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BOOK REVIEW

Lassoing the Haboob

Countering Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin in Mali

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Abstract

Since 2013, Mali has been the epicenter of violence in the Sahel region. However, over the last three years, Mali and neighboring Sahel states have seen a dramatic rise in violence and conflict. A significant percentage of this surge has been perpetrated by the group Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) or one of its subsidiary organizations. Another large percentage of Mali's violent attacks is the result of intercommunal conflict, which JNIM and other Islamist organizations often manipulate and enflame.

To develop solutions to Mali's crisis, it is first vital to understand its history and explain how a country that was once held up as an exemplar of democratic success in Africa could collapse with such rapidity. Additionally, the same factors that led to Mali's current disaster precipitated the creation of the extremist group JNIM. Therefore, it is similarly important to characterize and understand the group's history, organization, methods, and narrative. Only once armed with that understanding can one begin to develop possible strategies for countering JNIM and ameliorating Mali's troubled situation.

Introduction

The situation in Mali and the surrounding Sahel countries is dire and worsens by the month. Since 2015, violent activity involving extremist groups has doubled yearly. No other region in the world has seen a more rapid increase in jihadist attacks.[1] In Mali, a combination of ramifications from the Tuareg uprising in 2012, persistent ethnic and tribal conflict, and humanitarian considerations such as hunger and poverty have all led the country to a state of near-collapse. Foremost among the groups carrying out the violence and exacerbating the issues is JNIM, which, since its formation in March 2017, has been responsible for a 300-percent spike in violent attacks and a dramatic increase in civilian targeting. As of late 2018, JNIM had just under 2,000 fighters spread throughout the northern and central parts of Mali, but its attacks continue to increase and evolve in complexity and ferocity.[2] Understanding the history of the current crisis as well as characterizing its most dangerous extremist group, JNIM, is critical to any proposed method for ameliorating conditions in Mali.

The dangers that Mali's current problems present are potentially easy to under-state. Mali may be geographically far from US interests, but despite its apparent isolation, JNIM is a threat to global security. In 2015, the US Department of State called a JNIM subgroup "one of the greatest near-term threats to U.S. and inter-national interests in the Sahel."[3] The director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies described JNIM as "Sub-Saharan Africa's most formidable extremist group."[4] On the level of humanitarianism, the Mali crisis—of which JNIM is both cause and effect—has left 440,000 displaced, 1.8 million facing food insecurity, and 5.1 million in need of humanitarian assistance.[5] Moreover, the effects of JNIM's growth are not constrained to Mali, having spread to the neighboring countries of Burkina Faso and Niger, which witnessed a 7,000-percent and 500-percent increase in violent attacks respectively.[6] As the primary al-Qaeda affiliate in Africa, JNIM has the connections, motives, and re-sources to, if unchecked, create an arc of instability extending west into Maurita-nia and east across the Sahel into the Horn of Africa, characterized by ungoverned land controlled by transnational criminals.[7]

Analysis of Mali's numerous issues, including the ever-growing threat of at-tacks by groups like JNIM, makes clear that finding solutions is impossible with-out first understanding their genesis. It can be tempting to only go back as far as the 2012 Tuareg rebellion, which created advantageous conditions for JNIM; however, doing so fails to address the underlying issues predating 2012. Further-more, one must ask why a country that was, for a time, considered a model of stability and democracy could so quickly devolve into nation-wide ethnic, reli-gious, and political violence. What are the primary causal factors for the violence and instability in Mali that subsequently gave rise to JNIM? Historically, the principal causes can be attributed to the repercussions of colonization, ethnic ten-sions, and the conflicts that have torn apart other Sahel countries—all of which served to create ideal conditions for the 2012 Tuareg uprising and subsequent near-destruction of the Malian state.

Colonization

As in so many African countries, the history of its current conflict has its roots in colonization. The colonization of what is today Mali began in the 1850s and was solidified in 1887 with the final annexation and creation of the Colonial State of French Sudan. The French remained in control of Mali until its independence in 1960.[8] During that time, France saw to it that political and administrative power remained centralized in French hands. As a result, the local leaders' ability to govern atrophied, resulting in weakened governmental institutions leading up to and following independence. "Like other newly independent countries in Af-

rica, Mali faced enormous political, geographic and economic challenges at independence. . . . Unsurprisingly, state level institutions for governance and politics were underdeveloped or absent."[9] Like other African states, Mali's colonial rule institutionalized ineffective governance, resulting in limited control over large parts of the territory, particularly the Sahelian North.[10]

Weak governance was not the only negative effect of French colonial rule that would haunt Mali after independence. Though the French sought to weaken Malian self-governance, they simultaneously ensured a political elite controlled what little power the French were willing to grant. The existence of this elite not only guaranteed that those outside the political class were ostracized from participation in the political process but also that those fissures became entrenched in Malian society. A unified national identity was impossible due to "repressive colonial policies, which until 1944-45, denied a political right to Africa except a small minority."[11] These polices of repression and division were effective for maintaining power from the colonial perspective, but once the colonial powers departed in 1960s, they left Mali and other African countries with a debilitated government and divided state.

For Mali, colonial policies were still more divisive, as the elites were often chosen from a single tribe or ethnic group and usually from the cities where the elites congregated. This further disenfranchised "outgroups" like the Tuareg and people in remote areas. Interactions between north and south had been difficult preceding French arrival. However, "The French occupation even exacerbated these resentments. This is due to the attitude of the French during the colonial period, when they decided to educate a ruling class almost exclusively composed of majority black southerners."[12] Ethnic divisions, particularly those that existed between the Malian people and the Tuareg, were useful for French control but damaging to postcolonial Mali.

Ethnic Tensions

Ethnic tensions in Mali are the second root cause of today's problems. Yet, it would be disingenuous to claim that those divisions started with colonization. Instead, the history of ethnic and tribal divisions stretches far into the past with the origins of groups like the Fulani—extending back many centuries—and evidence of complex "caste" systems originating in the eleventh century.[13] As a consequence of these divisions and societal systems, various ethnicities and tribes have played important roles in Mali's history even before the arrival of Europeans. However, as this work has already demonstrated, colonization served to exacerbate these divisions.

The most notable of the ethnic conflicts in Mali is the one between the Tuareg and the rest of Malian society. "Although the Sahara-Sahel region contains numerous ethnic groups, the historical migratory range of one particular group, the Tuareg, seems to define its core."[14] For decades the Tuareg, mostly of North African and Berber descent, have found themselves at odds with sub-Saharan ethnic groups. Historically, the "White" Tuaregs and Arabs have considered themselves superior to other, "Black" Malians—even so far as participating in the trans-Saharan slave trade, enslaving "blacks" and working with European powers when possible. Many also harken back to a (mostly fictional) independent state of "Azawad," which is comprised of the three modern-day Malian provinces of Timbuktu, Kidal, and Gao (fig. 1). However, since independence in 1960, the power has shifted inside Mali's borders from the Tuareg communities in the North to the southern centers of political power.

> The decision to marginalize the north after independence, which has been illustrated by the will of the central state to affirm its territorial integrity all over the country, added to the historical bias between northerners and southerners. Southern populations, indeed, have a profoundly negative perception of the north. . . . The role of some northern nomadic groups in the trans-Saharan slave trade also helps to explain the historic and long-standing distrust between north and south.[15]

Since then, this power shift has resulted in racially motivated attacks against the Tuareg and the political and economic marginalization of northern populations.
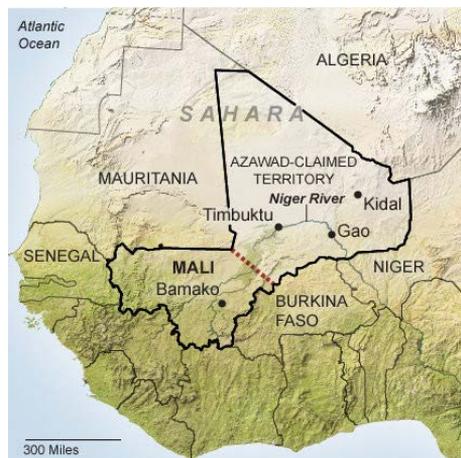
(image by The Tamoudré, https://web.archive.org/)

Figure 1: The traditional location of the Azawad

As a newly independent Mali progressed, so did governmental and societal prejudices against communities in the North. Northerners and Tuaregs struggled

to find a place within the new Malian state. As a result, they were consistently marginalized from positions of power, and "unequal access to state resources can be seen as the result of a divide-and-rule strategy implemented by the Malian government."[16] These tensions would result in four significant Tuareg rebellions in 1963, 1990, 2006, and most recently, in 2012. Even after the last uprising ended in 2015, the Malian army has been accused of extrajudicial killings of mostly Tuareg and Arab men for alleged participation in rebel groups. Similarly, "Tuareg separatists . . . have also been implicated in numerous serious abuses."[17] Unfortunately, the reality is that most of these issues have been born of a systemic ostracization of one particular ethnic group.

Despite the multiple Tuareg uprisings, there was a brief time when Mali was considered a paragon of democratic potential. In 1968, a young army lieutenant, Moussa Traoré, took power in a coup d'état and began a 23-year reign. Col Amadou Touré staged another coup in 1991, but rather than hold power like his predecessor, he returned it to the civilian government and allowed Mali to become a functioning democracy. The success of presidential elections in 1992 and again in 1997 and 2002 (the latter of which returned Amadou Touré to power as a civilian) turned Mali into a darling of the West and a symbol for how democracy could look in Africa.[18]

Unfortunately, under the surface, the same ethnic tensions still simmered. Even during the 1991 coup and democratic transition, the Malian military was engaged in fighting a Tuareg uprising in the North. Bamako and the Tuareg separatists signed a peace accord in 1996, but the issues at the root of the conflict remained unresolved and were never far from the fore of the nation's political climate. The "succession of crises in the north, alleged preferential treatment and fears of new military involvement fed continuous southern distrust regarding Malian's irredentist north. Meanwhile, people in the north continued to suffer from developmental inequalities and internal divisions."[19] Mali's "Tuareg problem" was an intractable issue with no clear resolution on the horizon and posed a constant threat of a return to violence.

Though Tuareg marginalization has had the most impact on Malian history and serve as the roots of the crisis today, it is not the only example of ethnic tensions contributing to the violence. Notably, the persistent conflict between the pastoral communities such as the Fulani tribes and sedentary agricultural communities like the Dogon has resulted in a dramatic increase in violence and provided a useful recruitment tool for extremist organizations like JNIM. "In recent months, the incidence of massacres has increased rapidly. Violence is now taking place on a different scale and the (ethnic) nature of these attacks is no longer in

doubt."[20] While the intensity of these clashes may be a relatively new phenomenon, warfare between ethnic groups in the Sahel is not.

Taking the example of the Fulani people, though their origins remain unknown, history does record the creation of Fulani states beginning in the eighteenth century. In fact, these Fulani states were the result of a series of ethnic and religiously based uprisings by Fulani against various West African governments. The most prominent of these states was the Sokoto Caliphate, which was created in 1804 by a Fulani scholar, Usman dan Fodio. To build his Fulani empire, dan Fodio "recruited Fulani nomads into a jihad that overthrew the Muslim Hausa Emirs of the Sahel and attacked the non-Muslim tribes of the region in the first decade of the 19th century."[21] As with many of the ethnic groups in conflict in Africa, the Fulani were not tied to national borders. The Sokoto Caliphate was in modern-day Nigeria, but its rise inspired similar Fulani states in Guinea, Senegal, and Mali. One such state, the Macina Empire, gives its name and historical gravitas to a JNIM subgroup, the Macina Liberation Front (MLF).[22] All these states brought the Fulani people into conflict with other groups in the region. There are some scholars who claim that some of today's conflicts are continuations of those begun in the nineteenth century.[23]

Bad Neighbors

If conflicts between rival tribes can have a destabilizing effect on a country, violent conflicts in neighboring countries can play a disastrous role as well. Unfortunately for Mali, it lives in a region where conflict is endemic, especially as a result of colonization and lingering ethnic tensions and violence. While any number of wars has had a deleterious effect on Mali's history, it is the civil wars in Algeria and Libya that have been the most damaging to Mali and that truly lie at the root of Mali's present-day problems.

Algeria

The 1990s in Algeria was a time of war, terror, and death. The Algerian Civil War was fought between the Algerian central government, represented by the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN), and various rebel groups and militias, starting in late 1991. Since independence from France in 1962, Algeria had been under a one-party dictatorship that funneled money and power to a small group of individuals who comprised the Algerian elite. Unfortunately, the inequality and poor conditions such an arrangement engendered chafed the working classes for 20 years. Throughout the 1980s, the influx of fighters returning from the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan further radicalized Algerian society.[24]

The same period saw the return of an estimated 1,000 Algerians who had gone to join the Afghan mujahedin in the fight against the Soviet invasion of their country. Overall, it is believed that between 3,000 and 4,000 Algerians had gone through the training camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan.[25]

The dissent culminated in severe riots in 1988 that spread throughout the country, giving birth to a host of political, ethnic, and religious opposition groups.[26] Most formidable among these new entities was a fundamentalist organization called the *Front Islamique du Salut* (*FIS*).

Established in 1989, the FIS was the main opposition group to the Algerian central government, and though it was an Islamist organization, it originally only sought legitimacy via electoral victory. This victory came in late 1991, when the FIS swept many local races and found itself on the verge of political ascendency in Algeria. However, in January 1992, the Algerian military intervened, nullified the election, and seized power. The new military junta killed or imprisoned many FIS leaders, and as a result, "vindicated those radicals among [the Islamists] who held that the violent overthrow of the secular regime in the tradition of the Afghan jihad would be the only way to obtain the establishment of a government based on Islamic principles."[27] The coup proved to be the spark that ignited the civil war.

The conflict between the FIS and the government of Algeria would quickly explode into a multifront civil war that lasted until 2001 and caused the deaths of more than 100,000 people.[28] Despite being an internal Algerian conflict, the Islamic fundamentalist nature of FIS played a critical role in inviting outside organizations like al-Qaeda to play a role. Recognizing the opportunity posed by violence, al-Qaeda moved to support its fellow Islamists: "al-Qaeda's infiltration of the Algerian Islamists can be explained by the latter's sophisticated underground organization in Europe. By cultivating their leaders and providing training and finance, al-Qaeda absorbed this ready-made network."[29] However, once it had a foot in the door, al-Qaeda was not content merely to support FIS financially.

The violence and depravity of the war as well as the influence of al-Qaeda began to influence the FIS' most extreme elements. Notable among these groups was the hardline *Group Islamique Armee* (*GIA*). Originally, the GIA was part of the FIS but broke with the latter organization because of its emphasis on electoral politics and its declared uneasiness with violent resistance to the government.[30] In 1993, the GIA split completely from the FIS, citing the latter's willingness to negotiate with the Algerian government and pursuit of limited objectives.

For the GIA, the goals put forth by the FIS were no longer sufficient. Simply regaining power in the Algerian government would not bring about the hardliners' lofty goals. Moreover, the GIA saw anyone who stood in the way of this ideal as an enemy.

> Heavily influenced by returning veterans of the Afghan jihad, the GIA aimed at more than reforming the state along the lines of the Islamist agenda. Rather, it sought the wholesale transformation of society, viewing those who did not share its convictions as apostates from Islam who could be legitimately killed.[31]

In support of this ideology, the GIA carried out a wave of terror and civilian attacks that continued through the remainder of the war. In some cases, the GIA would even find itself pitted against the FIS and its allies, particularly as war wound down and these other organizations began to seek a peaceful resolution.

However, as the war progressed into the late 1990s, the brutality of the GIA's attacks against civilians began to affect the organization's support and popularity. "It's bloody massacres of civilians caused public support for the group to dwindle and persistent rumors of the group being manipulated by the Algerian intelligence agencies further discredited it."[32] As a reaction to this loss of prestige and in anger at the indiscriminate targeting of Muslim civilians, al-Qaeda abandoned the GIA and encouraged former GIA commander Hassan Hattab to leave as well. In 1998, Hattab and approximately 100 former GIA members broke away to form the *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* (GSPC). Though not officially an al-Qaeda affiliate, by 2002, the GSPC had maintained links with al-Qaeda and developed into the strongest extremist group in Algeria.[33]

The GSPC remained active for the next ten years, carrying out attacks in Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, and Libya. In the beginning, the GSPC maintained links to al-Qaeda, but Hassan Hattab saw a declaration of allegiance to be a potential distraction. Though he espoused the Salafi jihadist ideology of al-Qaeda, Hattab wanted to focus all his efforts on what he saw as the true enemy—the Algerian government—and to avoid a struggle against any foreign power. "As a result, . . . Hattab was excluded from the GSPC leadership and replaced by Nabil Sahraoui, who was himself succeeded, after his death in June 2004, by Abdelmalek Droukdel."[34] Droukdel immediately applied to be an al-Qaeda affiliate. In 2007, al-Qaeda announced their newest affiliate in the Sahel, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the rebranded incarnation of the GSPC.[35]

After joining al-Qaeda, AQIM divided into two branches: one in northeastern Algeria and the other in the Sahel. The first branch, AQIM in Kabylia, remained under Droukdel and continued the group's efforts in Algeria. However, the southern command, AQIM–Sahel (also known as AQIM–Sahara), would fall to Mokhtar Belmokhtar, turning its focus south of Algeria to the Sahel, specifically, to Mali. Belmokhtar quickly began to solidify AQIM's hold on northern Mali through alliances with local extremist organizations, integration into local society, and activation of cross-border smuggling routes.

For AQIM–Sahel, alliances were vital to their survival. In 2011, AQIM formalized an alliance with the *Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest* (MUJAO) as part of an effort "to accommodate the local population in order to have it join the organization, especially through a strategy of promoting Tuareg leaders to key positions."[36] AQIM's other important ally was Ansar al-Din (AAD). Created in 2011 by Iyad Ag Ghali after the failed Tuareg rebellion in 2006, AAD's goal was to impose sharia across Mali. For AQIM, it represented a strong ally with identical religious ideals as well as local legitimacy.

All three groups had different origins and motivations. Yet, together they shared the same goal along with AQIM in Kabylia: to turn northern Mali and the Sahel into a Salafi sharia Islamic state and use it as a platform for the organization's operations.[37] With AAD and MUJAO as allies, AQIM had legitimacy from local ethnic leaders and, thus, had the makings of a powerful force with which to pursue its goals.

Not all the Tuareg in northern Mali were as interested in partnering with AQIM as was the MUJAO. The *Mouvement National pour la liberacion de l'Awazad* (MNLA) was a secular coalition of Tuareg militias, all of which sought independence for the Tuareg homeland in Mali, traditionally called Azawad (fig. 1). The MNLA did not share the Salafi jihadist motivations of MUJAO but agreed on Tuareg autonomy and, thus, had some links with the other group: "Though not ideologically aligned, there are shared interests and perhaps a pragmatic alliance, between AQIM and the members of the Tuaregs, including tribal ties and smuggling."[38] AQIM pursued a strategy of assimilation and integration into local societies. This ensured that AQIM could be cast as ally and protector of the local community, thus, bringing MNLA solidly into its sphere of influence.

At the moment of its naissance in 2007, AQIM lacked a consistent source of funding. The group's expansion into the Sahel, however, promised new revenue streams. The region represents a channel for criminal trafficking, which offered plentiful modes by which AQIM could fill its coffers.[39] Arms, drugs, cigarettes, and even people were available for trafficking to and from AQIM's bases in northern Mali. With help from alliances that had influence in local operations, trafficking was easier, safer, and far more lucrative. Starting in the early 2000s, AQIM also began kidnappings for ransom operations and established a "kidnapping industry" in the Sahel. Between 2003 and 2012, AQIM earned between approximately 150 million USD in ransoms.[40] Some of this money funded operations, but much of it was distributed among the population. Stealing from the government and giving to the people served to give AQIM a "Robin Hood" façade and further ingratiate the jihadist groups into Malian society. Still, by 2010, AQIM and its allies did not represent an existential threat.

Libya

Starting in the early 1970s, many of the Tuareg who had been alienated by the Malian government went to work for Libyan dictator Mu'ammar Gadhafi, who, for more than 30 years, hired them as mercenaries and paramilitary troops. However, in 2011 when the Libyan Civil War resulted in the toppling and execution of Gadhafi, those same Tuareg fighters returned to Mali. "Estimates of the number of returning Tuareg mercenaries ran as high as 4,000 . . . these fighters brought arms and military experience with them and by late 2011, had reignited the Tuareg separatist movement."[41] Though this influx of battle-hardened fighters contributed directly to the country's destabilization in 2011, it was not the only problem exported by the Libyan Civil War.

