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Which state strategies should be employed in the Arab world to combat jihadism ?

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[1] Flavien Bourrat and the authors propose the following paper in their personal capacity. The opinions expressed do not reflect those of IRSEM or the French Ministry of Defence.

SOMMAIRE

WHICH STATE STRATEGIES SHOULD BE EMPLOYED IN THE ARAB WORLD TO COMBAT JIHADISM?

*By **Flavien BOURRAT**, head of the North Africa and Middle-East programmes at IRSEM*

A new order resulting from political and institutional splits

The modern jihadi movement (or Salafi jihadism) is the most radical expression of what are referred to as the Islamist movements. Ideologically, it is characterized by the rejection of political modernity embodied by the nation-state. In terms of courses of action, it is distinguished by the use of violence. Since its beginnings in the Afghan scrublands in the 1980s, to its transformation and upsurge in Arab countries in the 1990s, this phenomenon has come to be a major security challenge – to different degrees of intensity in both time and geographic terms – for the countries in the region. The initial reaction of the governments in these countries was a violent one, or, to use the expression popular during the Algerian civil war, an "eradication policy". The context of the "global war on terror" – the result of the 09/11 bombing – generated new vocations within the jihadi movement, despite the blow dealt by the United States to the leaders of the Al Qaeda network. The Arab regimes most actively combating this movement saw this as an encouragement, the promise of international support, and a retrospective legitimization of their opting for an eradication policy. State actors involved in this struggle soon began to realise, however, that police and military means were not sufficient to extinguish a threat that was rooted in a specific ideological and religious context. Repressive policies therefore needed to be accompanied by a twofold process of disengagement – driving jihadi militants out of scrublands and hideouts – and of de-radicalisation – forcing them to renounce their radical ideologies and violent methods, through re-education. From the mid-2000s, this led to the implementation of State initiatives based on amnesty and re-education, in places where the jihadi movement was most active. "Prevention, Rehabilitation and Aftercare" was implemented in Saudi Arabia, the National Dialogue Conference was set up by the government of Sana'a, a de-radicalisation process was launched in Egypt (mainly relying on the public stance of the former emir of al-Jihad), and terrorist and radical elements were reintegrated in Algeria, a programme initiated in 1999 by the "Civil Concord" and institutionalised in 2005 with the adoption of the "Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation". Combining education and legal action programmes with constant military and security pressure, these policies were unquestionably successful, although it is not possible to estimate the role played by each course of action. In the end, the final results varied from country to country. The effectiveness of the measures taken was found to depend on the social, cultural and political environments. Where these had deteriorated, such as in Algeria or Yemen, jihadi violence persisted and sometimes regenerated despite the success achieved by State-sponsored initiatives.

The series of splits, caused by the Arab revolutions that began in January, 2011 and continue today, has disrupted this security structure, providing the jihadi movements with greater visibility and reviving them. This development, which was more marked in countries where rebellions resulted in governments being overthrown (Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen), took place in three stages. Initially, it was made possible because of a weakening of the national security forces – especially the police – through which governments implemented their investigation and repression policy, while

jihadi militants were being released. Secondly, due to opportunism rather than conviction, jihadi activists sought a place in the new political arena– which was more pluralist and liberalised – putting a greater emphasis on preaching than on jihad (with the exception of Syria), but refusing to be institutionalized. The elections brought movements to power that aligned themselves with political Islamism, and which took quite an ambiguous approach toward the Salafist-jihadi movement: in Tunisia, they decided to “reclaim the movement” to channel it or make political allies, if need be; in Egypt, they placed former officials in senior management positions or in intermediary roles with jihadists in Sinai. Lastly, the third stage was marked by those states regaining control of their security forces. For example, in Spring 2012, with the Yemeni government forces taking control of the Abyan governorate [previously occupied by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)]; in June 2013, after the Egyptian army overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood’s government; and lastly, with the Tunisian government declaring al Ansar Al Sharia (the main Tunisian jihadi organisation) a terrorist movement at the end of August 2013. This turning point deprived the jihadists of the political or territorial scope of action that they used to have, and incited them to start again or to intensify armed or terrorist violence.

The situations in Syria and Libya are somewhat different. Since the 2011 insurrections, the first has found itself in the middle of a civil war – in a context of deep conflict between jihadi movements and the regime in power – and the second in a chaotic political and security situation, providing a breeding ground for radical elements across the country. Lastly, other countries are not affected by revolutions but by a longstanding and strongly active jihadi presence, such as Algeria with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Iraq, with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In both of these examples, there is a dual problem of violence originating within the country and activism in the neighbouring countries, affected by conflict-prone and fragmentation situations (Syria, Libya, Mali).

Anti-terrorism policy must have a multi-dimensional base

One observation that can be made about Arab countries, whether they are affected by popular uprisings or not, is that jihadi violence on their territory has become such a resilient phenomenon that even the considerable resources deployed have failed to eradicate it. It is also evolving: despite the attacks directed toward it, there is a constant turnover of fighters, and the protagonists adapt to internal and regional developments while maintaining the same goals and ideological standard. Confronted with what appears to be the failure of state policies in their determination to eradicate jihadi violence, we can be tempted to place the blame on the choices made by political and security stakeholders, and especially the priority given to coercion measures implemented by the "deep state", i.e. the armed forces and security services. Two major issues now arise in terms of the fight against terrorism. On the one hand, jihadi violence is growing or escalating from hotbeds of regional tension, which by definition a national government cannot control. On the other hand, the strategies to implement, as the authorities themselves have acknowledged, must be simultaneously based on several clearly-defined and complementary approaches: the reinforcement of operational capabilities, regional cooperation, and field policies oriented toward the local, social and religious fabric.

