



**COUNTER IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES
CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**

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SUBJECT: (REPORT) SOME NOTES ABOUT THE TERRORIST GROUP DAESH OF GREAT SAHARA (Islamic State of the Great Sahara).

REFERENCES: A) C-IED CoE – “Jihad in the Region of the Triple Border”, December 2018
B) C-IED CoE – “Threat Assessment – IEDs in culverts in Mali”, January 2020
C) C-IED CoE – “Threat Networks’ Dynamics during COVID-19 Crisis”, May 2020
D) C-IED CoE – “Fighting between Terrorist Groups in Sahel”, May 2020
E) C-IED CoE – “Western Sahara Terrorist Threat”, June 2020
F) C-IED CoE – “Threat Networks’ Tactics, Techniques & Procedures”, July 2020
G) C-IED CoE – “Main Supply Route in Mali – C-IED Assessment”, July 2020

HISTORY. Previous conflicts and distribution of power in different groups’ area of activity.

The terrorist conflict in Mali has gained traction as result of the Algerian counter-terrorist pressure that managed to expel most of the terrorists that had been operating in Algeria since Al-Qaida in Islamic Magreb (AQIM) was established in that country in 2007. The rise of the terrorism in Mali took place in 2011 and 2012, when AQIM fighters already established in the north of Mali benefited from the political instability generated in Mali by the fourth Tuareg revolution, which fundamentally affected the northern region of Kidal after the fall of Gaddafi (Qaddafi, Kadhafi, are also accepted).

French intervention in northern Mali from January 2013 (Serval Operation) initially stopped the terrorist expansion, although Serval and its follow on Barkhane Force have not been able to prevent the consolidation of Al-Qaida and DAESH in vast areas of the north and central regions of the country.

The origin of DGS comes from the terrorist group called Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA, or most commonly MUJAO for its name in French), in turn a splinter group from AQIM in 2011. MUJAO, founded among others by Adnan Abou Walid, al-Sahraui, was operational in the Gao, Telemsi Valley and Menaka regions during the Malian Tuareg revolt. Abu Walid became then the leader of the Shura Council of this group in the so-called Islamic Emirate of Gao. Still splintered, MUJAO nevertheless continued to collaborate with AQIM and other AQIM franchises, especially during the terrorist control of northern Mali in 2012.

After the early success of Serval Operation, recovering important areas of Malian territory, MUJAO strengthened itself by merging with the terrorist group al-Mulathimin, led by the well-known terrorist Mokhtar Belmokhtar. It gave rise to the group called al-Morabitoum, under the authority of Abu Bakr al-Masri, who pledged allegiance to Al Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Al-Masri, died in April 2014, was replaced by Ahmed eal-Tilemsi who was later killed in December of the same year. The fact that Abou Walid was not elected al-Morabitoum leader on the death of Ahmed al-Tilemsi coincided with the emergence of DAESH in the Middle East. Abou Walid, in May 2015, issued a message of loyalty to DAESH on behalf of al-Morabitoum, while declaring DGS founded.

This message wasn't accepted by Mokhtar Belmokhtar who gave continuity to al-Morabitoum with the non-split half of the group, which continued under the orbit of AQIM.

RELIGION. Religion as additional factor of the group.

Radical Islam, which is an important factor in the terrorist groups in the Middle East, is not a determining factor in the recruitment of DGS fighters. In Africa, the recruitment is in a much greater extent the result of poverty, ostracism, lack of expectations and the Administration neglect of the affected regions. Islamist radicalization does not lead to membership in DGS. On the contrary, radicalization is a consequence of the militancy in terrorist groups.

RECRUITMENT OF FIGHTERS. Reasons and arguments. Circumstances. Loyalty and interests. Religiosity factor. Loyalty and continuity.

Poverty, exclusion, lack of expectations, absence of justice and fear are the main reasons for the recruitment of DAESH in the Sahel. Given the traditional marginalization that the nomadic Peul / Fulani ethnic group has historically suffered in most of the States in which it is settled, the claim for reparation is used by DAESH for its collective approach to this tribe, whose members in DGS account for approximately half of the group's members.

