

Jihadisme in Noordelijk Afrika

Drijfveren, daden en deelgenoten van AQIM en Boko Haram

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Bijlage 1: English Summary

The past three years the Paris-Dakar rally has been held in Latin America. After attacks by an organization called “Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb” (AQIM), in which dozens of people died, the original route through the Western Sahara was considered too dangerous. In the same period, in Northern Nigeria, hundreds of people have died in clashes between a group that is known as Boko Haram and security forces. The rise of both groups can be seen in the context of global attacks of terrorist jihadist groups linked in various ways to the Al-Qaeda network.

This paper is an attempt to learn more about AQIM and Boko Haram. There are several reasons for doing this. In the first place, AQIM and Boko Haram are responsible for the death of hundreds of people in Northern Africa. Secondly, the effects of their use of violence are not limited to the countries in the region themselves because there are numerous contacts between Northern Africa and Europe. Thirdly, AQIM maintains ties with the Al-Qaeda network, while in the case of Boko Haram there is at least an ideological connectedness. Finally, there are economic interests that are damaged by violent assault, illegal trafficking and kidnapping.

The findings in this paper are the result of a study for the Research and Documentation Centre of the Netherlands Ministry of Security and Justice at the request of the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism into jihadist organizations in Northern Africa. The study was conducted on the basis of the following sets of research questions:

1. What kind of organizations are AQIM and Boko Haram? In what kind of broader political context do they operate? What do their internal organizational structures and their mind-sets look like? How do they justify their actions?
2. What kind of actions do AQIM and Boko Haram undertake? How are these actions financed?
3. How do AQIM and Boko Haram relate to the global Al-Qaeda network? How are these organizations influenced by Al-Qaeda? Do they have connections with criminal organizations?

This report is based on literature and sources. Background information was searched in literature on Africa by, for instance, Martin Meredith and Basil Davidson. As far as literature on terrorism is concerned, this study is based on the work of Bruce Hoffman and Marc Sageman. Since the attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, there has been a growing interest in literature on the relation between terrorism, violence and religion. On this subject, literature was used by Michael Burleigh, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jessica Stern, and others. Finally, more specific literature on terrorism was used, such as studies concerning Algeria by Lianne Boudali, Jean-Pierre Filiu, Jeremy Keenan and Camille Tawil, and those concerning Nigeria by Sally Matthews and Solomon Hussein, Isidore Nwanaju, Freedom Onuoha and Stephanie Schulze.

Terrorist organizations use mass media in order to attract as much attention for their cause as possible. This holds for AQIM as well and to a lesser degree for Boko Haram. They present themselves on websites and YouTube in the way they want to be seen by a general or a specific audience. This study has used these websites as primary sources as a means of understanding objectives, motives and activities of AQIM and Boko Haram. They were compared and valued critically against the findings of the general literature.

This study used publicly available literature and sources, which, especially in the case of Boko Haram, are scarce. Often, not much more can be found than newspaper articles or scraps of news on the internet. Gaps in information are inevitable. Therefore, the conclusions that are drawn in this report are cautious.

In this study terrorism is defined as the threat, the preparation or the actual committing of serious violence directed against human beings, or acts aimed at creating damage disruptive to society in order to bring about societal changes, terrify the population, or influence political decision-making. In so doing, terrorism is aimed at causing a psychological effect and it needs publicity to achieve this. Therefore, the use of the media is essential to terrorist organizations. Since the emergence of the internet, they have been able to determine the content and the timing of their message and simultaneously reach a global audience. They use the internet for collecting and exchanging information, propaganda and recruitment, psychological warfare and for getting financial support. This study is about jihadist terrorist organizations. Jihadism is seen as an extreme political ideology characterized by its divine endeavour to spread Islam over the whole world by waging a “holy war” against all unbelievers.

AQIM and Boko Haram legitimize their activities by religious motives that they share with Al-Qaeda. This report does not discuss whether these organizations are primarily moved by religious motives or not. What is relevant is whether they present themselves as religiously motivated, as is the case with AQIM and Boko Haram. Partly, they fight secular, corrupt and authoritarian regimes in their own countries, partly they resist the economic, cultural and political dominance of the West. Within terrorist organizations religion can serve several purposes: as an instrument for recruitment, as a justification of extreme violence, as a motivation for suicide attacks and as a criterion for the selection of targets.

AQIM

The name AQIM is short for “Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb”. It is an extremist jihadist organization predominantly active in the North East of Algeria and the Sahel region. The official Arabic name is “*Tanzim al-Qa’ida bi-bilad al-Maghrib al-islami*”. The current organization has its roots in the “Islamic Salvation Front” (FIS), which was forced into illegality after the Algerian military intervened in the elections of 1992. Extremists then founded the “Armed Islamic Group” (GIA), which developed into the largest terrorist organization in Algeria. In 2007 an offshoot of the GIA, the “Salafist Group for Preaching and Struggle” (GPSC) became an official branch of Al-Qaeda and changed its name into AQIM.

The most important objective of AQIM is the establishment of an Islamic state in Algeria on the basis of the Sharia, liberation of the nations of Islam from the occupation by the agents of the West and the struggle against political, economic and cultural domination of the West. AQIM sees itself as a religiously motivated organization. All its public declarations begin with citations from the Koran and the Hadith. Religion plays a role in the recruitment of members, the legitimation of extreme violence and in the internal debate on the selection of targets of attacks.