- ***Strengthening operational capabilities: Reorganisation and resource-sharing***

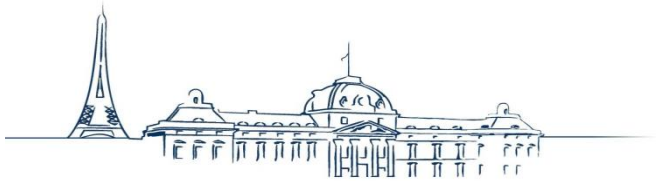
The regained security control seeks to address a new orientation of jihadi violence in the Arab world, resulting from recent political developments. It is characterised not only by a situation of direct armed confrontation between these groups and weakened states, but also by their reterritorialization, taking control – if only partially – of parts of the territory in order to use them as refuge places from which logistic installations are set up, and which they sometimes try to control, such as in the west of Iraq. Confronted with this new context, for which they are usually unprepared, the military and security forces are forced to adapt in terms of resources and methods. Moreover, jihadi groups possess unprecedented offensive capabilities, having benefited from the massive circulation of arms following the insurrections that began in 2011. This was notably the case for Ansar Bayt al Maqdiss, the main jihadi organisation based in Sinai, in possession of sophisticated surface-to-air missiles. The government forces must also deal with the fact that jihadists were often already on the ground before the popular uprising (especially in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen), which reinforces their presence in the field and their striking power.

Although there is usually no shortage of technical capabilities – externally supported if necessary[1] – at the disposal of the military and police forces when dealing with an asymmetric threat, the focus is on the reorganisation of these forces. The goal is to share resources and to combine the action of domestic security services with that of the military. The latter – as coordinators of the fight against terrorism – play the dominant role, which they previously lacked. This policy must be accompanied by the regaining of control over domestic security agencies, discredited under the previous regimes, but whose disorganisation following the uprising mainly generated a sense of demotivation and a lack of professionalism. The neutrality of the security forces implies excluding leaders that had too many ties to the old system, as well as preventing the infiltration of radical Islamists – this is essential to carry through with the fight against jihadi groups.

- ***Regional cooperation: A vital and unparalleled approach in the area***

The idea to apply the same security policies in combating jihadi movements only emerged recently among Arab countries. Previously, with the exception of annual meetings between Home Secretaries of the Arab League, anti-Islamism policies fell under domestic agendas. Exchanges on this widely sensitive topic – no operational cooperation existed – were hampered by a general sentiment of distrust, sometimes nourished by the ambiguous attitude of some capitals faced with the actions of these movements beyond their own borders. The security crisis that developed in the wake of the Arab uprisings deeply modified this state of affairs: the destabilization of neighbouring countries was no longer beneficial but was a threat to a nation's own security. From that point on, the threat posed by jihadi organisations to the whole region[2] – taking advantage of the weakened countries and border controls and the fact that threats were easier to identify in the past –convinced their leaders to pool information and operational resources.

As such, diverse forms of security cooperation are being implemented, regardless of the nature of the political regimes. Egypt, particularly exposed due to its central geographic location, is the most eclectic: it collaborates with Maghreb countries, but also with two regimes as contradictory and



hostile as those of Syria and Saudi Arabia. It also collaborates with Israel, with which cooperation seems to have increased since the Mubarak era, on the treacherous Sinai and Hamas cases. However, though Saudi Arabia is deeply committed alongside Yemen in the fight against AQAP – within which there are still many Saudis –security cooperation with this stakeholder may not be accepted everywhere. Riyadh's recent decision to ban its citizens from carrying out jihad on regional lands are mostly for internal application, and are probably not enough to dispel the distrust and doubts as to Saudi Arabia's dubious relations with the Salafist-jihadi movements of the Arab world. The desire to cooperate in the security domain is also hampered by the weakening – and even, in the cases of Libya and Iraq, the collapse – of the central state and its military and security instruments. The influence of the recently signed agreements on security cooperation – especially with the Libyan government – may be considerably limited by the lack of centralised, coherent and relevant organisations, against a backdrop of militarisation among society.

- ***Initiatives undertaken for civil society and the population***

Assuming that the use of force – even controlled – was not enough to eradicate jihadi violence, the critical concept that Arab countries must include in their counter-insurgency approach is that of "winning hearts and minds", especially among the populations most vulnerable to the jihadi ideology. This doctrine was implemented in Iraq during the previous decade, not by Arab leaders but through General Petraeus's "surge" policy. The idea is to separate the insurgent or terrorist movements from their representatives among the civilian population, and benefit in return from support from the latter, in exchange for the development and reorganisation of the social and economic fabric. The resentment felt by some sections of the population toward the state (especially in southern Algeria, north-western Tunisia, Cyrenaica, Sinai and western Iraq) is not necessarily limited to the most abandoned regions, and requires the government to dedicate its efforts there. Obtaining operational information requires harmony between the local population and the military and security forces. Simultaneously, where tribal laws govern society, governments strive to co-opt militias formed on this basis to fight jihadi groups, as auxiliary government forces. Although this policy is implemented in Iraq and Yemen, it does involve risks as it encourages the formation of paramilitary forces with their own agenda, which eventually makes them an additional source of tension. Lastly, de-radicalisation policies, initiated during the previous decade, are beginning to become widespread. Through this course of action, which takes a number of approaches such as galvanising Sufism and mainstream Islam, encouraging preachers in the Salafi movement and taking control of mosques, governments aim to act preventively to delegitimize the jihadi ideology. However, the efficiency of these means has yet to be proven, if the rejection among young people is any indication.

Footnotes:

1. This is traditional cooperation, and includes the delivery of war equipment. Targeted strikes against AQAP leaders by the United States' drones in Yemen are, however, an isolated case.

2. Today, there is a continuum of the jihadi threat, stretching from the east in Iraq to Syria and Egypt, to the west, from the Sahel and Tunisia to Algeria and Libya.