Social and tribal exclusion is not exclusive to the Peul tribe, however. There are other tribes excluded. The exclusion is even an intracommunity factor, where factions are excluded by other castes of their own tribe. This is the case of the Tuareg Dausak, extensively settled in the Menaka region, which provides also components to DGS, mainly in Adnan Abu Walid group. The Tuareg Dausak are a lower caste within their own Tuareg ethnic group, compared to the Ifhogas, which historically benefits from the privileges achieved by this tribe in Kidal city.

However, other arguments similarly generate a certain attraction towards terrorism by young people in rural areas where terrorist groups are evolving.

These areas are characterized by the absence of public administration, services and security elements, as well as the State abandonment. The presence of DAESH in these barren areas increases neglect. The schools are closed and justice lacks of territorial representation. Its flimsy solution takes the form of traditional resolutions, compensations, retaliations, and social accusations.

The absence of opportunities in this context of administrative neglect, contributes to the fact that the few inhabitants in the areas lack a sense of national belonging and, on the contrary, other social ties such as family, community, tribe or ethnic group gain dimension. Such small groups provide subsistence and security in a context of growing community confrontation over limited access to livelihoods, water and farmland or grasslands.

The State abandonment has made these rural and desert spaces areas of crime and illicit traffic. Traffickers become the only "employers" in their respective areas of development, providing easy income and sufficient livelihoods and security.

The DGS, as other terrorist groups, are also "employers" in the region. Jihad provides the means and social coverage denied by the State. It is also the way for social advancement, breaking the order and the norm in the traditional social stratification imposed by castes and birth-groups. Terrorist groups also position themselves as protectors and benefactors of the populations which they support, mainly

seen in AQIM and *Support Group for Islam and Muslims* (Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin, JNIM), which pamper much more than DAESH the roots and ties to the areas in which they evolve.

The habitual brutality of the DGS attacks and the mobility of its cells contribute to the fact that its members lack of roots in their zones of evolution in relation to AQ, which, on the contrary, cultivates through marriages and kinship the rooting of its militants to their zones of performance.

The DGS is not involved as a rule in illicit trafficking, although a few drug traffickers try to take advantage of the presence of terrorists in certain areas and their control over certain routes. Participation in drug trafficking is on the contrary linked to people installed in the power of the State and at the head of some of the pro-government militias, fundamentally before the coup d'état of Captain Sanogó in 2012, which expelled Toumani Touré from the presidency.

The separation of terrorists groups from drug trafficking does not mean that there have been some Arabs and even some fewer Tuaregs, mainly enrolled in MUJAO, who benefited from illicit trafficking.

IDEOLOGY. Ideological origins of the group. Cohesion factors, cultural/religious/political links, current ideological approach, external supporting groups

The extremely poor and illiterate inhabitants of these desert and almost unpopulated areas in the Sahel where terrorists evolve have a social dimension and a way of life not comparable to the Western model of life. Life expectancy in these depopulated areas is below the average of sixty years in the Sahel. Food insecurity also makes them enormously dependent on each other, reaching allegiances and loyalties unknown in the western environment. Their economy is of mere subsistence. Future parents aspire to reproduce the model of their parents, mainly among women where the birth rate exceeds seven children per woman.

In these circumstances, it is impossible to speak of ideology, and almost of aspirations. The claim of its inhabitants is almost no more than subsisting in the poor conditions they know and are used to. There are no national aspirations. Perhaps it is only possible to speak of "tribal ideology" in the case of some privileged castes, such as the Ifhogas Tuareg, where the already long struggle for the independence of Azawad defines a political goal among many of its inhabitants. This political or ideological lack of definition does not reach the DAESH members in anticipation of their enrollment in the terrorist group. Once in their ranks, the fulfillment and extension of the Jihad means everything for them.

