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ISIS has recently overrun Mosul, causing Iraqi forces to abandon posts and equipment, including uniforms.

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IRAQI COUNTER-INSURGENCY TACTICS UNDER FIRE

Andrew McGregor

Ineffective military tactics may have caused more damage to relations between the Iraqi National Army (INA) and the disaffected Sunni population of northwestern Iraq than to the targeted Islamist militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Prior to the abandonment of Mosul to ISIS forces, local Sunni politicians were calling on the government to avoid the use of indiscriminate bombing by mortars or warplanes in efforts to expel the Islamist insurgents. Citing heavy civilian losses as the result of such tactics, the local politicians urged a greater reliance on intelligence and cooperation with local authorities (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, June 9).

Reliance on such broad responses rather than engaging with the enemy directly was indicative of the low morale and poor leadership plaguing Iraqi military forces in northern Iraq. As seen in Mogadishu and elsewhere, indiscriminate bombing of urban areas rarely damages insurgent assets or personnel while alienating and angering the local population to the point they are unwilling to work with or support government forces. Reports of the use of crude barrel bombs by Iraqi aircraft in the region have only reinforced local attitudes that government forces have no interest in the safety of the civilian population. As suggested by their name, barrel bombs are simple barrels equipped with a fuse and filled with fuel, explosives and scrap metal. Widely used in the Sudanese government's campaign in Darfur (where they inflicted terrible casualties amongst civilians but rarely against more mobile rebel groups), these untargeted projectiles have now come into use by government forces in Syria and Iraq (AFP, May 27; AP, June 9).

As ISIS fighters entered Mosul, Iraqi Army discipline appears to have evaporated, with reports of the army's leaders and officers fleeing the city (sometimes in civilian clothes)

and abandoning their troops to their fate at the hands of an insurgent force that was only a fraction of the size of the well-equipped government garrison – some 65,000 government security personnel vs. some 2,000 to 3,000 lightly-armed ISIS fighters (Al-Monitor, June 11). The government has announced it will apply strict punishments to those who fled the city (particularly officers), though it may be a bit late to instill a sense of discipline into an Iraqi military with little interest in fighting the Salafi-Jihadists of ISIS.

Baghdad's failure to reach understandings with Sunni tribal elements or to incorporate Sunnis in substantial numbers into government security structures are primary causes of the military failure in northern Iraq. Local forces have also failed to coordinate with more experienced Kurdish *peshmerga* militias or to develop effective intelligence networks, something complicated by the fact most of the military units deployed in the Sunni north hail from the Shi'ite south. Relations have deteriorated to the point some Iraqi Sunni politicians now point to an alleged hidden Shi'ite agenda involving a deliberate failure to secure northern Sunni-dominated cities in order to provide an excuse for their destruction (Iraq Pulse/al-Monitor, June 9).

On the other hand, the army's opponents have developed a number of effective approaches to asymmetric warfare that have allowed Islamist fighters to succeed against far larger government forces. ISIS tactics that have been successfully used in the Islamist offensive include:

- Creating new entry points to urban regions
- Intimidation of local tribes (including the recent assassination of Sahwa [Awakening] leader Muhammad Khamis Abu Risha in Ramadi)
- Suicide attacks
- Kidnappings
- Use of car-bombs and other IEDs
- Summary executions of presumed or potential opponents
- Attacks on Iraqi Army convoys to prevent resupply or reinforcement
- Brief occupations of settled areas, withdrawing before government forces can recover for a counter-attack
- Attacks on Shi'ite shrines and holy sites such as the al-Askari Mosque in Samarra (the essential religious/sectarian component of Salafi-Jihadist warfare)
- Exploitation of superior skills in urban warfare
- Establishment of control over border points with Syria, allowing greater interaction with ISIS and other Islamist groups deployed there
- Simultaneous attacks in multiple regions to scatter and diffuse the government response

- Massive displacement of urban populations, which puts additional pressure on the central government's response
- Infiltration of ISIS cells into Baghdad neighborhoods ready to mount internal attacks during, or more likely, instead of an immediate full-scale assault on the capital.

The weapons, war materiel and cash reported to have fallen into insurgent hands in recent days will enable ISIS to expand its campaign and attract experienced foreign fighters through the network the group has built up in neighboring Syria. Proposed American air strikes may have the ability to deter ISIS from advancing on Baghdad in the short-term, but will have little impact on the systemic problems afflicting the Iraqi military and its political direction.

KHARTOUM'S ISLAMIST PERSPECTIVE ON LIBYA'S INTERNAL CONFLICT

Andrew McGregor

Though Sudan's shared border with Libya is relatively small and remote, it does include an ancient but still important cross-Saharan trade route that passes by Jabal Uwaynat, a small mountain complex at the meeting point of Egypt, Libya and Sudan. The route, used by commercial traffic, smugglers and human traffickers, leads to the oasis of Kufra in southeastern Libya after cutting through territory largely controlled by Tubu militias. Sudanese troops were active in securing the region during the Libyan revolution. Though Sudan has officially closed the border during the current troubles in Libya, African migrants are still being trafficked through the area on their way to the Libyan coast and a final attempt to reach Europe.

