

*Palmerino Cuneo*

*Italian Army Colonel Colonel (ITA-A), Phd*

*E-mail: palmerinoc@tiscali.it*

## *Terrorism and organised crime: The system of “permanent conflict” in the Sahel*

### **Abstract**

The fundamental tenets of International Relations on post-modernity, power and sovereignty have become more complex as a result of globalisation and growing interdependence. Where power becomes disseminated and diluted, sovereignty is shared, and the lines between competition, cooperation and conflict become blurred.

In the context of structural conflict in the Sahel, the old relational patterns are no longer adequate. A perspective is needed that allows placing the phenomenon of terrorism within the current geopolitical dimension where complex relationships of mutual dependence also apply to illicit transnational actors: terrorism and organised crime.

### **Keywords**

Conflict; transnational crime; multipolarity; Sahel; Terrorism.

### **To quote this article:**

CUNEO, P. “Terrorism and organised crime: The system of “permanent conflict” in the”. *Journal of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies*. 2019, n.º 13, pp. 181-212

## Introduction

There is a shared assumption that the world is a globalised international scenario where mutual dependence between actors is complex and asymmetrical, which does not point towards an “end of history” marked by peace and stability. The possible homogenising effect of globalisation has been cancelled out by the emergence of competitive socio-economic systems.

The multipolarity of the 21st century is imposing a coexistence of different countries, systems and powers. This entails growing instability and continuous competition which takes on a complex character and feeds back into a vicious circle with globalised forms of conflict, amplified by the simultaneous process of fragmentation. This tension has revived the importance of the African scenario which, despite its structural weaknesses and isolation, holds enormous potential.

In this context, the grey area of the Sahel — ancient crossroads of religions, slave trade and gold and salt merchants — is once again the pivot of the African continent and the centre of gravity of these global tensions<sup>1</sup>. This swath on the 16<sup>th</sup> parallel is an example of a multi-layered game-board where states, multinational organisations, and transnational actors such as organised crime gangs and terrorist groups interact on a multidimensional battlefield while obeying impulses and interests which are often at odds.

Here, the race for power preserves its unmistakable realistic flavour, even if accompanied by a relational complexity resulting from national, sub regional and transregional policies and conflict factors. As local rivalries come into play, this situation becomes more complex, and if subversive movements and transnational crime are added to the equation, the very concept of crisis control appears equivocal, puzzling and rather bleak. Contextualising the complex threat and placing terrorism inside the current global relations framework is essential to allow defining a coherent and effective long-term response.

## Permanent conflict

*“Asking a rebel leader to accept peace may be a little like asking a champion swimmer to empty the pool”<sup>2</sup>*

---

1 The National Security Strategy of the USA of 2015 confirms this relevance, where the importance attached to Europe is consistently very low, as Europe has ceased to be the arena where the great power games of the world take place. Instead, as seen with the current crisis in Ukraine, its relevance only comes to the fore when the old international liberal order is at stake: this matter is being fought out in Africa. Available at: [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015\\_national\\_security\\_strategy\\_2.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy_2.pdf) (date of access: 2 May 2018).

2 COLLIER, Paul. “Civil Wars. The Global Menace of Local Strife”, *The Economist*, 22 May 2003. Available at: <https://goo.gl/qzpHHh> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

Terror in our era is expanding with renewed force and displays unprecedented features of a global “Great Game”<sup>3</sup> in the transition to a multipolar order. The Cold War has not ended, it continues in Africa, which is also central to the interests of the Muslim world which in turn is caught up in its own internal struggles, the crisis of its *oil regimes* and the need to expand its influence. In the Sahel, external geopolitical interests are tied up with the local and regional elites. As such, the relationship between local insurgency, organised crime and terrorism acquires international geopolitical scope, requiring the step from an ideological “war on terror” to geopolitical realism. The choice of the word terrorism is a response to a long-term war which will never definitely be won. Terrorism is a variable of the geopolitical crisis and of the claim to power on the stage of realpolitik with multiple competitors.

Regime changes and state-building are supported by ethnical, religious or political conflicts, with new wars for power constituting the final goal, while international law (including humanitarian law) is shifting away from its initial purpose, which is to regulate international relations.

This conflict leads us to the idea of the *arcana imperii* (as described in the *Annals* by Cornelius Tacitus) as a turbid exercise of power that weakens economic and financial processes, postponing the shaping of homogeneous alliances and stable balances of power. We are witnessing a global conflict that is taking on a long-term perspective; a “permanent conflict” reminiscent of the Cold War, because it too does not present the features of a classical conflict<sup>4</sup>.

In this dynamic, “new warriors” are deployed, fighting on various fronts and in different dimensions. Jihadist terrorism projects itself as an ideal ally to implement this system of permanent conflict.

Support of this kind of system of violence opens the door to players who intervene and determine the balances of the regional political and economic system, provoking a destabilisation in the Sahel which, apart from feeding this very terrorism, determines another aspect of the so-called “economy of terror”, i.e. the interruption of businesses and supply lines at the expense of competitive economic projects, such as those of China. This “infantry” is decisive for the geopolitical competitive dynamics<sup>5</sup>. At the same time, however, its centripetal tendency, helped by the typical lack of unity within Islam, eludes the control of the main geopolitical actors.