LEADERSHIP. Historical leadership and current leader

The historical and current DGS leadership converges in the person of Adnan Abu Walid, al-Sahraui. Abu Walid, with other Saharans, joined the Malian jihad with the irruption of AQIM in the northern regions of Mali as consequence of the pressure exerted by the Algerian Army against terrorist groups operating in Algeria. It is not known his militancy in al-Qaida prior to the start of the Malian conflict in 2012 but the presence of Algerians in AQIM since its foundation in 2007 is nevertheless a constant of this Maghreb terrorist group.

Born in El Aaiun (Layoun) in 1970, Abu Walid studied at Algerian universities, although he did not obtain a degree. Later, he enlisted in the Polisario Front. This Saharan militancy does not prevent its repeated intention to attempt terrorist attacks against internationals in the Saharan camps, which the DGS almost achieved in 2018. In fact, the first prominent action of the then terrorist group MUJAO was the kidnapping of three Westerners from Saharan refugees' camps in Tindouf in October 2011.

Adnan Abu Walid has a leadership profile, which made him a founder of the MUJAO terrorist group in 2011 as a spin-off from AQIM. Most of the current DGS leaders are Saharans who also had ties with MUJAO, which was joined previously as new members recruited in the same way in the Saharan camps.

Among other important Saharan leaders in the DGS is Abdel Hakim al-Sahraoui, who leads the operational group of the DGS. Also notable was Abu Naim, al-Sahraoui, who until a few months ago was responsible for the logistics and finances of this terrorist group, in addition to enjoying the utmost confidence of Adnan Abu Walid. He died in August 2020, possibly infected with COVID.

In turn, a considerable proportion of the DGS middle managers are of the Peul ethnic group. It supports the the DGS leadership will to keep command and control of the members of this ethnic group integrated in the DGS, as well as to promote the entente and the recruitment of new members from this Sahelian ethnic group.

GROUPS BEHIND THE DAESH FRANCHISE. Information of primitive groups before they offered loyalty to DAESH

The foundation of the terrorist group called Al Morabitoun led to the dissolution of its two integrated groups: MUJAO and al-Muthalimin. Led from its origins by the charismatic Mokhtar Belmokhtar, al-Morabitoun continued its loyalty to al-Qaida after the emergence of DAESH in the Sahel in 2015, as well as later joining JNIM in 2017.

Mokhtar Belmokhtar led AQIM's main external terrorist attacks. This is the case of the one perpetrated at the In Amenas power station in southern Algeria in 2013, and in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso (Capuccino cafeteria and Splendid Hotel in 2016, as well as against the French Embassy in Burkina Faso and the headquarters of the Army in 2018). Al-Morabitoun also carried out the main terrorist attacks in Bamako, Mali, both in 2015 (La Terrace cafeteria and Radisson Blue Hotel), as well as in 2016 in an Ivorian resort.

Even if al-Morabitoun's is today a part of JNIM, its strong and specialized terrorist structure has faded after the final death of Mokhtar Belmokhtar in Libya in 2018.

The DGS also had until approximately 2017 the so-called Salaheddine group. Its leader, an Arab Lemhar named Sultan Ould Bady, was always a free spirit within the organization. Its membership was always involved to different groups, pursuing in all cases the satisfaction of his own criminal interests, linked to the illicit traffics in the area.

Sultan Ould Bady had been the founder of MUJAO with Admed el-Tilemsi, Adnan Abu Walid and Hamada Ould al-Kheirou. With the disappearance of MUJAO, Sultan Ould Bady established ties without much commitment, first with Ansar Dine, and later, with JNIM after its creation in March 2017. However, that same year of 2017 he affiliated to DGS, where he evolved with his group until his own voluntary surrender to the Algerian authorities.

GROUPS BEHIND THE DAESH FRANCHISE. Current.

The main groups incorporated to the DGS terrorist structure at present are:

- Adnan Abu Walid's group: This group operates on the Ansona-Menaka road, near the Niger border, as well as inside Niger, in the western region of Tillaberi. Its members are Lemhar Arabs, Tuaregs-

Dausak, as well as there are several subgroups of Peul ethnic group. They seek territorial expansion to the south. Cells and subgroups are in constant motion.