FIGHTING JIHADISM IN TUNISIA: A COMPLEX EQUATION CONFRONTED WITH A NEW CHALLENGE

*By **Flavien BOURRAT**, head of the North Africa and Middle-East programmes at IRSEM*

During Zine el Abidine Ben Ali's twenty-three years in power, the Tunisian state apparatus had prevented the emergence of jihadist groups that specialised in violent modes of action. It did so with the help of its grossly inflated security forces, – and a political system that refused change and ruthlessly crushed any Islamist movements. This situation made Tunisia unique in the Arab world, which during this period experienced varying degrees of violence, with the most extreme case being the Algerian civil war. Terrorist violence was common, committed by those who aligned themselves with the Salafi jihadist movement. The most that was mentioned in security circles was the existence of a secret Tunisian Islamic Front, founded in 1986 from a splinter group of the Islamist movement Ennahdha – sometimes considered its armed wing. In this context, the suicide bombing at the El Ghriba synagogue in April 2002 (inspired by Al Qaeda though the bomber acted alone) had caught Tunisian security agencies off guard – they were most likely over-confident of their ability to prevent all terrorist attacks. At the beginning of 2007, the events in Soliman – where, after a clash in the outskirts of Tunis, an armed group sought to create logistical support cells for the regional jihadist movement – was a warning for the Tunisian authorities. These events showed that the country, despite its security network, was liable to operational jihadist structures on its soil.

The revolution which resulted in Ben Ali's fall in January 2011, and the political and institutional transition process that followed weakened the State security structures, and correlatively, worsened the security situation – a natural consequence in a period of transition. Initially, this security crisis was due mainly to acts of delinquency and plundering; it gradually shifted toward structured and ideologized forms of violence, choosing terrorism as a course of action. This development undoubtedly experienced a surge following the overthrow of Gadhafi's regime, at the end of a civil war which mainly resulted in the chaos now characteristic of Libya's domestic situation. This was coupled with an exodus of thousands of young Tunisians – to Syria (and for some, a return), the new hub of international jihad. To the repercussions of regional instability – swiftly becoming structural – we must add the impact as of 2012 of an internal political crisis and the actions of certain political players, who were sometimes directly involved in the management of public affairs.

From 2012 (and especially during 2013), these factors led to the rise in Tunisia of radical groups claiming to beers of Salafi jihadism. The most notorious is *Ansar al Sharia*: it benefits from a local presence and engages in violent actions against security forces such as those observed during the Algerian civil war (ambushes, armed attacks, mine-laying), though to a lesser extent. These events were unprecedented in the country's contemporary history, and were taken very seriously by the military and the police –the main targets of the jihadists – and more ambiguously, by the political power. These various players had to act in order to halt the rise of this phenomenon, and in particular, to prevent the creation of a local terrorist hub.

The challenge remains substantial for State authorities, as the current political power can no longer rely on the methods used during Ben Ali's time – mainly based on surveillance and police repression. Though efficient at the time, they are no longer compatible with the new regional environment, and even less so with the institutional setup and ethical principles brought about by the revolution of

January 2011. As well as adapting and strengthening the technical and operational resources required for the fight against armed extremist movements, a new approach must now be taken, through a stabilized and sound political environment, and reconciliation with the populations most targeted– socially and geographically – by radical movements. The key to success for the State and Tunisian society in the fight against jihadism – and it is a long-term goal – is based on this complex combination of approaches, which may seem contradictory but must not be separated from one another.

Adapting the Tunisian security apparatus to the jihadist challenge

On March 5th, 2014, the Tunisian government lifted the state of emergency that was in force since the outbreak of the Revolution. This decision was desired at the head of the State and by the military forces, but was constantly postponed by the latter due to the continuing tension and violence in the country. The government itself emphasized that the aim of this decision was not to reduce the measures taken to secure the territory. On the contrary, its goal is to enable the structures responsible for the state's security to dedicate themselves fully to this objective, centred on the dual complementary mission of border surveillance and the fight against armed extremism.

- ***The military at the forefront of operations***

It is often said – especially outside Tunisia – that the Tunisian armed forces are not equipped for the fight against terrorism. This would explain why they struggle to stamp out the jihadist implantation, the epicentre of which is located in Jebel ech Chambi, at the centre-west border of the country. This argument, often put forward with regard to the Algerian army faced with armed violence in the 1990s, is only partially relevant. The Tunisian military is capable of ensuring or re-establishing order and peace nationwide, whether it is in urban centres, along major thoroughfares or at the borders – and it has proven this over the last three years. Most of the population therefore respects and trusts them. Their material resources – modest compared to their neighbours' – do not constitute a significant handicap, considering the small surface area of the national territory. Lastly, at the command structure level it has proven its professionalism alongside partisan neutrality. The main difficulty lies in their capability to take control of "micro-zones", where jihadist elements are present and supported by the locals. It is no coincidence that the new "leader" (there is no official Chief of Staff) of the Tunisian army, General Mohamed Salah Hamdi, is an expert in this field: he was previously in charge of the special forces and directed the operations against the "Soliman Group" in January 2008.

For now, the army's first priority is to fully deploy its active assets – facilitated by the lifting of the state of emergency – for better control of the borders, especially in the deserted area in the south. In August 2013, it succeeded in forming military buffer zones at the borders with Algeria and Libya. If necessary, it can prohibit access or movements of the population. The fact that the military coordinates the activities of all security bodies in these buffer zones and directs joint patrols confirms the new leading role of the armed forces in the fight against terrorism and related activities.

- ***The necessary but difficult pooling of anti-jihadist intelligence and combat assets***

When stepping down from his duties of Chief of Defence Staff, in a context of increasing violence acts in Jebel ech Chambi, General Rachid Ammar had insisted on the necessity of basing counter-terrorism on real coordination – especially in terms of intelligence between the various services concerned – which was previously lacking. In particular, he recommended a national security agency be established, with generous resources and increased responsibilities, directly under the authority of the head of state.