As fighters came back to Mali from Libya, most rejoined militias and armed groups. With them they brought experience, tactics, and often an Islamist ideology that fit in perfectly with AQIM's objectives. However, arguably more important to their cause was not the additional personnel but the weaponry they brought with them. In Mali, "transfers from Libya qualitatively enhanced the military capacity of nonstate opposition groups by supplying military weapons that had previously been unavailable or in short supply."[42] By late 2011, thousands more fighters had access to armament like antitank weapons, mortars, and heavy machine guns. The alliance of AQIM–Sahel, AAD, and MUJAO along with secular Tuareg groups like MNLA was prepared to launch what would be the most devastating of the Tuareg uprisings in Mali's history.[43]

With the AQIM, AAD, and Tuareg alliances in place and incited by the returnees from the Libyan Civil War, the stage was set for the Tuareg uprising. The violence began in January 2012, when MNLA and AAD forces attacked Malian army outposts in the northern cities of Kidal, Tessalit, and Aguelhok. The unprepared Malian defense forces put up a token defense but, in the end, were caught off guard by the rebel advance: "the government had failed with the ammunition and other logistical support they needed."[44] Within two months, most of Kidal Province was under separatist control.

The state of complete disarray into which the rebellion had thrown the Malian government in Bamako did nothing to ameliorate the situation. The Malian government was completely surprised at the speed of the rebellion and the weakness of its own forces. President Touré—who was faced with an incompetent military, a looming presidential election, and many political peers who viewed negotiations with the Tuareg as treasonous—failed to react in any meaningful way as the rebel army continued its march south. Protests erupted outside the presidential palace

as a result of the people's anger with the government's handling of the situation; yet, the government remained paralyzed.[45]

In response to rising fear and tension in the capital, junior army officers staged a coup d'état and stormed the presidential palace on 22 March 2012. They chased President Touré into exile and declared the dissolution of all government institutions, accusing the Touré administrations of "failing to responsibly combat the growing rebellion."[46] The international community was swift to condemn the coup and maintained "pressure on the coup leaders and the military to respect civilian leadership, to withdraw completely from politics and to permit the full restoration of a democratically-elected government."[47] On 6 April, the coup leaders signed a power-sharing deal that brought government leadership back to Mali but, by that time, whatever chances there may have been to respond militarily to the rebellion had been lost.

By April, four months after hostilities commenced, the MNLA controlled 800,000 square kilometers of Mali and 10 percent of the population and had accomplished its goals (fig. 2).[48]

> As a consequence of the instability following the coup, Mali's three largest northern cities, Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu were overrun by the rebels on 3 consecutive days. On April 5, 2012, after the capture of the town of Duwenza, the National Movement for Liberation of Azawad, or the MNLA, said that it had accomplished its goals and called off its offensive. The following day, it proclaimed independence of their homeland, Azawad, from Mali.[49]

Ostensibly, the Tuareg uprising of 2012 could have been over. The Malian army was beaten, and the Tuareg finally had their homeland. However, a free Azawad was not the only goal of AAD and AQIM.
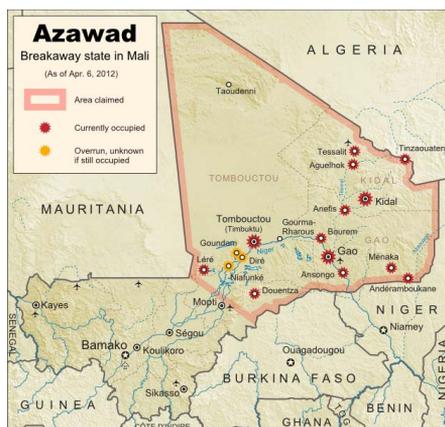
(image modified from original by Orionist, Wikimedia)

Figure 2: MNLA declared state of Azawad as of 6 April 2012

Almost immediately after declaring the uprising's objectives accomplished, the MNLA began to lose power over their territorial gains. AAD and MUJAO, backed by AQIM, were not satisfied with merely controlling Azawad but instead began to work toward their real objective, the institution of sharia law. In their drive to establish a sharia state, AAD and MUJAO turned on the secular MNLA. "The first clashes between the MNLA and Ansar Al Dine reportedly occurred on 8 June 2012 in the surroundings of Kidal, triggering a parallel non-international armed conflict between Tuareg and Islamist rebels. By the end of the month, Ansar Al Dine, MUJAO and AQIM expelled the MNLA from major cities in the north."[50] By December, many of the Tuareg chose to side with the Malian government rather than subject themselves to the harsh rule of the jihadists. With the secular Tuareg out of the way, AAD and its allies saw the opportunity to carry their fight beyond Azawad and on to Bamako itself (fig. 3).

(image modified from original by Orionist, Wikimedia)

Figure 3: Furthest extent of jihadist rebel territory before French intervention

While watching the events of 2012 unfold, the French government was debating intervention and at what level. In December 2012, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2085, authorizing the deployment of what was named the African-led International Support Mission to Mali. The French planned to join the UN mission in February 2013. However, on 8 January 2013 the jihadist forces advanced further south, passing the Niger River bend, taking the town of Konna and, for the first time, threatening Bamako. As the paradigm had now officially changed from "another Tuareg uprising" to a full-scale jihadist assault, France chose to intervene.[51]

French forces, along with remaining Malian personnel, executed Operation Serval in three phases from 11 January to 1 May 2013 (fig. 4). Phase 0 was a de-

fensive maneuver to block the jihadist advance and retake Konna. Phase 1 involved pushing jihadist forces back to their pre-2013 positions north of the Niger River bend, and Phase 2 was clearing the Gao region up to the Ifoghas Mountain. By May, French forces had pushed AQIM almost to the border with Algeria and were prepared to relinquish military control. Both French and Malian troops were to be integrated into the larger stabilization force of the UN *Mission Multidimensionnelle Intégrée des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation au Mali* (MINUSMA). French forces have remained in Mali since 2013 as Operation Barkhane augments and assists MINUSMA as a quick reaction force.[52]
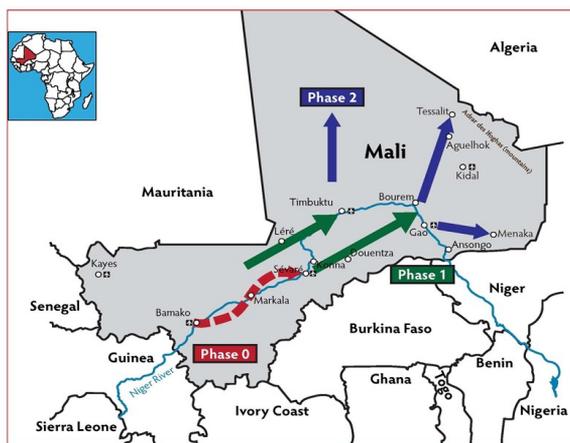
Figure 4: Operation Serval

Since Operation Serval ended, the international forces in Mali have taken on two military missions: UN peacekeeping under MINUSMA and regional French-led counterterrorism operations. Despite the success of Operation Serval and the continued presence of international forces, the jihadist situation has festered since 2013. The vastness of ungoverned reaches of northern Mali means the MINUSMA, the French, and the nascent refashioned Malian security forces have limited ability to respond to attacks. On 20 June 2015 a peace deal was signed between the Government of Mali (GoM) and the umbrella secular Tuareg organization, the Coordination of Movements for Azawad. However, the terms of the agreement have been seen as foreign-imposed, and thus far, the GoM has proven too weak to enforce the provisions.

> All the major provisions had yet to be implemented: the application of decentralization measures, the establishment of interim authorities or the restoration of state authority in the north, the launch of mixed patrols, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, and security sector reforms (SSR) have not produced meaningful progress beyond symbolic gestures.[53]

Even after Operation Serval, and as time went on, the GoM showed itself unable to maintain governance in the northern parts of the country and unable to enforce or implement the provisions of the 2015 peace accords.

The events of 2012 revealed Mali for what it really was. What had been held up as a model for how African democracies could be, instead proved to be a façade behind which were weak institutions, mismanagement, "big man" interests, and deep-seated racial and ethnic cleavages.[54] The chaos caused by the crumpling of this façade proved to be the perfect launching pad for the jihadist groups that, in time, would compose JNIM. Partially as a result of government inability to preserve security, attacks by jihadist groups rose steadily after 2015. In 2016, there were 257 attacks attributed to jihadist groups and 276 attacks in 2017.[55] Notable among these attacks were those directed at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako and other hotels in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. AQIM and its allies claimed responsibility for those attacks, which killed 66 people. In 2017, those jihadist groups, most of which had been involved in fighting since the early 2000s, united under a single banner: that of Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin.[56]

Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin Today

As discussed earlier, JNIM is an alliance of four al-Qaeda–linked Salafi jihadist groups. The unification was declared via a video released 2 March 2017, which featured leaders of the four groups—all of whom announced the creation of JNIM. In the video (from left to right) are Amadou Diallo (alias Amadou Koufa), leader of the MLF; Djamel Okacha (alias Abu al-Hammam), leader of AQIM–Sahel; Iyadh Ag Ghali (alias Abu al-Fadhel), leader of AAD; Muhammad Ould Nouini (alias Hassan al-Ansari), deputy leader of al-Mourabitoun (under Mokhtar Belmokhtar); and Abderrahman al-Sanhaji (alias Abderrahman al-Maghrebi), deputy leader of AQIM–Sahel.[57]

(screen capture by Alwatan News)

Figure 5: Video of 2 March 2017, announcing the creation of JNIM

In the video, Iyadh Ag Ghali, who also stepped into the role of JNIM's leader, spoke and declared the existence of JNIM and declared allegiance both to AQIM and al-Qaeda Central. "On this blessed occasion, we renew our pledge of allegiance to our honorable emirs and sheikhs: Abu Musab Abdul Wadud (aka Abdelmalek Droukel), our beloved wise man Sheikh Ayman Zawahiri (head of al-Qaeda Central), and from him to the Emir of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Haibatullah (leader of the Afghan Taliban), may Allah preserve them and grant them victory." With this declaration, Iyadh Ag Ghali and the rest of the terrorist leaders present in the video solidified their place in the overall al-Qaeda structure. JNIM, as a union of four other groups, remains under the authority of AQIM, which is, in turn, under al-Qaeda Central.[58]
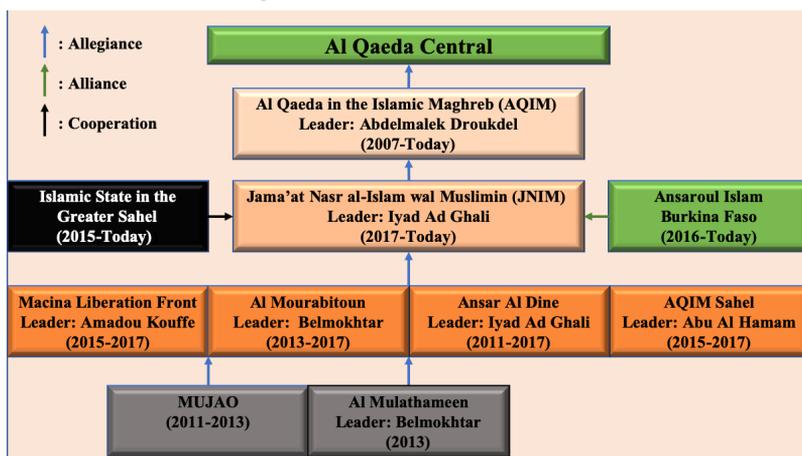
Figure 6: Al-Qaeda and JNIM organizational structure

Al-Qaeda's Grand Strategy

To effectively strategize methods for countering JNIM, it is first important to investigate the group's goals, motivations, and resources. There must be a clear understanding of how the organization has been successful since its creation in 2017 and how its component groups were successful previously. Yet, it would be negligent to first analyze JNIM or any of its subgroups without looking at the bigger picture and analyzing its "parent" organization: al-Qaeda. It is only with a clear understanding of al-Qaeda's history of success that we can effectively frame JNIM's contemporary effectiveness.

Over the last 20 years, al-Qaeda has been the most recognizable and infamous terrorist organization on the planet. The group has authored thousands of violent attacks, spurred dozens of offshoot affiliates and copycat groups, and even created rival Islamic extremist organizations. Despite all this, and subsequently spending

the last 20 years at war with the world's most effective militaries, the group continues to carry out its operations. Moreover, the success of foreign al-Qaeda affiliates illustrates that the group has become a global threat. Analyzing the tools that the organization has used to succeed will also give us a better understanding of how to combat al-Qaeda. Perhaps more importantly, it may help intelligence agencies recognize what strategies they will likely employ in the future. This article argues that the main factors contributing to al-Qaeda's continued global success are decentralization, effective narratives and propaganda, and the specific targeting of locations with a preexisting history of instability and violence.

Before we can discuss how al-Qaeda has achieved its success, we must first define *success*. If the term is to be defined as the completion of each organization's stated goals, none of these groups have yet succeeded. For example, "For al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb . . . the goal is to overthrow regimes in North Africa, especially Algeria, and replace them with an Islamic regime."[59] Moreover, if one takes the global end state as described by al-Qaeda's leader Ayman al-Zawahiri: "It is the hope of the Muslim nation to restore its fallen caliphate and regain its lost glory,"[60] then al-Qaeda has not even come close to accomplishing its goal.

As of today, the regime in Algeria remains. AQIM and AAD came close to toppling the government in Bamako, but it remains (with Western support), and al-Zawahiri is still far from restoring his fallen caliphate. Thus, to examine al-Qaeda's successes, I will need to define it in my own terms. For the purposes of this article, *success* is defined using three criteria: (1) relative freedom to carry out violent attacks with low probability of state interference, (2) steady sources of recruitment and resupply, and (3) high probability of continued survival of the group and its leaders. I will show that due to the success factors listed above, al-Qaeda, as a global organization, has been successful.

Decentralization

The first key to al-Qaeda's success is its ability to operate in a decentralized fashion. Currently, it has a global network of affiliates, allies, and supporters across the planet, including at least five major regional affiliates and more than 14 allied terrorist groups.[61] However, this was not always the case. Before 2001, al-Qaeda was a more centralized organization with most of the operational control falling under Osama bin Laden. Then, as pressure from the United States and its allies mounted, the organization was forced to adapt and change how it did business: "In the following years (after 2001), al-Qaeda adapted to increased pressure, especially from the U.S. military in Afghanistan and Pakistan, by further decentralizing its decision-making and operational planning. Bin Laden recognized regional groups that became their own centers of operation."[62] As it evolved, the organiza-

tion's focus naturally shifted to a more decentralized operational model. It began to create affiliates like al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), AQIM, and al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and allowed these subordinate organizations to conduct attacks autonomously, establish interactions among themselves, and set up further alliances in still more regions and countries.

Before continuing, it is important to identify the nature of the connections that largely comprise the global al-Qaeda network. Broadly, the organization can be split into four categories: al-Qaeda Central, affiliates, allied groups, and inspired networks. al-Qaeda Central is the group's leadership nexus, commanded by al-Zawahiri and primarily located in Pakistan. One can argue as to which organizations fall into the categories of affiliated groups and which are merely allies; however, in general, affiliates are formal yet geographically separated branches of al-Qaeda. AQIM, AQIS, AQAP, and al-Shabab all fall into this category. Third are the allied groups "that have established a direct relationship with al-Qaeda but have not become formal members. This arrangement allows the groups to remain independent and pursue their own goals, but to work with al-Qaeda for specific operations or training purposes when their interests converge."[63] Lastly, there are the inspired groups, which do not have any formal contact with al-Qaeda but have been inspired by the message, actions, or branding of al-Qaeda as a whole.

All these entities have ties of varying degrees to al-Qaeda Central. Furthermore, all these organizations, particularly the affiliates, contribute to the overall success of al-Qaeda as a whole by virtue of their links to the organization. AAD falls into the third category of al-Qaeda allied groups. Though al-Qaeda would classify AAD as an ally rather than an affiliate, according to the US Department of State, "AAD is an organization operating in Mali which cooperates closely with AQIM, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization . . . AAD has received support from AQIM since its inception in late 2011 and continues to maintain close ties to the group. AAD has received backing from AQIM in its fight against Malian and French forces."[64] This means that AAD has autonomy to carry out its own main objectives—fighting the French and local Malians—while still receiving training, funding, and legitimacy from its links to al-Qaeda.

How does this translate into a tool for success for the global al-Qaeda enterprise? In addition to making worldwide operations possible, decentralization can be effective in spreading the al-Qaeda brand: "What gives al Qaeda its global reach is its ability to appeal to Muslims irrespective of their nationality, giving it unprecedented reach. It can function in East Asia, in Russia, and the heart of Europe, in sub-Saharan Africa and throughout Canada and the US with equal facility."[65] Working with allies like AAD means that the al-Qaeda brand is being carried to many countries and peoples. Furthermore, it is heightened by local in-

dividuals who carry the message to their own towns and villages. This gives al-Qaeda global reach and influence that translates into recruitment potential and local support; thereby, providing AAD and, by consequence, al-Qaeda with one of the criteria of success: a steady source of recruitment and resupply.

However, arguably the greatest benefit of decentralization, whether through allies like AAD or regional affiliates like AQIM, is simple strength and resilience. By having a solid global network, al-Qaeda is stronger, harder to fight, and more tactically and strategically effective: "al-Qaeda's expansion is made much more dangerous by the existence of such relationships . . . It is now sharing finances, fighters, and tactics across large geographic areas…the entire network is stronger."[66] This means that not only does decentralization aid in recruitment and spreading narrative but also gives the group more freedom to carry out attacks in myriad locations, while simultaneously making the al-Qaeda leadership more protected from the consequences of those attacks.

Conflict Locations

The second manner in which al-Qaeda has found success also stems from decentralization. In its need to establish geographically distant alliances, al-Qaeda consistently choses locations where there is a preexisting history of instability and violence: "al-Qaeda has flourished in an environment of weak or quasi-states that are undergoing disruptive political or social change. Vast swaths of political instability in many parts of the world-particularly in Africa and Asia-have provided a breeding ground for al Qaeda and its analogues."[67] These locations are rife with poor governance, armed groups, and militias not tied to the state but which are supplied with unregulated weapons. These conditions make for the perfect foundation of al-Qaeda success as defined above.

If one examines al-Qaeda's main affiliates—AQAP, AQIS, AQIM, and al-Shabab—as well as most of its allies, like AAD, they all came into being amid conditions of conflict and unrest in their respective locations. This is not to say that al-Qaeda has not set up cells and alliances in places that are more stable. However, it is in conflict zones that the local al-Qaeda affiliates flourish. Thus, due to widespread war and civil conflict, postcolonial Africa has presented a perfect growth environment for al-Qaeda Central and has been its breeding ground for nearly 30 years.

I have already shown in detail how AQIM and its subsidiary AQIM–Sahel began thanks in large part to the devastation the Algerian Civil War caused. From that conflict and due to the simple geographic fact that vast swaths of the Sahel are ungovernable, AQIM's presence in the region represents one of al-Qaeda's greatest successes. The Sahel grants AQIM and AQIM–Sahel relative freedom to

conduct violent attacks as evidenced by the dramatic increase in the number of and countries in which they have been able to strike. The war provided the GIA and, subsequently, the GSPC and AQIM with a steady source of angry and violent recruits as well as access to the Islamist networks of North Africa and Europe. Finally, until recent military operations by Western countries, the vast deserts of the Sahel have provided ample protection that further enhanced the probability of the continued survival of AQIM and its leaders. Thus, one can safely say that using the Algerian Civil War to establish an African affiliate was a highly successful move for al-Qaeda.

Propaganda and Narrative

The third and final method by which al-Qaeda is able to succeed regularly is the use of effective narratives and propaganda networks. We have already seen how al-Qaeda used the preexisting hatred and rivalries during the Algerian Civil War to gather recruits to its name. We also saw how AAD used its affiliation with al-Qaeda to gain prestige and legitimacy, while al-Qaeda Central used AAD to spread its brand. However, the propaganda networks are not limited within the bounds of war nor are they static in their growth, evolution, or distribution: "Over the years, al Qaeda and its fellow travelers have transitioned to new platforms and mechanisms as circumstances have changed . . . in late 2012, the extremists' migration to social media such as Twitter and beyond accelerated."[68] Al-Qaeda and its allies and offshoots made use of its already decentralized structure to quickly and poignantly spread its narrative globally.

