Terrorism an Intellectual War
Saron Messembe Obia
Saron.obia@iacspsea.com, princemessembe@gmail.com

Abstract—The events of September 11, 2001 more than any other single event brought to the realization how globalized the world is. With coordinated attacks by al-Qaeda in the United States and the rise of ISIS as an international security threat. The decentralized system of these terrorists organizations have changed national security policing, due to its asymmetric nature. This paper addresses the technical aspects, while at the same time provides insight for security agencies to better understand how terrorists penetrate into a country and intelligence.

Keywords—Jihad, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Terrorism, Intelligence, Counter-Terrorism

Introduction

Counter-terrorism is a concept which re-emerged after the 9/11 attacks to completely curb international security threats of Al-Qaeda. The primary aim of some terrorists’ organizations is to establish a ‘caliphate’ where ‘sharia law’ will reign. The rise of ISIS and al-Qaeda’s resurgence are complex, the primary catalyst has been the chaos across the Arab world. Their ideology inspires wide appeal against their common enemy the ‘West’. Their wish is to inculcate sharia law and order by occupying strategic areas and forcing communities to comply, so long as there is ISIS, Al-Qaeda and even Al Shabbab jihadism will continues. Threats keep increasing with tags such as: violent jihadists, political Islam even to non-radical Muslims. Labelling the Muslim Brotherhood as extremist would be humiliating, alienating a philosophical and political action in relation to jihadism. Similarly, many armed groups fight alongside al-Qaeda, though some do not adhere jihadists’ goals of attacking the West or establishing a caliphate. Mapping them from al-Qaeda would be better than fighting on many fronts. From Libya to Somalia, Syria to Iraq, Yemen and Afghanistan, ISIS or al-Qaeda affiliates occupy strategic zones which cannot be secured by a single force.

The jihadist landscape

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines jihad as a holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty. Those usually engaged in this act are called jihadist. The effort to extinguish ISIS began in August 2014, when the United States assisted by other Western and Arab countries, carried out several attacks against ISIS targets in Iraq and Syria (Scharf, 2016). The jihadist landscape has changed this past months. ISIS has lost parts of its Iraqi and Syrian territories. Boko-Haram, whose leader pledged allegiance to ISIS, has been a menace to the

1Counter-terrorism Pitfalls: What the U.S. Fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda Should Avoid Crisis Group Special Report N°3, 22 March 2017
2Merriam Webster dictionary established the most used definition of jihad.
four African states around Lake Chad, but has split and lost much of the territory it held a year ago. Some foreigners travel to join terrorist organizations, but the main risk is their return and escape elsewhere⁴. The dynamics of al-Qaeda has revealed. Its affiliates, particularly in Somalia, Syria and Yemen, are more influential than the leadership in South Asia. Many significant al-Qaeda operatives are in Syria or Yemen. The affiliate’s prime identity is local more than transnational. Cells within them aim to inspire attacks against the West, engage in internal wrangling’s and recruit motivated fighters. The disorder of ISIS or al-Qaeda across parts of the Arab world has enabled its growth. Neither the social contracts nor a regional power rivalry which causes much of the chaos show signs of abating. The pool both movements have deepened, as more young people have come into the scene.

Al Qaeda and ISIS as International security threats

Timing as a strategic factor for terrorist attacks: The case study of France

The globalization period changed the perception about the unconventional approach to national security. Though considered as a weapon for the weak ‘terrorism⁵, the focal point is the Paris attacks. On 13 of November 2015, more than five terrorists coordinated attacks which took place in Paris⁵. According to a special report by the international institute for counter-terrorism, 129 people were killed in the attacks and more than 350 persons were injured. The terrorists were engaged in mass shootings, hostage takings and suicide attacks⁶. The suicide attacks where the first ever on French territory. The attacks occurred in strategic locations, mostly soft target areas. Three of the terrorists detonated their suicide belts and died around the national football stadium (Stade the France) at 21:20 to 21:53⁷. Another terrorist exploded in a restaurant around Boulevard Voltaire, injuring several persons, while multiple suicide attacks killed more than 80 people in the Bataclan Concert Hall. The attacks were strategic due to allege involvement of France in the Muslim faith (the direct attack on Prophet Mohammed). From the criminal report established by the French police, these attacks took years of planning. Some operational preparation took place in Belgium. At least two terrorists lived in Brussels, one of them in its environs, in Molenbeek, a center for radicalization⁸. This raises three questions which are; is Syria the base for terrorist organizations? Why has Syria been brandish as an international security threat? Is a bearer of Syrian passport a diplomat? The French Prosecutor, François Molins, confirmed that one Syrian passport (with name Ahmed Almohammad) was found in