In Ben Ali's time, such coordination did not exist. Most of the repression against religious extremism fell under the exclusive responsibility of the powerful services of the Ministry of the Interior; while border surveillance (in particular in the northern part of the country) came within the competency of the National Guard – a military body under police authority. The situation brought about by the revolution far from eased the mistrust and lack of dialogue between the two departments. Along with the disorganisation and demotivation affecting the Ministry of the Interior, there was a lack of professionalism and partisan and ideological beliefs of the new senior officials of this administration. This loss in efficiency and credibility increased the distrust felt towards the police services, especially as the military suspected the core of the National Guard to have been infiltrated by radical Islamists.

In March 2013, the appointment of Lotfi Ben Jeddou – known for his neutrality and competence, and still in office today – as Minister of the Interior re-established order (on the technical, administrative and legal levels) among the police forces, and they were gradually redeployed in areas where they were absent or inoperative since the revolution. Furthermore, the creation of joint patrols along the most problematic borders constitutes a first step, but it needs to be reinforced. However, the challenge represented by the development of jihadism, coupled with smuggling activities and arms and drugs trafficking in the border regions, requires task-sharing in the activities of the security agencies – which remain complementary despite the specificities of each. It is also important to reinforce the analysis capabilities of intelligence services and to restore the security network without falling back into the flaws and excesses of the former regime. A thorough reform of the Tunisian security system must replace the "divide and conquer" strategy that reigned during the authoritarian era. This requires the creation of a coordination structure in the fight against terrorism, which must be based on a stable and legitimate political and institutional framework to be effective.

- ***The benefits for Tunisia of anti-terrorist cooperation across the Maghreb***

Although security cooperation between Maghreb States appeared clearly necessary since the outbreak of the Algerian civil war in the 90s, little progress was made. If the crises in Libya and the Sahel made the Tunisian "sanctuary" permeable and vulnerable to jihadist incursions and arms trafficking, they also led – and to some extent, compelled – the Maghreb countries to develop security cooperation, mostly along their shared borders. Logically, a cooperative relationship developed significantly with Algeria, still reeling from the Tigantourine site attack in January 2013 by jihadists from Libya, and from the rise of *katibas* (jihadist terrorist battalion) in Jebel ech Chambi, a few kilometres from its border. This cooperation is facilitated by a substantial reinforcement of security agencies on the Algerian side, together with the creation of buffer areas by Tunisian

authorities. Its first success was the elimination of logistical infrastructures and making border crossings much more difficult, both for extremist elements and smugglers.

As for Libya, its weak state together with the lack of any coherent national defence and security structures made security cooperation very uncertain – despite a desire shared by Tunis and Tripoli. Cooperation with this neighbour seems however even more essential: the country is confronted with a chaotic situation, the presence of jihadist elements (especially Tunisian, among them Abou Iyadh, leader of Ansar al Sharia's Tunisian branch) has spread all over the territory – they even benefit from small training camps through which serve as transit points for weapons and Tunisian activists, returning from the jihad in Syria. Nevertheless, the meeting in Ghadamis between the three Tunisian, Algerian and Libyan leaders in January 2013 demonstrates a desire to share border surveillance and exchange intelligence on a regional scale.

The vital support of the political class and the population

The success of the eradication of jihadist violence in Tunisia cannot rely on the reinforcement of technical and operational resources and on inter-service cooperation alone. It also implies a consensual attitude to this objective from the various political movements, less ideologized religious education and places of worship and collaboration between State services and civil society. This is the "political and social" aspect of public action against armed extremism; for too long, it was overlooked or ignored, both during Ben Ali's time and under the Troika government, but it is inherent to the reinforcement and adaptation of the security instrument. For many Tunisians, the recovery of the security situation from the actions of jihadist activists is linked to the departure of the former government (dominated by the Islamist party Ennahdha) and its replacement by a neutral technocrat team in charge of carrying out the political transition process. Beyond the polemic and manipulative arguments which the two main political trends throw back at each other, this assessment is not without reason, although *Ansar al Sharia* was declared a terrorist movement in August 2013 by former Prime Minister Ali Larayedh (of the Ennahdha party), under the pressure of events at the time. Without question, Ennahdha's leaders as well as their representatives within the administration played an ambiguous and even dangerous game with the most radical branches of Tunisian Islamism – whose support (though weak) it planned to gain, in anticipation of the next elections. Since the designation of Ansar al Sharia as a terrorist organisation, this is now impossible. On the contrary, some have remarked that abandoning all attempts to institutionalize such a movement pushes it towards radicalism. Nonetheless, though state authorities cannot negotiate with the Salafi jihadist movements, they can create dialogue with its supporters, including the other political and religious movements, in the hope of coming to an agreement condemning the use of violence. This was the spirit with which the Minister of the Interior recently proposed a "mercy and remorse" law aiming to reintegrate Salafi jihadist activists into society by a twofold process of disengagement and de-radicalisation – excluding members of Ansar al Sharia and al Qaeda. The question remains as to which representative the government may rely on in this process. Institutional Islam, in effect under the previous regime, lost its role of religious authority in 2011, through control over mosques. Nevertheless, the former minister of religious affairs – who belonged to the branch of Salafist preachers – had during the previous year thrown out the jihadist imams that

had taken control of mosques (some of which were described as “strategic”), replacing them with Ennahdha members. His replacement within Mehdi Jomaas’ cabinet appears to be more neutral, but it is too soon to evaluate the government’s capacity to control this process.