In the case of JNIM, each of the groups that make up the organization have unique narratives (to be discussed later) but also simultaneously have signed on to support, propagate, and make use of the overarching al-Qaeda narrative. JNIM has consistently propagated "its intention to destabilize local governments in favor of their interpretation of sharia law . . . JNIM's ideology aligns with that of all al Qaeda affiliates, preaching vehement antipathy toward the West and local governments that collaborate with western countries."[69] While in the Malian context, narrative may translate to specific objectives like attacking French or UN forces, the fundamental ideology remains connected to al-Qaeda.

There is not an affiliate that has not participated in the pervasiveness of al-Qaeda propaganda, though some have done so with greater success than others. For example, AQAP has been the most prolific affiliate, with products that range from magazines to Twitter accounts, targeting anyone who may be vulnerable to radicalization, all with the goal of attracting recruits and support.

al-Qaeda uses a combination of "written and audiovisual messages that [tran-scends] both technology and literacy barriers." Most recently, al Qaeda added online magazines such as Inspire, launched in 2010 in several languages… The ease of disseminating the magazine via the Internet, it has become a vital recruit-ment method for al-Qaeda.[70]

These tactics have been absolutely fundamental in spreading al-Qaeda and build-ing its recruitment base. Narrative as a tool for motivation, recruitment, and group identity builds upon the other keys to success, is by far the most shareable, and, thus, represents the most formidable of al-Qaeda's global strategies.

Al-Qaeda's keys to continued global success have been decentralization, effective narratives and propaganda, and a focus on locations where there is a preexisting history of instability and violence. With this model, al-Qaeda has relative freedom to carry out violent attacks with low probability of state interference, steady sources of recruitment and resupply, and high probability of continued survival. Moreover, given the efficacy of these strategies, it would not be difficult to assess that al-Qaeda will continue using them to prolong its achievements. Those same strategies, par-ticularly when applied to affiliates like JNIM, take a slightly different shape as the organization both uses those strategies and benefits from them.

Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin: Strategic Estimate

Narratives and Objectives

Because JNIM is an alliance of four separate groups, any analysis of its objec-tives must, by necessity, consider JNIM as a whole and simultaneously examine each groups' unique goals as well. Similarly, when dissecting the groups' narratives and propaganda efforts, it is important to view JNIM's united narrative as well as the individual narratives of the groups of which it is comprised. Also, as al-Qaeda narratives and objectives are inextricably linked as keys for success, so are they for JNIM. Therefore, this section will first look at JNIM as a whole then dissect it and investigate the goals and narratives of its four subgroups: AQIM, the MLF, AAD, and al-Mourabitoun.

JNIM's foundational objectives are in line with those of al-Qaeda. As an al-Qaeda affiliate, JNIM plays an important role in carrying out al-Qaeda's ideology in Africa. Though JNIM may act with substantial autonomy, its objectives remain those of a Salafi jihadist group: "The group's goals and ideological basis are closely aligned with those of AQIM and it seeks to build up a Salafi-Islamist state while restoring the caliphate…and effectively implement Shariah law."[71] While this is al-Qaeda's grand strategic vision for JNIM, the alliance's unique goals involve the drive to "expand its presence over larger territory and train militants against

JNIM's enemies, while preserving relations with local communities."[72] To peruse that objective, JNIM must use its individual groups and their corresponding unique objectives.

JNIM's narrative is strongly reliant on a combination of its affiliation with al-Qaeda and its ties to local populations. The organization also relies heavily on the idea of unity—the notion that once disjointed and fragmented groups have now joined together under "One banner, one group, one Emir." In a place where ethnic tensions and violence are a constant threat and marginalization from the government with reprisals from the military are commonplace, the slogan of unity between groups of different backgrounds and ethnic compositions is extremely impactful.[73]

The narrative and propaganda efforts do not stop with preaching unity, however. Like AQIM and other affiliates, JNIM has its own propaganda arm, az-Zallāqa, with which the group preaches several main narratives: martial prowess and jihad, victimization of Muslims (mostly in the Sahel), and dehumanization of the enemy.[74] Az-Zallāqa often produces high quality publications, including images of training camps, drone shots of military formations, and videos of successful operations all interwoven with text, speeches from terrorist leaders, and eulogies of fallen terrorists—all with the objectives of recruitment, awareness, and indoctrination.

Other important pieces of JNIM's narrative are a desire to maintain good relations with local populations and to be seen as an alternative to the national government for defense and income. Part of JNIM's efforts to integrate locally is to use revenue gained from criminal operations to pay fighters, offer financial incentives to impoverished Malians, and provide basic services in places that the government cannot.[75] JNIM also seeks to appear as the righteous defender of the people and of Islam. JNIM Emir Iyadh Ag Ghali even laid out the organization's military policy by explaining that it seeks to continue "expanding geographically as much as possible, undermining (the) enemy by attacking him wherever he may be, inciting the people to do the same and protecting them, and securing popular support."[76] To truly integrate with the people, however, JNIM must rely on its subgroups and the legitimacy many of them already have.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb–Sahel

In general, AQIM is aligned with al-Qaeda's broader goals to institute sharia in all its areas of operation and claims that all non-Islamist governments are illegitimate and therefore must be replaced by whatever means necessary.[77] As verbalized by AQIM's leader Abdelmalek Droukal, "Our general goals are the same goals of al-Qaeda the mother, and you know them. As far as our goals concerning the Islamic Maghreb, they are plenty. But most importantly is to rescue our coun-

tries from the tentacles of these criminal regimes that betrayed their religion and their people."[78] AQIM has also made statements naming the overthrow of the governments of Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, and Mali and the reclamation of lost Islamic lands in southern Spain among its long-term goals.[79] As AQIM–Sahel was originally just an offshoot of AQIM, and even now represents a subgroup of JNIM (which is in turn loyal to AQIM), it is safe to say that AQIM–Sahel's goals are the same as those of AQIM but with a focus on the smaller group's primary areas of operations: the Sahel and Mali.

AQIM–Sahel's narrative, like that of other al-Qaeda affiliates, focuses around the authority and fear generated by the al-Qaeda brand. AQIM must simultaneously seem to be "one of the people" in their areas of operation while also having the ability to control the populace and use them for the organization's own means. As an example, in 2015, several dozen masked AQIM fighters took over several intercommunal meetings in the Timbuktu region. They read a letter "encouraging reconciliation between communities, threatened those that collaborated with the 'Enemies of Islam,' and promised to act against rural criminality."[80] This illustrated AQIM's effort to ensure its narratives walk the line between striking fear and ingratiating them to the people. One of the other ways in which they do this is by allying with organizations that already have that local legitimacy.

Al-Mourabitoun

Of the four main jihadist groups that make up JNIM, al-Mourabitoun has arguably the most complex history. In 2011, Mokhtar Belmokhtar was leader of AQIM's Sahel branch under the command of AQIM commander, Abdelmalek Droukdel. However, Belmokhtar was unhappy with Droukdel's leadership and split from AQIM to form the al-Mulathamun Battalion in 2012. In 2013, the al-Mulathamun Battalion merged with significant elements of the MUJAO to form al-Mourabitoun. Despite their earlier schism, al-Mourabitoun rejoined AQIM–Sahel in 2015 and united under the JNIM banner in 2017.

Despite the schism with AQIM in 2013, al-Mourabitoun's overall objectives never strayed far from those of AQIM. Similarly, its narrative does not represent a significant departure from that of AQIM–Sahel or JNIM more generally. Like the MLF, the name al-Mourabitoun harkens back to a historical empire. The Almoravid dynasty was an eleventh-century Berber empire known for religious zeal "that came from the merger between the preacher movement and the tribes they embedded in, ruling over the Maghreb and the Iberian Al Andalus." Without doubt, the selection of this name was made with the objective of conjuring up images of past Muslim power and piety.[81]

Ansar al-Din

If AQIM's objectives are continent-wide and AQIM–Sahel's objectives are regional, AAD's strategies focus still further into northern Mali and local issues. Though still an adherent to Salafi jihadist ideologies, AAD and its leader, Iyadh Ag Ghali have shown, since 2011, that its priority is bringing those ideologies to a northern Mali that is free from governmental oversight and control. It is notable that AQIM used its AAD allies as the face of the jihadist front during the 2012 uprising: "The use of Malians allowed AQIM and MUJAO to hide their actions behind those of AAD, while also tapping into local religious, ethnic, and cultural divides to fuel support and recruitment."[82] Being the "local face" of AQIM and now JNIM has not only driven AAD's goals but likewise its narrative. Iyadh Ag Ghali's installation as the publicly recognized leader of JNIM can be seen as both a reason and a consequence of this narrative of local legitimacy.

Macina Liberation Front

Above all, the FLM can and should be seen as a branch of AAD with specific cultural and tribal association. The group was created in 2015 by Fulani members formerly serving as MUJAO cadres. Therefore, though the FLM's broad objectives remain the same as AAD, its narrative and some of its unique objectives are shaped by the group's Fulani tribal affiliation.[83] The name Macina is a reference to the Macina Empire which, from 1818 to 1863, was a Fulani power in the Sahel. As discussed previously, the Macina Empire was one of the series of Fulani states that arose in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As a result, the FLM has leaned heavily on narratives of this historical empire for legitimacy and power and to gain support among disenfranchised Fulani. Parallel to the goal of sharia law in Mali, the MLF also maintains the goal of conquering the traditional area of the Macina Empire and substituting that for the Malian government.[84]
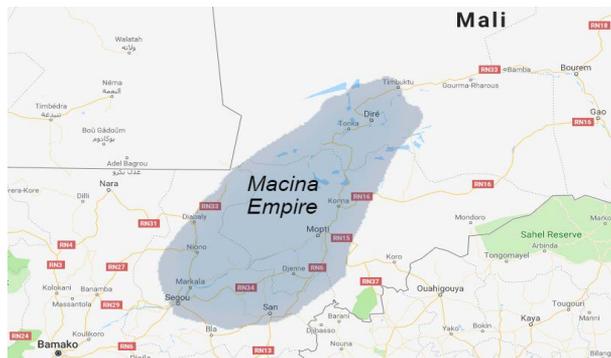
(Image: Tommy Lorne Miles; map data: Google)

Figure 7: The Macina Empire, c. 1830

For the JNIM, the Fulani comprise a significant portion of its recruits; likewise, the inclusion of the FLM was key to maintaining the stream of fighters. Moreover, the FLM area of operations, central Mali, is currently one of the most dangerous in the region. In 2018, 500 civilians were killed, more than 60,000 people have fled the violence, and 972,000 people are in need of humanitarian assistance. In fact, the MLF is believed to be one of JNIM's most active groups, currently linked to 63 percent of the violence in the country.[85]

The FLM's increasing importance and activity is reflective of JNIM's gradual shift of focus from the North to the more turbulent central parts of Mali. As one of JNIM's most active groups, the FLM has followed Droukdel's orders to "pretend to be a 'domestic' movement that has its own causes and concerns" and to avoid "showing that we have an expansionary, jihadist, al-Qaeda or any other sort of project."[86] Thus, by portraying itself as a "liberation movement," the FLM can avoid scrutiny by international counterterrorism organizations, carry out attacks, and simultaneously provide JNIM with local support. As a result, since approximately 2015, it has become one of the primary attack arms of JNIM and shifted the security situation into central Mali.[87]

Ansaroul Islam and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)

Although not part of JNIM, one cannot talk about extremist violence in Mali without mentioning Ansaroul Islam. As Mali's neighbor, Burkina Faso has been a victim of JNIM attacks along their shared border, but Ansaroul Islam is Burkina Faso's first homegrown Islamist group. In 2016, Malam Dicko, an ethnic Fulani, founded the group, which for the next two years would be responsible for more than half the violent attacks in Burkina Faso. Ansaroul Islam's alliance with FLM and links with AQIM ensure the frequency and severity of its and helps to protect its presence near the Burkina–Mali border. In 2018, Ansaroul Islam carried out 137 attacks accounting for 149 fatalities.[88]

This article will not focus on Ansaroul Islam nor on the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). The latter is not an ally of JNIM and is comprised mostly of fighters that actively defected from AQIM or FLM to pledge allegiance to the Islamic State. Also, most of its attacks are focused in Burkina Faso and Niger. That said, it remains a player in the greater Sahel, where the organization has been as deadly as JNIM. Moreover, in some cases though not a part of JNIM, "ISGS maintains close ties with JNIM members facilitating the coordination of their respective activities. The ability and willingness of ISGS to coordinate with JNIM enables them to deconflict their activities while expanding the areas in which the militants operate."[89] Therefore, any analysis of violent extremist organizations in the region is lacking without at least mentioning ISGS.

Methods and Tactics

Once one understands JNIM's goals and the narrative it uses to pursue them, the next step is to analyze the organization's capabilities. According to authors, Kim Cragin and Sarah Daly, there are five indicators by which one can assess how capable a terrorist group is:

1. Killing/injuring 50 or more people in a single attack;
2. Targeting unguarded foreign nationals;
3. Killing or injuring 150 or more people in a single attack;
4. Striking guarded targets; and
5. Successfully conducting multiple coordinated attacks.[90]

JNIM or its subgroups have met and exceeded every one of these threat indicators. The first two have been met by numerous attacks since 2013. Though technically before the announcement of the JNIM's formation, al-Mourabitoun carried out a suicide attack in January 2017 that resulted in 79 dead and 108 wounded—meeting the third threshold.[91] On the anniversary of its 2 March inauguration, JNIM conducted a coordinated attack on the French embassy and Burkinabe Army headquarters in Ougadougou, Burkina Faso, meeting the fourth and fifth indicators. Thus, by this measure, JNIM qualifies as being a highly capable extremist organization.

Not only is it capable, but the organization conduct its attacks using a broad spectrum of technologies. It has been responsible for complex attacks such as the 14 April 2018 Timbuktu airport attack, in which it sent four suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices into the airport, followed by an armed assault that resulted in a gun battle and the death of a UN peacekeeper.[92] Yet, there have also been reports of booby-trapped corpses and roadkill.[93] Generally, JNIM's preferred weapon has been improvised explosive devices (IED). Of 276 attacks in 2017, 71 came as a result of IEDs. However, most of the attacks that are considered "high casualty" (10+ casualties) are armed assaults and shootings.[94]

By its very nature as an alliance of four distinct groups, JNIM is willing and able to pull off attacks in coordination with other extremist groups. JNIM's very creation represents a complex organizational structure of communication, delegation, and operation coordination. This deconflicts attacks and mitigates the potential for group infighting and is evidenced by the geographic concentration of its operations (fig. 8). Furthermore, JNIM can also act like an "umbrella" for its constituent members. This is exemplified by the FLM, which, though it is the leading militant actor in Mali, is able to maintain a low profile. As previously stated,

JNIM obscures the group's true capabilities and the extent of its actions to avoid attention from government or international actors.[95]
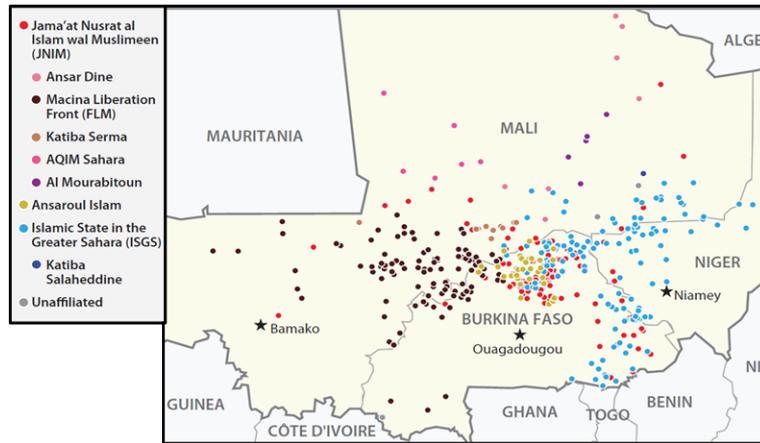
(Data source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project [ACLED])

Figure 8: Violent events involving the designated groups in 2019. Note: Data points represent violent events involving the designated groups in 2019.

Training is another key piece of the JNIM's overall capabilities. Al-Qaeda places significant emphasis on the training and development of operatives in all its affiliates, and JNIM is no exception: "JNIM controls a large territory in which to train new operatives . . . Training operations consist of both physical exercises and propaganda and trainees are given a manual of comprehensive instructions for conducting terror operations."[96] As part of its propaganda operations, JNIM features training camps in a video the organization released in 2018.[97]

Since the peace treaty was signed in 2015, JNIM and its constituent groups have undergone two shifts in their methods and overall strategy. First and most obvious, they have steadily increased their operational tempo to include more attacks with high casualty results (fig. 9). However, the second shift is more insidious, yet in line with the al-Qaeda keys to success previously discussed. To take advantage of conflicts between ethnic groups in the central parts of the country, JNIM has shifted its operations from the North to Mali's central regions. There, the group has access to fertile recruiting grounds and has the ability to push its narrative into communities that are already rife with conflict. In these communities, JNIM can exploit the grievances against other tribes and against the government. JNIM, and especially the FLM, "have tapped deep-seated local grievances to exploit social cleavages between Fulani and other local groups like the Bambara and Dogon. These recriminations have degenerated into ethnic clashes in central Mali."[98] Furthermore, for those communities that, until now, have avoided any

intercommunal violence, JNIM can foment those divisions, then present itself as the only viable choice for stability protection.
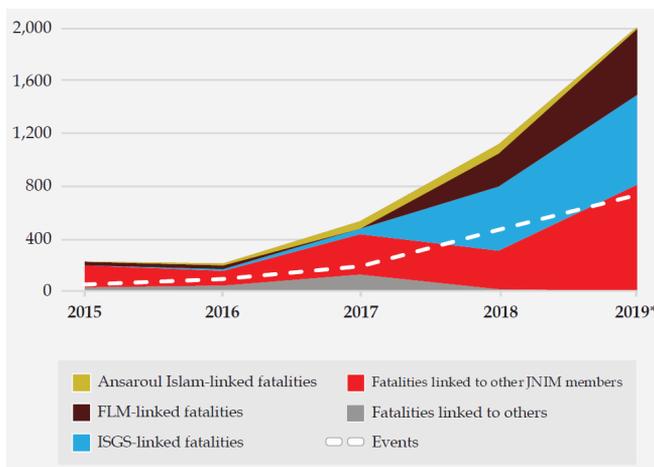
(Data source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project [ACLED])

Figure 9: Fatalities caused by extremist groups

Resources and Means

The primary means of supply for AQIM–Sahel and by extension, JNIM, was generally weapons smuggling from Libya and Algeria. Between 2011 and 2014, the majority of weapons trafficking in the Sahel originated in Libya and moved through Algeria or Niger on the way to AQIM. Though Libyan weapons remain a problem, recent evidence indicates that JNIM and other extremist movements have "employed an increasing proportion of heavy weaponry from Malian government stockpiles—particularly ammunition for larger weapon systems such as rockets and artillery—as opposed to Libyan or other foreign sources."[99] The decrease in smuggling is mostly due to the efforts of the French and Operation Barkhane. However, as clashes with Malian security forces continue and governance in the central and northern regions does not improve, JNIM will have continued access to weapons from both domestic and international sources.

Outside of weapons, Mali is still a crossroads for trade and commerce of both licit and illicit goods (fig. 10). Smuggling has been a part of the local livelihood since even before independence. Thus, JNIM makes much of its revenue through exploiting these commercial routes and smuggling operations. Networks that traditionally exchanged licit goods such as gas and foodstuffs, often evolve into illicit networks wherein JNIM and al-Qaeda operatives smuggle weapons, narcotics, tobacco, and

even people.[100] Of these revenue streams, there are two that have largely been the most lucrative for JNIM and its allies: kidnapping and drug trafficking.