This overland connection and various improvements made to it during the rule of the late Libyan leader Mu'ammarr Qaddafi give Libya an important commercial presence and, at times, even political influence in western Sudan's Darfur region. Khartoum's relations with Qaddafi's Libya were in a constant state of flux, with the former Libyan leader pursuing various unwanted unification schemes with his larger southern neighbor. Qaddafi's patronizing attitude irked a succession of Sudanese leaders and, when his advances were rejected, Qaddafi could quickly turn to supporting various elements of Sudan's armed opposition. Since Qaddafi's demise, however, Khartoum has adopted a cautious approach to the political chaos in Libya, though it is the sudden current effort of Libya's General Khalifa Haftar to install himself as that nation's latest

strongman through “Operation Dignity” that has created alarm in Khartoum. Though Sudan’s intelligence apparatus has developed close ties with the CIA, it is Haftar’s own association with that agency that disturbs Khartoum. Haftar is also supported by various interests in the Gulf region that are often at odds with Khartoum, which some Gulf states regard as being unduly close to Tehran.

Following the lead of newly-elected Egyptian president Field Marshal Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi, Haftar’s campaign has focused on Libya’s Muslim Brotherhood and radical Islamist groups such as Ansar al-Shari’a, the latter believed to have been responsible for the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi. Al-Sisi has even warned of the danger posed by Islamist terrorists operating out of eastern Libya, with these groups being involved in arms trafficking across the network of oases in the Egyptian part of the Libyan Desert (Tripoli Post, May 28). According to Haftar, the Islamist trend in Libya is a growing international threat:

The security problem is a major issue that has shaken our country in a frightening manner after the GNC allowed all the terrorist forces across the world to come to Libya and coexist with the Libyan people. We know that these terrorists can never coexist with the people of Libya. The Muslim Brotherhood is leading this move. They are being granted Libyan passports and are coming to our country from abroad. There is now a large group of Brothers here, and that is why our neighbors are raising questions about this situation... When terrorist operations began to take place in Egypt, and the Egyptian authorities announced that the Muslim Brotherhood were leading these [terrorist] groups, this opened the eyes of many Libyans to the true nature of the Brotherhood (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 22).

In a recent interview with the *Washington Post*, Haftar named Sudan as one of the countries (along with Chad and Egypt) from which armed Islamist groups are infiltrating Libya (*Washington Post*, May 21). On June 7, Haftar’s expanding military forces were joined by the largely Tubu 25th Brigade (a.k.a. the Ahmad al-Sharif Brigade). The brigade regards itself as part of Libya’s regular army and controls the important al-Sarir oilfield and several other oil facilities and border points in southeastern Libya. According to brigade commander Major Ali Sida, “We have always kept away from political issues and regional divisions... We’ve joined the Operation Dignity because Libyan Army members are being attacked and murdered. It’s our duty to protect ourselves and enforce law in our country” (Libya Herald, June 8). Recently resigned Tubu military leader Isa Abd al-Majid Mansur was accused of bringing Sudanese mercenaries to southeastern

Libya to establish an independent Tubu state after the collapse of the Qaddafi regime, charges he denies: “We have connections here and there, but that does not mean that we bring in fighters to Libya” (al-Jazeera, May 9).

On May 19, Sudan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement urging international respect for Libya’s sovereignty while calling on the Arab League, the African Union and other elements of the international community to support Libya’s “democratic transformation” (Sudan News Agency, May 20; Sudan Vision, May 21). Reports of a recent visit to Khartoum by Libyan al-Watan Party leader Abd al-Hakim Belhaj, a veteran jihadist turned politician, were quickly followed by accusations from Haftar’s Libyan National Army that Khartoum was using air assets to deliver Qatari-funded arms shipments to fighters loyal to Belhaj (*Youm al-Sabe’a* [Cairo], June 6; Sudan Tribune, June 6). Though Khartoum declined to comment on Belhaj’s alleged visit, a spokesman for the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) denied charges it was supplying arms to Islamist factions in Libya and pointed to the military training a number of Libyan officers are receiving at Sudan’s Karari military college and the work of joint Libyan-Sudanese border forces as proof of military cooperation between Tripoli and Khartoum (Sudan Tribune, June 9).

Though many leading figures in the military-Islamist coalition that rules Sudan have their political origins in Sudan’s Ikhwan movement (an independent Sudanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood), Sudan’s Foreign Minister, Ali Karti, has taken steps to distance the regime from the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates in the Gulf states: “Some people in the Gulf states believe that we have feelings towards the Muslim Brotherhood in any country in the Gulf or even Egypt. Sudan was the first state that refused to join the Muslim Brotherhood movement.” Karti also denied reports that Qatari ruler Shaykh Tamim bin-Hamad used a recent visit to Khartoum to request Sudanese assistance in relocating fugitive Muslim Brotherhood leaders from Doha to Khartoum (*al-Hayat*, May 29).

