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Security Risks in North Africa – The Strategy of the Terrorists

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Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Strategic Environment & History
3. Algeria
4. Egypt
5. Libya
6. Tunisia
7. ... and what could be done?





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The current Situation, its Framework Conditions and Root Causes

Current situation:

- ◆ Arab Spring
 - hope for a better life not always fulfilled

◆ Depending on the country lack of:

- social standards
- stable governments
- perspectives for the future
- human rights
- (real) democracy
- security (in some regions)

a fertile ground for radicalization

WHY?

strategic environment and history

- framework conditions: geography, economy & demography
- roots in history: why are things as they are?
- driving element: religion / radical understanding of Islam
- external factors: Arab bitterness



Islamic Extremist Organizations

- ◆ Exploit grievances
 - ◆ justify political violence through religion & use terrorism as a means
 - ◆ target “enemies” (local governments, Islamic religious establishment, US/Israel/West)
-
- ◆ **Salafism** (fastest growing Islamic movement in the world)
 - strict and puritanical approach to Islam – close to Wahhabism (**funding!!!**)
 - vast majority follows the conservative Hanbali school
 - **not necessarily violent, but many Jihadists are hardline Salafists**
 - **want to forcibly "purify" the Muslim society**
 - **"liberation" of all Muslim lands is an individual obligation**



Al Qaeda's View of North Africa

- ◆ North Africa is an important part of the world-wide conflict
- ◆ large Muslim population
- ◆ proximity to Europe – global reach = global basing required
- ◆ some regions considered as a sanctuary
- ◆ financial
 - significant base for fund-raising
 - exploit criminal connections / routes
- ◆ outer links
 - influence over Muslim groups outside of the region (Europe!!!)
 - “Sub-contracting” the global *Jihad* against the far enemy (this includes Europe)
- ◆ AQ was surprised by the Arab Spring



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Algeria – an ongoing Insurgency 13 yrs after the End of a Civil War

- ◆ Algerian civil war 1991-2002: 150.000+ KIA
- ◆ painful and violent transition from a military backed dictatorship to a more liberalized form of government
- ◆ social unrest & sporadic violent riots in early 2011 – no real challenge to the government
- ◆ continued insurgency on decreasing level (AQIM)
- ◆ current situation
 - quite stable - suspicion remains about the role of the military
 - a wealthy country with a largely poor population
 - mostly low level AQIM guerilla operations in the northeast and east
 - exception: In Amenas gas field attack (January 13)
 - flow of weapons from Libya (also through Tunisia)
 - International cooperation to keep the pressure on AQIM
- ◆ future developments
 - no major change expected, but there is potential for further instability



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Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

- ◆ **origins in Algeria (Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et la Combat – GSPC / 1998)**
 - renamed itself in Jan 07 - leader: Abdelmalek Droukdel (since 2004)
 - probably about 5-800 fighters
- ◆ **transnational radical Islamist ideology**
- ◆ **strategy: similar to AQ, but focused on North Africa**
 - final objective: regional fundamentalistic Islamic State under sharia law
 - short-/mid-term aim: establishing, consolidating & expanding safe havens/base areas
- ◆ **tactics**
 - low-level guerilla activities ongoing with periodic mass-casualty attacks (VBIED / SVBIED)
 - Kidnapping – probably the richest AQ organization
- ◆ **area of operation**
 - Algeria (focus NE), Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Tunisia
 - wish of Libyan AQIM member (2012) for a “combat zone” in Libya rejected – Fezzan is too important as a safe haven & logistic base!
- ◆ **various regional insurgents / splinter groups are cross connected with AQIM**
 - **exampel: Katibat al-Muqaoon bil-Dumaa (Bn. of Those Who Sign with Blood)**
 - leader: Mokhtar Belmokhtar (responsible for the 16Jan13 attack on In Amenas)
 - links to Boko Haram (Nigeria), Okba Ibn Nafaa (Tunisia) and the IS (several leaders pledged allegiance)



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Egypt – Demography & Economy – a very difficult Situation