- Sahara Group: Operates in the Malian triangle composed by the locations of Gao, Bouarem and Tabankort. Its members are mostly Lemhar Arabs, as well as Sahrawis.

- Abdulhakim's group: it is the most important group and the one that generates most of the terrorist activity. It evolves in continuous mobility in the Malian Gourma-Liptako region, as well as, to the south, in the north and east parts of Burkina Faso. Their vocation for expansion, even to the Southern countries of the Gulf of Guinea, as well as the pressure of the Malian army and the Barkhane Force in Mali, has largely displaced them towards the Burkinabe provinces of Oudalan and Soum. The intention of the group is to be able to link territorially towards the west with ISWAP. The significant terrorist prestige of this group among the terrorist people has led to the transfer of fighters to the DGS from the Burkina Faso group of Ansaroul al Islam.

The global volume of the DGS fighters is estimated at around three hundred terrorists.

Some features of the terrorist activity of DGS

- JNIM is the most active terrorist group in Mali (40 attacks / month), while DGS maintains a lower terrorist activity rate (23 attacks / month). Nevertheless, DGS surpasses JNIM, albeit slightly, as the most lethal group and the one that generates the most of the victims.

- Both groups are active in the three Sahel countries: Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. While JNIM concentrates its terrorist effort in Mali, DGS manifests itself in all three; mainly, currently, in Burkina Faso.

- Burkina Faso is now the main scenario of terrorist activity for DGS, with approximately 34 attacks / month, followed by Mali and Niger.

- The period from September the 1st, 2019 to April the 30th, 2020 was of great terrorist activity for DGS. January 2020 was a month in which this terrorist group carried out its major attacks. This activity has decreased since April. Probably, because of the confrontation between DGS and JNIM.

- The DGS seeks the territorial expansion of the group within the Sahel, consequently affecting the neighbouring countries further south, such as Benin and the Ivory Coast.

- The areas of Niger near the borders of Burkina Faso and Mali are also common areas of jihadist activity in this country where numerous attacks have been conducted against local population.

- DGS also undertakes attacks against Western interests in general, both against civilians and against military. The last one was the murder of six French aid workers in August about 60 km south-east of Niger, by terrorists on four motorcycles. It was not a random attack, as this place is a natural park of giraffes frequented by foreigners during the weekends. It was claimed by the propagandistic platform Al-Naba.

- Western missionaries are also regular targets of DGS.

- The territories of Western Sahara are also a permanent target of the DGS, where in 2011 they carried out the kidnapping of three Westerners. They attempted to perpetrate also terrorist attacks in December 2018 and December 2019.

TACTICS IN VIOLENT ACTIVITY. Specifications regarding TTP

- Most of the attacks are retaliations carried out by terrorist cells against civilian people, accused by jihadists of alleged collaboration with security organizations. These cells use Kalashnikov's most of the time. These attacks are also the ones that cause the highest number of victims.