The situation in Libya has been complicated by the disputed designation of Ahmad Mu’aytiq, a Misratah-based politician viewed as close to the Muslim Brotherhood, as the nation’s new Prime Minister. Misratah’s Central Shield Force militia is responsible for protecting the ruling General National Council’s facilities in Tripoli, but are at odds with the Zintan militia, which has lined up behind General Haftar and also operates in parts of Tripoli (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 21).

The foreign relations secretary for Sudan’s influential Islamist opposition party, the Popular Congress Party (led by veteran

Islamist Dr. Hassan al-Turabi after a split with the ruling National Congress Party) issued a statement in late May warning against military intervention in Libya by Sudanese, Chadian or Egyptian forces, citing the negative consequences that would follow such an intervention. While Bashir Adam Rahma insisted these nations should play a role only as “neutral reformers,” he emphasized that direct intervention by Khartoum could result in new military operations by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and other Darfur-based rebel movements. Rahma also warned that if the enemies of political Islam triumphed in Libya, Khartoum would be the next target of “anti-Islamic” forces (Sudan Tribune, May 29). Similar suggestions appeared in a report carried by the government-connected Sudan Vision news agency on June 8. According to the report, Sudan’s border with Libya was now regarded as “unsafe,” and “will continue to be more unsafe with the rising of General Khalifa Haftar as a potential leader in his strong military campaigns against the Islamic movements in the east of Libya.” Khartoum expects that Haftar will cooperate fully with al-Sisi in Egypt in his “ruthless campaign against the Islamic Brotherhood movement” (Sudan Vision, June 8).

Ansar-ut Tawhid and the Transnational Jihadist Threat to India

Animesh Roul

Transnational Islamist terrorist groups have recently made sporadic attempts to lure India’s Muslim population towards global jihad, frequently urging them to fight the democratically elected secular government. India-specific incitements have issued from al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri and al-Qaeda ideologue Maulana Asim Umar through audio-visual messages that directly target Indian Muslims. A similar anti-India campaign was unleashed by a hitherto unknown group calling itself Ansar-ut Tawhid fi Bilad al-Hind (AuT – Supporters of Monotheism in the Land of India) through its media arm, al-Isabah Media. Its messages highlight the issue of government atrocities against Muslims in India and encourage Indian Muslims to join the ongoing Afghan or Syrian jihads and to carry out attacks inside India.

The AuT has issued at least four videotapes since October 2013, the most recent of them surfaced on May 17, when the group called for attacks against Indian targets worldwide. The ten-minute video featuring AuT leader Maulana Abdur Rahman al-Hindi urges other prominent jihadi leaders such as the Taliban’s Mullah Omar, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, Nasir Abd al-Wuhayshi of al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula, al-Shabaab’s Abdi Godane and Abd al-Malik Droukdel of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb to come forward to attack Indian Government interests and its economic centers in India and elsewhere as a means of “protecting the Muslims of India.” [1]

The AuT’s call appeared to resonate immediately when suspected Taliban militants attacked the Indian consulate in Afghanistan’s Herat Province on May 23, with the aim of embarrassing the newly-elected Indian Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government of Narendra Modi, who is prominently attacked in the AuT’s propaganda materials (AP, May 23). Islamists have long blamed the BJP and its leadership for demolishing Ayodhya’s 16th century Babri Mosque in December 1992, an act that fanned countrywide communal tensions that left 2,000 dead and fuelled an enduring schism between India’s Hindu and Muslim communities. Numerous episodes of sectarian violence, including the Gujarat riots of 2002, have a direct connection to the mosque’s demolition. The AuT’s May 17 message attempted to exploit the socio-

religious divide prevalent in India.

Through its media arm, AuT released its first ever propaganda message in October 2013. Entitled “In the Land of Hind: Usood al-Hind (Lions of India),” the video called for the participation of Indian Muslims in the global jihad. [2] A subsequent video entitled “From Kandahar to Delhi” attempted to incite Indian Muslims to take revenge for the anti-Muslim disturbances in Gujarat, Assam, Hyderabad and, most recently, in the Uttar Pradesh city of Muzaffarnagar. [3] The video portrayed AuT chief Maulana Abdul Rahman al-Hindi flanked by seven gunmen together with still footage of past communal clashes and terrorist attacks, including the Babri Mosque demolition, the Mumbai serial blasts and the Gujarat riots. These events found a place in AuT’s subsequent propaganda videos. One such message entitled, “Oh Indian Muslims, if you can’t understand, you will perish!” was issued by al-Isabah Media in late March. [4] This 18-minute video declared that, since independence from British yoke in 1947, “Indian Muslims are living in fear and dread under the Hindus... who worship cows.”