---

3 As defined by Captain Arthur Conolly to describe competition in Central Asia and India between the British and the Russian empires during the early half of the 19th century. Available at: <https://www.wdl.org/es/item/16713/> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

4 FAGAN, Pierluigi. *Verso un mondo multipolare, il gioco di tutti i giochi nell'era Trump*. Rome: Fazi, 2017.

5 SUBHAYU Bandyopadhyay et al. “The Toll of Terrorism: Terrorists not only exact a direct human cost, they can cause innumerable economic problems too”, *Finance & Development*, vol.52, n.2, 2015, pp.26-28. Available at: <https://goo.gl/SVtDYH> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

Terrorism and the multiplications of the crisis it provokes are presented as “logical” phenomena of economic, trade and financial globalisation<sup>6</sup>, insofar as illegal activities are adopted and internationalised at the same (or higher) speed as legal activities. In the Sahel, crime syndicates, drug cartels, failed states and terrorist groups interact, showcasing a perfect adjustment of economic terror politics to global economic politics.

## Warriors and the postmodern fighting ground

Today the proxy wars of former times are being forced to adapt to greater relational complexity, a phase of postmodernity that Baumann calls the “*interregnum*” and which is characterised by the growing mutual dependence between the “old” and the “new” global powers. These procurement wars of postmodernity, according to the *World Economic Forum*<sup>8</sup>, take on an interstate character<sup>9</sup> and are played out in grey areas where mutual dependence is structurally asymmetrical, because this is where they can minimise their effects and reap all the benefits. Today, no-one wants colonies or dominions; competition is for the control of primary resources and supply chains: global balances are determined by the control of cross-connections<sup>10</sup>.

---

6 LABÉVIERE, Richard. *Terrorisme, face cachée de la mondialisation*. Paris: Pierre-Guillaume de Roux, 2016.

7 BAUMANN, Zygmund. “Times of Interregnum”, *Ethics and Global Politic*, vol.5, n.1, 2012, pp.49-56. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3402/egp.v5i1.17200> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

8 WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM. “*International Conflict Top List of Global Risks in 2015*”, 15 January 2015. Available at: <https://goo.gl/bwSZoM> (consulted on: 4 May 2018).

9 Such as those that take place in Ukraine (see MOTYL, Alexander. “Time for a hybrid warfare against Russia”, *World Affairs*, 25 November 2014. Available at: <https://goo.gl/rnS6LE> (consulted on: 2 May 2018) or in Syria (see ABUKHAIL, Assad. “The 8 proxy wars going on in Syria right now”, *The Huffington Post*, 24 November 2014. Available at: <https://goo.gl/TPJfAf> (consulted on: 13 February 2018).

10 A logic which is apparent both in Ukraine and in the Middle East (with the Syria-Iran axis or between Russia, Iran and India; the tensión in Xinyang because of its eagerness to link up to supply chains; the independance of Kurdistan, or the project of the Afghan oil pipeline that was supposed to connect Turkmenistan to India). The list continues in Albania and Kosovo, which today is a crossroads for jihadism in the vicinity of the TAP (*Trans Adriatic Pipeline*) which will carry oil from Azerbaijan to the European border (consulted: 2 May 2018, available at: <https://goo.gl/JcQUkx>), or the prospering of ISIS on the border between Myanmar and China (in the region of Rakhine, where the Islamic minority of the Rohingya ethnic group lives), the site of the oil pipeline that will ensure an alternative connection between the China and Middle Eastern oil via the port of Kyaukpyu. The same logic is repeated in the Sahel with the oil pipeline that runs from Nigeria to Morocco bypassing Algeria (consulted: 2 May 2018, available at: <https://goo.gl/GTjVXh>) or the one trying to connect South Sudan with Kenya: the “terrorist” threat has reawakened in Algeria, and Al Shaabab is setting its sights on the Chinese “highway” that reaches out of South Sudan, joining up the conflicting interests of the multinational companies *Tullow* (UK) and *Total* (French) in Kenya and Uganda. Available at: <https://www.pandorarivista.it/articoli/petrolio-rinnovabili-africa-orientale/> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

After the Cold War, the typical relational elements of the modern world, fighting and conquering, were rejected. Between postmodern states, there is no longer an emphasis on Westphalian-type sovereignty, and palpable enemies surface on the fringes of globalisation, where there is not a socio-political organisation capable of fulfilling Weber's criterion of the monopoly of violence. This provides the basis for the emergence of highly dangerous non-state actors<sup>11</sup>.

These new “warriors” follow different rules from those of the Western World and International Law; they use new war techniques and tactics and in many cases lack a vertical command structure, as theirs is “network-centric”. These actors are re-shaping the landscape of international relations with a return to a pre-Westphalian world, where fragmented use of violence reflects the instability of existing sovereign power, accompanied by a legal dimension of the phenomenon<sup>12</sup>.