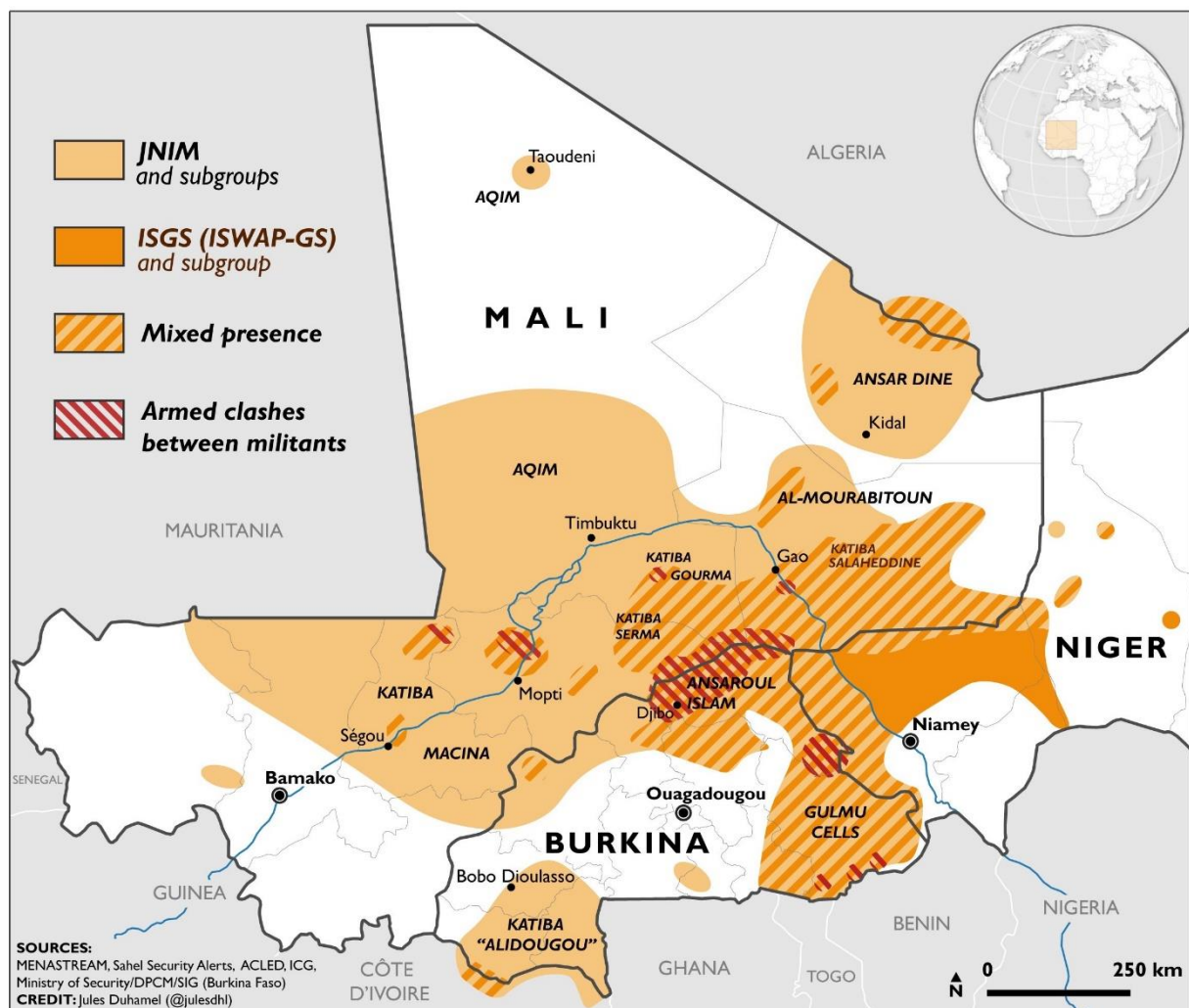
- Complex attacks, in which machine-guns are mixed with IED's and / or mortar fire, are much less frequent. These types of attacks require experience and adequate preparation, for which they require the convergence of many of the usually dispersed terrorist cells.

TARGETS OF THE VIOLENT ACTIVITY. Type of objectives and estimated effects on violent action

Most of the DGS attacks are directed against civilians. To a lesser extent, against components also of the Army and security forces, both national and of the different international organizations involved in counter-terrorism activity. Authorities and public officials, schoolteachers and other members of the General State Administration, as well as religious and Christian missionaries located in their areas of action are also common targets of their terrorist activity.

The selection of targets to attack is a feature in which DGS differs from JNIM. Latter group selects its objectives among the personnel and facilities largely linked to the structures of the State. They are therefore not as indiscriminate as it is the case with DGS.

GEOLOCALIZATION OF VIOLENT ACTIVITY



Insurgent/terrorist areas of operations in Mali/Burkina-Faso/Niger, January 2016 – July 2020 (Source: - @julesdhl)

FINANCING AND RESOURCES. Activities for self-financing, external financing, interaction with other groups with a view to self-financing.

