Africa in the perspective of G20
Madrid. 27/04/2017

Jihadist Insurgencies in Africa: The centrality of the local context

Laurent Bossard
Director
Sahel and West Africa Club / OECD
the terrorist groups active in the Sahara-Sahel are very deeply rooted in the local social fabric; that they use perfectly the knowledge of the nomads and that they operate on the basis of the same social networks.
I. African Jihadist entrepreneurs have tended to establish their bases in peripheral areas where the state has only a limited statehood.

II. Jihadist insurgent groups tend to emerge in a context of ongoing local conflict and take advantage of this conflict situation to grow and establish themselves.

III. Three out of the four major Jihadist movements in Africa are direct offshoots of pre-existing conflicts:

- AQIM / Algerian civil war
- Ansar al-Sharia / Libyan civil war
- Al-Shabab / clan-based conflict
IV. The contemporary Jihadist insurgencies mobilize large number of local adherents beyond the limits of prevailing ethnic, tribal cleavages.

V. This inclusiveness does not make Jihadist movements homogenous or unified

VI. Despite these major internal divisions, Jihadist insurgencies have proven capable of major disruptions in their local area of action:

- AQIM and affiliates / Mali 2012-2013.
- Al-Shabab and Ansar al-Sharia / southern Somalia - northeastern Libya since 2012,
- Boko Haram / northeastern Nigeria since 2014
VII. Local taxation, ransoms, and illicit trafficking constitutes Jihadists’ major sources of income.

VIII. The connections between African Jihadist movements and global Jihadist should not be overstated

African jihadism relies mostly on pre-existing groups, is mainly financed locally and develops on the basis of local social networks. Understanding these local roots and dynamics must be a central element of any counter-terrorism strategy.