Most of the AuT’s Arabic and Urdu messages demand the overthrow of Hindu supremacy in India and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. AuT videos eulogize those who have perpetrated the numerous terrorist revenge attacks inside India following the Babri Mosque demolition. Proudly terming all the slain Muslim terrorists as martyrs, the videos are dedicated to all Indian-origin mujahideen who are fighting on jihadist battlefields in different parts of the world.

AuT messages commonly include verses from the Quran and Islamic *hadith*-s (deeds and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad). The visuals depict the jihadist “Black Flag of Khorasan” (a medieval Islamic empire consisting of most of modern Afghanistan and parts of Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), piercing a map of India or hoisted atop the Red Fort of Delhi, indicating that this new anti-Indian jihad originates from Afghanistan.

Media reports indicate that a breakaway faction of the Indian Mujahideen (IM) formed the AuT with the help of the Pakistan and Afghan Taliban (*Mail Today* [Delhi], May 23). If Intelligence sources are to be believed, around six IM militants have joined the AuT and are undergoing training in Pakistan’s North Waziristan province (*The Hindu* [Chennai], May 22). Most of these IM operatives are from the movement’s Azamgarh (Uttar Pradesh) and Bhatkal (Karnataka) wings that fled to Pakistan following the countrywide crackdown on IM’s infrastructures in 2008-2009.

On May 30, Indian investigative agencies believed they had found the missing link between IM and the AuT when Haider Ali, a suspected IM terrorist under detention, provided details regarding the joint training of IM and AuT operatives at Pakistani Taliban training centers (*Times of India*, May 30). Ali is believed to have been involved in multiple bombings at the October 26, 2013 BJP rally at Patna (Bihar) and to have had ties with the proscribed Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) led by Islamist Safdar Nagori.

Even if information about AuT’s actual strength and leadership remains sketchy, the emergence of this organization indicates that India has become a prime target for transnational terrorist groups. With its large Muslim population (the second largest in the world, after Indonesia), India presents a massive source of manpower for Islamist groups like al-Qaeda or the AuT that are ready to work closely with homegrown terrorist groups such as IM or SIMI. The myriad threats from domestic terrorist groups in India have now spread well beyond the usual Kashmir-centric groups fighting for the “liberation” of that region.

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Notes

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=104SodPVFO4>.
2. <http://bab-ul-islam.net/showthread.php?t=20802>.
3. <https://archive.org/details/Ksedhd?start=434.5>.
4. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7HWG8_3MI4.

A Review of Abubakar Siddique's *The Pashtun Question: The Unresolved Key to the Future of Pakistan and Afghanistan*

Reviewed by Brian Glyn Williams

For decades, works on the Pashtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan were limited to an aging generation of Western academicians tucked away in ivory towers. These scholars carried out their field research in the region prior to the 1979 Soviet invasion. Few of this generation of deskbound researchers took the time to learn an Afghan language, nor did they bother to renew their links to Afghanistan due to the perceived risks of traveling to this country.

Against this tradition stands *The Pashtun Question: The Unresolved Key to the Future of Pakistan and Afghanistan* by Abubakar Siddique. Siddique is a Pashtun who grew up in the Afghan-Pakistani borderlands speaking Pashtun and personally experiencing the conflicts that convulsed his homeland from the 1980s through to today's wars against the Taliban. As a Westernized Pashtun journalist who has worked for Radio Free Europe, Siddique is uniquely positioned to straddle the tribal world he grew up in and the modern Western world. The fact that he is able to critically analyze his own society using the skilled prose of a journalist (as opposed to the impenetrable "academese" of a scholar) makes his volume all the more useful. In fact the *Pashtun Question* is probably the most important work on the Pashtuns since Sir Olaf Caroe's classic 1954 field study on the subject, *The Pathans*.

Among the issues Siddique carefully addresses is the question of what makes the Pashtuns so inclined toward militant Islamism (the Taliban are almost exclusively ethnic Pashtuns). In my own time among the Pashtuns in both Afghanistan's southeast and the tribal zones of Pakistan's northwest, I found this people quick to blame external sources for this tendency. Most Pashtuns (especially those in Afghanistan) blamed Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency for their propensity to wage costly holy wars.