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⁴ Some foreigners join terrorist organizations through social networks or decentralized affiliates
⁵ The Paris Black Friday 13/11/2015 Attacks - What do we know? What should we do? Special report by International Institute for Counter-Terrorism with the support of Keren Daniel time factors is been discussed.
⁶ One of the major source of income terrorist organizations is through hostage taking and the capture of strategic areas.
⁷ Radical Muslim attacks are to inflict pain on their enemy. Timing is a strategic factor, mostly when it involves soft targets like the attacks national football stadium in France.
⁸ The GWOT has changed the concept of national security, revolving around intelligence and counter terrorism. Drawing from the attacks on the French territory, two questions arises; is Molenbeek an ungoverned space? How Belgian intelligence aware of the increasing operations on her terrain?
Saint-Denis. The passport was used in Greece in order to seek asylum.\textsuperscript{9} Timing played a major role during the attacks due to the intellectual skills and lapses of the French intelligence in issues related to counter-terrorism.

**National security threats in U.S**

The paradigm focuses on defense intelligence threat which primarily has military capabilities targeting some principal adversaries. This is because traditionally American national security threats focused on deterrence, intelligence warning and the superiority of the American military machine.\textsuperscript{10} But somehow security and military operations has changed fundamentally. They have gone asymmetric. Focusing on global terrorism and al Qaeda, U.S national security policy has been real branded, turning around the ‘global war on terror’. In the U.S there are different agencies that coordinate actions leading to a foreign policy. The Foreign Service and state department are in charge of foreign policy, while the pentagon the defense intelligence agency direct the war machine.\textsuperscript{11} Intelligence to facilitate American’s global war on terror comes from the defense intelligence part of their job is to identify emerging threat challenges, they do this by providing information to defense strategists and national security officials. Huge amount of resources are devoted to generate the needed intelligence. For example the U.S has registered notable progress on al Qaeda. With the use of intelligence, senior operative of the group has been killed. An U.S has been able to disrupt several terrorist operations. Nonetheless al Qaeda remains a formidable threat to the U.S. They continue to aspire to stage attacks using aircrafts.\textsuperscript{12} This’s because of the large scale casualties and media coverage since 9/11, the network enjoys considerable support through her recruitment. Despite sustained pressure from the U.S military machine, they have been able to adopt their planning through a more decentralized structure and affiliates. This is evident in their choice of targets which increasing are soft targets like tourist centers, shopping buildings through affiliated groups like Al Shabbab in East Africa, Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia and al Qaeda in the Maghreb in North Africa. The success of these affiliations is the common ideology the share.\textsuperscript{13} Iraq was considered as the main destination for jihadi missions. Syria and Yemen have recently taken centre stage and they now serve as training ground for the next generation of terrorist. The increasing concern of ungoverned spaces are potential terrains for terrorist training, planning and organization like the West province of Pakistan and several areas in Africa. These ungoverned spaces play a major importance in the GWOT. The believe is founded on

\textsuperscript{9} Asylum is a new strategy used by some terrorists to penetrate the target. Either political instability is evoked by the terrorist or violation of human rights following certain cultures.

\textsuperscript{10} A lecture on the unconventional approach to national security theory; the U.S example in 2016 at the Pan African Institute for Development West Africa by Dr. Daniel Ekongwe.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid

\textsuperscript{12} The have been a mutation in terrorist attacks in the West, due the great media coverage of the 9/11 in U.S, terrorist organization continue to aspire to stage attacks like that of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab in 2009.

\textsuperscript{13} The ideology of Al Qaeda and ISIS have been adopted by its affiliates. Al Shabbab in East Africa is gaming the region. Meanwhile the split of Boko-Haram is not only a serious challenge to countries of the Lake Chad Basin, but another formidable threat for Africa, with increasing internal wrangling’s.
grounds that ungoverned territories are usually found in densely populated cities where terrorists congregate to prepared operations.

**Terrorist penetration strategies: Educational and refugee status or crisis**

Examining the strategies of the two protagonists (al Qaeda and ISIS)

**Jihadi John (affiliation ISIS)**

Jihadi John (Mohammed Emwazi) a name which nearly rub out Ben Laden’s 9/11, after his appearance as a member of the Islamic State noted for their ferocity. Mohammed Emwazi was a twenty-one-year-old IT graduate in England, who claimed the security services were ruining his life. According to Verkaik’s (2016) investigations two pertinent questions are put forth after the U.S air strike that killed Emwazi in November 2015; what led Emwazi to come to him for help in the first place? And why do hundreds of Britons want to join Islamic State? Though few would recognize the name of Mohammad Emwazi. He is much known as Jihadi John. He shocked the world with series of videos of cruel executions. Verkaik made an interesting observation in relation to those who inflict terrorism. For him, agencies involved in the protection citizens sometimes employ tactics which have unintended results. Relating Emwazi’s story about being grilled at London's Heathrow Airport, was already on the road to radicalization when his Qur'an was allegedly placed on the floor by one of his interrogators. He was from a Kuwaiti family that migrated to London. Like Jihadi John, others integrate the society through education, avoiding suspicion. They work quietly with people like themselves who focus on very dark things, not to reveal their agenda.