In using these innovative war techniques and by fighting on diversified “grounds”, these sub state or transnational actors involve factors external to war, such as religion or ethnic origin, taking on the shape of a proxy war with a hybrid war character<sup>13</sup>, which makes it impossible to detect a precise enemy or engage in head-on battle. This emerging multipolar system, which is controlled by a complex array of mutual dependencies, has reintroduced the anarchy of Thomas Hobbes in the International System, where no single power succeeds in attaining a clearly hegemonic position, and a return to a Westphalian balance is impossible. In this change of balance of the distribution of global power, the monopolist sovereign of violence now becomes a “strategic” State, or “entrepreneurial” State as Mariana Mazzucato would say<sup>14</sup>, with “shared” capacities to wage war, in the same way it shares its sovereignty. In this framework, a metamorphosis of the figure of the “enemy” is taking place, in that it is relativised; with the *iustus hostis* disappearing, the sovereignty of the postmodern State extends beyond martial law of a Westphalian kind.

On the international scene, there is a “return to antiquity” as defined by Robert Kaplan<sup>15</sup>, where the actors are the same as the ones that already made their appearance

11 COOPER, Robert. “El Estado postmoderno”, *Revista Académica de Relaciones Internacionales GERI-UAM*, n.1, 2005, p.7. Available at: <https://goo.gl/ei98A8> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

12 ARQUILLA, John & RONFELDT, David. *In Athena's Camp. Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1997. Available at: <https://goo.gl/mjmXDw> (consulted on: 2 May 2018). - *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2001. Available at: <https://goo.gl/AYvMnA> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

13 The term *hybrid war* was coined to describe the methods employed by Hezbollah in Lebanon (see CORDESMAN, Anthony. “Lessons of the 2006 Israeli Hezbollah war”, Washington: Center of Strategic and International Studies, 2007).

14 MAZZUCATO, Marianna. *The Entrepreneurial State: Debunking Public Vs. Private Sector Myths*. London: Anthem Press, 2015.

15 KAPLAN, Robert. *El retorno de la Antigüedad. La política de los guerreros*. Barcelona: Editorial B, 2002.

on the international political scene — and were taken little notice of — in the 1980s, during the conflict between the USA and the USSR: guerrilla fighters, drug lords, mercenaries, self-defence militias, pirates, etc. They have now adapted to the situation. Today, these actors adopt corporate brands as the case fits and follow game rules that are coherent with globalisation.

In the Sahel a new *bellum omnium contra omnes* is taking place, and in this “state of nature” the gravitational point of the threat is not concurrent with a particular enemy, but diffused across the whole relational structure: Islamic terrorism, ethnic/tribal conflicts, international illicit trafficking, control of primary resources, competition between economic-financial systems and regional systems. All these factors converge and create instability. In this way, the threat is constituted by the very interconnection of these interests, giving rise to a globalised enemy that takes on one face or another depending on the interest at hand, its structure Hydra-like – fluid and quick to adapt.

In this era of “uncertainty”<sup>16</sup>, the concepts *enemy* and *conflict* thus constitute a complex issue and do not present themselves as an absolute otherness of values which are antithetical to ours; “what is different” does not exist, but rather is reduced to a problem of cultural incomprehension which makes it impossible to discern a single and incontestable political solution<sup>17</sup>. In this perspective, the realistic focus of the response therefore needs to identify relational dynamics that are able to mitigate the potential of conflict.

The Sahel is the ideal postmodern fighting ground for a system of permanent conflict, without the factors of the “cycle of security”: development, security and human rights<sup>18</sup>. If stability and development sustainability are the indispensable conditions for human safety<sup>19</sup>, their absence in the Sahel has reached critical levels. The structural vulnerabilities which are common to these countries interact with their political, socio-economic and cultural variables as well as with the way these societies manage their relevant resources. This interaction is driving a severe process of desertification, not only environmentally speaking, but also in a political, social and identity sense.

These vulnerabilities, which are made worse by the population explosion, are added to political instability and to the interests of external actors, defining the combination

---

16 GALBRAITH, John, Kenneth. *The age of uncertainty*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1977.

17 D'ANGELO, Valerio. “Hostis antes portas. El poder, la guerra y la figura del enemigo en las relaciones internacionales”, *Revista UNISCI*, n.38, 2015, p.64. Available at: <https://goo.gl/tjCsxZ> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

18 The former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, has been insisting for over ten years on the need to simultaneously address the three fundamental issues: development, security and human rights. See United Nations: “In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all”, *Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, A/59/2005*, New York, p.6.

19 UNITED NATIONS. *Human Security in Theory and Practice. An Overview of the Human Security Concept and the United Nation Trust Fund for Human Security*. New York: UN Human Security Unit, 2009.

of devastating conflict factors mentioned earlier: illicit trafficking, terrorist groups, organised crime and armed conflicts within state boundaries. In the Sahel with its international and domestic, or “*intermestic*”, battleground, the classical security dilemma is inverted: instead of an orderly home situation and international threat, one encounters domestic threats and international order<sup>20</sup> – with the added problem in the Sahel that the political and economic impacts of its most powerful neighbours both to the north and south are absorbed and multiplied<sup>21</sup>.

In short, it is the political and socioeconomic conditions that create a fertile breeding ground for the appearance of insurgent groups in these countries.