Before reading Siddique's analysis of this topic, I found this typical Pashtun response to be a reflexive dodge by a people that refused to take responsibility for a trait that was seemingly intrinsic to their society. Their deflective responses failed to address what it was about the Pashtuns (as opposed to the neighboring Turkmen, Aimaqs, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Chitralis, Punjabis, Sindhis, etc.) that uniquely made them

fight bloody holy wars against local "infidels." The Pashtuns, it will be recalled, waged jihads against such peoples as the pagan mountain Kafirs (i.e. the Nuristanis who were forced at sword point to convert to Islam in the late 19th century by the Pashtuns), the Hazaras (Shi'ite Mongols whose homeland was devastated in by the Sunni Pashtuns in a 19th century "jihad") and the British from 1839 to 1947. I felt that the Pashtuns I talked with were not honestly looking themselves in the mirror and addressing the endogenous, uniquely Pashtun roots of the Islamist militancy that has plagued their people since a young Winston Churchill wrote of this people, "Their superstition exposes them to the rapacity and tyranny of a numerous priesthood – 'Mullahs,' 'Sahibzadas,' 'Akhundzadas,' 'Fakirs,' – and a host of wandering Talib-ul-ilmis." [1]

To a degree, Siddique overcomes this issue by delving into the past of his people's militancy. While acknowledging on page 15 that "jihadist ideology is now entrenched in the [Pashtun] region," Siddique sets out to explore how such a sizeable portion of his people became followers of this ideology. Going back in history he shows that much (but not all!) of the fault for the Pashtun jihadist militancy on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border does in fact lie with external actors, most notably the manipulative policies of Islamabad. As Siddique eloquently demonstrates, going back to the 15th century there were strains of Islamic thinking among the Pashtuns that were inspired by "spirituality and moderation" on one hand (e.g. the movement led by the Pashtun religious leader Pir Roshan) and those inspired by a harsher brand of Islam (e.g. the movement led by "the Rigid Mullah" Akhund Derweza). It was the latter strain which led to what Siddique calls "frontier jihads" against the British once these "infidel" outsiders divided the Pashtun lands between Afghanistan and British India in the 1890s. It was also this strain of Islam that the newly created Pakistani government was to tap into after their 1947 independence in order to undermine the concept of "Pashtunistan" (i.e. the Afghan government's irredentist efforts to reunite under Kabul's rule the lost Pashtun lands of Pakistan with those in Afghanistan).

As it transpires, consecutive nationalist Afghan-Pashtun governments rejected the 1879 Treaty of Gandamak that led to the British annexation of the Pashtun lands of what would become Pakistan and continued to foment secessionist rebellions among restless Pashtuns living in Pakistan's tribal regions. To counteract this policy, Islamabad responded by sponsoring domestic Islamist rebellions against Kabul led by Afghan Pashtuns. This tit-for-tat policy culminated in Pakistan's support for Islamist mujahideen rebels (as opposed to ethnic-nationalist Pashtun rebels who had irredentist

tendencies) during the 1980s anti-Soviet jihad. The Pakistanis hoped that Islamist Pashtun rebels, rather than nationalist rebel factions, would seize Kabul from the Communists and create a government based on pan-Islamic principles instead of cross-border Pashtun nationalism. Muslim (as opposed to Pashtun nationalist) Afghanistan could then serve as a key Islamic ally and fallback zone should Muslim Pakistan get into an existential war with Hindu-dominated India.

Siddique sums up the results of Islamabad's policy of pumping millions of U.S. dollars in to support radical Islamist Pashtun elements among the mujahideen rebels by stating on page 41: "Pashtuns were major victims of this policy, as it radicalized and militarized their homeland." The Pashtuns were not, however, the only ones to suffer from the ISI's sponsorship of fanatical Islamist elements among the Pashtun mujahideen to the detriment of more moderate nationalist elements. This policy would ultimately come back to haunt the Pakistanis when they sponsored a new Islamist Pashtun movement known as the Taliban that sought to conquer Afghanistan and impose a strict interpretation of Shari'a.

While the Pakistani-sponsored Taliban initially supported Islamabad's goals by creating an Islamic theocracy as opposed to a Pashtun nationalist state, the Pakistanis were clearly playing with fire. Siddique sums up the negative results of Pakistan's policy of cynically meddling in Pashtun militancy as a means for undermining Pashtunism on page 43 by noting that decades of Pakistani investment transformed Pashtun Islamism into a formidable political force and reduced the Pashtun nationalist threat. However, several built-in contradictions in the policy backfired on Islamabad and its goal of enhancing Pakistani security and prestige. Indeed, these contradictions became so onerous they now threaten Pakistan's survival. The country's existence as a nation-state directly clashes with the pan-Islamism of al-Qaeda and the radical elements of the Taliban.

Having tasted power in Afghanistan from 1995 to 2001, Siddique quotes a Taliban mullah he interviewed in 2001, who warned: "Having taken care of [Ahmad Shah] Massoud [the head of the Northern Alliance opposition to the Taliban who was killed on September 9, 2001] we will soon come to Pakistan to implement true Islam there." By 2002, a Pakistani Taliban rebellion had emerged in the Pashtun tribal regions of Pakistan that aimed to do nothing less than overthrow the secular government and replace it with a Shari'a regime like the one the ISI had cynically sponsored in neighboring Afghanistan. Just like the Arab-Afghan mujahideen who turned on the United States after the communist regime fell in Afghanistan in 1992, the Taliban had turned on their Pakistani masters.