Kidnapping has been a part of AQIM's arsenal since the early days of its appearance in Mali and became a mainstay of its tactics in the years leading up to 2012. Starting in 2003, AQIM committed a dizzying array of kidnappings, with victims ranging from 32 Europeans in one event to individual French tourists who were merely in the wrong place at the wrong time. For a decade after 2003, AQIM made more than 100 million USD, of which kidnapping was the predominant income source, allowing the organization to spread its influence throughout the Sahel. Kidnapping was an effective and extraordinarily high-reward practice. Between 2008 and 2013, AQIM netted 91.5 million USD on just seven ransom payments for 20 individuals (roughly 4.6 million USD per hostage).[101] While JNIM did not exist at that time, kidnapping is still one of its primary means of revenue. In 2017, under the auspices of JNIM, AQIM kidnapped a South African and eventually received a 4.2 million USD ransom.[102]

Next to kidnapping, drugs represent JNIM's main revenue stream. Each year, 1.25 billion USD of cocaine transits through West Africa. JNIM subgroups, specifically, make the bulk of their funds "from their control of 'ancient trade routes through the Sahara' used for trafficking drugs . . . (and) taxes on shipments going through their territory."[103] Though historically kidnapping for ransom has been the most lucrative activity, JNIM has taken a globalized trajectory. It has shifted its focus away from kidnapping to protection rackets, robbery, human trafficking, and money laundering and with that shift toward al-Qaeda networks, facilitating drug trafficking from South America into Europe.[104]
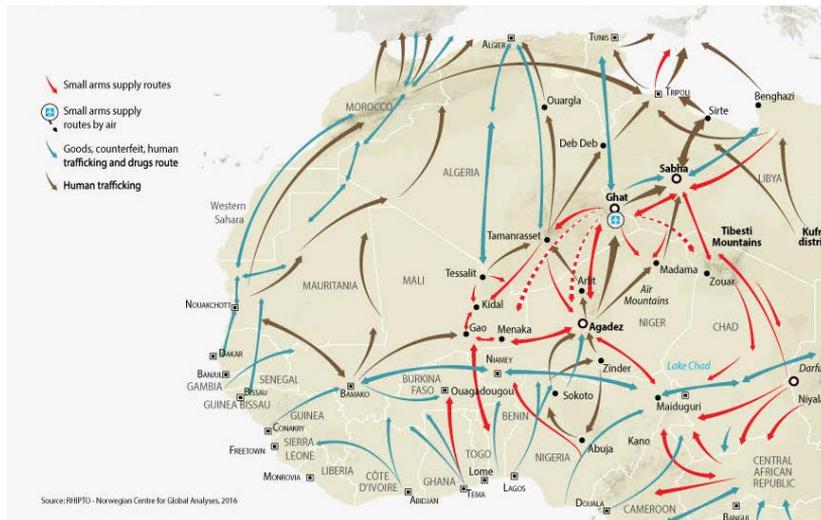

Figure 10: Trans-Sahara trafficking and threat finance

Conclusion

Before 2012, the international community saw Mali as an example of what success in Africa could look like. Unfortunately, Mali's institutional weakness under the surface meant that success was a façade. Thanks to the deep-seated scars of colonization, simmering ethnic conflicts, and detrimental effects of nearby civil wars, Mali was unable to maintain its pretense of stability in the face of an ethnic revolt. The result was the near-complete collapse of the Malian state and—perhaps more dangerous for the continent as a whole—the creation and empowerment of radical groups that would in time become JNIM.

JNIM's activity in Mali and the greater Sahel, coupled with the group's integration into society, represents an existential threat to Mali. Similarly, continued degradation of the Malian state is advantageous to JNIM and fits into its narrative of state weakness and lack of governance. By understanding both the root causes of Mali's current instability and the characteristics of its most dangerous extremist group, one can begin to develop strategies that simultaneously combat JNIM and improve Malian stability and governance. Therefore, a subsequent article in this journal will take on that objective, building upon the information here to provide strategies for both combating JNIM and improving conditions on the ground in Mali.

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The Use of Helicopters against Guerrillas

The Israeli Model

Dr. Tal Tovy

Since its establishment, the State of Israel has been facing a bloody struggle against terrorism and guerrilla warfare, in addition to four conventional wars.[1] The Israeli war against guerrilla fighters or terrorists began almost immediately after the War of Independence. Palestinian terrorists attempted to infiltrate Israel from the surrounding Arab countries and perform sabotage actions near the border, which were little more than lines drawn on a map and proved wholly inadequate in stopping the infiltrations. After the 1967 war, most terrorists crossed over from Jordan. Following the "Black September" conflict in 1970 and up until 1982 (Operation Peace for Galilee), most terrorists infiltrated through the Lebanese border. In the 1980s and 1990s, Israel fought against the Shiite Amal Movement and Hezbollah organization in Lebanon. Since October 2000, Israel has struggled against widespread military uprisings in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

To counter these activities, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) uses various operational methods. Special Forces have raided known terrorist bases and routine security activities have been conducted along the borders and in the major cities. A third method has been targeting specific terrorist leaders or installations in the Middle East and in Europe. Most operations of the first and third categories are still classified. The IDF has launched a few large attacks targeting terrorist infrastructure—for example Karameh and Litany—with the most extensive one being the Lebanon War (1982), at least initially. In these large-scale operations, Israel has deployed massive infantry, armor, and artillery forces. Infantry and Special Forces stood at the forefront of the war against terrorism.[2] Since the Six-Day War, the IDF has begun to utilize a new instrument—the Israeli Air Force (IAF).

This article will examine the IAF's use of helicopters in the war against terrorism. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the specificity of IAF use of attack helicopters (AH) as compared with other armies fighting terror in the world today. The first part of the article will present a theoretical framework to analyze the use of helicopters in low-intensity conflict (LIC). To develop the operational framework for helicopter use in the Israeli army, the second part will analyze of use of helicopters in various other armies.

Airpower and the War against Terrorism/Guerrilla—
The Theoretical Framework

The use of airpower in general, and helicopters in particular, may be integral to the attainment of various counterguerrilla objectives.[3] The inclusive aim of the counterguerrilla campaign is to destroy the organization's political and operational infrastructures. This goal can be achieved by deterioration and attrition of the guerrilla forces that enjoy widespread popular support of the local population and are intimately acquainted with the area of operations. The counterguerrilla campaign must then be conducted in two parallel dimensions. The first one is the *civic dimension*, and its goal to isolate the guerrilla warrior from his civilian support or, to paraphrase Mao Zedong, to withhold water from the fish.[4] The civic action must include psychological warfare and a variety of political, economic, and sociological measures intended to improve the living conditions of the civilian population.[5]

The second dimension is the *military dimension*. The primary objective of any army fighting a guerrilla force is to minimize its own casualties as much as possible. The army must therefore bring its technological superiority to the battlefield. In the military actions against guerrilla units, the air force plays an important role. Airpower gives operational flexibility, high mobility, superiority in firepower, better maneuver capability, and real-time combat intelligence. When we say *air force* we mean combat aircraft capable of quick and powerful attacks at (almost) any time, in every terrain and in every weather, including assault helicopters; unmanned air vehicle (UAV) for real-time intelligence; airborne command, control, communications, and intelligence (C3I) systems, and AH.[6]

The major characteristic of counterguerrilla warfare is its asymmetry, because the opponents are unequal in technological means. The IDF's superior technology is best exemplified through the IAF. Regular armies fighting guerrilla units have always held the technological advantage. Though a country must utilize its technological advantage when fighting terrorism, it must seek whenever possible to avoid noncombatant casualties.

The AH has become a major instrument in the struggle against guerrillas. It exhibits a high level of mobility over any kind of terrain, it has a long operating range, and it is able to concentrate a comparatively large and precise volume of fire. As opposed to ground forces, the helicopter need not be exposed to direct or indirect enemy fire. This point is especially important, because history has taught us that the occupation of a territory is often useless when fighting guerrilla warriors. Furthermore, regular units occupying static positions are easy targets for guerrilla fighters and prove to be logistical nightmares. Indeed, most IDF casualties in Lebanon were suffered during non-offensive activity such as road-clearing

and supply operations or base security.[7] When the IDF took the initiative, its operational ability, coupled with its technology superiority, became lethal.

The AH holds another advantage; it can carry long-range precise ammunition. The AH can escort assault helicopters that insert/extract a ground task force and provide close air support (CAS) en route, at the landing zone, and during evacuation. The last advantage is the AH's versatility. Guerrilla warfare is defined as a war without fronts, and guerrilla fighters can attack anywhere and at any time. It is impossible to hold any territory with massive ground forces, especially because it cannot be predictable when and where the guerrilla will attack. The AH can come quickly to the fire zone and provide mass fire support to the ground forces, and assault helicopters can bring to the field more forces to block the or to encircle the guerrilla. This course of action was very common in Vietnam and during the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.[8] In some way this is the main mission of the AH, i.e., attack the primary infiltration routes of the enemy (in the case of high-intensity conflict—the armor masses) in every place where the defense line can collapse or even where it does not exist.

To the multiple quantity and quality advantages of the AH we need to add another advantage that of inestimable value. As has already been argued, guerrilla warfare is characterized by its asymmetric balance, and the use of airpower presents the technological superiority of the stronger adversary; thus, we get an important basis to psychological warfare. If leaders use airpower precisely and inflict significant damage to the guerrilla infrastructure, airpower becomes an important tool in refuting guerrillas' belief and propaganda asserting that they can win. The ability to launch an unseen surprise and powerful strike and then fall back can also inflict mental damage upon guerrilla fighters. From evidence that has been taken from Palestinians after the IAF's AH attacks in the West Bank and Gaza, respondents mention the fact that they failed to see the helicopters approach the area and that the first missile barrage was sudden, quick, and deadly. Without entering a moral and political argument about such Israeli targeted killings, this demonstrates the tremendous capability of the AH to hit the human and logistics infrastructure of a terrorist organization.

However, the helicopter also has some disadvantages. Of primary concern is the high vulnerability of an expensive and sophisticated platform to cheap and unsophisticated weapons such as antiaircraft artillery (AAA) or machine guns. The helicopters that fly at low attitudes are more exposed to AAA. Thus, for example, in October 1993, Somali rebels using RPG-7 unguided, shoulder-launched, antitank rocket-propelled grenade launchers shot down two US UH-60 Black Hawks in Mogadishu, Somalia, during Operation Gothic Serpent. Today, we still do not possess the technology that can warn pilots before such simple weapons

are aimed at them. Another disadvantage is the difficulty to operate helicopters in bad weather. Poor visibility (night or fog) also can limit the ability of the helicopter to fly. However, the visibility problems can be solved by unique night vision system—such as the Pilot Night Vision System. Still, despite its vulnerability, the AH can launch its guided missiles from a safe distance that can surprise guerrilla combatants.[9] Until the guerrilla has figured out what happened, the helicopter can be far away outside the danger zone. The launch-and-forget capability of the AH-64 Apache, for example, gives the technological superiority to the military fighting against guerrillas or terrorists. The combination between high mobility and strong firepower make the AH an effective and lethal weapon that is very beneficial in the war against irregular fighters.[10]

Helicopters in the IDF: The First Phase (to 1975)

There are two main phases in the operational use of the helicopters in the IDF. The first period began in May 1951, when the first helicopters arrived to Israel. In this period, the helicopters were used for observing, reconnaissance, intelligence collection, and transporting commanders and units to and from the battle fields. The second phase began after the lessons learned from the Yom Kippur War (October 1973). In this war, the IAF suffered heavy losses from the massive surface-to-air (SAM) formations in both fronts. The IAF failed to block the aggressive Syrian and Egyptian armor incursions, and also the IAF did not successfully provide CAS to the Israeli armor and infantry units. The ground forces, after witnessing one aircraft after another being shot down, avoided calling for CAS. After the war, the IDF decided to bring into service the AH for a better response against armor columns and to overcome the obstacles of Israeli enemies' SAM systems in the future. Since the late 1960s, the United States has been Israel's main weapon supplier, particularly of aircraft;[11] thus, it was natural that Israel would also buy American AH from the United States. In April 1975, the first AH-1Q Cobra[12] arrived in Israel, and shortly thereafter, Israel also bought MD-500 Defenders.[13] During the first half of the 1990s, the IDF procured the AH-64 Apache.[14]

Despite the IAF operating helicopters since the 1950s, the aircraft saw action only after the Six-Day War. After this war, the main operation of the IAF was in the War of Attrition, especially in the southern and the eastern fronts.[15] In the beginning of the War of Attrition (1968), the IAF used fixed-wing aircraft to bomb targets in Egypt, Jordan, and later Syria and Lebanon. At the same time, the IDF operated helicopters to transfer troops for search-and-destroy missions in pursuit of terrorists who tried to cross the Jordan River. Also, the helicopters landed special forces behind enemy lines, mostly in Egypt. This followed the American model, which had been developed during the Vietnam War,[16] and the

Israeli infantry brigades became air assault units. To demonstrate the importance of the helicopters during the Attrition War, I will survey some operations that in which these aircraft played a crucial function in the success of the operation.

During the war, many actions were taken against the Egyptians. In those operations, special operations forces were landed deep within Egyptian territory. The goal of these actions was to show Cairo that no place Egypt was safe and to hurt enemy morale. On 31 October 1968, helicopters landed forces near electricity facilities in Egypt. The Israeli forces succeed in destroying the facilities, seriously damaging electrical power to Cairo. Such operations were operated, from time to time, during the period between 1968 to 1970.[17] One of the most famous operations took place on 27 December 1969. In a very daredevil operation, units inserted via CH-53 helicopters captured a new radar system from Egyptian territory.[18] The Israeli and American air forces, which struggled against Soviet-made SAM missiles in the Middle East and North Vietnam respectively, produced useful intelligence information from the captured radar system.

In addition to the Egyptian front, the War of Attrition also had a Jordanian front. After the Six-Day War, Israel ruled over the entire area west of the Jordan River. The terrorist Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) began to establish bases in Jordan, and until September 1970, the groups cadres routinely crossed the river on their way to attack Israeli targets or to join their comrades in the towns, villages, and refugee camps in the West Bank. IDF units tried to frustrate any attempt to ford the Jordan River, and when they discovered footprints, the army began to pursue the terrorists to kill or capture them. In this type of warfare, the helicopter has a very important rule. IDF helicopters had been used to transfer forces to block the terrorist route and to participate in observation missions. The war on the Jordanian front was also against the Jordanian army, which provided a logistics infrastructure and safe haven to Palestinian terrorist groups, including the PLO. Also, almost every day, the Jordanian army bombed Israeli settlements in the northern Jordan Valley. The primary response to the attacks by the Jordanian army was provided by IAF fixed-wing aircraft, which bombed targets in Jordanian territory. But, for time to time, there were ground operations, which relied upon helicopters to insert forces and evacuate the wounded.

The war in the eastern theater ended when Jordan's King Hussein decided to fight against the terrorist groups in his kingdom. In September 1970 (known as "Black September" in the PLO collective memory), Jordanian forces destroyed the PLO's infrastructure, and the PLO was forced to relocate to southern Lebanon. It is worth mentioning that there had been terrorist actions launched from southern Lebanon before 1970, and the IDF had operated along the border and also deep in Lebanon. The helicopters were crucial platforms in this theater too.

On 28 December 1968, special operations forces raided the international airport in Beirut in response to terrorist attacks on El-Al planes. The Israeli forces reached their destination by Aérospatiale SA-321K Super Frelon transport helicopters, escorted by Bell-205 multipurpose helicopters that provided CAS. The Israeli forces destroyed 14 airplanes that belonged to Arab countries, declaring that the IDF would reach any place to hit terrorists in response to an attack on Israeli targets or civilians. With the escalation of the war in the north, both against the PLO in Lebanon and the Syrian army, the IDF began to operate a wide range of forces: armor, infantry, artillery, the navy, and the air force. Again, the helicopters played important roles in a variety of missions. In this period, the IAF began to arm the Bell-205 with 7.62-mm light machineguns, 30-mm canons,[19] and rockets. The War of Attrition in the north continued until a month before the Yom Kippur War (6 October 1973). During the Yom Kippur War, the helicopters' missions were similar to their missions before the war—but conducted in more intensity, like the war itself.[20]

Up to this point, there was no difference between the IDF's use of helicopters and that of other countries fighting against terrorists or guerrillas: for example, Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union.[21] In general, it can be said that the helicopters' operations came as a substitute to the combat parachute operations: air assault instead of airborne. Landing elite forces by helicopter behind enemy lines is swifter and more precise and reduces casualty rates when compared to air dropping units, especially in areas where the enemy has strong antiaircraft defenses.[22] In sum, we can create the following operational task list by development order:

1. Logistics missions;
2. Wounded evacuation from the battle field and search-and-rescue missions;
3. Landing forces;
4. Close air support to convoys and ground forces; and
5. Independent combat missions against guerrilla targets.

Helicopters in the IDF: The Second Phase (since 1979)

After the Yom Kippur War, Israel began to employ the AH-1 Cobra and MD-500 Defender AHs. The reason to deploy AHs in the Israeli army was the lessons from the Yom Kippur War, when the Israeli forces failed in stopping Arab nations' tanks in the Sinai and the Golan Heights.

In the Operation Litani (15–21 March 1978), Israeli forces used the helicopters in logistical missions but not to pursue terrorists, because Israel's Cobras had

been sent to the United States to upgrade their weapon systems. By the end of the 1970s, Israeli AHs began to operate in Lebanon. Their main mission was to bomb terrorist ground targets. In fact, the helicopters demonstrated excellent and precise operational capabilities in missions that were previously exclusively the purview of attack aircraft such as the A-4 Skyhawk and the C-7 Kfir. The first combat mission of the Cobra was in 9 May 1979, when two Cobras bombarded a building near Tyre, where terrorists were hiding.[23] The Defenders began their combat activity, in Lebanon, a year later.

During the Lebanon War (also known as Operation Peace of the Galilee) the AHs had dual missions. Their main mission, in the opening phase of the war (June 1982) was to destroy tanks and other armored vehicles,[24] i.e., conventional tasks. The war in Lebanon also combined elements of guerrilla warfare. The guerrilla nature of the war provided a milieu to demonstrate the operational versatility of the AHs.

The important rule of the helicopters in general and the AHs in particular, discovered during the long conflict between Israel and the Shiite terrorist groups Hezbollah and Amal. Following the IDF withdrawal from most Lebanese territory, and its regrouping in the security zone near the international border between Israel and Lebanon (the so-called Purple Line), the IDF combined its airborne platforms very intensively during the war against the terrorist cadres operating in southern Lebanon. The AHs, assault helicopters that brought elite ground forces to the battle field, attack aircraft, and real-time intelligence, airborne systems played significant roles in this stage of the conflict. Since the beginning of the conflict in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (September 2000), the IAF, particularly its helicopter wings, have crucial tasks in the war against terrorism. The operational tasks of the helicopters represent the military and technological superiority of the Israeli forces in this kind of war. Also, the missions of the AHs in CAS operations have dramatically decreased the number of casualties of the ground forces.

Back to Lebanon the variety of missions undertaken by the AHs were, in fact, expressions of the operational capabilities of the helicopters. In Lebanon, the IDF faced two major problems: (1) sudden firefights and ambushes between Israeli forces (mostly infantry units) and Hezbollah irregular forces, and (2) locating and destroying rocket launchers (the Katyusha) that attack, from time to time, the northern Israeli settlements and cities. Similar to the Scud hunting of Desert Storm, the struggle against the launchers was a difficult and frustrating mission. The attempt to locate the launchers combined real-time intelligence with archived data from unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). In the moment when the launchers been located, aircraft launched to destroy the launcher and to hit the cadres who operated it. In many cases, the launcher was located after the rockets had already

been fired; thus, the purpose of the counterstrike was to destroy the launcher so Hezbollah would be unable to use it again. A second propose was to show that the IDF takes offensive measures.