### Islamic ;Terrorism?

The countries of the Sahel “are conglomerates of ethnic groups and tribes, in which the feeling of caste, ethnic origin or belonging to a people predominates over the national identity [...] This multi-ethnic conglomerate is conducive to feelings of discrimination and interethnic confrontation”<sup>22</sup>.

This islamised battleground has also reawakened the ambitions of the Gulf countries, which want to preserve their space of independent power within the energy sector, besides actively participating in the balances between the Western countries and the expansion of China, while trying to define their atavistic rivalry between Shiites and Sunnis. Thus, the threat has become imbued with “Islamic” terrorism over the last years, while the emergence of the political-religious factor — under the guise of ISIS or Al Qaeda — further complicates the existing complex multipolar relations and postpones the attainment of a balance of powers. If the *realpolitik* is experiencing a renaissance in postmodernity — as witnessed in playing for time and applying divide and rule strategies —, jihadist terrorism presents itself as a fundamental actor to in-

20 SØRENSEN, Georg. “Big and important things in IR: Structural realism and the neglect of changes in statehood”, *International Relations Journal*, vol.23, n.2, 2009, pp.223–239.

21 This characteristic has a domino effect: when violence erupts in a state, it spreads beyond its boundaries (like Boko Haram between the borders of Nigeria, Chad and Niger for example). Likewise, some governments, such as those of Sudan and Chad, support the rebel forces of neighbour states by offering their own territory to supply them with arms, strategic bases and even direct military support, contributing to increasing the impact of the conflict and spreading the problem regionally.

22 MARTÍN BALLESTEROS. “Diagnóstico geoestratégico del conflicto en Malí”, *Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, Documento de Análisis n.14, Madrid, 2013, p.3. In addition, CALDUCH highlights that the clans of the Sahel represent groups which are socially and culturally integrated in certain ethnic groups with the aim of guaranteeing the self-sufficient existence of the group itself, and that they often constitute a genuine basis of local power, while ethnic origins contribute the basic elements of collective cohesion and social legitimacy both to the clans and their elites (see CALDUCH, Cervera, Rafael. “África: dimensión geoestratégica de las operaciones militares”, in: *África futuro escenario de operaciones militares*, monografía n.139, Escuela de Altos Estudios de la Defensa. Madrid, 2014, p.36 (ISSN-e: 2255-3479)).

fluence, obstruct or postpone strategic alliances, converting the Sahel into the region of the world where it develops most prolifically and where it causes (after the Middle East) the highest number of deaths: the *Institute for Economics and Peace* confirms the classification of these countries at a global level for 2017<sup>23</sup>.

Hence, the issue at hand is that of a dynamic form of terrorism which responds to changeable and circumstantial alliances between the Arab countries, regional states and outside powers, and moreover uses the imposition of political Islam for its own convenience and financial profit, all the while harnessing local actors and transnational crime. The line separating organised crime from terrorism is becoming increasingly blurred<sup>24</sup>, and their growing interrelation is complicating the threat, because these warriors are not only closely linked at a local level but also woven into the actual state they are operating in. The latter relationship takes on an alternately antagonistic or agreeable form, but ultimately allows them to usurp the state's monopoly on the use of force and to impose their own plans both locally and globally.

The non-monolithic character of Islam favours its instrumentalisation<sup>25</sup> and the battleground of the Sahel constitutes the perfect breeding ground for radicalisation. A response focused only on considerations of security proves insufficient and counterproductive<sup>26</sup>. In order to obtain stability, more complex and integrated approaches must be followed.

It should be pointed out that in the Sahel, which has been islamised — though not arabised — for centuries and where religion has rarely given rise to criminal violence<sup>27</sup>, “it is inconceivable that this could be the main point of concern as a cause of conflict”<sup>28</sup>.

23 INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC & PEACE. *Global Terrorism Index*. College Park: University of Maryland, 2017, p.10. Available at: <https://goo.gl/ErzqrC> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

24 DE LA CORTE, Luis. “¿Hasta qué punto convergen el terrorismo global y la criminalidad organizada?: parámetros generales y escenarios críticos”, *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, n. 1, 2013, pp.151-172.

25 Islamic fundamentalism encompasses many different schools of thought and action, with a number of changeable acronyms and organisations which, although aimed at radically re-islamising society, diverge in terms of strategies and methods. Islamic terrorism has developed within fundamentalism as a criminal phenomenon “of recent making”; the first movement to theorise about the use of violence in order to bring back the way of life of the ancient orthodox muslims was that of the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928 in Egypt by Hassan al Banna (initially financed by the Saudi monarchy until it started to cause it problems). In the course of later geopolitical events, this movement fraternised with the Palestinian and Iranian liberation movements and took an interest in the conflict between Russia and Afghanistan, thereby shedding its local perspective and adopting a global and anti-Western scope.

26 NÚÑEZ, VILLAVERDE, Jesús. *Daesh, el porvenir de la amenaza yihadista*. Madrid: Catarata, 2018. p.11.

27 WILLIAMS, Paul. *War and conflict in Africa*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012, p.128.

28 NÚÑEZ, VILLAVERDE, Jesús et al. *Terrorismo Internacional en África, la construcción de una amenaza en el Sahel*. Madrid: Catarata, 2009, p.34.