Now it was the Pashtuns, in the form of a local Pakistan Taliban movement, that were carving out space in Pakistan for their own purposes.

Today, up to 3,000 Pakistanis per year are lost to suicide bombers in a deadly Pakistani Taliban insurgency that has cost the Pakistani Army more soldiers' lives than the United States lost in Afghanistan. Islamabad appears to be incapable of suppressing the jihad it created among the Pashtuns and now faces a threat that is far greater than that of secular Pashtun nationalism of the sort that once called for the creation of a Pashtun nation.

At the end of the day, the ultimate victims are Siddique's people, the Pashtuns who have been squeezed between 300,000 NATO and Pakistani troops and tormented by fanatical elements among their own people. This ethnic group has lost more than one million people since 1979 according to Siddique's estimate and their future does not look bright as the United States and NATO prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan. Siddique ends his masterful account with a word of caution for those in Islamabad who may seek to exploit the Pashtuns for their own purposes once again now that Washington has begun its withdrawal. On page 220, he states:

The continued exploitation of the Pashtuns, aimed at keeping them weak and tormented, may serve the short-term interests of powerful governments. But such policies will only prevent the region from rising to its potential and may yet again prove self-defeating.

The tragic history covered in Siddique's account of decades of exploitation of Pashtuns by Islamabad that ultimately came back to haunt Islamabad would seem to support his cautionary prognostication.

Abubakar Siddique: *The Pashtun Question: The Unresolved Key to the Future of Pakistan and Afghanistan* (London; Hurst. 2013), 271 pages.

Brian Glyn Williams is author of *Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America's Longest War* (U. Penn Press 2012), *Predators: The CIA's Drone War on Al Qaeda* (Washington DC, 2013) and *The Last Warlord: The Life and Legend of Dostum, the Afghan Warrior who Led U.S. Special Forces to Topple the Taliban Regime* (Chicago, 2013) which are based on his fieldwork in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Note

1. Winston Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, London, 1915, p.7.

A Divided Military Fuels Mali's Political Crisis

Andrew McGregor

Both short- and long-term prospects for renewed stability in Mali's restive northern region took a heavy blow with the May collapse of the Forces armées du Mali (FAMA) in the face of Tuareg and Arab resistance in the northeastern Kidal region. The collapse reflected long-standing divisions and rivalries within the Malian Army that have gone unresolved despite new efforts at equipping and training the Malian military.

While the international community has pledged over \$4 billion in funds intended for reconstruction, patience is beginning to run out with the government of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, who appears to have wasted little time in re-introducing various ills of the previous government, including nepotism, poor governance practices and a lack of fiscal accountability most visibly manifested in the unnecessary purchase of a \$40 million Boeing 737 jet for presidential use that has endangered Mali's eligibility for foreign aid. Funds targeted for military reconstruction have produced new uniforms and a new logo for the army, but little else (*Guardian*, May 18).

When a small group of Islamist insurgents attacked the city of Gao shortly after its January 2013 liberation by French forces, a much stronger Malian force made an unsuccessful appeal to French forces to intervene. Malian operations chief Colonel Didier Dacko did not find the French refusal surprising: "I do not blame [the French] for not coming immediately. It was the first time that the two armies were facing a common enemy, with no real coordination," adding that "Our army is the exact image of our country. The coup has accelerated its decay" (*L'Indépendant* [Bamako], February 19, 2013).

Miscalculation in Kidal

The trouble in Kidal began with a poorly considered visit to the region by Prime Minister Moussa Mara on May 17, intended as a demonstration of Bamako's sovereignty over the region. Mara insisted on visiting Kidal despite several days of violent protests and runway occupations designed to prevent his plane from landing. Mara eventually arrived at the military base by helicopter, but violence erupted with Tuareg and Arab rebel factions seizing the government house, abducting civil servants as hostages and slaughtering some eight government officials. A Malian military offensive was launched on May 21 to retake Kidal, but faltered in the face

of heavy opposition from the Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA – largely Ifoghas Tuareg), the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad (MNLA – largely Idnan and Taghat Mellit Tuareg) and the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad (MAA).

Once fighting broke out, Malian troops, many of them recent graduates of EU military training, quickly broke and abandoned their positions across northeastern Mali to take refuge in Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations unies pour la stabilisation au Mali (MINUSMA – United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali) camps or to flee south or north on the road to Algeria. With Malian forces on the run in most regions of northeastern Mali, MNLA forces easily occupied the towns of Anefis, Aguelhok, Tessalit, Menaka, Ansongo, Anderamboukane and Lere, seizing weapons and vehicles abandoned by the Malian troops without a shot being fired in many cases (Reuters, May 22). Without French intervention, the MNLA and its allies might have easily retaken all of northern Mali.