- ◆ **strategic important location (Suez Canal)**
- ◆ **99% of a population of 87 million live in the Nile river valley (4% of the country)**
- ◆ **environmental degradation**
 - **loss of agricultural areas – Egypt is not self-sufficient in food any more**
- ◆ **hydrocarbon industry**
 - **4th largest amount of natural gas reserves in Africa - much is used for electric power plants**
 - **largest oil refinery capacity in Africa, but consumption is higher than local production**
- ◆ **main sources of foreign currency income**
 - **Suez Canal (\$ 5.5 billion in 2014)**
 - **tourism**
 - **remittances**
- ◆ **outlook**
 - **population will grow to 95,6 mio by 2026 (+ 1,0 mio/yr)**
 - **population growth is the highest in the poorest regions**
 - **together with a lack of economic growth & subsidy & spending programs a bad combination**
- ◆ **Egypt is almost entirely dependent on financial aid form the gulf States**



The Strategy of the Terrorists

- ◆ **The strategy of the Islamic extremists is:**
 - to weaken the security forces in specific areas
 - to attack the economy of the country (in particular the three top sources of foreign currency)
 - to provoke over-reactions of the security forces alienate them from the population
 - the worsening security and socioeconomic situation should prepare the ground for mass protests and a public uprising to finally overthrow the government
- ◆ **Conclusions:**
 - Islamic insurgency will not be able to entirely destabilize the country by terrorist means
 - the main danger is that terrorism will deepen the economic difficulties
 - Mass mobilization and social unrests for economic grievances are the most serious risks, which could be eventually exploited by the Islamists
- ◆ **It is unlikely that the government will be able to satisfy the expectations of the population in the near future.**



Libya – a failed state in North Africa?

- ◆ **located in the center of the Mediterranean**
- ◆ **Libya maintains the 9th largest reserves of crude oil globally**
- ◆ **root causes of the current situation:**
 - **the inability of the international recognized government to impose its will and retain the monopoly on violence**
 - **the rising influence of radical Islamists**
 - **the legacy of the chaotic administration of the state under the Gaddafi regime**
 - **the numerous century old tribal conflicts in several parts of the country**
- ◆ **no centralized control of the warring factions**
- ◆ **in the near future the prospects for a “political solution” and a “unity government” are not very bright**



The Strategy of IS in Libya (1/2)

- ◆ **Libya's geostrategic location provides ideal opportunities for further expansion**
 - it is simply the perfect place to destabilize the whole of North Africa and the Sahel
 - the best-suited staging area for terrorist attacks on Europe
 - provides access to an almost inexhaustible amount of income through the hydrocarbon resources.
- ◆ **illegal immigration:**
 - first and foremost a human tragedy, but also
 - a tool to destabilize Europe (see Gaddafi's threats)
 - a source of income - somehow a follow-up of the former Sahara trade
 - an opportunity for the infiltration of terrorists
- ◆ **Libya is more & more attractive for international Jihadists**
- ◆ **probable intermediate objective:**
to establish firm control over at least some larger parts of the country to have a firm base for further expansion



The Strategy of IS in Libya (2/2)

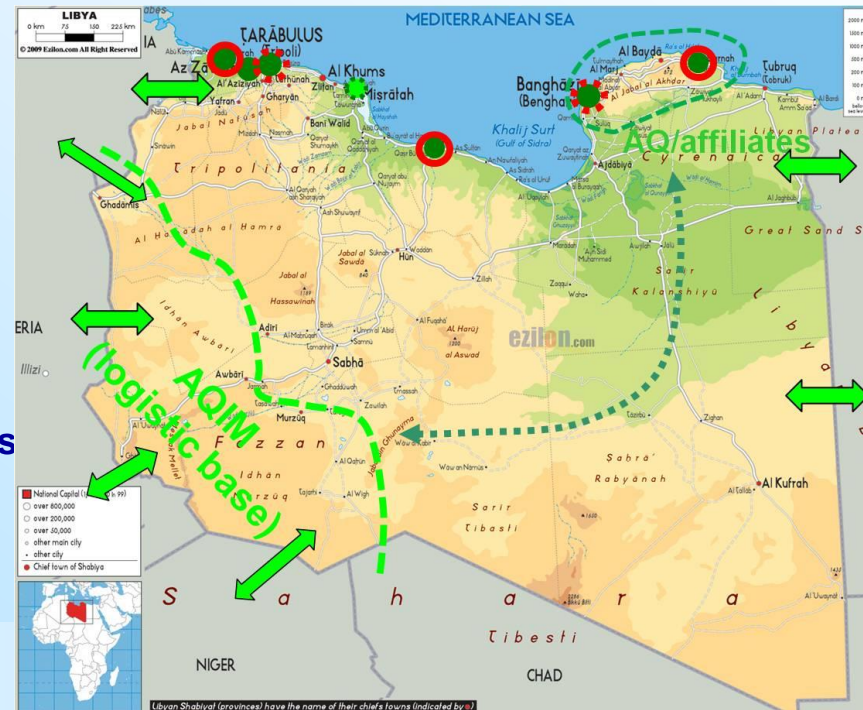
- ◆ **double-pronged strategy :**
 - **escalation of the armed struggle to capture key facilities and as territory**
 - first phase: intimidation of the population in the new targeted area
 - second phase: assassination of former regime supporters, security forces, human rights activists, journalists, other political opponents, and Christian foreigners
 - third phase: takeover of the softened target city in the third phase. The more chaos they create at the beginning, the more likely is the success of their strategy
 - prevent any progress/stabilization and deny the opponents the use of the economic resources
 - **law & order and welfare**
 - fight on crime and corruption with an iron fist
 - conduct of welfare programs for the needy, in particular for the families of the “martyrs”
 - IS will demonstrate that the wellbeing of its followers is one of its major goals.
- ◆ **With the help of this strategy,**
 - IS intends to convince as many people as possible that its way of Islam is the “solution”
 - whoever cannot be convinced is considered an enemy of Islam and will be overwhelmed by force
 - other jihadi groups active (e.g. AaS) will be absorbed - or exterminated.
- ◆ **in parallel the fight will be exported to neighboring states to keep the momentum**