According to various sources, AQIM has between 100 and several thousand members. They originate from such diverse countries as Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Tunisia, Libya, Burkina Faso and Nigeria, although the majority of members is Algerian. AQIM is most active in North Eastern Algeria and in the Sahara regions of Southern Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad. AQIM is structured as a military

organization, based on regional units that operate under the command of an emir. Supreme commander of AQIM is Abu Musab Abdul Wadud, Wadud for short. His second is Yahya Jawadi, emir of the Sahara region, currently the most important area of operation. The supreme commander is elected by the council of leaders, which consists of the emirs of the regional units.

Since, in 2007, AQIM became officially aligned with the al-Qaeda network, the number of suicide attacks in Algeria, abduction of westerners and facilitation and participation in smuggling have increased considerably. Between 2008 and 2009 the number of kidnappings increased by more than 60%. Apart from kidnappings, AQIM's activities are also financed by smuggling drugs, arms and people. An important "weapon" in the armory of AQIM is the use of the internet and YouTube. The internet is used mostly for propaganda and recruitment.

AQIM is involved in international criminal networks as well. In Arabic and French media AQIM is often mentioned in connection with drugs networks in the Western Sahara. The fragile states in the Western Sahara region are not fully capable of guarding their borders or combating terrorist or criminal groups. However, as a consequence of counterterrorism measures by the Algerian government the capability of AQIM to undertake large-scale attacks has been reduced, especially in the larger towns and cities. Sahel countries as well as the United States are building up an international cooperation in the field of combating terrorism.

Boko Haram

The Nigerian terrorist organization Boko Haram is rooted in the Islamic Yusufiyya sect, founded by and named after Mohamed Yusuf, in Northern Nigeria. A charismatic preacher, Yusuf died in 2009, while under police custody. After his death Abu-Mohammad Abu-Bakr Ibn Mohammad al-Shakwi, Abubakar Shekau for short, became the new leader. The Nigerian police claim to have killed him a year ago. In spite of the Nigerian government claim that it defeated Boko Haram, the attacks and the violence continue.

Boko Haram uses several names. One of these is "*Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'a 'ala Minhaj as-Salaf*", which means "People of the Tradition of the Prophet and the Group according to the Salafist Method". Another name used is "*Jama'at Ahl al-Sunnah li Da'wah wal Jihad*", which means "Community of People of the Tradition for Preaching and Holy War". For a long time, there have been no official documents produced by the group itself. The first public declaration in which the name of Boko Haram was used appeared in August 2009.

Playing an important role in Boko Haram, religion is the strongest factor binding its members. Members pray separately in their own mosques and do not mingle with the local population. They can be recognized by their long beards and black headdresses. The importance of religion can also be deduced from the name Boko Haram. Literally, Boko Haram means "western education is unlawful". According to Boko Haram's leadership it has a broader meaning, implying the rejection of all kinds of western influence, such as constitutional protection of the rights of women, homosexuality, alcohol, crime, drugs, lax morality and multiparty democracy. The political objective of the group is the overthrow of the current Nigerian government and the establishment of an Islamic state.

Nigeria is an ethnically diverse state. About half the population are Muslims living in the North of the country. The other half, located in the South, are Christians. There are strong tensions between both groups. Boko Haram is mainly active in the federal state of Borno. The last few years Boko Haram has expanded its field of operations to include the member state of Kano and the dividing line between the Islamic North and the Christian South.

Boko Haram is said to have hundreds or even thousands of members. The group is divided according to member states of Nigeria and the provinces within the member states. The leader of these branches is called emir. Activities of the group include attacks on motorcycles with firearms and explosives against police stations, other government buildings and churches. The most important riots instigated by Boko Haram took place in July 2009. They started with an attack against a police station in the town of Bauchi, followed by fights between Boko Haram and the Nigerian armed forces. The fights spread to Yobe, Kano and Borno. The number of casualties amounted to between 800 and 1000, mainly members of Boko Haram. There were thousands of wounded. Local people live in fear of the group.

The main sources of income are the contributions paid by the members as well as donations made by politicians, government functionaries and organizations within Nigeria.

In a statement of October 2010, Shekau paid respect to al-Qaida and its branches and leaders in Iraq, Yemen and North Africa, al-Shabaab in Somalia and the mujahideen in Pakistan, Chechnya and Kashmir. He also specifically mentioned AQIM. Wadud of AQIM declared his support to Boko Haram, which has used posters featuring the name of Shekau and the logo of AQIM. The cooperation between Boko Haram and AQIM is still limited to propaganda. The former group is also beginning to be mentioned in pro-jihadi websites, which places the jihad in Nigeria in the context of the global jihad and gives the violence in Nigeria a certain amount of legitimacy.

The rapprochement between AQIM and Boko Haram must be taken seriously. The most important reason for this is that AQIM has the technical know-how, the organizational skills and logistics to make bombs and commit suicide attacks. They also have a good knowledge of the Sahel. Boko Haram for its part may not always be effective, but the group has an almost inexhaustible reservoir of members, of mujahideen.

Sinds de jaren negentig zijn op veel plaatsen in de wereld jihadistische terroristische organisaties actief. In Noordelijk Afrika zijn dit AQIM en Boko Haram. Beide verbinden zich aan de ideologie van al-Qaida. Ze zijn verantwoordelijk voor honderden slachtoffers in de regio. Maar de effecten blijven niet beperkt tot de betrokken landen zelf. Dit onderzoek naar AQIM en Boko Haram is gedaan op verzoek van de Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en in opdracht van het Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum van het Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie. Het is uitgevoerd door de Sen Foundation. In deze studie wordt getracht inzicht te geven in de drijfveren, de daden en de deelgenoten van de betrokken organisaties.

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