Malian authorities maintain that the forces opposing them in Kidal were far larger than originally estimated (2,000 as opposed to 700) and were reinforced by elements of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the allied Movement for Unity and Justice in West Africa (MUJWA), an unlikely combination in the current political circumstances of northern Mali (*Mali Demain* [Bamako], June 5; *L'Indépendant* [Bamako], June 5).

The question of who actually ordered the disastrous offensive on Kidal remains unanswered (the president denies it was his decision), though the resignation of former Minister of Defense and Veterans Affairs and former intelligence chief Soumeylou Boubèye Maiga appears to have served to satisfy the demand for a scapegoat (*Le Débat* [Bamako], June 9). The new defense minister is Ba N'Dao, a retired colonel in the Malian Air Force.

Regardless of who ordered the attack on Kidal, the actual assault was directed by operational commander Brigadier Didier Dacko and led by Brigadier Ag Gamou, who was later accused by French sources of "pouring oil on the fire" (*L'Opinion* [Paris], June 10). Ag Gamou and his Imghad Tuareg militia have been engaged in a lengthy and bitter struggle with the Ifoghas Tuareg elites in Kidal, making Ag Gamou a provocative choice to lead the assault on Kidal. Leading a column of loyalist Tuareg, Red Berets and elements of three battalions of EU-trained Green Berets equipped with light armor, artillery and BM-21 Katyusha rocket launchers, Ag Gamou's force appears to have encountered a

superior force of rebels from the MNLA, HCUA and MAA. The Malian offensive quickly collapsed with the loss of as many as 50 soldiers, including Ag Gamou's right-hand man, Colonel Ag Kiba. No attempt at intervention was made by the 1,200 MINUSMA police and troops from Guinea, Chad and Senegal stationed in Kidal's Camp 2. France eventually responded to the violence by sending an additional 100 troops from Abidjan to Gao, bringing the French deployment up to 1,700 soldiers (Reuters, May 21).

Return of the Red Berets?

Much of the weakness of the Malian Army is based on distrust between different factions that predates the January 2012 Tuareg/Islamist rising in northern Mali, but which was exacerbated by the March 22, 2012 military coup led by Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo and the "Green Beret" faction of the Malian Army. The coup was opposed by the 33rd Parachute Brigade "Red Beret" airborne units that also formed the presidential guard of Amadou Toumani Touré, himself a former Red Beret. Though unable to prevent the coup, the Red Berets succeeded in spirited the president to safety before mounting an unsuccessful counter-coup in late April 2012 (see Terrorism Monitor, February 22, 2013). The failed counter-coup was followed by the brutal torture and murder of roughly 30 captured Red Berets, who subsequently disappeared into mass graves near the Kati military base outside of Bamako that served as Sanogo's headquarters. 33rd Brigade commander Colonel Abidine Guindo was arrested in July 2012, for his role in the counter-coup and detained for 16 months. The two factions clashed again on February 8, 2013 (*Le Flambeau* [Bamako], February 13, 2013).

A reconciliation was effected between the two factions in June 2013, that allowed the Red Berets to return to active service in northern Mali, with Sanogo describing the fatal conflict within the military as a series of "misunderstandings and differences of view" (*Le Progrès* [Bamako], June 29, 2013). However, after having failed in his attempt to position himself as a senior statesman in democratic Mali following the election of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta in September 2013, Sanogo and twenty of his relatives were charged with "kidnapping, abduction and murder" in connection with the murders of the Red Berets (AFP/MaliActu, June 6). Also charged were former defense minister General Yamoussa Camara, former state security director General Sidi Touré and two of Sanogo's aides, Captain Amadou Konaré and Lieutenant Tahirou Mariko (*L'Aube* [Bamako], March 27). Responsibility for guarding the president was eventually passed on to Mali's *Garde Nationale*.

It was not only Red Berets who suffered under Sanogo's command, however, as demonstrated by a September 2013 mutiny at the Kati military base by soldiers of Sanogo's Green Beret faction angry at the cancellation of promised promotions (*L'Aube* [Bamako], March 27). The disturbance was ended by the intervention of Malian Special Forces under Lieutenant Colonel Elisha Daou, which arrested some 30 mutineers. The bodies of five of these soldiers, still in uniform but bound with rope and irons, were found in two bizarre graves alongside the heads of five crocodiles (*L'Indépendant* [Bamako], February 25). Many other victims of Sanogo's manhunt for mutineers remain missing.

On June 6, Malian authorities revealed they had disrupted a new military plot against the government of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta allegedly led by members of the Red Berets. Some officials denied the plot was actually a coup and those detained were officially charged with intending to "destabilize the institutions of the Republic and endangering the security of the State" (*22 Septembre* [Bamako], June 9).