The introduction of the AH-64 Apache into the IAF in September 1990 greatly improved the IDF's capability to fight terrorism. The new platform became an integral part of defensive and offensive operations in southern Lebanon. During Operation Desert Storm in 1991, the Apache's capabilities were demonstrated on the battle field.[25] Its advanced technology and firepower allowed the IAF to play an integral role in targeted-killing operations. On 16 February 1992, two Apache helicopters destroyed a Hezbollah convoy, killing the organization's chairman, Abbas al-Musawi, and his two bodyguards. The convoy left one of the villages in southern Lebanon at 2130, on its way to Sidon. Once the convoy was under way, the Apaches were scrambled and ordered to a previously arranged point on the convoys' route. The helicopters hovered around a bend in the road. When the convoy approached, the helicopters fired their lethal charge.[26] The missile launch that killed the chairman of the Hezbollah was the last act in a very well-executed operation. It began with intensive intelligence gathering that detailed al-Musawi's life. The real-time intelligence needed on the day of the operation was probably gathered by intelligence officers. Visual confirmation of the convoy was probably done through a small UAV. The shooting proved to be the simplest part of the operation. Over the years, Apache helicopters were again called upon to demonstrate their special abilities. On 31 May 1995 and 25 August 1998, high-level Hezbollah members were eliminated through targeted killing. Though the Apache came to be used in the full range of military operations in southern Lebanon, it was usually chosen to perform night-time operations. During Operations Accountability (July 1993) and Grapes of Wrath (April 1996), Apache helicopters were called upon to perform surgical attacks, often destroying specific apartments without crashing the entire building.

The fighting in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip that begun in September 2000 once again has proven the superiority of the AH.[27] Targeted-killing operations have been used to a greater extent. Dozens of terrorists were killed at the culmination of complex intelligence operations. Most were high-level members of various terrorist organizations (Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Tanzim) responsible for a host of terrorist acts, including the deployment of suicide bombers. Throughout 2001, AHs conducted over 65 combat sorties in all theaters during all hours.[28] F-16 attack airplanes were used to destroy entire buildings belonging to the Palestinian Authority, including command and municipal centers and ammunition dumps. However, whenever the need arose for surgical bombing due to fear of potential civilian casualties, the Apache was deployed. For instance, on 31

July 2001, Apaches fired two Hellfire missiles through the windows of a building. Two high-level members of the Hamas terrorist organization and four of their assistants were killed in the attack.[29]

AHs are mainly called upon to provide air cover and CAS for ground operations. The fighting in the territories is conducted against guerrilla warriors and in densely populated areas. The features of the city inhibit mobility and surveillance. Under these constraints, the Apache offers many advantages. It combines immense firepower, precision, and unique observation capabilities, including a forward-looking infrared (FLIR) system. Combined ground and helicopter operations multiply the force in a given area.[30]

The AHs have received a great share of the limelight in the war against terror. A *BBC* report from 2002 described Israel's war against terrorism, including the killing of a terrorist by a helicopter. The report described the classical infantry ambush and the revolutionary use of attack helicopter in ambush operations. Viewers were shown the actual firing of a missile as seen through the helicopter video recorder.[31]

The actual firing of the missile constitutes the very end of an intelligence operation that may have gone on for a few weeks. To minimize civilian casualties, the IDF maintains an extensive intelligence apparatus. Warfare in the territories mandates a heavy reliance on human intelligence in which Palestinian collaborators play a major role. The level of operational accuracy exhibited by the IDF comes as a result of deep penetration of terrorist organizations.[32] Intelligence gathered from collaborators has proven to be both qualitative and quantitative. Indeed, a great effort is put into capturing live terrorists for the intelligence that can be extracted from them.

Small Searcher 2 UAVs contribute qualitative intelligence in the form of real-time visual surveillance. Often, the intelligence gathered by these UAVs is crucial for the success of an operation. So crucial is their contribution that they are involved in most air and ground operations.[33] First to arrive on the scene, they are tasked with surveillance and real-time intelligence collection. In addition to the UAV squadron, the IDF operates various ground and air intelligence assets.[34]

Though the AHs have certain shortfalls, not least of which are their enormous operational cost, they are offer superior attack platforms. These aircraft have drastically improved the IDF's operational capabilities and have lowered the casualty rate as a result of their ability to engage in close quarters combat. The sheer volume of combat sorties conducted by AHs has put guerrilla units under tremendous pressure. Maintaining the offensive obligates the opponent to perform defensive operations. The opponent's capacity to go on the offensive is diminished, and the terrorist organization is less capable of achieving its political goals.

The IAF has revolutionized the use of AHs, which allows the service to go on the offensive in the war against terror. To demonstrate the uniqueness of the Israeli concept, we shall examine the role of AHs in the British and American militaries—both of which are airpower leaders in the war against terrorism today.

From the literature devoted to British and American special forces and counterterrorism units, we learn that the helicopters are used mainly for traditional purposes—transportation and CAS missions. Essentially, the helicopter doctrine developed during 1950s has remained unchanged.[35]

For instance, the British Army has not used helicopters for any form of targeted killing in its war against the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Contrary to popular belief, the war in Ireland has not been confined to the major cities but has also been fought throughout the countryside. The British deployment in Northern Ireland has been extensive and includes regular Army units, police, special forces (such as the 22nd Regiment of the Special Air Service (SAS), and various intelligence organizations.[36]

The following example is illustrative of British conduct. In May 1987, British intelligence got wind of an impending IRA car-bomb attack on a police station. The IRA team was placed under surveillance, and the SAS prepared an ambush for them at the police station. The attack was allowed to begin, and the police station was destroyed. Though there were no British casualties, civilians that had gathered in a nearby church had been in danger.[37]

The IRA terrorists could have been killed en route. The police station, in the town of Loughall, was in a rural area. The intelligence was specific enough to enable a helicopter attack on the terrorists' vehicle. The Aérospatiale SA-341 Gazelle scout helicopter that was scrambled was used only to assist in locating runaway terrorists.

Likewise, US Army Field Manual 7-98 *Operations in a Low-Intensity Conflict* devotes only one paragraph to the use of AHs in small tactics operations.[38] Though the opening words are "AH are a highly mobile and immediate-response maneuver element,"[39] the mission it designates for them are reconnaissance, protection, escort, and CAS operations. The AH is considered a support platform. Chapter 7 of the field manual describes various combat-support forces, such as artillery, antiaircraft weapons, CAS from fixed-wing aircraft, and fire support from maritime platforms. In relation to US and British low-intensity warfare doctrine, the AH is considered a support weapon and not expected to initiate offensive operations. Nevertheless, in high-intensity conflicts, the attack helicopter is allotted a primary position and as a purely offensive weapon.

Conclusions

The history of AH operations in Israel's war against terrorism can be divided into two major stages. During the first stage, AHs attacked specific targets, particularly targeted killings of terrorists. The second stage began with Operation Defensive Shield (March 2002), during which AHs mainly preformed CAS operations for the infantry and armored forces that reestablished control over Palestinian cities. We may assert that through the use of AHs, with the close support of the intelligence community, the IDF has been able to successfully initiate offensive operations against terrorists—so much so that the AHs have become an integral part in Israel's war against terrorism. Initiating offensive operations demonstrates to the terrorist organizations and to their supporters (passive and active) that Israel is no longer on the defense. The heavy reliance on intelligence combined with the success rate enjoyed by the IDF proves to the terrorists that they are not safe even among their staunchest supporters. The terrorists are then forced to further compartmentalize their organizations, thereby, severely hinder operational capabilities. The superiority of the AHs in the guerrilla warfare taking place in Judea, Samaria, and in the Gaza Strip (and earlier in southern Lebanon) stems from the aircraft's ability to carry heavy, sophisticated munitions load and their accuracy and maneuverability. Due to AHs' sophisticated weapons systems, these aircraft are regularly able to inflict heavy damage to the target while avoiding collateral damage. The IAF is unique in deploying AHs in this fashion. AHs are able to operate for long stretches of time without fear of attrition. They are able to transfer regularly between theaters of operations and to target specific targets with little fear of collateral damage.

However, the danger of collateral damage still persists even in targeted killing. In future operations, the IDF must always consider the damage to a terrorist organization versus the impact such an attack will have on the image of Israel if noncombatants are hurt.

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Notes

1. In this article, I do not make a terminological distinction between *terrorism* and *guerrilla*, mostly because no precise definition has yet been found acceptable to most researchers that will distinguish between a terror organization and a guerrilla organization. Eventually, the definition that will differentiate between the two concepts will be individual and subjectively linked with the cultural, political, and social aspects of one state or another. Therefore, the concepts of guerrilla warfare and terrorism will be used concurrently. Alex P. Schmid gives a long list of definitions he has collected from leading studies in the field of terror research. *See* Alex P. Schmid, *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases and Literature* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1987), 5–152. Robert Kennedy, "Is One Person's Terrorist Another's Freedom Fighter: Western and Islamic Approaches to 'Just War' Compared," in *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11, no. 1 (1999): 3–4. Jenkins makes a chronological distinction. In his view, guerrilla warfare became terrorism at the end of the 1960s, when the guerrilla organizations despaired of this form of warfare and also understood that they would not succeed in obtaining their aims through conventional warfare. *See* Brian M. Jenkins, *New Modes of Conflict* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1983), 7–9.

2. Gunther E. Rothenberg, "Israeli Defense Forces and Low Intensity Operations," in *Armies in Low-Intensity Conflict*, ed. David A. Charters and Mourice Tugwell (London, 1989), 49–72. *See also* Samuel M. Katz, *Guards without Frontiers – Israel's War against Terrorism*, (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1990).

3. For a general survey about the use of airpower in counterguerrilla warfare, *see* Shmuel Gordon, *The Vulture and the Snake—Counter-guerrilla Air Warfare: The War in Southern Lebanon* (Ramat Gan: Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 1998)

4. US Marine Corps, FMFRP 12-18: *Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, 5 April 1989, 8, https://www.marines.mil/.

5. Jay M. Shafritz, Tod J. A. Shafritz, and David B. Robertson, *The Facts on File Dictionary of Military Science* (New York: Facts on File, 1989), 116.

6. Gordon, *Vulture and the Snake*, 38–39.

7. The most extreme and tragic example is the air accident between two CH-53 helicopters on 4 February 1997, the "Helicopters disaster." The soldiers killed were on their way to replace their comrades in Lebanon. All 73 soldiers and pilots were killed.

8. For the "Helicopter War" in Vietnam, *see* John J. Tolson, *Airmobility, 1961–1971* (Washington DC: Department of the Army, 1973), 38–39; for Afghanistan *see* Anthony H. Cordesman and Abraham R. Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War (vol. 3)—The Afghan and Falklands Conflicts* (London: Mansell, 1990), 192–205.

9. The helicopters in the IAF are armed with BGM-71 Tow and AGM-114 Hellfire missiles. The range of the Tow is 4 km, and the Hellfire's range is twice and more precise.

10. It must be mentioned that despite the massive operational use of helicopters in the current conflict, the IAF did not "forget" the real mission of the AHs: to destroy the enemy's armor columns in case of attack on Israel. Today, Syria is the major conventional threat to Israel's national security. See an interview with former IAF's chief of staff Maj Gen Eitan Ben-Eliahu in: *Jane's Defense Weekly*, 9 February 2000.

11. In December 1967, the first A-4 Skyhawk arrived in Israel. The F-4E Phantom II became part of IAF in September 1969.

12. Their nickname in the IAF is Viper.

13. Their nickname in the IAF is Juggler.

14. Their nickname in the IAF is Adder.

15. For a general survey about the War of Attrition, particularly on the southern front, *see* George W. Gawrych, *The Albatross of Decisive Victory: War and Policy between Egypt and Israel in the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000), 127–57. On the IDF's operations, *see* Eli Landau, *Suez: Fire on the Water* (Tel Aviv: Otpaz, 1970), 189–207.

16. Tolson, *Airmobility, 1961–1971*, 38–39.

17. Landau, *Suez: Fire on the Water*, 121–26.

18. Landau, *Suez: Fire on the Water*, 227–35.

19. The canons originally belonged to the Mirage III.

20. About the helicopters' missions in the Yom Kippur War, *see* Anthony H. Cordesman and Abraham R. Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War (vol. I): The Arab-Israeli Conflicts, 1973-1989*, (London: Mantell, 1990), 100–01.

21. On the British experience in Malaya (1948–1960), *see* Robert Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency* (London: Routledge, 1991), 98–103; E. D. Smith, *Malaya and Borneo* (London: I. Allan, 1985), 35. On the French experiences both in Indo-China and Algeria, *see* V. J. Croizat (tr.), *A Translation from the French Lessons of the War in Indochina*, May 1967 CORDS Information Library, RG 472 (Records of the United States Forces in Southeast Asia, 1950-1975), box 19, file no. 101223, 299-30; Hilaire Bethouart, "Combat Helicopters in Algeria," in *The Guerrilla and How to Fight Him*, ed. T. N. Greene (New York: Praeger, 1966), 260–69. Concerning the helicopters used by the Soviets/Russia in Afghanistan and Chechnya, *see* Cordesman and Wagner, *Lessons of Modern War (vol. 3)*, 192–205; Timothy L. Thomas, "Air Operations in Low Intensity Conflict: The Case of Chechnya," *Airpower Journal* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1997), 51–59, https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/.

22. Robin Neillands, *In the Combat Zone: Special Forces since 1945* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 54.

23. Eliezer Cohen and Zvi Lavi, *The Sky Is Not the Limit: The Story of the Israeli Air Force* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Sifriyat Hapoalim, 1990), 625–26.

24. Cordesman and Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War (vol. 1)*, 210–13.

25. *See* Harry G. Summers, *Persian Gulf Almanac* (New York: Facts on File, 1995), 62–63.

26. Danny Shalom, *50 Years of Air Superiority* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Kineret, 1998), 196.

27. The IAF's Apaches have conducted approximately 1,500 combat sorties over Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip since September 2000. *IAF Magazine*, August 2002, 6. (Hereafter *IAFM*)

28. *IAFM*, December 2001, 6.

29. *IAFM*, August 2001, 7.

30. *IAFM*, April 2002, 38.

31. John Kampfner, "The Dirty War: Israel Undercover," *BBC Two*, 17 February 2002, produced and directed by Dominic Allan, co-produced by Israel Goldvicht, executive produced by Tom Roberts, and edited by Fiona Murch. The report was broadcasted in Britain February 2002 and in Israel April 2002. The transcript can be found at the following site: http://news.bbc.co.uk/.

32. *Jane's Intelligence Review*, December 2001, 24–26.

33. *IAFM*, October 2001, 26.

34. *Jane's Defense Weekly* 9/1/2001. Interviewing - Commander of the Field Intelligence Corps Brigadier General Amnon Sofrin

35. Terry Griswold and D. M. Giangreco, *Delta: America's Elite Counterterrorist Force* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 1992), 78–87; and Steve Crawford, *The SAS Encyclopedia* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 266–69.

36. Ken Connor, *Ghost Force the Secret History of the SAS* (London: Orion, 2001), 303–40.

37. *See* James Adams, Robin Morgan, and Anthony Bambridge, *Ambush: The Secret War between the SAS and the IRA* (London: Pan Books, 1988), 110–18.

38. Archived at https://www.globalsecurity.org/.

39. Archived at https://www.globalsecurity.org/.

The Revolution in Drone Warfare
The Lessons from the Idlib De-Escalation Zone

Ridvan Bari Urcosta

Turkey and Russia are learning how to operationally use a new type of twenty-first-century warfare—unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) warfare. Many historical analogies can be traced to the advent of new types of weapons and resulting strategies implemented for their use in a direct, kinetic confrontation. UAVs have existed since the Cold War, but in the 1990s few countries possessed first-generation UAV technologies. Russia and Turkey joined the military UAV technology club relatively late, and both set a straightforward aim toward creating their own indigenous drones—first for utility-based roles and then purely combat drones. Russia achieved the first aim, but Turkey soon managed to field its own combat drone. However, Russia has a larger UAV fleet.

The beginning of 2020 nearly witnessed Russia and Turkey in direct kinetic war, initially due to a successful Syrian offensive against Turkish-backed rebel forces. This success forced Turkey to enter a war against the Syrian Army, and from 27 February until 5 March 2020, an active phase of hostilities in the Idlib Province ensued. Russia and Turkey came to this confrontation well-experienced in the use of UAVs and electromagnetic spectrum (EMS) warfare technologies, having demonstrated their proficiencies in actions taken against rebel factions in Syria—and in Ankara's case against Kurdish groups in Turkey—but neither Russia nor Turkey, or other countries for that matter, have experience in employing these technologies in a direct clash against a peer competitor. It was truly a transformational confrontation that will definitely be added into military handbooks and manuals around the globe. The UAVs in this full-scale military operation were not merely an element of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) but rather instruments of combat, fully integrated into the operational strategy of three countries: Syria, Russia, and Turkey. In Idlib, Russia and Syria learned the hard truth of how important UAVs are in modern warfare and duly employed significant EMS warfare countermeasures against Turkish UAVs.

Russia's Role: Defense and Observation

The 2018–2019 UAV strikes against Khmeimim Air Base, a Syrian facility currently operated by Russia, located southeast of the city of Latakia in Latakia Governorate, Syria, were the first ever attacks of this nature against a great military

power. However, events in Idlib Province in 2020 witnessed the case study that will inform the next chapter on drone warfare, both in terms of UAV use by insurgents and UAVs being a crucial element of modern war between states.

The Khmeimim Air Base is a symbol of Russia's presence in Syria. The Assad regime has signed an agreement with Moscow that will see that presence extended for the next half century. It is the most secure Russian base in Syria and is actually considered as Russian land inside Syria. According to Russian sources, Khmeimim and its naval counterpart, Tartus (which has been leased to Russia in similar fashion), deployed sophisticated antidrone systems as early as 2017. These systems are equipped with modules to detect, fire, electronically suppress, and jam signals. Russia determined that UAVs presented a concrete threat only at the beginning of 2018. On New Year's Eve, Syrian rebels conducted the first successful collective-drone strike, employing eight UAVs in unison, and throughout January, Russian forces had to respond to intensive attacks of drones on their bases. In 2019, Russia thwarted around 60 UAV attacks at Khmeimim. Russia did not expect such a move from the rebels, and only after the first attack did Russian commanders realize how vulnerable their forces were against the such attacks. Russia lost several aircraft and soldiers during these attacks. Russia blamed the United States for the attack and for direct coordination of the drone strikes; the Russian deputy minister of defense stated that American Poseidon-8 coordinated the attacks. According to military experts, Russia imposed effective radio-electronic countermeasures against the strikes. However, in the attack on 31 December 2017, the rebels' drones snuck into Khmeimim when, for short period, the entire system of radio-electronic jamming was off. Usually, such measures regarding radio-electronic defense systems are obligatory when planes take off using their navigation system. To maintain the defense of the air base in such moments, the Russians usually put all air-defense systems at the high alert, but it seems that air-defense systems were not ready for such a massive drone attack.

On 5 January 2018, UAV attacks targeted Tartus and Khmeimim. The rebels increased the number of drones—13 this time—seven of which the Pantsir systems destroyed. Russian specialists from the electronic warfare units managed to seize control of the remaining drones. The Russians had detected the drones long before they reached the bases. Russian experts indicated that the rebels had employed sophisticated strategies, i.e., reducing the number of explosives to two and greatly reducing their speed to make the drones much harder to detect. This was when Russia learned the fact that drones employed in contemporary guerrilla warfare can play a key role and can destroy strategic infrastructure in the enemy's rear.

Ankara entered the ranks of UAV powers independently and now uses combat drones as an important instrument in protecting Turkey's national interests

throughout the entire Middle East. Sources indicate that Turkish electronic warfare systems (EWS) allowed Turkish forces to undertake all necessary tasks during the conflict with the Syrian Army, despite Russian and Syrian government forces' closure of the airspace over Idlib. According to Turkish Minister of Defense Hulusi Akar, in just one night, the army destroyed more than 200 targets, five helicopters, 23 tanks, 23 artillery pieces, and Russian-made Buk and Pantsir anti-aircraft missile systems and killed 309 Syrian soldiers. Turkish operations in Idlib involved the tactical Bayraktar TB2 and multipurpose TAI Anka medium-altitude, long-range (MALE) UAVs.[1] The massive employment of these UAVs ensured the unprecedented success of the Turkish Army, sending a message not only to Russia but also to Ankara's Western allies—and more importantly, to the regional powers with whom Turkey is competing for regional hegemony—that Turkey had made great leaps in this new war domain. Turkish UAVs were doing what their Russian counterparts remain in capable of doing: destroying targets immediately after detecting them.