The religious factor does not come into play on its own. Instead, it is accompanied by tribal or ethnic divisions and rivalries (such as the Tuareg rebellion in Mali in 2012, the uprising of the Kanuri community in the northeast of Nigeria which was subsequently absorbed by Boko Haram<sup>29</sup>, and the “ethnic” conflicts in the two Sudans), and generally combines with financial factors<sup>30</sup> and the fight over their control. Thus, rather than a “holy war” on the Western World<sup>31</sup>, this is a series of intra-Islamic civil wars against their own regimes and in the name of a political form of Islam, where powerful actors from the Gulf area are involved (Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iran<sup>32</sup>) who, at the same time, determine the balances of the multipolar order that extends across the Sahel.

The socio-political vacuum of the Sahel has been filled by a jihadist movement that seems to have very little to do with Islam, because terrorism is a transnational movement of strategic relevance and with a political purpose. Although it casts its ideology around a religious and monotheistic framework, the connection is rather loose. Politics and religion in Islamic culture are difficult to separate, and the reawakening of seditious political contestation under the totem of religious identity as a legitimising source of rulemaking<sup>33</sup> has brought old internal and local rivalries to the fore, drawing other countries and non-state actors into the quarrel who hope to capitalise on the situation through alliances.

The goal of these terrorist organisations, in accordance with Gourdin<sup>34</sup>, is to impose a new model of society, taking over control of these safe havens as the epicentre of the Islamic reconquest. It is therefore a profoundly political problem, inasmuch as these seditious movements of radical Islamic bias are strengthened by the ease of mobilising their “warriors” and by the high profitability derived from the networks of organised crime. With their loose connections to Al Qaeda or ISIS, they become globalised and turn into fundamental tools when it comes to determining the new multipolar balances. The threat is of a complex nature, and the underlying mecha-

29 We shall continue calling it that, although since 2015 its leader Abu Bakr Shekau, in his loyalty oath to the self-proclaimed “Caliph” Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi of ISIS, referred to it as “*Wilayat al Sudan al Gharbi*” (States of Western Sudan) which has also been named *Wilāyat West Ifriqiyyah* (States of West Africa) in ISIS’ digital English language publication “*Dabiq*”. Available at: <https://goo.gl/sZby8Y> (consulted on: 3 May 2018).

30 KEATINGE, Tom. “Black Market. How the charcoal trade fuels Al Shabab”, *Foreign Affairs*, 18 November 2014. Available at: <https://goo.gl/5ypRGo> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

31 And while Al Bagdadi at least has some academic credentials in Islamic theology, despite having destroyed the great Al Nuri mosque where he proclaimed himself caliph, none of the exponents or leaders of these movements can attribute themselves an Islamic mandate allowing them to speak and act in the name of Islam (see NÚÑEZ, VILLAVARDE, Jesús. op. cit., 2018, p.14).

32 For this, see CICCIOMESSERE, Roberto. “Terrorismo islamico: la vera guerra non è in Europa”, *Strade on line*, 2 August 2016. Available at: <https://goo.gl/Auu8z5> (consulted on: 4 May 2018).

33 DEMMERS, Jolle. *Theories of Violent Conflict: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2012, p.8.

34 GOURDIN, Patrice. «Al-Qaida au Maghreb Islamique (AQMI) », *Question Internationales*, n.58, 2012, p.19.

nisms and practices are simultaneously subject to the double morality of those who use and support them. The cultivation of political radicalisation and organised crime is inherent in the “environmental” conditions offered by the battleground of the Sahel (which is replicated in other parts of the Maghreb, the Middle East or Kosovo in 2008), where strong social conflicts are not adequately mediated by the political system, which is the prerequisite for the emergence of these transversal movements of a political-religious character. The latter use the tool of terrorism<sup>35</sup> as an excuse to target local political and separatist interests, ultimately benefitting the economy of organised crime. From this perspective, it is appropriate to reconsider the actual scope of the jihadist threat.

### Local Jihad or Isis *versus* Al Qaeda?

As can be seen, Islam is not a monolith. Neither can “Sunni” terrorism be considered as a united front. In other words, identifying groups as clearly defined entities and possessing a coherently structured ideology leads to confusions and errors, preventing one from seeing them in their actual essence, dimension and purpose.

In the Sahel, “Islamic” terrorism, though an expression of the globalisation of jihadism, seems to remain faithful to its local objectives, and its command structure and “network-centric” control allow its lack of homogeneity<sup>36</sup>. The analysis of these movements has to be targeted at the particular context in which they arise and act, even if they are embedded within a transnational political-religious context and striving to build their governance on an extremist and simplistic view of Islam. The globalisation process has converted the terrorist networks into “NGOs of violence” which, in the words of Ulrich Beck, “in one sense operate locally, but also transnationally in another [...] which means, in the first place, that this type of transnational terrorism is not tied to Islamic terrorism, but that it can append itself onto all possible kinds of objectives, ideologies and fundamentalisms”<sup>37</sup>.

In mediatic terms, this threat is concentrated within two types of jihadist organisations, Al Qaeda and ISIS, which compete for the leadership of the worldwide move-

35 Terrorism is a means to an end, a tactic, and the term “war against terrorism” is extremely wrong; it is as if one referred to World War II as the war against the *Blitzkrieg*, or against *Kamikazes*.

