



TERRORIST THREAT IN 2014

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Abstract:

The threat of international and national terrorism is projected to grow in 2014. With half of the countries in the world suffering from political violence and ideological extremism, terrorism will remain the tier-one national security threat to the stability of most countries in 2014.

Keywords: Terrorism, Extremism, National Security.

Resumen:

La amenaza que supone el terrorismo nacional e internacional crecerá en 2014. Con la mitad de los Estados del mundo sufriendo la violencia política y el extremismo ideológico, el terrorismo seguirá siendo la amenaza de primer nivel para la estabilidad de la mayoría de los Estados en 2014.

Palabras clave: *Terrorismo, extremismo, seguridad nacional.*

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1. Introduction

The year 2013 has been the most violent since the beginning of the contemporary wave of terrorism. Although al Qaeda core has decreased in size, the group has become even more influential. With its extraordinary presence on the web, al Qaeda is guiding its associates to fight back. With the Western drawdown from Afghanistan in 2014, the Taliban-led terrorist sanctuary will likely be reconstituted once again, threatening global stability and security.

The threat of international and national terrorism is projected to grow in 2014. With half of the countries in the world suffering from political violence and ideological extremism, terrorism will remain the tier-one national security threat to the stability of most countries in 2014.

With Afghanistan and Syria emerging as the two most important hubs of global terrorism, the security of South Asia, the Levant and the Sahel is threatened. Like the anti-Soviet multi-national Afghan mujahidin campaign formed the foundation of contemporary terrorism, the blow back from Syria is likely to produce the next generation of fighters - both guerrillas that attack government forces and terrorists that attack civilians.

2. The Context

Today, the conflicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India are the most violent conflicts. After South Asia, the Middle East - Syria and Iraq - and Africa - Nigeria and Somalia - are the most violent. Since 9/11, over a million combatants and non-combatants have been killed or injured, mostly Muslims by terrorists and US-led coalitions to fight insurrections and terrorist campaigns.

According to the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan - suffered more than half of 2012's attacks (54%) and fatalities (58%). The next five most frequently targeted countries were India, Nigeria, Somalia, Yemen and Thailand. With increasing fatalities and casualties from 2012 to 2013, the threat is projected to escalate in 2014. With US-led coalition withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, the global threat of terrorism is likely to grow even further.

3. The Threat Landscape

Since 9/11, counter-insurgency and counterterrorism efforts have had mixed results. al Qaeda has weakened but the al Qaeda family is grown in strength, size and influence. About 30-40 threat groups in Asia, Africa, Middle East and in the Caucasus are emulating al Qaeda ideology of global violence and methodology of suicide attacks. While core al Qaeda led by Dr Ayman Zawahiri has transformed from an operational to an ideological and a training organization, the associate groups carry out a bulk of the attacks. Although the death of Osama bin Laden demonstrated that any terrorist can be hunted down, the death of the al Qaeda leader did not reduce the growing threat.

The deadliest terrorist groups in the world belong to the al Qaeda family with the Taliban (both Afghan and Pakistan Taliban) leading the list. Others are al Nusra Front in



Syria, Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and al-Shabaab. The al Qaeda ability to influence associate groups was brought to international attention in the brutal attack on Westgate Mall in Kenya by al-Shabaab, previously known as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) of Somalia.

With the decentralization of threat, Africa is emerging as a new epicenter of terrorism and extremism.

The "Arab Spring" has transformed into an Arab nightmare with multiple Al Qaeda linked groups emerging throughout North Africa and the Middle East. An al Qaeda associated Al Nusra Front has emerged in Syria. With 12,000 Sunni and a comparable number of Shia foreign fighters in Syria, the threat to the west and the rest of the world will grow.

Stemming from the developments in Syria, the Shia-Sunni conflict is threatening to break out into a regional conflict. The Iran backed Lebanese Hezbollah condemned the detainment of al-Wefaq Secretary General Sheikh Ali Salman Ahmed Salman by Bahraini officials, and called on human rights organizations and others to make Bahrain take full responsibility for any physical and psychological harm to which he might be exposed. According to SITE Monitoring Service, Ali Salman was detained on December 28, 2013, on charges of inciting for religious hatred, and was released one day later and banned from travel.

The terrorists mounted their year-end attack in Volgograd, Southern Russia, that hit a railway station and trolleybus on December 29 and December 30, 2013. Aimed at sowing fear, Shumukh al-Islam, the top forum for al Qaeda affiliated propaganda praised the timing of the attack. SITE Monitoring Service reported the terrorists saying Russians are not safe "since their country continues to supply arms to the malicious combatant regime of the doomed apostate Bashar." From the Caucasus, the terrorists are traveling through Turkey to Syria to fight against the Bashar Regime.