Concurrently, in Moscow some experts provided their own version of the conflict, and of course this reflected the Russian spin.[2] In Idlib, Russian leaders admitted, Turkey achieved some success, but it was not a "strategic success" and the rest of Turkey's version of the story was merely rhetoric. The "air phase" of the Idlib confrontation lasted around two days and was only one part of the conflict. Neither the Russians nor the Syrians expected the Turkish Army's presence in the zone. That by itself was a key factor that altered the entire battlefield. Two days of Russian and Syrian embarrassment allowed Turkey to achieve some tactical success. However, when Syrians and Russians adjusted to the factor of Turks fighting actively on the side of the rebels on the battlefield and in the Syrian airspace, they balanced Turkey's UAV superiority by utilizing air-defense systems. The nature of Turkish UAV-based success on the first day of conflict was based on their more powerful EMS warfare systems, which operated from within Turkey and covered the area of Idlib.

The Turkish EMS system enabled Ankara to listen into Syrian Army telephones, allowing them to detect the coordinates of the Syrians. Then Turkish forces transmitted those locations to the TAI Anka UAVs, which relayed data to the combat Bayraktar TB2s for target elimination. Naturally, Russian specialists blame their adversary's success on the Syrians, saying their allies did not know how to run EMS warfare—naïvely using their cell phones. The immediate countermeasure for the Syrian Army and its local allies was primitive but effective—terminating the use of cell phones and anything that allowed others to detect their location. Orders were subsequently issued on paper, and subsequently, neither Turkish UAVs nor EMS systems could identify the Syrians.

Importantly, Western specialists completely disagree with the Russian assessment. For instance, the Institute for the Study of War—a US-based a nonpartisan, nonprofit, public policy research organization—indicated that Turkey's destruction of Russian-provided antiaircraft systems damaged Russia's reputation and could reduce its subsequent arms sales. Turkish UAVs, likely using electronic jamming technology, evaded the Russo-Syrian countermeasures and destroyed at least three Russian-made state-of-the-art Pantsir-S1 air-defense systems.[3] Turkish specialists attribute this to Ankara's very serious investment in electronic warfare and deployment of radar electronic attack systems including KORAL (a land-based transportable EWS developed to jam and deceive hostile radars with an effective range of roughly 200 km, which is exactly enough to reach the Idlib zone from within Turkey) to intercept and deceive radar systems in Syria.[4]

Regarding the Russian-made Syrian air-defense systems, Turkish sources claim to have destroyed eight Pantsir-S1s (older versions). The Russian Ministry of Defense refuted these numbers, stating that only four such systems were deployed to Idlib and Turkish attacks damaged two of those. Regardless of the figures, this was the first time Turkey managed to command the airspace over such a large area using drone swarms.[5] According to the Russian narrative, the main target of the Turkish combat UAVs was the heavy weaponry of the Syrian Army, and this was accomplished quite successfully.[6] The psychological effect of this strike was particularly important. Due to the ability of UAVs to sneak into the Syrian Army's rear and destroy weapons systems and kill troops without any direct participation of Turkish troops in the battlefield, the continuous UAV strikes from the air led to a situation where Syrian reservists abandoned equipment and fled their positions.[7] Syria had deployed the first Pantsir-S1 to Idlib on 1 March, and these systems shot down roughly 10 Turkish drones within the first days. The delivery of air-defense systems according to the Russian experts stabilized the balance in the battlefield and permitted the Syrian Army to regain the strategic city of Saraqib. However, Turkish specialists insist that their UAVs are capable of destroying these systems, and as evidence, they emphasized that the UAVs had destroyed a Pantsir-S1 at very close range, when the system failed to detect the Turkish UAVs.[8] The fog of war and information warfare apparently remain as vital today as in the times of Clausewitz.

Turkey's Role: Offense and Elaboration of Strategy of UAV Attacks

Turkey is experiencing a golden age in the development of its military industry. In 2016, Turkey's President of Defense Industries İsmail Demir, stated during his stay in the United States, "I don't want to be sarcastic, but I would like to thank [the US government] for any of the projects that were not approved of by the U.S.

because this forced us to develop our own systems," adding that Turkey no longer wanted US-made combat UAVs.[9] Thanks to restrictive measures on Western drone technology toward Ankara, Turkey has arguably become the leading state with combat-proven UAVs in the Middle East. Some experts are even calling Turkey a "drone superpower,"[10] but it is too early for such claims—despite the obvious momentum in that direction.

Neither Israel nor the United States wanted to share technologies with Turkey, but this actually worked to Turkey's advantage.[11] Recently, during the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, Turkey presented a unique *YouTube* documentary about the Turkish UAV industry, entitled "AKINCI DOCUMENTARY."[12] The main message is that the country has reached the highest technological stage and is able to compete at the world level with other players in the UAV market.

Turkey had used its drones previously during the 2018 Operation Olive Branch, the Turkish incursion into Syria aimed at creating a 20-mile-deep buffer zone around the Syrian city of Afrin and ousting thousands of US-supported Kurdish militiamen who had aided the US fight against Islamic State terrorists in Syria. However, the Idlib campaign (Operation Spring Shield) was the first time Turkey had used its UAVs at such a massive scale and against a foreign country with as powerful a backer as Russia. During Spring Shield, Turkish UAVs were operating almost everywhere in the greater Idlib area and reached the deep rear of the Syrian Army. The penetration into the Syrian rear had serious psychological and military consequences. The Syrians spotted Turkish UAVs in Hama and Aleppo, territories under Syrian government control.

In Idlib, the Turkish Army employed new drones for the first time, field testing its ANKA-S and Bayraktar-TB2 with intensity. Aside from traditional strategic or tactical roles, the UAVs were used to conduct so-called "sniper" missions, liquidating targeted groups and specific persons of interest. For example, Turkish UAVs reportedly liquidated two Syrian brigadier generals, a colonel, and foreign fighters from Hezbollah and Iran in an attack on Syrian headquarters in Zerba, south of Aleppo.[13]

Furthermore, Ankara actively promoted Turkey as the first country to employ sophisticated small drones as a swarm in combat.[14] Turkish officials claimed that this military innovation demonstrated Ankara's technological prowess on the battlefield. These swarms of remotely-controlled drones destroyed Syrian bases and chemical warfare depots, as well as air-defense systems.[15]

The strategic success of Turkey in Idlib is undeniable. Turkish forces stopped Syrian Army operations against Turkish-supported rebels, pushing Syrian forces out of the area. Russia had to intervene in the conflict militarily and diplomatically to stop Turkey's impressive advance.

Moscow was forced to reconsider its situation in Syria. Taking a new angle, Russia seeks a long-lasting strategy toward improving relations with Turkey and avoiding direct confrontation with Ankara. According to Russian propaganda, it was in Moscow's interest to allow the Turkish–Syrian clash in Idlib so Russia could see a NATO country in action—particularly NATO's drone strategy and tactics employed in real-time battle. This was a process of in-depth evaluation, observation, and reflection. According to this narrative, Moscow chose not to interfere too early in the conflict and enjoyed it, from a theoretician's perspective, taking valuable notes from its observations and giving Turkey the freedom of action to see what a NATO-member country is capable of doing. Strikingly, the pro-Iranian *al-Akbar* news outlet and the Syrians blamed the Russians, saying the latter had intentionally left the airspace open for Turkey to launch the full-scale UAV attack against the Syrian Army.[16] Russian experts raised quite an interesting possibility: that Moscow actually permitted the use of drones as result of a Turkish–Russian agreement during intensive negotiations in Ankara and Moscow.[17]

Ankara conducted almost all military deployment to Idlib exactly from Hatay, and a serious number of Turkish forces are now concentrated in the region.[18] During the operation, Turkish Minister of Industry and Technology Mustafa Varank went to Hatay with drone experts and engineers. They were working at the Second Army Command Tactical Command Center, where Operation Spring Shield was directed. During the meetings the use of defense technologies (KORAL and UAVs) was discussed, with the participation of the Ministry of Defense. This clearly illustrates that Turkey is adamantly developing its UAV strategy despite political and technological complexities. Reportedly, Turkey developed and used in Idlib the effective system of military communications that permits UAV operators to communicate directly with land units that the operator sees from the air during operations. Such a function can save the lives of troops, because the UAV operator can find the most secure path home and avoid unwanted encounters with enemy troops.[19]

American experts writing in the reputable *Small Wars Journal* admitted that Turkish losses were minimal and the Syrian Army is accurately accounting for the number of destroyed drones. However, destroying six UAVs against the damage to Syrian Army operation in Idlib is incomparable. This demands particularly close attention to the following limitations of Turkish drones: large measures of technical superiority, massed effect, and—perhaps most importantly—the element of surprise. While Turkey continues to maintain a level of technical superiority vis-à-vis the Syrians, achieving massed airpower and springing another surprise will be difficult. The Syrians will be better prepared next time. In light of this, the

Turkish military will undoubtedly conduct a critical examination of Operation Spring Shield, so that they are ready as well.[20]

Libya as the Largest Drone Battlefield in the World

In the case of Libya, Turkey is achieving its geopolitical goals astonishingly successfully, in much the same way it has in Syria. The presence of UAVs does not resemble the presence of massive military force build-up in previous international conflicts, but the goals that are achievable are the same. If Russia sends its private military company, Wagner Group, which is ostensibly independent but obviously closely affiliated with Moscow, political consequences abound. However, in the case of UAVs, it is possible for Turkey to send a small team of drone operators to Libya without eliciting the same reaction sending ground troops would and while still achieving the desired political and military power projection and end state.

In Libya and Syria, the incessant use of combat UAVs allowed Turkey to alter the situation on the ground. In both cases, Turkish-sponsored forces were at a last critical point in their struggles against opposing forces. Interestingly, the United Nations Special Representative to Libya, Ghassan Salamé, called the Libyan conflict "the largest drone war in the world"—with nearly 1,000 air strikes conducted by UAVs.[21] According to Turkish experts, Libyan National Army (LNA)—the faction supported by Egypt, France, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Russia, is a component of Libya's military forces that was nominally a unified national force under the command of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar— acquired Chinese-made Chengdu Pterodactyl I, also known as Wing Loong, MALE UAVs in 2016, significantly enhancing the LNA's military capabilities, and these UAVs were used effectively in the battle for Tripoli.[22] These Chinese-made UAVs—operated by pilots from the UAE and flown out of the Al-Khadim Air Base in eastern Libya—have a combat radius of 1,500 km (932 miles), meaning they can deliver precision-guided missiles and bombs anywhere in the country.[23]

One additional point should be noted, which is that the Libyan terrain is very flat, and the desert allows easy spotting of targets. Moreover, while Libya is an enormous country, it is sparsely populated, making it more feasible to utilize long-endurance UAVs for continuous ISR missions rather than using manned warplanes or ground forces. Compared with the Idlib battleground, the UAVs in Libya make it possible to continually patrol sizable territories, highly complicating the adversary's abilities to regroup, retreat, counterattack, or deliver reinforcements. Hence, UAVs provide a real-time picture of the war as it unfolds.

If Libya is currently the largest drone battlefield in the world, the same can be said about air-defense and EMS warfare. According to American experts from the Washington Institute, the game-changing event for the Government of Na-

tional Accord (GNA)—the faction supported by Turkey, Italy, and Qatar—came when Ankara delivered different air-defense and EWS systems along with Turkish-made UAVs.[24] This enables the forces in Tripoli to establish a local superiority around the capital and regroup, launching counteroffensive measures against LNA forces. Turkey has undertaken measures in Tripoli to create an air-defense bubble around the capital, deploying multiple surface-to-air (SAM) systems in and around Mitiga Air Base. Employing a combination of medium-range US-made MIM-23 Hawk SAMs, Turkish-made Hisar short-range SAMs, and KORKUT 35-mm self-propelled antiaircraft guns created a layered defense over critical infrastructure and reduced the threat to GNA drone ground stations and launch operations. Additionally, Turkey deployed its KORAL EWS, which is an integral component of the abovementioned air-defense and radio-electronic warfare complex. The KORALs are able to jam the work of the Pantsir-S1 and Chinese UAVs and can be used for jamming other target sets, including communications and other emitters, such as line-of-sight drone control links. The system also has useful direction-finding capabilities that could geolocate enemy forces by zeroing in on their radiofrequency emissions.[25] These systems actually cover Tripoli and its outskirts to a radius of 124 miles (200 km).[26] Given this, it is logical to assume that the system covered nearly the entire Idlib Province in Syria, which is under Turkish control.

All Turkish UAV operations are conducted in the operational centers in Ankara and Hatay Province, Turkey.[27] This province has strategic importance for Turkey, and the confrontations in Idlib once again proved to Ankara the importance of this region disputed between Syria and Turkey.

As a result of Turkey's successes with UAVs on the battlefields of Syria and Libya, Ankara promotes Turkey as a country with advanced military technologies in the international UAV market. The demand for UAVs is high and will be expanding faster than we can imagine. Thanks to Turkey's ability to demonstrate its UAVs combat-proven capabilities, Ukraine, Qatar, and Tunisia have already purchased Turkish drones.[28] Turkish UAVs now compete with Chinese, American, Israeli, and other major UAV-producing nations' products in the international market. Given their respective performances in Libya, nations are more likely to turn to Turkish drones than Chinese ones, which are offering a similar package.[29]

Operational Advantages and Limitations of Drone Use

What are the operational advantages of drones in modern warfare? Lessons learned from Operation Spring Shield have shown that small- and middle-sized combat UAVs are extremely effective tools on the tactical battlefield—but not without some limitations. These advantages and limitations are as follows:

1. The UAVs are able to digitally and instantly provide the most desired and precious operational information about the battlefield. They are eyes in the skies, over a battlefield that is crammed with high-resolution optics, data links, radars, and laser-guidance systems. The UAVs' advantage is an ability to loiter, often at a high altitude over a target, watching it ceaselessly for hours, if not days, and sometimes even weeks.[30] In remote and unreachable areas, UAVs are quite effective tools because they conduct ISR without any detection by the enemy. The serious weakness of the UAV is a high-level of dependence on fair weather. As one child in Yemen said, all the kids are scared of blue skies, because that is when the drones come out.

2. Striking the enemy or its infrastructure in the deep rear and interrupting some operations that have strategic importance additionally with a traditional mission of ISR.

3. The Turkish and Russian experiences have demonstrated that UAVs are optimal in cooperation with heavy artillery and air forces that provide high accuracy of bombardment.

4. Price is a significant determinant that makes drones attractive for future warfare. Therefore, the governments of leading countries must consider increasing their UAV production and development. Such systems must be cheap and easily produced. It is highly likely that we will witness a massive production of military drones for all types of armies for use in land, air, and naval domains in the near future. The Turkish cases show that the price of replacement of lost drones can become burdensome to the defense budget, particularly for the more expensive combat UAVs. To minimize such expenses, Turkey promotes the Kargu kamikaze drone, which is ideal for the swarm tactic. These units are cheap and pose a serious threat to any military unit when able to evade adversaries' countermeasures.

5. Chinese experts from *China Military Online* indicated one interesting lesson for future wars was that on 1 March, the Syrian military issued a warning that any air target would be considered a hostile target and shot down, as Syria shut down Idlib's airspace. This warning indicates that destruction upon discovery has become the norm on the battlefield, which is also a point worth attention in future drone wars. On the Syrian battlefield, not only sovereign states but also violent extremist organizations have this capability and are implementing destroy-upon-discovery measures, which poses difficulties and an ethical crisis to the practice of drone warfare.[31]

6. The lessons learned from Operation Spring Shield teach that in an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) environment, UAVs are the most effective instrument in fulfilling military and political goals. Turkish UAVs were

able to reach targets that F-16s could not, obtaining the same effects as warplanes without incurring the same military or political consequences that the more traditional penetration into hostile areas might accrue.

7. UAVs serve as an integral part of network-centric warfare. In fact, UAVs made this doctrine truly operational, because such systems genuinely enabled an enhanced situational awareness, rapid target assessment, and distributed weapon assignment. Now Turkey and Russia have learned this new military reality. Turkey particularly is working on integration of UAVs and robots (under development) into this doctrine.[32]

8. The drone swarm tactic makes it possible to detect and destroy enemy air-defense systems.

9. For EWS and the air-defense forces of any country, it became clear after Idlib that antidrone tactics and technique must be developed. Antidrone systems must be more sophisticated and effective. Reports from Syria and Libya indicate that antiquated air-defense and EWS systems are able to destroy drones, but not easily.

10. A technical aspect that manifested its importance in Idlib was the choice between an excellent quality camera and radio-electronic equipment or concentrating on the combat features of the drone. The drone's payload is limited; therefore, designers and military leaders must carefully assess what should be the priority.

11. The case of Pantsir systems shows that the even recently developed counter technologies are ill-prepared to handle drone warfare. The Russian specialists recognized that the system's hardware and software did not detect low-speed targets. They are hopeful that following an upgrade the Pantsir system will be able to destroy different types of UAVs. However, in the competition between Turkish UAVs and the Russian Pantsir system, the measure of success is not simply counted in numbers of kills but in replacement costs. The price of a Bayraktar UAV is roughly 2.5 million USD, whereas a Russian Pantsir costs about 14 million USD. Turkey lost 19 Bayraktars, which would cost about 47.5 million USD to replace. However, Russia lost eight Pantsir systems, which would cost Moscow a whopping 112 million USD to replace. Adding in the other targets destroyed in the drone attacks, including tanks and troops, the cost ratio becomes even more significant.

12. Drone production rates must increase. Within one month, Turkey lost a several of its drones, and to compensate for such losses, any country must develop an algorithm of drones' effective production vs. combat losses.

13. Developers must improve drones' quality, maneuverability, speed, stealth, and active or passive defense from air-to-air attack or SAMs.

14. UAVs allow for the participation of the highest-level politicians and generals in decisions for strikes against specific target in real time. Additionally, drones can conduct careful ISR and immediately destroy targets with the collective approval of all relevant decision makers. Before the advent of combat UAVs, this was the most serious weakness. The most famous incident occurred in 2000, when an American Predator UAV spotted Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan but was unable to attack. This was one of the main reasons why the weaponization of UAVs intensified.[33]

15. The sniper role is a unique element offered by UAVs, allowing operators to detect, track, and liquidate a particular person or a group of people whose deaths have a political or military significance.

16. Russia and Turkey have raised the issue of sovereignty over satellites. Since Moscow possesses its own GLONASS satellite navigation system, Russia only needs to wisely integrate the system into this new type of warfare. Turkey is very much aware its dependence on foreign satellite navigation systems. Ankara is planning to go in an alternative direction by developing a Navigation Feature with Internal Sensor Fusion that reportedly will reduce and possibly eliminate GPS dependency altogether.[34]

17. UAVs make it possible to patrol huge territories continually, highly complicating the processes of regrouping, retreating, counterattacking, or delivering reinforcements. Hence, drones provide an instant digital picture of the war in real time. The generals are able to see the war in a fashion similar to a video game, monitoring the entire battlefield without leaving their headquarters or even deploying. However, this does not make war any easier; on the contrary, it makes it highly complicated. For the generals in the building, their strategies must be more sophisticated in defining the goals and means of war at the tactical and strategic levels. Additionally, the doctrine of concealment must be improved.

18. However, the lessons learned from Operation Spring Shield have shown that small- and mid-sized combat UAVs are an extremely effective tool on the tactical battlefield. The area of the Idlib Province is 4,054 km2. Turkish commanders took this into account when they decided to use UAVs instead of warplanes. Thus, it is possible to assume that Russia will pay some serious attention to this fact, trying to compensate for such attacks in the near future.

19. The psychological effect when the enemy is unaware of the direction of the next attack is pivotal, because traditionally our mind-set is dividing

and categorizing reality. In case of war, there can be three main categories of areas: a safe zone, a war zone (the frontline), and an enemy zone. In the case of UAV use, the Idlib episode showed perfectly that soldiers' mindsets are ruined because from now on, they cannot feel secure in their supposed safe zone with drones sneaking into the rear, striking soldiers, weapons systems, and infrastructure.

20. From the abovementioned point is derive the next—a physical effect. UAVs have revolutionized the perception of the battlefield. Since the confrontation in Idlib, it is possible to say that the traditional concept of war, where the rear is more or less stable, is over. Aircraft are flying faster and are usually making strikes in the enemy's rear and returning to the base; however, UAVs are able to control the enemy's rear constantly.

21. The main limitation of drones, as with any other weapon system, is that eventually humanity will develop countermeasures against this advanced weaponry. Nevertheless, for the immediate future, UAVs will be, to some extent, a baffling enigma. From its lessons learned in Syria and Libya, Russia is working to develop air-defense and radio-electronic warfare tactics and systems to counter UAVs.

