greatest risk is surely that al-Qaeda (through some nuclear or other extreme terrorist event) or a gung-ho US Republican president intent on repeating the mistakes of his Republican predecessor could goad the US into another ill-advised military adventure in the Middle East, with predictable and disastrous consequences for the entire Middle East–North Africa region.

## Notes

1    Pakistani dictator Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq was the main proponent of the campaign of religious insurrection to counter the potential encirclement of his country and any efforts that might lead to Pashtun independence. He

strongly believed that Pakistan should be organised around political Islam and used that to counter communist ideology. US and Saudi support was channelled through the Pakistan intelligence services that allowed no direct access for their operatives to Afghanistan. See Steve Coll, *Ghost wars,* Penguin, 2004, 61–62, 65–66; Seth Jones, *In the graveyard of empires: America's war in Afghanistan,* WW Norton & Company, 2009; Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An enemy we created: The myth of the Taliban/Al Qaeda merger in Afghanistan,* 1970–2010, Oxford University Press, 2012.

2   After four years in Sudan, Bin Laden reluctantly agreed to leave after intense pressure from the US, Egypt and Algeria, among others. Steve Coll, *Ghost wars,* Penguin, 2004, 9.

3   Anneli Botha, *Terrorism in the Maghreb,* Institute for Security Studies monograph 144, June 2008, www.issafrica.org/publications/monographs/terrorism-in-the-maghreb-the-transnationalisation-of-domestic-terrorism, 17.

4   Lawrence Wright, *The looming tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11,* Knopf, 2006, 194.

5   More than 200 people died and more than 4 000 were wounded during the simultaneous truck bomb attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam on 7 August 1998. Al-Qaeda followed this up with an attack on the *USS Cole,* a guided missile destroyer in the Yemeni port of Aden on 12 October 2000.

6   Including the Groupe Islamique Armé in Algeria. Anneli Botha, *Terrorism in the Maghreb,* Institute for Security Studies monograph 144, June 2008, www.issafrica.org/publications/monographs/terrorism-in-the-maghreb-the-transnationalisation-of-domestic-terrorism, 63.

7   Ibid., 63–64; Preeti Bhattacharji, State sponsors: Sudan, Council on Foreign Relations, 2 April 2008, www.cfr.org/sudan/state-sponsors-sudan/p9367, accessed 1 September 2015.

8   Anneli Botha, *Terrorism in the Maghreb,* Institute for Security Studies monograph 144, June 2008, www.issafrica.org/publications/monographs/terrorism-in-the-maghreb-the-transnationalisation-of-domestic-terrorism, 32–34.

9   Isabelle Werenfels, Going 'glocal': Jihadism in Algeria and Tunisia, in Guido Steinberg and Annette Weber (eds), Jihadism in Africa, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik research paper, June 2015, 53.

10   Anneli Botha, *Terrorism in the Maghreb,* Institute for Security Studies monograph 144, June 2008, www.issafrica.org/publications/monographs/terrorism-in-the-maghreb-the-transnationalisation-of-domestic-terrorism, 32–33.

11   Isabelle Werenfels, Going 'glocal': Jihadism in Algeria and Tunisia, in Guido Steinberg and Annette Weber (eds), Jihadism in Africa, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik research paper, June 2015, 53.

12   Anneli Botha, *Terrorism in the Maghreb,* Institute for Security Studies monograph 144, June 2008, www.issafrica.org/publications/monographs/terrorism-in-the-maghreb-the-transnationalisation-of-domestic-terrorism, 27.

13   Jessica Stern and JM Berger, *ISIS – The state of terror,* William Collins, India, 2015, 177. Various smaller insurgent bands regrouped, becoming the FIS-loyalist Islamic Salvation Army (Armée Islamique du Salut).

14   Jessica Stern and JM Berger, *ISIS – The state of terror,* William Collins, India, 2015, 22.

15   Bouteflika continues to serve as president in 2015 after the removal of a two-term constitutional limit.

16   Anneli Botha, Terrorism in the Maghreb, Institute for Security Studies monograph 144, June 2008, www.issafrica.org/publications/monographs/terrorism-in-the-maghreb-the-transnationalisation-of-domestic-terrorism, 1–3, 23–39.

17   Ibid., 1, 69–71.

18   Isabelle Werenfels, Going 'glocal': Jihadism in Algeria and Tunisia, in Guido Steinberg and Annette Weber (eds), Jihadism in Africa, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik research paper, June 2015, 64.

19   Berbers represent around 30% of the Algerian population and have long considered themselves marginalised by the country's dominant Arab culture.

20   See Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Qaeda_in_the_Islamic_Maghreb, accessed 8 August 2015, and Algerian Civil War, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algerian_Civil_War accessed 8 August 2015.

21   Anneli Botha, *Terrorism in the Maghreb,* Institute for Security Studies monograph 144, June 2008, www.issafrica.org/publications/monographs/terrorism-in-the-maghreb-the-transnationalisation-of-domestic-terrorism,, 70–71.

22   These events have been covered in a number of books, such as Ali A Allawi, *The occupation of Iraq: Winning the war, losing the peace,* Yale University Press, 2007, and Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco: The American military adventure in Iraq,* Penguin, 2006.