Among those arrested were the alleged ring-leader, Lieutenant Muhammad Ouattara, and ten non-commissioned officers, though there were reports authorities believed the plot was sponsored by "some senior military officers" (*L'Indépendant* [Bamako], June 6; Reuters, June 6). Otherwise, details of the plot remain scarce and there is wide skepticism in Bamako over the reality of the alleged coup. Ouattara previously spent 8 months in detention following the Red Beret's unsuccessful counter-coup in April 2012 and was sent north to the Gao region after his release (*L'Aube*, June 9).

Al-Hajj ag Gamou and the Pro-Bamako Tuareg Militia

Brigadier Ag Gamou, the leader of the failed assault on Kidal, is one of Mali's most experienced and controversial officers. After joining the Libyan Army at age 16, the future militia leader saw service in Chad, Lebanon and Syria before returning to Mali as a rebel leader in the 1990s before his integration into the Malian Army. Ag Gamou was decorated for his service as an ECOWAS peacekeeper in Sierra Leone before being posted to northern Mali, where he cooperated with Arab militia commander Muhammad Ould Abd al-Rahman Meydou in driving Tuareg rebels under the late Ibrahim ag Bahanga from northern Mali in 2009. Promoted to Brigadier in September 2013, Meydou is a Tilemsi Arab and highly capable desert fighter whose command is composed mostly of Bérabiche Arabs from the Timbuktu region (*L'Indépendant* [Bamako], September 13).

Finding himself isolated in the Gao region by the 2012 Islamist occupation of northern Mali, Ag Gamou rescued his men by declaring his allegiance to the Islamists before moving them through Islamist lines to the Niger border, which he then crossed with his troops while declaring his change of loyalties was only a subterfuge. While in Niamey, Ag Gamou survived an assassination attempt intended as payback for his trickery. When Chadian and Nigérien forces moved north to join the French-led Operation Serval, Ag Gamou's troops joined them and played an important role in hunting down Islamists in the rough terrain of the Adrar des Ifoghas.

Despite these successes, Gamou found himself recalled to Bamako in March 2013, after arresting three MNLA rebels in Kidal who were cooperating with French forces involved in Operation Serval. According to sources within the military, Ag Gamou continued to operate independently and without regard for the chain of command, a habit developed during his time under former Malian president Amadou Toumani Touré, who gave the Tuareg militia leader a largely free hand to carry out operations in northern Mali as he saw fit (*Procès Verbal* [Bamako], April 3, 2013). While in Bamako, elements of MUJWA attacked a home belonging to Ag Gamou's relatives, killing two (including a four-year-old girl) and severely injuring the child's mother. Despite his controversial status, Ag Gamou was promoted to Brigadier General on September 18, 2013, a move received with popular acclaim in the Gao region (*Le Débat* [Bamako], January 3).

In February, a group of Fulani tribesmen attacked Gamou's home village of Tamkoutat in the latest stage of an ethnic conflict between local Tuareg and Fulani herders. Gamou saw a political motive in the attacks:

They put pressure on me by attacking my family because they accuse us of having acted for various military forces to return the Malian government in the north. They used the same procedure as [the January 2012 MNLA/Ansar al-Din massacre of Malian troops at] Aguel-hoc, tying their victims' hands behind their back and slaughtering them one by one (*Nouvelle Libération* [Bamako], February 13).

Recently, representatives of the MAA and the Coordination malienne des Forces patriotiques de résistance (CMFPR – largely Songhai and Fulani “loyalist” self-defense militias such as Ganda Koy and Ganda Iso) involved in peace talks in Ouagadougou proposed Ag Gamou as the new Malian chief-of-staff to replace General Mahamane Touré, who resigned following the Kidal affair, suggesting that Ag Gamou was the individual most capable of uniting the badly divided military

(*L'Indépendant* [Bamako], June 4).

Conclusion

The Kidal incident has revived popular anger at the French and the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, with both being accused of working in favor of Tuareg separatists. This perception is a natural development stemming from French cooperation with the MNLA during the Spring 2013 Operation Serval campaign against armed Islamists in northern Mali and subsequent French attempts to slow the reintroduction of central government authority in the Kidal region before a general peace treaty is agreed upon. In the meantime, the Keïta government has announced it will expand its underfunded and underequipped military by introducing mandatory national service for men and women aged 18 to 35 earlier this month (Reuters, June 5). Military training will last for a period of six months, though it was not clear whether this measure would be applied in northern Mali, where it would likely be a non-starter with both Tuareg and Arab groups. There is a sense that Keïta's new measure is at least in part a response to student protests in Bamako.

President Keïta has lost the confidence of the international community – the IMF, World Bank and EU have frozen aid and development programs in the face of unanswered accountability questions. Within Mali, the president has lost credibility and must now enter negotiations with rebels in Ouagadougou in a position of weakness. While there are serious questions regarding the reality of Ouattara's Red Beret coup attempt, the conditions nevertheless exist in Mali that would encourage another military coup – corruption, military collapse, plummeting morale, internal challenges to sovereignty, international isolation, ineffective governance and loss of confidence.

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