22. The success of Turkey in building its own UAV technologies paid off the enormous investments Ankara poured into the program throughout the past few decades. Undoubtedly, Turkey's experience will serve as an example for other countries (such as Poland) that they must develop their own military technologies. In case of war, Poland definitely will face an adversary armed with UAVs, robots, and artificial intelligence–enhanced weaponry. However, most political and military leaders continue to think and plan in terms of antiquated categories and modalities of war.

23. The humanitarian or moral question of drone warfare is very significant. Allegedly, UAVs are peerless when it comes to destroying the targets; however, the use of such weapons is prone to significant collateral damage—including the killing of civilians. Another point to consider is the aspect of drone operators, sitting at a base and not bound to the real battlefield and potentially prone to making operational mistakes.

24. Finally, I would say the most important advantage of UAVs is that they are useful tools for politicians. UAVs are able to achieve a tangible result without any meaningful human engagement. The definition of war and politics was never so close as it is now to the Clausewitzian concept that "the war is continuation of politics by other means." It is the one of the greatest advantages of the future of war that limits human losses by allowing a machine to perform missions that would traditionally have involved troops

or human pilots. This advantage will provide the impetus for the coming revolution in remote warfare.

The Geopolitical Implications of Tukey's Use of UAVs

The geopolitical aftermath of the conflict in the Idlib de-escalation zone is that Turkey managed to keep Idlib Province under Ankara's control, which would have been impossible without the use of UAVs. In Turkey's fight against the Kurds within Turkey and in Idlib, UAVs demonstrated a high technological level and resolved the biggest political problem facing international conflict—the human cost of military campaigns. Without UAVs, the number of Turkish soldiers needed to accomplish the same results would have been significantly higher. Turkey lost many UAVs during the conflict in Idlib, but to a politician the destruction of a UAV is incomparable with the deaths of his/her country's soldiers, particularly if the military campaign has a political sensitivity inside the country.

UAVs as an element of the twenty-first-century warfare definitely have a significant future, although major players are obviously working on the development of countermeasures. For example, with Russian support, the Syrian Air Defense Force reportedly destroyed approximately 20 Turkish UAVs with the help of Buk-M2E (NATO nomenclature: SA-17 Grizzly) SAM systems,[35] illustrating that such systems can be sufficient to undermine UAVs' superiority in the air. This was previously proven during the 2008 Russo–Georgian War, when similar Russian systems destroyed several Israeli-made Georgian drones.[36]

Turkey's reputation for UAV-centric warfare increased in the aftermath of Operation Spring Shield, during which Turkish drones inflicted the most sensitive losses on the army of Bashar al-Assad. Definitely, neither Russia nor Syria expected such a scenario. As a Russian expert writes, in some periods of these hostilities, the Syrian Army had an overt fear of drones, reminiscent of the fear of German tanks among the Red Army during World War II.[37] Russian combat journalists reported about this new phenomenon in the Syrian war and were definitely unhappy about it, because they continually had to hide from UAV attacks. One such journalist recognized that Turkish drones had changed the course of the war in Idlib.[38] Additionally, one of the most crucial issues for Russia is the role of Turkish-made UAVs in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Kiev bought six Turkish drones, and after Russia's Idlib experience, Moscow reacted nervously to such news coming from Ukraine.[39]

Russia and Turkey behave similarly in Syria and Libya. Once Russia had to intervene in the Syrian Civil War to save the Assad regime, and the same actually happened in December 2019, when Turkey decided to openly behave as a true great-power country without Western consent. In some context, these two countries

are buttressing each other in attaining the geopolitical power of their previous historical forms: the Ottoman and Russian Empires. Drone technology has brought Russia and Turkey to the fore of modern warfare, on a par with the United States.

The theorization of the UAV phenomenon in modern warfare is already being put into action. Still, Russia has not developed its abilities as well as the West, but it is only a matter time before it does so. For example, after the experience in Khmeimim, Russia created a specific term for such attacks: "a massive air micro-attack."[40] To fight with small drones, the army must work with new scientific approaches that are able to create the weapons that work on the new physical principles (laser, particle-beam, electromagnetic, and so forth).[41] For example, Russia conducted at least 15 military drills in November 2019 where the main task was to fight against UAVs by means of radio-electronic warfare.[42]

Russia made significant conclusions from the Idlib operation, and soon it seems to expect the massive production of combat drones. Even before Idlib, Russia had deeply recognized the essence of the problem, which is the lack of combat drones. However, the situation on the battlefield was never as dramatic as it turned out to be in Idlib this year. Idlib spurred the Russian military establishment to take more concrete steps. The main drone doctrine has already been developed, focusing on reconnaissance and targeting, but it is now likely that such doctrine will be altered significantly. Undoubtedly, Russia is on the way toward the creation of combat drones, as witnessed by the development of the S-70 Okhotnik-B (also referred to as Hunter-B) stealth heavy combat UAV. However, this is a heavy strike drone, and its scope is global or continental. Its creation was meant to challenge the super heavy league: the United States, China, and so forth.

The revolution of UAV warfare is spreading across the Middle East and beyond—from Yemen to Libya and from Syria to Ukraine. Turkey and Russia, not the United States, are now determining the future of the region, which is a logical development given the history of the region. When the ideological expansion fades away, the power vacuum usually is filled by normal or traditional powers, which in this case Turkey and Russia represent. In Syria and Libya, world armies are forging the tactics, techniques, and strategies of future wars.

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It Is Time to Embrace the European Union's Strategic Autonomy in Space

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Abstract

This article discusses why and how the United States should pivot from holding a long-standing skeptical view toward the European Union's (EU) strategic autonomy (SA) initiatives in the space domain to embracing them. The article first highlights how the EU has advanced its research and development in space. It then discusses how the strategic environment has changed, specifically with NATO declaring space an operational domain, the US supporting greater interoperability with European allies and partners within its *National Defense Strategy*, Russia's growing threat to the Baltics, and Europe's increased appetite to leverage space for defense purposes. The article then recommends how the United States could embrace and further the EU's space initiatives by leveraging Washington's power within NATO—all while remaining cognizant of Europe's waning views of the US defense industrial base. Finally, the article demonstrates how the United States, European Union, and NATO could all benefit from America's pivot in this burgeoning domain.

Introduction and Background

Over the past two decades, the European Union has taken significant steps to assume greater responsibility in strengthening its security and building its defense industrial base. In 2016, the bloc codified this effort in its "Global Strategy." Within this strategic document, the European Union introduced the concept of *strategic autonomy* (SA) as it relates to European security and defense. Although the strategy recognized that NATO exists to defend its members—most of which are European—from external attack, it stressed that Europeans must be better equipped, trained, and organized to contribute decisively to such collective efforts, as well as to act autonomously if and when necessary.[1] Since the European Union announced its SA plan, its member states have aggressively collaborated on 47 new defense projects within the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework and process. [2] These projects are largely focused in the areas of space; air; land; maritime; cyber; training; logistics; and command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR).[3]

Specifically within the space domain, the PESCO projects aim to enhance space-based ballistic missile early warning systems, military use of the Galileo Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), and space situational awareness (SSA).[4] For example, France is leading the Timely Warning and Interception with Space-based Theater Surveillance (TWISTER) project with support from Spain, Finland, Italy, and the Netherlands. This project will enable Europeans to better detect, track, and counter missile threats through a combination of enhanced capabilities for space-based early warning and endoatmospheric interceptors.[5] France is also leading the EU Radio Navigation Solution (EURAS) project. Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Poland have a supporting role in this initiative, which will promote the development of EU military positioning, navigation, and timing capabilities and leverage the GNSS public-regulated service.[6] Additionally, Italy and France co-lead the European Military Space Surveillance Awareness Network (EU-SSA-N) project, which calls for developing an autonomous, sovereign EU military SSA capability that is interoperable, integrated, and harmonized with the EU Space Surveillance and Tracking (SST) support framework.[7] Together, the EU-SSA-N and SST will detect, catalogue, and predict movements of space objects and debris orbiting earth and alert spacecraft operators in an effort to mitigate the risk of collision.[8] In another initiative, Germany is leading Austria, Greece, France, Portugal, and Romania in the Geo-Meteorological and Oceanographic (GEOMETOC) Support Coordination Element (GMSE) project that will leverage data derived from member states' meteorological, environmental monitoring, and oceanographic satellites to support military operations.[9] Finally, Spain is leading Germany, France, Italy, Portugal, and the Netherlands in the Strategic Command and Control (C2) System for Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) Missions and Operations project, which will leverage satellite communications and remote sensing to execute missions and operations where the European Union takes a leading role in conflict prevention, peacekeeping operations, and crisis management.[10]

These initiatives are clearly indicative of the EU's desire to assume greater responsibility in the collective defense of Europe. One may think the United States would welcome or even encourage EU member state collaboration to enhance the security of Europe; however, for the better part of 20 years, US administrations have largely met such initiatives with reservations and mixed views. Pres. Bill Clinton took a firm stance that EU defense initiatives must not decouple the United States from Europe, duplicate NATO structures and capabilities, nor discriminate against NATO members that do not belong to the EU.[11] The George W. Bush administration was also critical of such initiatives, while the Obama administration was somewhat more supportive.[12] In recent years, the Trump ad-

ministration has raised concerns that the initiatives may limit US influence in Europe, harm alliance interoperability, and steal market share from American defense contractors in the European market.[13]

Why Washington Should Support the EU's Strategic Autonomy

If the Unites States were to reassess the strategic environment, as it pertains to the transatlantic alliance, the analysis may lead America to reconsider its long-standing unenthusiastic position on the EU's SA defense initiatives, particularly those in the space domain. Below, are several reasons why it is an opportune time to embrace such initiatives:

NATO's Newest Operational Domain: Space

In December 2019, 29 heads of state and government from each NATO member state met in London. One of the key deliverables of the meeting was NATO declaring space a new military operational domain—joining air, land, sea, and cyberspace.[14] With the declaration, NATO will begin strengthening capabilities in the space domain. According to NATO's recently published military strategy, NATO has no intention to put weapons in space and does not seek to become an autonomous space actor.[15] Instead, NATO will serve as a forum for allies to share relevant information to increase interoperability and to ensure the alliance's operations receive necessary support from national space capabilities.[16]

Although some argue NATO is slow to respond to changes in the operational environment, such critics should consider NATO's aggressive response to the burgeoning cyberspace domain before passing judgment. In 2014, the allies made cyberdefense a core part of collective defense, declaring that a cyberattack could lead to the invocation of the collective defense clause, commonly referred to as Article 5, of NATO's founding treaty.[17] Moreover, in 2016, the allies recognized cyberspace as a new military operational domain and further pledged to enhance the cyber defenses of their national networks and infrastructure as a matter of priority.[18] Since then, NATO has created cyber rapid reaction teams to respond to cyberattacks, established a Cyberspace Operations Center to adapt and respond to the evolving threat landscape, and integrated sovereign cyber capabilities into alliance operations and missions.[19]

NATO, specifically the EU member states within the alliance, both collectively and individually, have unquestionably built capacity in a short period within the cyberspace domain. These efforts have enhanced the collective defense of Europe. Arguably, if NATO were to build capacity and leverage its member states' capabilities in the space domain as quickly as it did in the cyberspace domain, the

United States could indirectly further enhance the collective defense of Europe by welcoming, shaping, and informing such initiatives in a manner that complements NATO's deterrence efforts.

US National Defense Strategy Alignment

The 2018 US Department of Defense (DOD) *National Defense Strategy* (*NDS*) has three distinct lines of effort (LOE): (1) rebuilding military readiness while building a more lethal joint force, (2) strengthening alliances and attracting new partners, and (3) reforming the DOD's business practices for greater performance and affordability.[20] Specifically, within the first line of effort, the DOD called for deterring aggression in Europe by modernizing key capabilities, which includes prioritizing investments in resilience, reconstitution, and operations to assure its space capabilities.[21] Also, within the second line of effort, the DOD calls for deepening interoperability with European allies and partners, fortifying the transatlantic alliance, and expecting NATO members to fulfill their commitments to increase defense and modernization spending.

If the United States were to support the European Union's SA initiatives in the space domain, it would advance both LOEs. By investing and modernizing EU space domain initiatives, the United States would indirectly support NATO's collective defense, as 22 EU member states are also NATO allies. Furthermore, by making a small investment in EU space initiatives, Washington can allocate more funds toward highly innovative and exquisite national space assets than if it were to autonomously develop space capabilities for the European theater. Furthermore, by informing and shaping EU SA space domain initiatives, the United States can ensure the systems are interoperable, complement NATO's collective defense, and support US European Command's (EUCOM) operational plans. Additionally, for those EU member states that are also NATO allies, their investments in EU SA space initiatives counts toward their NATO burden sharing goal of 2 percent of gross domestic product and 20 percent of defense expenditures for either major equipment or research and development.[22] As noted by Senator Marco Rubio (R–FL), the EU's SA might be one of the best chances of bringing about increased European defense spending and more capabilities, which would be to the benefit of European security.[23] Finally, as many EU space initiatives are dual-use in nature, the United States stands to gain political equity, good will, and capabilities that further other national interests. Ultimately, supporting EU SA initiatives in the space domain would fortify the NATO alliance, strengthen Europe's collective defense, and increase assurance among US allies and partners in the region.

Relevance to the Russian Threat

From 2016–2019, the RAND Corporation and National Defense University (NDU) explored the most significant security challenges facing the Baltic States through focused strategic research and a series of multinational, interactive theater war games.[24] One of the recommendations resulting from the war games was for NATO to adapt an overall strategic concept that seamlessly transitions from deterrence through countering Russia's gray-zone activities onto conventional war.[25] As part of the suggestion, the authors recommended NATO invest in technologies that can revolutionize the potency of frontline states' hedgehog defenses, such as small warheads, 3-D manufacturing, drones, task-specific artificial intelligence, robust cyber capabilities, and inexpensive space capabilities.[26] More specifically, the authors recommended NATO and its regional partners should also invest in low-cost and commercially available micro and cube satellites to create a resilient space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capability.[27] Although the RAND and NDU studies were myopic in nature, focusing on only one Russian scenario, the importance and utility of leveraging interoperable space-based assets to provide early warning indications of an impending Russian attack along a different axis of advance cannot be overstated. EU SA initiatives in the space domain could complement NATO's collective defense in the Baltics and elsewhere along its eastern flank.

Europe's Growing Appetite to Leverage Space for Security and Defense Purposes

After the European Space Agency (ESA) was established in 1973, it became one of the world's leading organization for civil space cooperation, eventually growing to 22 nation-state members.[28] Similar to NASA, ESA was initially focused on exploring space for exclusively peaceful objectives, using space research and technology for scientific purposes and operational space application systems.[29] However, with the continuous militarization of space, ESA has begun cooperating with the European Defense Agency (EDA) on several defense initiatives since 2014.[30] In January, French Air Force general Michel Friedling, head of France's new Space Command, expressed his concern over the vulnerability of ESA's Galileo, European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS), and Copernicus satellite systems because they are used for both civilian and military purposes.[31] EU policy makers have also begun to drop their opposition to linking Europe's civilian space assets with defense elements.[32] Indicative of this paradigm shift, the European Commission recently created a new branch, the Director General of Defense Industry and Space (DEFIS), which was long resisted by

London while Britain was an EU member.[33] Even during recent EU budget negotiations, the chair of the EU's European Parliament's Subcommittee for Security and Defense, MEP Nathalie Loisau stated, "Europe needs to work on the space dimension of the EU military space network, finalize the space program, and needs the budget to have the right means to do it."[34] This tenor has also been reflected in the work of the EU's Satellite Center (SatCen), a decentralized agency founded in 1992, which provides geospatial and imagery intelligence derived from member state and commercial satellite providers to a myriad of users and partners, including the EDA and units performing EU missions and operations.[35] It is clear, that in the absence of NATO having any dedicated space assets, the European Union has the will, intent, and burgeoning capabilities in the space domain that NATO and the United States should consider leveraging toward the collective defense of Europe.

European Off-Putting Perception of US Defense Industrial Base

The European Union has consistently run a massive annual trade deficit in terms of defense imports and exports with the United States. Between 2011–2015, more than three-quarters of international defense contracts in the European Union went to US firms.[36] This topic has become a point of contention among prominent European leaders, recently prompting French defense minister Florence Parly to make a point that the mutual-defense provision of the NATO treaty does not require European countries to buy American fighter jets, stating "It's called Article 5, not Article F-35."[37] On a more macro level, the combined arms exports of EU member states accounted for 27 percent of the global total in 2014–2018, while the United States alone accounted for 36 percent.[38] In 2019, four of the top five largest defense contractors were US firms.[39] Further compounding matters, Europe's defense spending has historically been plagued with redundancies and inefficiencies.[40] As a matter of fact, the European Union was largely driven by economic factors in adopting its SA defense initiatives—specifically the desire to develop a robust European defense industry.[41] It is true that US foreign military sales may decrease if the United States supports EU SA defense initiatives; however, there are other factors America should consider. By informing and shaping the space domain initiatives with the EU, US defense firms could ensure interoperability, pursue joint ventures, and offset research and development costs.

How the US Can Support the EU's Initiatives

If one believes the current strategic environment, as it pertains to the transatlantic alliance, warrants the United States supporting, fostering, and possibly even

investing in EU SA defense initiatives in the space domain, how should it proceed? Guided by the *NDS*, US actions should naturally align with two of the three *NDS* LOEs.

Strengthen Alliances and Attract New Partners LOE

The European Union and NATO have a history of collaborating on matters of security and defense. In 2003, they instituted the Berlin Plus arrangement, which established a cooperative framework that allowed the European Union to coordinate and deconflict planning efforts with NATO for EU-led military missions.[42] Since the European Union announced its SA Plan, the European Union and NATO have made two joint declarations. This first declaration, in 2016, called for enhancing cooperation on cybersecurity and cyber defense as well as countering hybrid threats and illegal migration.[43] Two years later in 2018, the organizations issued a second declaration where they agreed to cooperate on initiatives in military mobilization; counterterrorism; resilience to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN)–related risks; and promoting the women, peace, and security agenda.[44]

From a security and defense standpoint, the United States has greater leverage with NATO than with the European Union. The United States is the largest contributor to NATO and has commanded Allied Command Operations (ACO), the military arm of NATO, since the inception of the alliance. Through NATO, Washington should support the European Union's pursuit of SA initiatives in the space domain and encourage the alliance to pursue an opportunity to build upon the 2003 Berlin Plus arrangement and the joint declarations of 2016 and 2018. Washington, by proxy of NATO, can leverage the existing policy to proactively inform and shape EU SA projects in the space domain. As part of this effort, NATO should assign a contingent of senior military leaders to the European Union and charge them with the responsibility of ensuring EU SA initiatives in the space domain enhance NATO's collective defense. If done properly, EU SA projects in the space domain can enhance the European Union's agility to surge forces for missions outside of NATO's charter such as migration control, law enforcement, and counterterrorism, while simultaneously enhancing NATO's collective readiness, posture, and deterrence.

Rebuilding Military Readiness while Building a More Lethal Joint Force LOE

Similar to NATO, EUCOM and the US defense industrial base could benefit from informing and shaping EU SA initiatives in the space domain. As part of

the aforementioned NATO contingent assigned to the European Union, EU-COM should appoint a group of US military and civilian experts who are steeped in space operations support to civil and military missions. These experts would serve three functions. First, from an operational standpoint, they would encourage the European Union to prioritize SA projects in the space domain that fulfil outstanding capabilities gaps needed to execute EUCOM's theater operations, contingency plans, and support globally integrated operations (GIO). Second, from an acquisition perspective, the US members of the contingent should evaluate the SA projects in the space domain and seek opportunities to either procure capabilities not offered by the US space industrial base and/or identify projects the European Union might consider entering as a joint venture with a US firm. This would enable the DOD to focus on developing highly innovative capabilities designed to gain a competitive advantage over near-peer adversaries while simultaneously supporting the burgeoning European defense industry. Finally, the experts should advise the European Union on dual-use opportunities of the SA projects in the space domain.