A final challenge, and possible the most delicate and urgent one, remains for state actors. Jihadist elements – some of which were present since before the revolution – are mainly established in border regions. These regions are often ignored and forgotten about by the central power, and they survive partly thanks to trafficking, generally with a strong feeling of resentment and abandonment, especially in the northern part of the western border. As a result, there is often marked hostility towards the security forces, which they associate with a discredited and delegitimized state, ultimately refusing to collaborate. It is therefore urgent that the military and the police forces make new contact with the local actors, who are often professional traffickers, as well as with the inhabitants, whose support is required in order to combat jihadist groups effectively and durably.

EGYPT'S COMBAT AGAINST JIHADISM IN SINAI

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A major and long-lasting concern

On June 30th, 2013, Egypt is a besieged country – both in terms of power and society – and surrounded by hostile states or regimes. Sudan and Gaza are governed by organisations very close to the Muslim Brotherhood[2]. The latter, as well as other branches of Islamism, constitute a key and even dominant force in Libya. Within the country, there are currently two clashes. The first, along the Nile valley, opposes the police and military forces and the terrorist groups – followers of either the Brotherhood or jihadists. Though the situation may change, the Egyptian State seems, for now, capable of winning the battle. The Islamists did not succeed in their attempt to provoke widespread desertion, and ultimately the collapse of the regime's troops. The second battle is taking place in Northern Sinai and concerns mostly the army, but also the police, engaged in conflict with various jihadist organisations. Its outcome is more unpredictable, though the situation of the government forces has improved in recent weeks.

After the revolution of January 25th, 2011, and since the Muslim Brotherhood and president Morsi came to power at the end of June 2012, jihadist presence in Northern Sinai has evolved qualitatively and quantitatively. The number of jihadists increased from 100-150 in January 2011 to around ten thousand (7,000 according to low estimates, 20,000 according to the more pessimistic estimates). For this reason, the current power in place considers that the Brotherhood knowingly let or even helped the jihadists converge toward the peninsula, and that it negotiated with some of them an agreement, through Muhammad al Zawāhirī, to ensure that these jihadists would not attack Israel, in exchange for certain concessions. It was this accusation that the military and Field Marshall al-Sisi used as the core of their argumentation against the Brotherhood. Such a presence remains a serious challenge as it is, but the jihadists also jeopardize the Suez Canal region as well as the al Sharqia Governorate, and beyond – several of their operations targeted Cairo.

Generally speaking, the peninsula will long remain the main security issue for all Egyptian regimes. This is due to its arid and mountainous topography, the extent of its shoreline (Sinai represents 6.1% of the Egyptian territory, but around 30% of its coasts), the multiple trafficking networks (weapons, drugs, medicines, stolen cars, illegal immigration, smuggling into Gaza), and lastly, to the jihadist presence. The relationship between the central government and the Bedouin population is also problematic. While some tribes adhere to the central State, others see it as their enemy, and within each of them, a small minority act with no heed to what their leaders advocate. But the problem goes deeper, with experts pointing out that the interactions between the state and the tribes oppose

[2] In its internal statutes, Hamas defines itself as the Brotherhood's branch in Palestine. The international relations section of Hamas is directed by Muhammad Sawalha, an eminent member of the international organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood. Some Egyptian Brothers sit on the *Majlis Shura* of Hamas, its highest authority. Jum'a Muhammad: "*Hamas ba'da suqût al ikhwân fi Misr" (Hamas after the fall of the Brotherhood in Egypt)*, al Ahram strategic reports, No. 244, Cairo 2013.

or tie two completely different worlds, which don't understand each other and whose imaginations are separated by gaps that may not be bridged, even when the actors overcome their prejudices. The State does not possess the necessary resources to comprehend the "Bedouin of the Sinai", and the peninsula's inhabitants only see in the Nile's leviathan a behemoth from the Book of Job. The situation has grown worse because of the blind savagery of the repression following the first jihadist attacks in 2004, collective punishments, and multiple forms of discrimination against the tribes' members. Many jihadist groups can actually count on the sympathy of part of the Bedouin population, as shown by the relative popularity of Sharia courts created by advocates of this movement.

Moreover, it is very difficult to draw up an official list of the actors involved in the crisis and their interactions. Leaving aside the possible (or likely) interventions of intelligence services and regional financial backers (Iran, Hezbollah, Qatar, Turkey), we must, however, mention the many standpoints and instructions given by external jihadist theorists, such as Jordanian Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi or Saudi Wahhabi "Takfirist" Abî Munzir al Shanqîtî[3]. On the other hand, some operations carried out in Sinai seem to have been led by groups or teams that are not established in the peninsula, such as the murder of State Security officer Abu Shaqra. It is also important to point out the contingents of foreign, Palestinian, Yemeni, etc. jihadists present in northern Sinai. Together with their Egyptian counterparts, they are better trained than the previous generations. They have been trained in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Syria and have experience in fighting. They are also better armed as they managed to shoot down some of the army's helicopters. In a flat that presumably belongs to a Muslim Brother, in the outskirts of Cairo, the Egyptian authorities arrested a top leader of Al Qaeda, Tharwat Shihâta. His role in the inter-group coordination in the Sinai remains unclear, much like the cartography of the groups operating in the area. As an example, Ansar Bayt al Maqdis, presented as the most powerful movement, is both a real organisation and a banner borrowed by other groups. We know for certain that there are several of these groups, that they comprise thousands of members, and that they coordinate with each other, and most likely with the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Hamas factor

It is hard to understand the roles of Hamas, the Islamists and the jihadists. The Egyptian authorities have always claimed that the Palestinians so closely monitor the hundreds of tunnels that have linked Gaza to Sinai these past years that it was impossible to use them without Hamas knowing. Whatever the case may be, since June 30th, 2013, the Egyptian army has increased its efforts to destroy these tunnels, but at least one hundred of them remain operational. This initiative is both a "sanction" against Palestinian Islamist organisation, and an attempt to stem the flow of soldiers and weapons supply to the groups established in Sinai, even if it is not the major HQ of jihadist activity (this position belongs to Libya and Yemen). A number of Egyptians security agents, Sudanese Islamists and Egyptian military experts living in Saudi Arabia affirm that Yemen is a major source of

[3] *Takfir* is a key concept of the salafi jihadist ideology and consists in depriving an individual, a group, or even the whole society from their Muslim status.
http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/4980/17/The-Sinai-of-all-fears.aspx
http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentPrint/1/0/99478/Egypt/0/Egypts-Sinai--Mapping-terror.aspx

weapons and men for the jihad in Sinai. They often pass through Sudan and enter Egypt covertly. Despite numerous check points to monitor the access to Sinai from the western shore of the Suez Canal, as well as increased control by the authorities, weapons and men still reach their destination, though to a lesser extent.