The murder of six French nationals in Niger in August 2020 by members of DGS, when they could have been kidnapped, taking into account that it was a premeditated attack, highlights the non-participation of the DGS in kidnappings perpetrated in the region. The responsibility in this kind of actions is reserved almost exclusively to JNIM.

It is unknown the main reason why the DGS does not kidnap and deprives itself of this important way for financing that JNIM has. In fact, the DGS does not have any captives among the kidnappings that are currently active. One reason for depriving itself of this source could be that the territory in Mali in which the DGS operates, and to a certain extent has its control, is much smaller and not as inaccessible as the one available to JNIM. The affiliated groups of al Qaida control the Northern regions above Timbuctoo and in the Malian border with Mauritania. JNIM also controls the Adrar of Ifhogas area, in the Kidal region. In both cases, JNIM can afford to hold the hostages, even for years.

Deprived of this type of income, the austere cells of the DGS are largely self-financing. Composed of between six and twelve fighters and always on the move, these cells have available the livelihoods they acquire through looting and extortion from locals and pedestrians, as well as the material captured in their attacks on national security and cooperation agencies and international ones.

They also occasionally have funds and materials delivered by the central core of the organization.

PROPAGANDA AND INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES. Past and present propaganda. Communication agencies available. Propaganda message and evolution of this message

Propaganda' messages are an important tool used by terrorist groups to project their activity. It allows the terrorist groups to recruit members and to project their principles and capabilities.

From the beginning, JNIM media apparatus, al-Zalaqa, benefited of the experience and expertise of AQIM media apparatus. The DGS propaganda's birth was diametrically opposite. It was greatly influenced by the precariousness with which it was born as a terrorist group in 2015, which took almost two years to be recognized by DAESH Core. This means that DGS was deprived in its early years of the influence of the important media apparatus that DAESH Core had in the Middle East. When DGS was finally recognized as a DAESH affiliate in 2017, that central propaganda apparatus was in full decline. This means that the DGS propaganda was at the beginning tremendously rudimentary and barely connected with the DAESH propaganda already existing on the internet.

For its poor propagandist dissemination, DGS used at that moment a Mauritanian portal, as well as some international media, what avoided the connection with the local scene in which the group carried out its terrorist activity.

Some steps were done after its official recognition by DAESH, making use of the central DAESH propaganda apparatus, which initially included DGS in the operational framework of Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP, Boko Haram). It was in 2019 when DGS managed to connect with the DAESH Core media apparatus, using very aggressive messages through the central media platforms of DAESH, al-Nuba and Amaq. With this messaging, DGS tried perhaps to break the propaganda hegemony of JNIM. These same platforms have been used in their confrontation with JNIM. Al-Nuba, a platform used by DAESH Core in May 2020, attempted to reproach JNIM for the confrontation between both

groups, as well as to demand the militancy in DGS of JNIM fighters. Some of the groups without terrorist leaders had been shot down by Barkhane Force, as well as disenchanted with the attempt to drive talks between the terrorists and the Government of Mali.

ALLIANCES. Relations with other ethnic groups. Confrontations between them.

The DAESH's presence in the Sahel is represented by the DGS, as well as by the ISWAP group, which is the Boko Haram split that Abubakar Shekau has been leading since then in the triple border region of Lake Chad. Although both groups receive the DAESH core expansionist message to join both conflicting regions by a corridor, the reality is that both groups act usually isolated each other.

The DGS's strongest relationship in the region had been until the beginning of 2020 with JNIM, to the point of sharing a coexistence and even cooperation between both groups, which constituted an exception to the usual confrontation between both terrorist groups in other Jihadist scenarios of the world.

The shared militancy of leaders of both groups in AQIM and the mutual knowledge among them allowed a certain terrorist coordination in common scenarios, which even became cooperative at specific moments. The territorial expansion of both groups towards central regions of Mali and towards Burkina brought the consequent overlap of territories and available resources, which finally resulted in misunderstandings and confrontation. The DGS's rejection of a possible dialogue between the Malian government and JNIM also influenced the deterioration of relationships between two groups. Finally, as well as the increasing intervention of the central nucleus of DAESH in DGS affairs conforming DAESH was losing its prominence in the Middle East and started to perceive some possibilities in other world scenarios, especially in Africa.