**Umar Farouk A. (affiliation Al Qaeda)**

Intelligence led security is another word that is popular with security experts or strategists. Security service use intelligence as pro-active measures in disrupting potential eminent threats. It has been used in the UK to justify the arrest of (Muslim) Manchester United fans who were suspected of wanting to blow up Old Trafford the 'Plane Bomb plot' that was said to have been initiated in Pakistan, which led to the ban on carrying liquids into planes. It is intelligence led security that initiated measures such as the national database, the biometric ID cards and the gathering of information through a myriad persons. There has been a simple and yet insight misinterpretation of 'information' and 'intelligence'. It is certainly easy, to gather considerable information on a massive amount of people. However, that cannot be considered to be 'intelligence' until each piece of information is classified, assessed, and put into a wider context. Information gathering is mean less in preventing terrorism unless there modus operandi is exposed, then the data or information becomes

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14 Jihadi John: The Making of a Terrorist by Robert Verkaik
15 Ibid
16 Migration plays a vital role in terrorist attacks, as the attacker must not have a criminal record nor create suspicion to intelligence agencies. Terrorist penetrate easily in to countries through education, tourist visa and marriages.
17 Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab and the Christmas Day Attack: Why Aren't Lessons Learned? By David Rubens
18 Ibid
19 Ibid
valuable. The official Congressional Report on the intelligence failure that led to 9/11 identified the fact that there was so much unassessed data in the system, that there was no way of knowing what was significant\textsuperscript{20}. The FBI claimed that there are 500,000 people on their ‘terrorist watch’ list, and therefore they were not able to identify Abdulmutallab as someone of being beyond normal interest, which demonstrates that the attempts to gather more data in order to make itself more effective has actually increased vulnerability\textsuperscript{21}.

It is unlikely that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab would have been able to carry out his plot without the aid of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. More specifically, American-born radical imam Anwar al-Awlaki played a critical role in recruiting and equipping him. Al-Awlaki has been given the moniker ‘the bin Laden of the internet’ according to Al Arabiyah Television. His exploits have been significant enough for President Obama to order the targeted killing of al-Awlaki, the first U.S. citizen to be placed on this list. Abdulmutallab allegedly first met with al-Awlaki in 2005 while Abdulmutallab was in Yemen to study Arabic\textsuperscript{22}. In October 2009 Abdulmutallab traveled to a house owned and operated by al-Awlaki in the Shabwah Mountains of Yemen\textsuperscript{23}. There he received equipment and training in the use of explosives. It is unlikely that Abdulmutallab would have been able to procure PETN, the highly explosive substance used in his attempted attack, without the assistance of an organized terrorist group. Only al-Awlaki, of AQAP could facilitate procurement of the substance. The Muslim community had little impact of Abdulmutallab’s progression toward violence. He attended thrilling sermons at various mosques, during his studies of Arabic at a language institute in Sana’a, as the president of the University College of London’s Islamic Society. Abdulmutallab boarded Flight 253 without a passport, identifying him as a Sudanese refugee\textsuperscript{24}. As the airline often allows Sudanese refugees to fly without passports. According to Mueller (2011) Muslim community involvement identified through radical imams like Anwar al-Awlaki, recruiter for al-Qaeda. Education and refugee status had a great impact in Abdulmutallab’s penetration in to America, due to intelligence failure.

**Conclusion**

International security has changed dramatically, as terrorists based in foreign nations continues to recruit fanatics in Europe and Africa. According to Arena (2017) home-grown takes into account the cell make-up and local motivations, usually excluding direct involvement with al-Qaeda and ISIL\textsuperscript{25}. However, the distinction is frequently difficult to unpack due to the complex interplay of national and international motivations, networks and opportunities. According to Verkaik (2016), restraining terrorism will warrant regulators to act as bulwark between Muslims and security agencies. For him, the approach of some law enforcement officerstowards young Muslims seem to be impropriate.

\textsuperscript{20}(http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/intel/RL33539.pdf)
\textsuperscript{22} See Case 33: The Underwear Bomber by John Mueller, July 12, 2011
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid
\textsuperscript{23} Abdulmutallab’s Sudanese refugee status appeals to intelligence services on policing method in regard to the present refugee crisis in Europe which remains an eminent threat to national security.
\textsuperscript{24} Arena, M. (2017) Islamic Terrorism in the West and International Migrations: The “Far” or “Near” Enemy Within? What is the Evidence? European University Institute; Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies
huge counter-terrorism agencies have data about suspected criminals, if it’s inaccessible and unclassified it remains meaningless. Counter-terrorism is more of intelligence and tenacity of security agents. As such, agents should penetrate refugee camps in order to tap intelligence of future terrorist attacks, as well as proper scrutiny and profiling of foreign student and travelling record.

References:

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