36 Thus we are witnessing the growth of a “native” jihadism that “rests” on factors reaching beyond ideological and religious lines which ostensibly serve as its basis. It is born out of the weakness and deficiencies – such as corruption or poor governance – of the state vacuum in many rural areas. Jihadism takes advantage of these factors to establish itself (In: <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/440007/politique/ny-a-dissue-militaire-bourbier-malien/> - consulted on: 29 April 2018). This underlines the fact that the problem is not imported from outside, but that local implications have allowed a local appropriation of the fight on jihadist terms, with a threat that has expanded its range of action to the point of consolidating itself in areas where it was not present before.

37 BECK, Ulrich. *Sobre el terrorismo y la Guerra*. Barcelona: Paidós, 2003, pp.28-29.

ment<sup>38</sup>. The panoply of denominations and acronyms found across the Sahel has been catalogued by observers who at times are drawn into simplifying the international brands of terror; and while it is true that the stronger brands work and everybody has an interest in tagging onto them, on the other hand it is worth noting that each group ties its origins and interests to its birth territory.

The dynamic expansion of the jihadist presence across the whole Sahel<sup>39</sup> and its dichotomous reordering has not entailed an increase in the number of jihadist groups, but a series of excisions and loyalty switches motivated by personal and local agendas. Essentially, it is “much more a case of fragmentation of jihadism [...] than a rise of its numbers.”<sup>40</sup> Moreover, these two organisations are currently undergoing a process of structural and strategic convergence<sup>41</sup>, and it is not on this dichotomy that the focus of the response should be targeted, but on its structural causes explaining the synergy between jihadism and violence<sup>42</sup>.

---

38 Both pursue the same objectives (unification of the *umma*, imposition of the *sharia*, and reconstitution of the Caliphate, a return to the unity, purity and greatness of Islam), however, at least initially, they differ in terms of structures and tactics in the short and medium term. While ISIS has embedded itself in contexts where local populations are strongly rooted in their territory and defend their claims of autonomy and independence from the central government through jihad, in regions where the territorial factor and direct administration is culturally weaker, the loosely-woven *network* model encouraged by Al Qaeda prevails.

39 This is no longer limited to the north of Mali (Azawad). Al Qaeda, through the JNIM, is establishing itself in places where its presence was hitherto intermittent, for example in the centre of Mali, the desert of Mauritania and the western provinces of Niger. Or Burkina Faso, which had not been faced with jihadism until a couple of years ago. At the same time, ISIS is trying to link its branches in Libya to Boko Haram by adhering minority groups such as the “remains” of the MUJAO, commanded by Abu Walid Al Sahrawi. See: <https://goo.gl/qENTPo>. (Consulted on: 5 May 2018).

40 NÚÑEZ, VILLAVERDE, Jesús. *Op. cit.*, 2018, p.41.

41 ISIS, following its defeats in Iraq and Syria and on seeing its funding and recruitment compromised, has for the time being changed strategies, increasing and focussing its attacks on more specific targets in the West, too, while using more typically terrorist approaches. The point is to show that it has survived and only delays its achievements (MARTIN, Javier. *Estado Islámico, geopolítica del caos*. Madrid: Catarata, 2017, p.146). On the other hand, Al Qaeda has evolved, conquering territories and being able to rely not only on networks of terrorist cells but also groups of militias with a military organisation (see: <https://goo.gl/UPYKSz>, and <https://goo.gl/FsssFF> - consulted on: 4 May 2018). Before the French intervention in 2012, its organisation in Mali was a genuine occupying army, almost a proto-state controlling the north of Mali, delivering services to the local population. Similarly to ISIS' recent tactical change, its defeat provoked a change to urban guerrilla tactics, bombs, suicide attacks and terrorism (ROLET, Hélène. “L'armée française à l'épreuve de la guerre hybride dans le Sahel”, *Revue Défense Nationale*, n. 765, 2016, pp.1-5), in addition to redefining the strategic southwestern axis (Belmoktar's domain).

42 Hence, the “balkanisation” of the region does not seem to be a convincing strategic objective, apart from rendering the tangible creation of a universal caliphate impossible: the seditious objective of the jihad of unifying the Arab world through civil wars seems to be more local rather than international (CAMPANINI, Massimo. “L'islamismo jihadista da Al-Quaeda all'IS”, *Rivista dell'Istituto Studi Politica Internazionale*, Documento de Analisis n.290, Rome, 2015, p.14).

Bruce Hoffman confirms the absence of a bipolar jihad and the existence of negotiations between the Al Qaeda and ISIS brands to operate jointly in the coming years, because: “After all, they are ideologically identical. Where they differ is in style and tone. Both follow the tenets of Osama Bin Laden. What separates them is the great personal rivalry between the two leaders.”<sup>43</sup> More specifically, on a local level it is possible to talk of a restructuring of the jihadist landscape, because apart from a clear conflict, currently there is an ongoing development in the relations between the two organisations<sup>44</sup>.

Thus the fragmentation, aggregation and expansion of native jihadism should be read as an internal dialectic of the rival groups with ideological lines that evolve in terms of alliances, i.e. as local/regional competition that brings advantages in the recognition of a wider international and strategic struggle, adopting a leading role among Islamist organisations.