The reciprocal loss of trust between both groups has materialized in deadly confrontations between combatants from both groups throughout 2020, persisting to this day. Damages in both groups are important, although the smaller dimension of the DGS increase a bigger deterioration in DGS in a greater extent.

With regard to the Burkinabe terrorist group Ansar-al Islam, it is close to JNIM structure. Nevertheless, the notable prestige that the DGS has among jihadism in the region has led some fighters from Ansarum al Islam to embrace the DGS.

NEUTRAL INTERACTIONS. Relevant interactions with other actors in the area.

It's not assessed to identify neutrality as a trait of DGS in its relationship with other groups. The secrecy and constant mobility in which their cells usually have to develop do not facilitate neutral interaction with other groups. This model of life and behavior of the DGS terrorists does not even allow interaction with local populations in the areas where they evolve. This is precisely a differentiating feature with AQIM / JNIM, whose fighters try to create links with the inhabitants of the regions in which they operate and in whose territories they settle. Nor does the habitual brutality of DGS terrorist help precisely to foster ties with the inhabitants with whom they cross their path.

NEGOTIATION. POTENTIAL INITIATIVES. Old and present negotiations

The persistent lack of control and absence of State authority in some regions of Mali; the withdrawal of detached military units to some regions as a consequence of their exposure and punishment by terrorists; and the nonexistent advance of peace in Mali, led former President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita to promote in 2020 an initiative to explore an agreement with JNIM.

Contacts in the religious sphere tried to find out the willingness of this group to some kind of agreement that was impossible since the first stages of the negotiations because of the strong demand of the terrorists that such possibility would only be feasible with the withdrawal of French troops from Mali.

Although there is no information in this regard, given the outstanding dimension of France's support for the fight against terrorism in Mali, it can be assumed that France previously approved the undertaking of this project of contacts with JNIM, which, however, can be said to have failed. The kidnapping of the Malian opposition leader, Soumaila Cissé, in March 2020 when he was campaigning in Timbuktu, distracted such contacts to a more specific purpose, such as his release, which finally took place in October.

Bearing in mind that the current interim military government in Mali will continue the counter-terrorism policy of former President Keita, given the vital support from France and the international community, it could be assumed that this exploration route will have its continuity, although caution should be exercised in this regard.

COUNTER-TERRORIST ACTION. Some notes to military cooperation.

Two important lines of action support the counter-terrorism activities in the area. On one hand, the political agreements and the peace plans already adopted. They should generate the living and governing conditions to promote the State governance, as well as the political and social stability to generate development and growing prosperity. The second pillar to deal with the terrorist threat is the national and international military and security fighting against terrorist groups.

At present, the so-called Algiers Peace Agreement is still in force (preceded by a previous one signed in 2013, which was later rejected). This peace agreement reached with the main militias located in the northern region of Mali, the rebel Tuaregs and the pro-government militias, has proven unfeasible in its application. The reality is that the northern part of the country does not have yet the governance and control of the State. Even the Malian Army does not have a permanent and stable presence in Kidal province and other regions of Mali.

The withdrawal of the Government from these enormous territorial extensions puts in the hands of the terrorist groups important spaces of action in which they evolve without any problem. It is conceivable that the incorporation of elements of stability and development into this geographical space would have a very direct impact on the neutralization of the terrorist practice. However, the fact that five years after the achievement of the aforementioned peace treaty has not finally led to a situation of peace speaks for itself of the failure of the initiatives adopted. Nor to have the national and international security contingents involved have created the necessary security conditions.

While Serval operation carried out in Mali by France in 2013, promptly prevented terrorist groups from spreading from the north to other large areas of the country, it's true that such a terrorist threat has

finally spread to a wider section of the central region, including Niger and Burkina Faso. In the latter case to a greater extent.