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The Impact of the Libyan Revolution on Regional Security

- ◆ Weapons
 - SALW
 - MANPADS
 - mainly Strela-2 / SA-7 (~ 2.000), some Strela-3 / SA-14/16 (100s), few Iglas / SA-24
 - threat depends on the condition of the weapon and the skill of the operator
 - smuggled to Mali, Niger, Tunisia, Egypt, ...
- ◆ trained fighters
 - → Tunisia & Egypt
 - Tuareg → Mali, Niger
 - Arabs → AQIM, AQAP
 - Arabs → Syria
- ◆ Crime
 - smuggling
 - drugs, fuel, all kinds of consumer goods
 - illegal migration
 - from Black Africa to Europe
 - now rapidly growing





Tunisia –

A fertile Ground for radical Islamists ???

- ◆ successful transition process as a role model for others
- ◆ very high educational standards - and a strong civil society
- ◆ very young population (39% below 25 yrs)
- ◆ limited natural resources
- ◆ transformation of the economy is required (agriculture & textile industry)
- ◆ socio-economic situation - some hard facts
 - GDP increase + 2.8 % (2014 est.) not sufficient
 - foreign direct investments not sufficient to jump-start the economy
 - unemployment : 15,2 + (official figure!)
 - 42.3 % youth ages (15-24); in some areas more than 50%
 - 35% (??) of university graduates
 - huge difference in the development of the hinterland from the coast
 - social support for the population did not always get better
- ◆ **Salafist groups are quite active**



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The Strategy of the Terrorists

- ◆ various Salafist jihadi groups "coordinated" through a common ideology and a common objective are firmly routed in some parts of Tunisia
- ◆ exploitation of the grievances of the population in particular parts of the country for recruiting sympathizers and fighters
- ◆ destabilization of the country by attacking
 - security forces
 - the economy of the country
 - (increasingly likely) Western targets in Tunisia
- ◆ means:
 - assassinations, bomb attacks, raids (up to larger scale coordinated terrorist raids)
 - Salafist charity activities
- ◆ immediate objective:
 - establishment of "resistance pockets" in remote areas (like Jebel Chaambi)
 - enlargement of the controlled territory
- ◆ ultimate objective: fundamentalistic Islamic State
- ◆ assessment: a military victory of the terrorists is not realistic - triggering a social uprising could be their means of choice



... and what can be done?

- ◆ social-economic situation at the bottom of the problem
→ education and a huge amount of investments required
- ◆ security problems are the “symptoms of the diseases”
→ are needed to be “treated”, too
(a certain amount of security is precondition for progress)
- ◆ extremist ideology - needs to be countered at the same level
- ◆ increased focus on transitional justice as well as on fighting corruption & the shadow economy
- ◆ different situation in different countries require different answers - there is not "one" solution
- ◆ focus on Tunisia to create a positive example for the others
- ◆ “Let globalization work on them!” as a long-term strategy??



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***... paraphrasing Mao:
"Terrorists must act like a fish in the ocean!"***

**Let's change the salt water into fresh water and
these dangerous fish will not survive!**

**Give the people something to loose!
Give them something worth living for!**