23   See Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the army of terror,* Regan Arts, 2015, 186, 58. The Iraqi Ba'athists are essentially secular nationalists reflecting the fact that the Islamic State has a political agenda. After the civil war started in neighbouring Syria, ISI sent Sunni fighters (the al-Nusra Front) in August 2011. In April 2013, ISI merged with al-Nusra Front to form the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

24   Three years later, the GSPC in Algeria became the second organisation to adopt the name of AQIM and, later, Somalia's al-Shabaab was also accepted into the al-Qaeda franchise.

25   Jessica Stern and JM Berger, *ISIS – The state of terror,* William Collins, India, 2015, 28–30, 45.

26   Ibid., 39–40.

27   Ironically, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi seems to have been radicalised and shaped during the several months that he spent in US detention in Camp Bucca, in southern Iraq, before being released as a no-risk detainee in December 2004. Al-Baghdadi assumed leadership of the ISI after a US–Iraqi joint air strike wiped out the ISI senior leadership in April 2010. Ibid., 34–37.

28   Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the army of terror,* Regan Arts, 2015, 196.

29   Ibid., 178; Intelwire, Mullah Omar and the AQ-ISIS War, 30 July 2015, http://news.intelwire.com/2015/07/mullah-omar-and-aq-isis-war.html, accessed 15 August 2015. Ayman al-Zawahiri (the head of al-Qaeda) rapidly pledged allegiance to Mullah Akhtar Mansour, the new leader of the Taliban.

30   See, for example, Barak Mendelsohn, Al-Qaeda's franchising strategy, *Survival,* 53:3, 2011, 29–50.

31   See the chapter on Tunisia in Anneli Botha, *Terrorism in the Maghreb,* Institute for Security Studies monograph 144, June 2008, www.issafrica.org/publications/monographs/terrorism-in-the-maghreb-the-transnationalisation-of-domestic-terrorism, 111–123.

32   Originally known as Harakat al-Ittijah al Islami, and established after the newly independent Tunisian government had, similar to Algeria, incorporated secular principles. The movement was banned after being implicated in a plot to overthrow the government in 1987 but re-emerged as Harakat al-Nahda in 1988 in the run-up to the 1989 elections, when its candidates stood as independents. It was subsequently banned and its leadership imprisoned. See Anneli Botha, *Terrorism in the Maghreb,* Institute for Security Studies monograph 144, June 2008, www.issafrica.org/publications/monographs/terrorism-in-the-maghreb-the-transnationalisation-of-domestic-terrorism, 111–117.

33   Isabelle Werenfels, Going 'glocal': Jihadism in Algeria and Tunisia, in Guido Steinberg and Annette Weber (eds), Jihadism in Africa, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik research paper, June 2015, 63.

34   Ibid., 56.

35   Independent Strategy and Intelligence Study Group, Terror at the museum in Tunisia, 18 March 2015, http://isisstudygroup.com/?p=5690, accessed 15 August 2015; Isabelle Werenfels, Going 'glocal': Jihadism in Algeria and Tunisia, in Guido Steinberg and Annette Weber (eds), Jihadism in

Africa, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik research paper, June 2015, 60–63.

36 In the 1980s many Tunisians had left to join the jihad in Afghanistan and, later, Bosnia. Isabelle Werenfells, Going 'glocal': Jihadism in Algeria and Tunisia, in Guido Steinberg and Annette Weber (eds), Jihadism in Africa, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik research paper, June 2015, 56.

37 Thomas Joscelyn, AQIM battalion takes credit for killing 4 Tunisian security officers, 20 February 2015, www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/02/aqim-battalion-takes-credit-for-killing-4-tunisian-security-officers.php, accessed 1 September 2015.

38 Guido Steinberg and Annette Weber, Conclusions and recommendations, in in Guido Steinberg and Annette Weber (eds), Jihadism in Africa, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik research paper, June 2015, 100.

39 Ibid., 16.

40 Anneli Botha, Politics and terrorism: An assessment of the origin and threat of terrorism in Egypt, ISS paper 131, December 2006, www.issafrica.org/acpst/papers/politics-and-terrorism-an-assessment-of-the-origin-and-threat-of-terrorism-in-egypt, 4, 7.

41 Ibid.

42 Radical Islam and terror are not new in Egypt, having gone through successive waves since the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, which included the assassination, in 1948, of Prime Minister Nukrashi Pasha and the attempted assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1954. From 1993 to 1997 the country experienced a number of particularly bloody attacks. Anneli Botha, *Terrorism in the Maghreb,* Institute for Security Studies monograph 144, June 2008, www.issafrica.org/publications/monographs/terrorism-in-the-maghreb-the-transnationalisation-of-domestic-terrorism, 2–7.

43 Egyptian presidential election, 2014, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_presidential_election,_2014, accessed 15 August 2015.

44 Ibid.

45 Egypt court upholds Morsi death sentence, Al Jazeera, 16 June 2015, www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/egypt-court-upholds-morsi-death-sentence-150616104041261.html, accessed 25 August 2015.

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# ISS PAPER

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The Institute for Security Studies is an African organisation that aims to enhance human security on the continent. It does independent and authoritative research, provides expert policy analysis and advice, and delivers practical training and technical assistance.

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