The more than fifteen thousand MINUSMA troops located in Mali on a mission to stabilize and support the political and security process in Mali, are completely ineffective, as it is also the performance of the G5-Sahel group. In the same way, the mission of training and support of the EU to the Malian troops is proving ineffective. In this case, because of the difficulty to incorporate as regular units the militias until now faced each other, as well as the impossibility to sustain their presence in certain areas due to the absence of appropriate logistics chains or the lack of combat support, specially coming from the air. Neither personal, economic nor social circumstances made military recruitment attractive to soldiers and avoid the abundant desertions. The performance of the Malian Armed Forces is consequently poor and ineffective in those geographical areas in which its presence is viable, being also almost unbearable the attrition in lives (there are no known statistics of the significant number of Malian soldiers killed annually).

Only France achieves certain milestones in counter-terrorism, albeit insufficient, to the point that the extension of its mission in time is sowing some doubts about its viability in some sectors of French society. On the other hand, the military intervention of France in Mali causes the rejection of a considerable part of the Malian population, which distrusts about the last reason to be there. They are also suspicious if the support that a sector of the Malian Tuareg offers to Barkhane Force in his counter-terrorism task, do not be at the end a push to the independence of the Azawad.

Such political and social mistrust towards France is even greater in Burkina Faso, where the bilateral military agreement of both States lacks the dimension and depth that is already available with Mali.

Although the security actions of national and international troops prevent the establishment of the Caliphate in the zones of evolution of the DGS, it is no less true that such zones also lack the control of the State to execute governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Circumstances of insecurity and instability in the region, as well as the impossibility of improving the living conditions of citizens, have made difficult the exercise of Malian politics, to the point of two coups d'état have been perpetrated in Mali in 2013 and 2020. Both military coups reveal the difficulty of undertaking restorative political measures. **Support for good governance should continue.**

Given the Malian conflict has its origin in the extreme conditions of life and precariousness of the region, it is assumed that it is in these areas where the emphasis for international support should be taken for the recovery and normalization of the region. It means, **development cooperation, in a narrow harmony with the present security support.** And very important also, it is **to involve the local population in the design and execution of development initiatives**, usually coming from administrative offices placed in the capitals, far away of the ground and unfamiliar to real local needs and local interpretations.

The fight against illicit traffics should also be a constant in action, given that such traffics are almost the unique employers in the area. The attraction that these illegal businesses generate among local youth should be transformed in the opposite, using these youth to fight their eradication.

Taking into consideration the benefit that terrorist groups obtain from neighborhood ethnic differences and confrontation between them, it is required to **promote initiatives for detente and harmony between tribes**, teaching and helping them to respect the traditional peculiarities of every tribe.

The promotion of **de-radicalization programs** already undertaken by some Muslim states with their nationals, as it is the case of Morocco, can provide efficient results in the medium term among the Jihadist jailed.

The effort in the field for **schooling the children of the tribes in which the DGS recruits** could be also a front of action conducive to minimizing the support that these tribes provide to the DGS.

Another aspect to take into consideration, which concerns Spain and the other European countries that compose the military European Union's mission to support the Malian army, is the **correct treatment that have to prevail among the Malian soldiers in their relationship with local populations** that are in one way or another affected by terrorist activity. The excesses, and even murders that are sometimes perpetrated against this population, revert very negatively in the image that Mali should project to the world, and even in the efficiency of the counter-terrorist fighting.

The ransom payments for terrorist kidnappings, as well as the release of prisoners as a consequence of their freedom, must also be considered with a certain dimension. An international agreement in this subject and its exquisite observation will avoid the extra financing of terrorist groups.

Finally, if an international military participation is developed in the Sahel region, **more real military engagement is required by European countries**, supporting the military leadership made by France as reference's country. It is a pity that the call to participate in **Takouba Force** to fight terrorism had had so few enthusiastic support from European forces, engaged most of the times in perimeter support that, if it helps the Malian reconstruction, it is far from producing essential security outcomes. In this aspect, it is necessary to identify more precisely the type of military support to provide, in order to offer, no more help, but more decisive and of better quality.

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