The Egyptian security agencies, which have also arrested dozens of Hamas soldiers in Sinai, support the theory that Hamas was at war with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood against the new regime – at least during the first months after the fall of president Morsi. However, Egyptian researchers claimed that messages were sent from Cairo to Gaza, threatening to substantially escalate the level of activism, and that the Palestinian Islamist organisation recently reconsidered its stance.

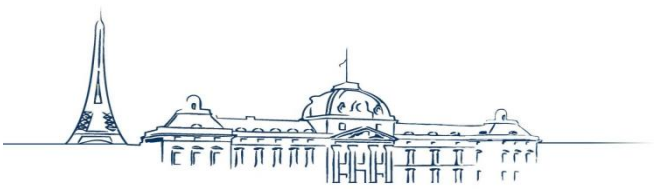
Furthermore, cooperation between the Egyptian and Israeli services appears to be particularly close – and the latter is highly present in the peninsula. It is worth noting that the Egyptian security agencies initially were at a significant disadvantage: they had lost several senior experts on jihadism – they had been "purged" during the two years that followed Mubarak's fall – and president Morsi had prohibited any investigation – including routine ones – on Islamist advocates, regardless of their orientation. Since then, these services seem to have gradually caught up.

The campaign against the jihadist presence: priority given to lethal means

It is difficult to describe how operations unfolded. August and November 2013 seem to have been particularly deadly for the government forces, especially with the second attack on Rafah in November. That month also corresponds to the period when many jihadist leaders were arrested. It appears that in February 2014, the authorities were not satisfied with the progress made, and in the middle of March, they appointed a new commander for the Second Army. In some Cairene circles, the offensive led by the Egyptian army was believed to have resulted, among others, in renewed ties between the various Islamist movements on the ground. In particular, the Takfirists, who initially did not want to start an immediate jihad against the Egyptian army, considering themselves ill-prepared, came to the aid of the jihadists when they were attacked by state forces.

Since then, it seems that notable progress has been made. Observers pointed out that the "threat was reduced to an acceptable level, although it has not completely disappeared." The security situation has considerably improved near el-Arish, and only the regions of Rafah and al Shaykh Zuwayd remain very dangerous. The central government seems to have attempted to ensure cooperation between the tribes' chiefs, and has succeeded. Information obtained suggests that it also accepted to provide weapons to some tribal militias and include them in the anti-jihadist fight. The very fact that jihadists murdered a dozen prominent Sinai figures and other tribe leaders demonstrates this cooperation. However, the coverage of these events by the Egyptian press indirectly shows the extent of collateral damage, which the tribes regularly complain about. They include demolished houses, the bombing of villages suspected of harbouring jihadists, and the indiscriminate use of excessive firepower to answer terrorist attacks.

For example, according to a source, in eight months, the Second Army's fight against Islamist soldiers



resulted in 400 deaths and more than 850 wounded among the jihadists or Takfirists. The Second Army's engineers have destroyed more than 1,350 tunnels linking Sinai to Gaza. The same source declares that the resources chosen by the army radically changed after the loss of several aircrafts shot down by the jihadists via sophisticated missiles. The army now gives priority to the use of missiles and air bombing against what it considers jihadist locations. Dozens of houses have thus been razed to the ground, villages wiped off the map – such as al Muqâta'a and al Tûma, the launch site of the missile that shot down a helicopter at the beginning of the year. Hundreds of huts and motorcycles without registration plates were demolished. Lastly, on the morning of May 7th, the army heavily bombed the south of Rafah. There is no official estimate of the death and injuries toll, as internet network and phone communications are cut in the region.

It is too soon to measure the effectiveness of the rapid reaction forces created by the military, but the intervention was being prepared for over a year. The Egyptian military claims it needs Apache helicopters, drones, and border surveillance radars. However, the Camp David Accords prohibit such radar from being installed on the eastern border of Egypt.

All in all, the "fight for security" is far from over, despite improvements observed on the ground. The experts agree that a victory – already hard to obtain – will not be enough if a serious effort for "human safety" is not agreed on, if a development plan for Sinai (that takes into account local cultures and specificities) is not implemented, and if the Bedouin tribes are not included in the distribution of wealth obtained by the region's exploitation or development. To this, we may add that a prerequisite would be the development of the relationship between central State representatives and Bedouins. This requires especially a cultural revolution and specific training for the state services, as well as a clear and flexible strategy on trafficking issues, which constitutes the peninsula's main economy – tourism excluded.

SECURITY POLICY EMPLOYED BY THE YEMENI AUTHORITIES AGAINST AL QAEDA

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In Yemen, the political transition process that ended the reign of President Ali Abdallah Saleh in November 2011 was accompanied by a thorough restructuring of the armed forces and security services. In most of the country, the jihadi elements thus became stronger, taking advantage of the decaying security apparatus, weakened by the many changes brought in by the new interim president, Abdel Rabbo Mansour Hadi. Al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP) and its local franchise, Ansar al-Sharia (AS), thereby increased the sizeable activities against the Armed Forces of Yemen (AFY) from 2013, carrying out targeted attacks against official military buildings, launching an assassination campaign against members of the security forces and kidnapping westerners.