Rather than a dichotomy between Al Qaeda and ISIS, a change of tactical order is taking place to extend their area of geopolitical influence, which reflects different generations of fighters<sup>45</sup>, two different conceptions of jihad and different relations networks<sup>46</sup>; thus, rather than a competition it seems a confrontation between an old and a new terrorist model<sup>47</sup> with a certain degree of overlap<sup>48</sup>.

---

43 See his speech at the fifth ELCANO forum on Global Terrorism, 11 November 2017, Madrid. Available at: <https://goo.gl/HMxvxs> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

44 In this sense, on 17 January 2018, one month after the meeting of the G5 defence ministers and Western sponsor countries in Paris, Adman Abou Walid Saharaoui, the leader of the Islamic State of the Greater Sahara (ISGS), announced a united front between the Qaeda formations and groups close to ISIS to “fight the infidels” (see GALLINARO, Eleonora. “Sahel: Niger e Mali, la trappola della Guerra Santa nel deserto”, *Affari Internazionali*, 18 January 2018. Available at: <https://goo.gl/dWBYKY> (consulted on: 2 May 2018)).

45 The factor of generational vocation of jihadism is highly relevant. As we are reminded by Javier Martin (op.cit, 2017, p.152), many of those who returned from Syria and Iraq and are now fighting in Libya and the Sahel (as well as Yemen) are the children of those who fought in the 1980s, especially in Afghanistan. These families have been brought up in and have only known the world of radicalism and war. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that Derna is the bastion of radical Islam in Libya; in 2011, it was the central core of opposition to Gaddafi, and in 2014 it was the first city in North Africa to swear allegiance to ISIS.

46 The old (unofficial and never recognised) relations between Boko Haram and Al Qaeda (see BAGAJI, Ali Yusufu et al. “Boko Haram and the Recurring Bomb Attacks in Nigeria: Attempt to Impose Religious Ideology through Terrorism?”, *Cross-cultural Communication*, vol.8, n.1, 2012, pp.37), were cut off to create an alliance with ISIS, which did not materialise in a change of strategy of Shekau’s movement (which is still essentially local), but took place in March 2015, when AQMI experienced a loss of strength and the probable need to finance the military response by internationalising the conflict became apparent, apart from a growing permeability of ISIS’ ideology (CARBONE, Giovanni & CASOLA, Camillo. “Dal Sahel al Corno d’Africa: le aree di instabilità e le aree di crisi in Africa Subsahariana”, *Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale*, Dossier n.122, 2016, Rome, p. 28).

47 In: <http://formiche.net/2016/10/21/isis-mosul-2/> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

48 For example in the Libyan region of Fezzan one can observe joint actions by AQMI, its affiliate Ansar al Sharia and ISIS, with an exchange of expertise, especially in the area of weapons, transport

The decision of the jihadist groups in the Sahel whether to affiliate with Al Qaeda or ISIS depends primarily on the specific goals and inter-ethnic dynamics, which are determined by the local context and where these cells develop<sup>49</sup>. As mentioned, factors such as the territorial political and social fabric and local interests of clans and of the transnational crime networks that support them also come into play<sup>50</sup>. In short, jihadism exploits local tensions and feeds on them to achieve its political and economic goals, and its adaptability to one model or another is tied to the political and social changes of the countries involved<sup>51</sup>, as well as the rivalries between old and new generations of fighters, and lastly the degree of mutual permeability between organised crime and jihadist cells.

The tendency of terrorist groups to build alliances depends on both the international political-military pressure and on the local regimes<sup>52</sup>, and on all the structural factors that constitute their breeding ground. The local purpose of jihadism needs to be underlined, which is why it should not be considered a monolithic global threat, but rather local insurgence with global repercussions, with two standard bearers as a visible front: Al Qaeda and ISIS. In this context, the grassroots extremists take their

and illicit trafficking, with very fluid boundaries. Moreover, it can be seen that the separation of Ghabat al Nusra from Al Qaeda has received approval from Al Zawahiri (in: <https://goo.gl/xWAQUw> - consulted on: 2 May 2018).

49 MAZZONE, Carolina. “La competizione tra Al-Qaeda e Daesh in Africa Sub-Sahariana”, *Revista CeSI (Centro Studi Internazionale)*, 13 May 2016. Available at: <https://goo.gl/PyNNfY> (consulted on: 5 May 2018).

50 Shekau’s Boko Haram itself — which experienced a recent decline as a result of the efforts of the MNJTF (*Multinational Joint Task Force*, which includes 8-10,000 soldiers from Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Benin and Cameroun) — is suffering from internal strife, with a possible split by the branch led by Al Barnawi and loyal to Al Qaeda; this partly helps to understand the greater thrust towards ISIS and its Libyan affiliates.