4. Rise of Violence in Asia

Since the epicenter of global terrorism shifted to Asia after September 11, 2001, the sub region of South Asia is most violent. In India, ethno-political and left wing insurgencies and Muslim terrorism kill both Indians and foreigners. Although Sri Lanka experienced no revival of terrorism since the Tamil Tigers were dismantled in May 2009, the terrorists are reorganizing themselves in Tamil Nadu in India. In Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and in the Maldives, a wave of communal or religious extremism affected Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

As of November 2013, Afghanistan suffered 66003 but mostly in the south and east. SITE Monitoring Service reported, Afghan Taliban's deputy leader for Paktika province of eastern Afghanistan Abdullah alias Hammad, remarked the "most significant change" in Paktika in 2013 was U.S. and ISAF forces withdrawing from many bases and remaining in only a few cities. This pull out was the result of strikes by the fighters, he claimed, and the Barmal and Marghay camps, which were "once considered "insurmountable," were destroyed. He added that the civilians' support to the fighters is what enabled them to succeed in taking control of most areas of Paktika. Of the 7141 attacks in Afghanistan in 2013, 63 were suicide attacks and 27 were insider attacks. While 2,730 Afghan security forces personnel were killed



and 5,169 injured, 2168 guerrillas and terrorists were killed, according the Afghan ministry of interior.

In Southeast Asia, Thailand remains the most violent conflict. The threat in Indonesia remains significant with about a dozen threat groups operationally or ideologically affiliated with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Although the peace process in the Philippines has stabilized the south, the threat from Abu Sayyaf Group and New People's Army, a leftist terrorist group is significant. In addition to the Moro National Liberation Front, breakaway factions of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and Khalifa Islamiyah Mindanao (KIM) threatens the peace process. KIM is affiliated both with JI and other extra regional groups particularly al Qaeda.

The developments in Afghanistan spilled over not only to South, Central and Southeast Asia but also to Northeast Asia. The most violent group in China, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) is collaborating with the al Qaeda family of threat groups such as the Pakistani Taliban, the Afghan Taliban, Islamic Jihad Union. Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Emirate of the Caucasus and since recently al Nusra Front in Syria. Although ETIM is a medium sized threat group of less than 100 fighters it has attacked not only the Chinese government and society, but the security forces of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, and the US-led coalition in Afghanistan. While ETIM aim is to create an independent Islamic state in Xingjiang, it also collaborates with like-minded threat groups the belief in creating a global Islamic caliphate. Although the UN, the US and several other governments have designated ETIM as a terrorist group, the ETIM and its political wing Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) operates through front cover and sympathetic organizations in North America, Europe, Gulf and in Central Asia disseminating propaganda and raising funds. After the terrorist attack in Tiananmen Square in Beijing on October 28, 2013, TIP released in Uyghur an audio speech from its leader, Abdullah Mansour, calling the incident a "jihadi operation" and its executors "mujahideen". The terrorists drove their SUV into a crowd at Tiananmen Square, causing it to crash and then burst into flames. Two pedestrians were killed and 38 others were injured. The speech translated by SITE Monitoring Service came in an 8 minute, 11 second video produced by the group's Islam Awazi (Voice of Islam) Media Center that was created by al Qaeda media committee. In 2013, ETIM conducted or inspired over 200 attacks in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwest China.

5. Conclusion

Since 9/11, the global terrorist threat has been growing. According to the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), 8,400 terrorist attacks killed nearly 15,400 people in 2012. With 5,100 attacks in the first six months of 2013, START reported "the wave of violence shows few signs of ebbing". The Western centric kinetic and lethal operations have failed to reduce the global threat. The worldwide opinion poll conducted by Win/Gallup International, twenty four percent of people worldwide said the US is the biggest threat to the world. In the coming decades, in parallel to developing tactical counter terrorism capabilities, governments should build strategic counter terrorism capabilities to erode the support base. The new frontiers in counter terrorism and extremism such as community engagement and rehabilitation should be considered.

With ever-increasing globalization, the world has witnessed the rise of ethnicity and religiosity. With identity becoming salient, government and community leaders should be trained and retrained to manage diversity. The failure to manage diversity has fragmented



society and lead to inter-ethnic and inter-religious disputes. If not properly managed, the intermittent disputes break out to violent conflicts in the form of ideological extremism. Both insurgency and terrorism are vicious by products of ideological extremism.

Government and community leaders should develop a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach. To prevent holistically and respond decisively to identity disputes, the leadership at all levels needs to be mentored and groomed. Unless governments take the lead and work with community leaders, societies will be threatened by the existing and emerging wave of ideologically motivated violence.