To counter this rise in jihadi activities in Yemen, the transition government decided to launch a hard-hitting offensive in late April 2014 in several of the southern sectors (mainly the regions of Abyan and Shabwa) in order to dislodge the jihadists from their positions. This was the second major operation of this type since the combat operations of May 2012 which saw the armed forces regain control of several towns in the south of the country which had fallen into the hands of the AQAP and AS jihadists during the first months of the popular uprising against President Salah in the spring of 2011. This second offensive was undoubtedly a result of the visit in April 2014 of the Yemeni Minister of Defence (Brigadier General Mohammad Nasser) to the USA. The minister confirmed that US-Yemeni cooperation was in place in the fight against terrorism in Yemen. The use of drones, the most commonly used “lethal weapon” in Yemen, has been confirmed and will most likely be increased. The cooperation with and training of AFY units by American officers focusing on the war on terrorism will also be stepped up. The Minister of the Interior (Abduh Hussein al-Tarab), to whom the Special Security Forces (SSF) are attached, is continuing to consult with the state services in order to develop a more efficient state department in terms of security. Military operations in the provinces of Shabwa and Abyan (two major strongholds of AQAP) were launched in order to secure the main thoroughfares. The second stage of this process of “territorial reconquest” will be the deployment of tribal militia trained locally in the combat against jihadi groups, based on a model already established in May 2012 while reconquering the towns in Abyan. As such, these new operations are symptomatic of a Yemeni security policy based on the following four focal points: (i) Significant American assistance in the fields of intelligence and air strikes; (ii) a strengthening of the restructured AFY’s operational capacities; (iii) regional cooperation with Saudi Arabia, a major power in the Arabian Peninsula; (iv) field policy that attempts to use auxiliary tribal militias to secure territories where the presence of jihadists remains significant.

The United States at the heart of the fight against AQAP

American military administration has been present in Yemen in the fight against Al Qaeda for many years, notably since the attack against the destroyer USS Cole in September 2000. It was in Yemen that the very first drone operation led by the CIA took place, in November 2002, with the elimination of a Yemeni leader, Abu Ali al-Harithi. Air raids carried out in December 2009 in the south, following the failed operation against the commercial Amsterdam-Detroit flight, threw the regions of Abyan and Shabwa into a state of chaos that greatly facilitated the takeover by AQAP of certain towns in those regions. Since 2011, Washington has attempted a similar strategy to that employed in the tribal Pakistani zone: This involves assassinating the main leaders of jihadist organizations in targeted strikes, which will naturally have a significant impact on the restructuring of its chain of command and how the movement proceeds to function[4].

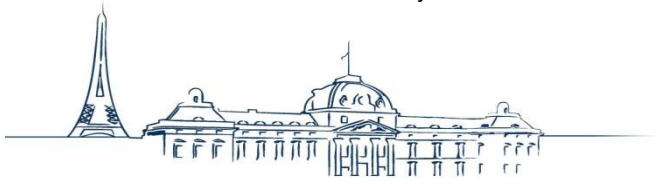
Beyond this strategy, the United States' goal is simple: the fight against AQAP is a priority in line with the war they are leading against terrorism. For full efficiency in the battle against jihadi networks, coordination in intelligence is necessary with the security apparatuses, in order to carry out drone strikes. The national security bureau, headed since 2013 by a service member originally from Shabwa, has become the key institution in counter-terrorism in Yemen. As such, it receives a significant amount of cooperation and assistance from the US.

- ***A thorough restructuring of the armed forces***

The security issue, listed in the transition agreement of November 2011 (brokered by the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council), must be handled if the country is to be stabilised. The resistance against the regime, initiated in February 2011, resulted in a de facto division of the AFY, split between the loyalists (Republican Guard, central security and units under pro-Saleh command) and revolutionaries (1st Armoured Division and units that supported the dissident General Ali Muhsen). Furthermore, the splintering of the security services also largely contributed to the worsening of the security climate in the country, leading to the emancipation of regionalist rebel groups. From April 2012, the new authorities in Sana'a, in particular on the advice of the Americans (on defence and intelligence) and the Jordanians (on the Ministry of the Interior) who played an active role in this domain, began a thorough restructuring of the security forces attached to the ministries of defence and the interior. The first measures taken between April and October 2012 consisted in getting rid of the main senior officers that were members of or close to the clan of former president Ali Abdallah Saleh[5]. This resulted in a significantly more balanced distribution of officers from northern and southern origin, as the southerners had been marginalised since the civil war in 1994. The latter were

[4] In Yemen, AQAP lost significant leaders during these strikes, such as the preacher Anwar Al-Awlaqi (September 2011), Mohammad al-Omda and Fahd al-Qusaa (killed in April 2012). Since 2012, there have been several dozen strikes per drone each year, causing the death of hundreds of jihadi activists.

[5] This clan headed the main elements of the security forces and intelligence services: the presidential guard, the Republican Guard and special forces, the air force, regional headquarters, central security and national secruity. Only the 1st Armoured Division and its partisans, under the command of General Ali Muhsen who decided in March 2011 to join the revolutionaries, escaped presidential control.



thus promoted, undoubtedly as a result of President Hadi's desire to give preference to trustworthy men (he is also a southerner) and assert his weak authority. Several superior officers, members of the former president's clan or other influential clans, were posted as defence attachés, ambassadors or advisors.

A second stage, between December 2012 and April 2013, was more focused on the centralisation of command and control, reforming units and a reorganising of military regions (now divided into seven new zones). The Republican Guard and the 1st Armoured Division were dismantled and their staff integrated within a unified headquarters placed under the joint authority of the Ministry of Defence and the Presidency (President Hadi being the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces).