Counterargument

Some may argue that leveraging US power within NATO to influence EU SA initiatives in the space domain, for the purpose of pursuing US national interests, is riddled with problems or is not the right approach for the United States. There is a risk the European Union would not welcome a contingent, or would see it through the lens of US-centric overtures or suggestions. Within the European Union, there may not be a consensus to pursue initiatives in the space domain that improve NATO's collective defense, particularly by Austria, Finland, Malta, Sweden, Cyprus, and Ireland, who are members of the EU but not NATO, and are therefore by definition not protected by Article 5. Finally, if the European Union and NATO fielded dual-use space-based systems, there is a question of which body would prioritize the use or assume operational control of those systems during times of peace, crisis, or war.

Although these are valid concerns, transparency and candidness on the part of the United States would bode well if it were to pursue assigning personnel to a NATO contingent. If the European Union was not initially receptive to the idea of working with a NATO contingent with US representation, the United States should first try selling the proposal's benefits, namely, the dual-use potential of space-based assets, catalyst to the burgeoning European industrial base, and autonomy gained by relying less on US defense capabilities. If not yet persuaded, the United States should acknowledge the risk America would assume under such an arrangement, specifically, relying on a trade union for defense capabilities, de-

pending on member state contributions to PESCO's European Defense Fund (EDF) that pays for SA projects, and US defense contractors losing market share in Europe. If none of these convinces the European Union to work with the contingent, the United States should offer to make an annual contribution to the EDF in exchange for some form of collaborative arrangement. Finally, if all the aforementioned approaches fail to convince the European Union to collaborate with NATO and the United States on space domain initiatives, Washington should abandon the effort and pursue bilateral arrangements with advanced spacefaring nations in Europe that will further America's national interests as well as that of its cooperating allies and/or partners.

Conclusion

Since 2016, the European Union has demonstrated a will, intent, and capability to exploit the space domain for civil and military use under its Strategic Autonomy Plan—particularly in the areas of ballistic missiles, early warning systems, dual-use spacecraft, SSA, satellite communications, and remote sensing. Since then, NATO has declared space as a military operational domain, the United States has professed investing in space capabilities while fortifying the NATO alliance a priority, Russia has developed capabilities to exploit NATO's absence in the space domain, and the European Union has made a concerted effort to breathe life into its burgeoning defense industrial base that has long been dwarfed by that of the United States. Holistically, these elements of the operational environment suggest the United States should reconsider its traditional unenthusiastic view of EU security and defense initiatives, particularly in the space domain. The United States should consider exploiting standing NATO–EU policy, while leveraging US influence within NATO by assigning a senior team of military and civilian leaders/experts steeped in space operations to the European Union to shape, inform, and possibly invest in EU SA initiatives in the space domain. From a military standpoint, such an effort would enable the United States to ensure such initiatives are interoperable with US space systems, complement NATO's collective defense, and support EUCOM's operational plans and role in GIO. Diplomatically, US support would bolster security assurance among its European allies and partners, build the European defense industrial base, and signal relevance and credibility to an European Union that has recently shown signs of fracturing in the aftermath of the Brexit. From and economic perspective, US support may lead to dual-use secondary and tertiary benefits for all nations involved, while simultaneously enabling the DOD and US defense contractors to procure technologies or offset research and development costs through pursuing joint ventures with European defense firms—partially offsetting market share loss by US defense contractors in

Europe. From and information standpoint, US support would positively reinforce security and defense burden sharing among European nations, further deter Russian aggression, and enable the United States to gain influence among non-NATO EU members without endorsing the expansion of NATO, which would otherwise escalate tensions with Russia. Finally, such an approach, if done under the veil of NATO, would give the European Union exactly what it is seeking: a stronger European defense industrial base, the image of a more autonomous Europe, and capabilities Europe can leverage for missions outside of NATO's charter. In summary, the current operational environment suggests the timing is right for the United States to leverage its position within NATO to inform, shape, and invest in EU SA initiatives in the space domain to advance America's national interests, enhance the common defense of Europe, and strengthen the transatlantic alliance across all elements of national power.

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Islamic Radicalization in Belgium

Vinayak Dalmia

While the total number of Muslims in Belgium is estimated at less than a million, far less than countries like France and Germany, the country's sparse population (11 million) means Muslims comprise approximately 6 percent of the country's inhabitants.[1] Similar to France, Belgium does not record censuses on the basis of religion, leaving the exact figure a subject of speculation. In fact, the two countries share a great deal with regards to their Muslim populations: their history in the country, current realities, and attempted measures to mitigate the issues that arise from different cultures. A complicating factor is the preexisting divide in the country between the Dutch-speaking North (Flanders) and primarily French-speaking South (Wallonia).

Belgium's Muslim population traces its history in the country to the migration laws of the 1960s, where workers from North Africa were welcomed to bolster the country's labor needs. Bilateral agreements with Turkey and Morocco encouraged migration, and Muslims from these countries form the bulk of the Islamic population in Belgium even today.[2] Historically, the Flemish (Dutch heritage) political parties have been more conservative than the French- and German-speaking Walloons; the Flemish deride multiculturalism and host negative attitudes towards non-EU immigrants. One of the reasons for this can be that the workers recruited in the 1960s flocked to large industrial towns like Antwerp, most of which are in Flanders. Perceived problems in integration in Flanders led to the spread of slogans like "Turkish rats, roll your mats" being regularly chanted at the Flemish Bloc's (Vlaams Belang) rallies in the 1990s, a decade before large terror attacks like 9/11 occurred.[3] Belgium's federal structure ensures that local parties have a greater say in governance and policies regarding Islam and immigrants, leading to differences in how Islam, Islamization, and radicalization are approached in different parts of the country.

Ironically, for a country that now has to contend with worrisome radicalization, Belgium was the first country in Europe to recognize Islam as an official religion in 1974. Between 9/11 and the advent of the Islamic State of Syria and the Levant (ISIL), Belgium was spared the kind of terrorist attacks that struck other countries in Europe like the United Kingdom and Spain. However, larger issues of integration of Islamic immigrants with Belgian "values" have existed since the 1990s. As far back as 1989, the Belgian Royal Commission for Immigrants Policy released an integration strategy that was seen as a compromise between a purely

multicultural approach and the rigid assimilationist views held by right-wing Flemish parties. This strategy entailed the following:

1. Assimilation where public order makes it compulsory;

2. Promotion of the highest degree of fundamental social principles under-pinning the culture of the host society, which correspond to modernity, emancipation, and pluralism in the sense given by modern Western states; and

3. Unequivocal respect for cultural diversity as a process of mutual enrich-ment in all other domains of social life.[4]

This strategy reflects the decades-old divide in the country between the Flem-ish and Walloons, with their interaction in Brussels often leading to disagree-ments and then compromises about these contentious issues. An estimated 300,000 Muslims live in Flanders, comprising ~5 percent of the region's popula-tion, similar to the proportion of Muslims in Wallonia (~5 percent), numbering approximately 175,000. However, the national capital of Brussels, a separate re-gion altogether, hosts approximately 200,000–275,000 Muslims, comprising 20–25 percent of the city's population. [56] Additionally, close to 40 percent of all Bel-gian Muslims live in Brussels, making the city a crucial case study for integration, radicalization, and deradicalization.

Points that cause friction between the various groups in the country include an increasing Islamic population (right-wing groups claim Muslims in Brussels will form the majority group in two to three decades), Islamic values versus "Western" values, and the steady increase of radicalized individuals in the country. Within the country, Flemish groups often deride Wallonian parties for being too soft on Islam and immigration. In 2011, Belgium introduced a veil ban that made face-covering veils like the *niqab* and *burqa* illegal, which was challenged by two Mus-lim women on the grounds of respect for private life and freedom of religion. The ban was later upheld by the European Court of Human Rights.[7] In state-run el-ementary schools in Brussels, the proportion of students opting for Christian in-struction is estimated at 24 percent, while Muslim lessons have been opted for by approximately 51 percent of attending students. If one were to include faith-based elementary schools, children receiving Islamic education are close to 30 percent of that age group in Brussels.[8]

Terror attacks in Belgium since the inception of ISIL include a 2018 stabbing–shooting spree in Liège by a man radicalized in prison, an attempted Nice-style vehicular attack in 2017, and, most significantly, the Brussels airport/train station suicide bombings in March 2016 that killed 32 people. Belgium has favorable

conditions for extremists in many ways—an underfunded security establishment grappling with different agencies across levels and regions of government, a flourishing black arms market, and proximity to several other European capitals. Molenbeek, a primarily Muslim neighborhood in Brussels located 10 minutes from the city center, is now known as a "no-go zone" and considered a hotbed of extremism. The neighborhoods infamy increased due to its links to the Paris 2015 and Brussels 2016 terrorists. While youth unemployment in the country is at a staggering 23.2 percent, that of Belgian youth born outside the EU is almost 45 percent. Molenbeek has an estimated overall unemployment rate of 30 percent, and youth unemployment of almost 40 percent.[9] In 2017, the neighborhood housed 49 terror suspects per 100,000 people; the rest of Belgium had a ratio of 3 per 100,000.[10] Five of the neighborhood's 25 mosques and Quranic schools have been shut as of 2018 on the grounds of fostering militant versions of Islam.

Belgium also has the unfortunate distinction of being the point of origin for the most foreign ISIL fighters per capita in Western Europe, with an estimated 450 Belgians having traveled to the Middle East in 2015 and 2016, including women and children.[11] Of these, an estimated 207 were from Brussels alone, and about 115 from Antwerp. Almost none of the fighters were from Wallonia. While Belgium is reluctant to repatriate foreign fighters from Syria and Iraq, there are approximately 137 Belgian children in those two countries, most of whom were born there. About 115 returnees are thought to be alive in Belgium as of 2018.[12] Even the returnees imprisoned will be released starting in 2021, with unclear implications for the Belgian polity.

Groups like Sharia4Belgium, Resto du Tawheed, and the Zerkani network have contributed to jihadi radicalization in Belgium in recent years. The first two are considered similar to Islam4UK, and were active in Antwerp and Brussels North respectively, with the third the primary recruiter in Molenbeek.[13] Sharia-4Belgium's founder is understood to have preached jihad in public, amplified by an expansive social media presence, even attracting individuals from higher socio-economic strata in the city. The group relied on utilizing personal and familial connections in neighborhoods with ethnoreligious homogeneity, sometimes also quoting right-wing rhetoric prevalent in Flanders. Recruiters are believed to have been paid 2,000–10,000 USD, depending on the number and skill set of their recruits.[14] Resto du Tawheed has operated in Brussels North train station, recruiting under the garb of free meals to destitute Muslims.[15] The organization's leader, Jean-Louis Denis was arrested and convicted in 2013 after two underage students traveled to Syria, but Denis was released in 2018. The Instrumental in recruiting the Paris 2015 and Brussels 2016 attackers, the Zerkani network in Molenbeek

has been described as an organization of gangster jihadis. The group is believed to have paid 6,000 Euros to those willing to join ISIL in Iraq and Syria.[16]

The Belgian government has undertaken various measures in the past and in recent years to mitigate the threat of Islamic radicalization. The Belgian penal code was revised in 2015 to expand the definition of terrorism, now including traveling to join a terrorist organization abroad.[17] On the technology front, the country has banned the sale of anonymous prepaid SIM cards, which facilitate communication within extremist groups. There does not appear to be any mass surveillance program in place, with the legal system still requiring specific warrant-based surveillance.

ISIL fighters returning to Belgium are imprisoned for an average of five years, lesser sentences than meted out in countries like the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. Even such light sentences exacerbate concerns over the issue of radicalization in prisons.[18] No efforts have been made to isolate these imprisoned returnees from the prisons' "general population" in most cases, ensuring these fighters continue to radicalize others while in prison.[19] While Muslims make up only 6 percent of the country's population, they are believed to comprise 20–30 percent of the prison population, reiterating the danger of not establishing and enforcing separate penitentiary arrangements for individuals identified as radicalized.[20] The case of Nizar Trabelsi is one example. An al-Qaeda operative, Trabelsi was involved in an attempt to drive an explosives-packed car into a NATO air base in 2003. He was noted for being extremely popular, teaching Arabic and passing around copies of the Quran, while proselytizing during social hours, throughout the subsequent 10 years he spent in a Belgian prison.[21]

Formed in 1996, the Executive of the Muslims of Belgium (EMB) is the official interlocutor between Belgian Muslims and local, regional, and federal governments. Among the organization's responsibilities are organizing Muslim education, presentation and training of imams, and officially recognizing local mosques. In recent years, the organization has taken control of Brussels' Grand Mosque, run by Saudi Arabia since 1969 on a 99-year lease. After the 2016 attacks, the mosque came under scrutiny for espousing Salafism, which resulted in the Belgian government transferring control to the EMB. The mosque's Egyptian imam, Abdelhadi Sewif, was denied an extension on his residence permit in 2017, which a court then reversed on the grounds of no substantial evidence.[22] The Belgian State Secretary for Asylum and Migration had characterized him as "a danger to the national security of the country" for preaching an extremely conservative strain of Islam.[23] Belgian Interior Minister Jan Jambon justified the move, saying, "in this way we are tackling Salafist, violent extremist influences."[24] However, there appears to be no concerted push to identify and monitor other sources

of radicalization in local mosques (an estimated 400 in the country) and other community meeting points.[25]

While the security establishment is undoubtedly keeping tabs on violent extremism, it is unclear if the EMB alone can meet a mandate of efficiently monitoring mosques and radicalizing messages in the social sphere. As the role of mosques in radicalization lessens, being replaced with informal settings in introverted communities (assisted a great deal by digital technology), a careful look at policies to mitigate Muslim alienation is necessary. Any new policies have to tackle the increasing appeal of extremist Islamic thought and a fast-growing Muslim youth demographic and balance those concerns against the resurgence of right-wing parties that continually grow more hostile toward Belgian Muslims. These policies will also need to be drafted keeping in mind the regional differences across the country, without making them ineffectual in an attempt to pander to different groups. With an increasing call for an Islam compatible with Belgian values, rifts between Belgium's Muslims and the rest of the country on a variety of issues may prove to be just as serious a problem as the violent Islamists one sees today.

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A Concise History of Sunnis & Shi'is by John McHugo. Georgetown University Press, 2018, 347 pp.

Is bloody sectarian violence in the Middle East an inevitable consequence of the millennia-old Sunni and Shi'i divide in Islam? Or, as author John McHugo contests, are today's Middle East battlefields shaped more by politics than dogma? In *A Concise History of Sunnis and Shi'is*, McHugo outlines the 1,400-year history of Islam, detailing not only the foundations of several Islamic sects (aside from Sunnism and Shi'ism) but also outlining secular causes of contemporary conflict.

A Middle East expert, McHugo pivoted from an Arabic language scholar to international lawyer to a historian focusing on the Arab world. He serves as the honorary senior fellow at the Center for Syrian Studies at the University of St Andrews and has published related works, including *Syria: A Recent History* and *A Concise History of the Arabs*. It is McHugo's apolitical and intellectually-intensive viewpoint that guides readers from the death of the Prophet Muhammad through intricate political (and religious) Islamic schisms up until present-day discord.

The two-part book first describes seventh-century Islamic political struggles following the death of the Prophet. Through this lens readers understand the initial Sunni/Shi'i divide. The book then details nearly every other splintering among Muslims up through the Ottoman Empire and the eighteenth-century Islamic Reformation. The second half of *A Concise History* draws on the reader's newfound knowledge of Islam to better grasp the causes of regional strife over the past 200 years. The final section explores contemporary feuds like Saudi Arabia's opposition to Iran or ISIS's animosity for Shi'ism. With plain language and accessible analysis, McHugo tackles the expansive history of Islam and educates the reader on the nuanced conflict raging in the Middle East.

Islam, like other organized religions, was not immune to damaging human influence. That is, its adherents' struggle for power following the death of Muhammad resulted in centuries of political wrangling and outright bloodshed. Simply put, the primary schism between Sunni and Shi'i Muslims centers not only around who is the rightful successor to Muhammad but also which interpretation of sharia, or religious law, is valid. In the first question, early Muslims split on who should politically succeed Muhammed as the caliph of Islam when he failed to name a successor. In the second question, as Muslims temporally distanced from the Prophet and the Companions who personally knew him, sharia relied less on firsthand accounts of the Prophet's teachings and more about interpretation from religious law scholars.

Sunnis hold that the leader or caliph of Islam need not be a familial descendent and, later, that law scholars can interpret sharia by referencing the Qur'an and hadith, the collection of teachings ascribed to Muhammed. Conversely, Shi'is believe that the Twelve Imams who directly descend from the Prophet are the true leaders of the secular organization as well as the infallible interpreters of religious sharia. (Note: There are several branches of Shi'ism. For simplicity, this review references Shi'ism as it relates to "Twelvers," the largest sect of Shi'ism. McHugo also details several other sects of Islam that emerged during the early struggle to determine succession and control of the Islamic empire.) Though disagreements arose over religious authority following the Prophet's death, Sunni and Shi'i sects share enough common theological connections that the casual student of Islam would be hard-pressed to differentiate. The divisions between sects were not exacerbated until the twentieth century due to political rather than theological notions.

Well before the rise of nationalism in the twentieth century, imperialism swept across the Middle East—first in a wave of Mongols then Ottomans. During their conquests of the Abbasid Caliphate (the Muslim empire at that time) in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Mongols adopted and spread Sunni Islam to better integrate with conquered people and, as a political move, more efficiently raise taxes. In fifteenth- to eighteenth-century Iran, the Safavid dynasty converted to Shi'i Islam to solidify political power over the region. Concurrently, the Ottoman Empire arose from a Sunni Turkish tribe and became a great power with land holdings extending from Europe across North Africa to the Middle East. Although the Ottoman Empire was a staunch defender of Sunnism, this advocacy was less likely due to religious conviction and more likely the result of

militarily posturing against the Safavid dynasty. The decline of Middle East empires in the face of rising European imperial powers resulted in the drawing of arbitrary national borders. Being exposed to Western ideas and contained by artificial boundaries, the newly formed Middle Eastern countries juggled both the concept of localized nationalism and the supernationalism afforded by Islam. While disdain for the opposing sect of Islam continued, political motivations rather than doctrinal divides still proved the main wedge between Sunnis and Shi'is.

The archetypal religious row between Sunni and Shi'i sects root primarily in the politics of the twentieth century and the foundation of present-day Saudi Arabia and Iran. In the early twentieth century, Muhammad ibn Saud led the al-Saud family to establish its emirate on the Arabian Peninsula after military action and a governmental appointment by the Ottoman Empire. At the time, Ottoman authorities cooperated with prominent Shi'i Muslims. However, ibn Saud, who practiced Wahhabism, a strict form of Sunnism, took a more aggressive stance toward Shi'ism. In his opinion, it was an inferior form of Islam. The subsequent rising oil price and ensuing wealth led to the advance of both Saudi Arabia and Wahhabism.

Around that same time, the Iranian Revolution unfolded due to grievances against government corruption and repression. A second secular goal of the revolution was to return to more traditional Islamic values. One objective of the new Iranian constitution was "to ensure the continuation of the revolution at home and abroad." Importantly, because the new constitution based itself on Qur'anic values, Iran viewed its revolution as appealing to Islamic supernationalism and expressed these convictions in its constitution: "the government . . . must constantly strive to bring about political, economic, and cultural unity of the Islamic world." Iran, at its core, is not anti-Sunni, and its actions, in effect, are a response to the artificial boundaries levied by imperial Europe. Unfortunately, in recent history, foreign intervention collapsed regional governments; in turn, local populations coalesced not around national identity (which disappeared with the local government) but instead around shared community identities—the most readily apparent of which is religion. As both Saudi Arabia and Iran attempt to shape regional politics to their respective advantages, both leverage the networks of sectarian Islam. Once more, this new "us versus them" mentality is less about hierological distinctions and more a consequence of secular end goals.

McHugo's *A Concise History of Sunnis and Shi'is* delves into much more nuanced detail about both the machinations of early Islamic leaders and the drivers of the current Middle Eastern conflict. The amount of detail contributes to the richness of the text but also at times hinders the casual reader. With few maps, timelines, and charts, the reader must often backtrack to untangle chronology and understand character origins. Visual depictions of the multiple sects of Islam would have been helpful for instance. Additionally, the text ends abruptly with no real conclusion—though, as a history primer, this may be for the best. In short, *A Concise History of Sunnis and Shi'is* manages to be exhaustive without being exhausting—this book is recommended to readers who desire an understanding of Middle Eastern conflict not as a millennia-old holy war but rather a modern political struggle with religious roots.

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