Though its structures are not perfect (partisans of the former president regularly exert their influence to hamper the effective implementation of new directives), these reforms gradually helped increase the operational capacity of the elite units committed to counterterrorism, in particular in the capital, Sana'a, and around the economic nerve centres of the country (oil and gas terminals on the Red Sea and in the Indian Ocean).

The necessity of regional cooperation with Saudi Arabia

The security and stability of Yemen are the governing principles of Saudi diplomacy towards its neighbour. Following the tried and tested model with tribal clans, the Saudis are diversifying their support network. Former commander of the 1st Armoured Division, General Ali Muhsen – who became the president's security advisor in March 2013 – is the main beneficiary of direct Saudi aid for security. Every year he receives financial aid estimated at approximately 22 million dollars. A shareholder in several Yemeni companies with contacts in the Islamist movement of Al Islah, Ali Muhsen – as an influential economic, political and military actor – is a heavyweight contact for the Saudis.

For Riyadh, the two main security threats from Yemen are clearly identified. The battle against AQAP continues to be the main source of concern. Furthermore, this file is handled by the Minister of the Interior, Mohammad ben Nayef, who is in charge of counterterrorism issues in the kingdom. AQAP was founded in Saudi Arabia, migrating to Yemen and merging with Yemeni jihadists in 2009. Several hundred Saudis fight in its ranks and a large number of Yemenis became radicalised on the Saudi territory upon encountering jihadi preachers. While the group has not organised any activities on Saudi soil since August 2009 (failed attempt to assassinate Mohammed ben Nayef), the Saudi kingdom's interests in Yemen remain under direct threat: In March 2012, the deputy consul posted to Aden was kidnapped and is still missing, while another diplomat was assassinated in Sana'a in November 2012.

During the large-scale military offensives led by the AFY (May 2012, April 2014) against jihadists in south Yemen, domestic Saudi security services financed tribal networks in the south to form auxiliary tribal militias to fight alongside the Yemeni military. The Saudi forces also provided military equipment (logistic assistance, weapons resupply) to Sana'a. Lastly, several Yemeni agents were

recruited for the Saudi services, across the country, to provide essential intelligence for the authorities, who then process this information for use in operations (air raids).

Local tribes: a high-risk local hub for counterterrorism in Yemen

To combat AQAP and Ansar al-Sharia, the authorities made a significant effort to give a role to the tribal chiefs most opposed to the authority exercised by certain jihadi figures locally. This policy of co-opting local tribes had already been tested under the Saleh presidency, in particular during the Zaydi rebellion of the Houthi rebels. To counter the spread of the jihadi discourse, elements of the al-Islah Islamist movement were recruited to these popular tribal committees, which became auxiliary paramilitary structures to the AFY. However, a gradual drifting of these militias was observed from 2011. They wanted to capitalise on all forms of trafficking and became a source of extra tension between rival factions in the south. The tribal committees are also from different circles, who receive financing from the different wings of power: Some who support former President Saleh or the current president Hadi and others of the dissident Ali Muhsen, who rely on generous Saudi financing guaranteed by his tribal allies. In the central province of Maarib, where a number of oil and gas wells are found and regularly targeted by all forms of subversive groups, the Yemeni authorities intend to form new tribal militias, based on the committee model of the Abyan region. To conclude, the policy of militarizing certain tribes would appear counterproductive and could have a damaging effect while maintaining a significant level of instability.

AQAP: between resilience and counter-offensives

Faced with this multilateral security policy, AQAP first decided to create a structure specially dedicated to intelligence. The aim of this section is to counter the sensitive information intended for use by American intelligence for drone strikes, but also to infiltrate the Yemeni military and security apparatuses[6]. Secondly, while the American raids were carried out at an unprecedented rhythm, they simultaneously contribute to the radicalisation of some of the tribes in the regions targeted, leaving in their wake a rise in future popularity for jihadists who see these raids as a serious violation of the sovereignty of the country.

Similarly, since losing ground in May 2012, ASAP suffered heavy losses during a series of violent battles when the AFY regained control of the terrain. The territorialisation led in 2011 by the joint AQAP-AS was therefore a failure, resulting in many losses (human and financial) for the organisation. In terms of image, however, the outcome was less severe as the administration and civil services established were occasionally appreciated by the population, neglected without development perspectives and suffering from the methods in place by corrupt local authorities.

[6] This enabled them to strengthen their capacity to target certain security agencies and a significant number of security officers. Over one hundred officers were killed or injured during the 2012-2013 period, though not all of these attacks can be attributed to AQAP alone.

Today, AQAP has understood that such a strategy is no longer possible, especially due to the level of current cooperation between the AFY and the American security services. The jihadist organisation has returned to a more underground form, that which prevailed before 2011. Since the beginning of 2013, the jihadists have launched a campaign of targeted assassinations and spectacular attacks, mainly aimed at military personnel in the country's biggest cities (mainly Sana'a, Aden and Hadhramaut, with attacks on official buildings of the Ministry of Defence and targeted attacks on military barracks). These operations show a continually growing level of professionalism in the jihadists, who continue to capitalise on surprise tactics to carry out their attacks successfully.

Since the end of the Saleh era, the Yemeni authorities in their transition period strive to pursue an anti-AQAP security policy. This counterterrorism strongly relies on cooperation with the United States, but also on a necessary Saudi partnership. However, the latest military offensives in the south have shown their limits and potentially harmful effects in the medium-term. The stability of the regions where AQAP is still active has not been restored. Similarly, the regional and centrifugal conflict that Yemen has experienced for a decade (Houthi in the north and secessionists in the south) continue. They continue to render an effective counterterrorist policy unpredictable in Yemen, faced with a resilient adversary that is also locally integrated, encouraged by this chronic instability.