51 UNITED STATE INSTITUTE FOR PEACE. *The Jihadi Treath, ISIS, al-Qaeda, and beyond*, Washington, 2017, p. 28. Available at: <https://goo.gl/f9Jofy> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

52 For example Idriss Déby, President of Chad since 1990, the “sheriff” who in 2013 sent his soldiers to support the French in Mali against an embryonic caliphate, on the eastern side supports the “brother” of same ethnic origin, Ibrahim Khalil, leader of the Jem (Justice and Equality Movement) who, by agitating in favour of independence for Darfur, wanted to depose President al-Bashir in 2008 and replace Hassan al-Tourabi, redefining the state on the basis of the *sharia* and radical Islamism. Meanwhile, Boko Haram inexplicably uses weapons from the Chad army, and France intervenes directly with its supplies of weapons and mercenaries (in: <https://goo.gl/SQGSZP> - consulted on: 2 May 2018). Boko Haram finds refuge in the area close to Cameroun where its leader, Paul Biya – in power for 41 years – does not fight against it, conscious of the fact that Boko Haram’s activity ensures that Nigeria does not insist on the territorial claims to ownership of the Bakassi peninsula in a coastal area rich in oil. There is also a strange friendship between Sudan’s Muslim President Omar al-Bashir and Joseph Kony, Christian leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army which from Uganda is ramping up its incursions into the towns and villages of South Sudan (FUMAGALLI, Giuseppe. “Terrorismo in Africa: le complicità dei regimi autoritari”, *Rivista dell’Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale*, 11 April 2016. Available at: <https://goo.gl/nZDg57> - consulted on: 2 May 2018).

inspiration from the ideology of either group or, in some cases, both<sup>53</sup>. This means that it is important not to be side-tracked by a war of acronyms, or by the religious aspects of the movement, or the tactics they use and the global goals they pursue. Rather, what matters are the structural causes that generate the synergy between jihadism and violent acts, which are committed because of the interests of oppressive regimes, rival militias, terrorist groups, sectarian differences, tribal tensions, criminal organisations and foreign interventions.

In short, we are faced with a heterogeneous, fragmented and native terrorist phenomenon which confirms its local nature through the fact that it is embedded in the context of an expansion of the illicit economy, which, although not fully owned by terrorism, functions under the control of different local gangs and clans, so that any exterior blow immediately leads to action by the local population<sup>54</sup>. Hence, waging a full-scale war against a single and homogenous enemy does not make sense, because its resilience lies in the local fabric and is moulded by the support of organised crime. In the Sahel, the jihad is local and this applies equally to the true terrorist threat. The increase of terrorist attacks from 2015 onwards confirms — despite its anti-Western and anticolonial rhetoric — that the strategic scope of this threat is still confined to local and sub regional scenarios. The reasons for this are basically two: the extreme fragmentation of the jihadist framework and the unequal relationship between jihadists and criminal agents<sup>55</sup>.

The contemporary presence and proliferation of armed groups and Islamist militias which act as “drugs mafias” regardless of their faith, proves that the greatest interest in cloaking themselves in jihadism lies in enhancing their own potential for doing business. If agreements between transnational crime gangs and terrorist groups have guaranteed a distribution of business according to their respective strategic interests, this situation has simultaneously caused a structural dependency — in terms of both capital and human resources — of the jihadist groups on criminal organisations. This is explained by their reliance on the latter’s extensive criminal networks and consequent capacity for channelling arms, funds and documents, as well as providing logistics support and access to their connections to the global financial circuit.

Finally, the role of the economic factor in this “competition” must not be overlooked: the multi-layered management of illicit trafficking and the extensive cross-permeation

---

53 SCOTT, Stewart. “Tracking global terrorism”, *Stratfor*, 18 de enero 2018. Available at: <https://goo.gl/XG3b5n> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

54 The mentioned leader of the ISGS uses claims and grievances from tribes such as the Fulani people (also known as Peul), nomads in the border regions between Mali and Niger, to stake out his political and economic space and accommodate the “fugitives” from the caliphate in Syria and Iraq.

55 In this context, see report by Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, available at: <http://www.ispionline.it/it/articoli/articolo/sicurezzaafrica/scenari-una-nuova-dimensione-del-terrorismoislamista-africa-14936> (consulted on: 5 May 2018).

between terrorism and organised crime. The economic and financial globalisation has determined a process which Loretta Napoleoni as a whole defines as the “privatisation of terrorism”<sup>56</sup>, a hybrid between the economy of terror, the world of crime and lawlessness. This hybrid character is a factor of prime importance in terms of the search for a response to this complex threat.

### The symbiotic nexus between terrorism and transnational crime

*“Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you.  
But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you.”*

(Qur’an, 2:216)

Whereas initially and for years the prevailing impression was that the jihadist cells avoided getting involved in criminal activities, only committing minor crimes for the purpose of self-financing, reality has progressively transformed this notion. Terrorism and transnational crime are the winners of globalisation<sup>57</sup>, with all the advantages brought by growing interdependence. Globalisation allows them to use their arms and fighters in an asymmetric balance of forces and enables a digital revolution of terrorism that offers them a fundamental strategic and mediatic dimension to exert a direct influence on the multipolar balances.

It seems perfectly plausible that the transnational nature of organised crime has enabled terrorism to attain a global reach and that the collapse of governability of the jihadist movement has incentivised the “*pax mafiosa*” between organised crime and terrorists – which Osama Bin Laden was vehemently opposed to.

This phenomenon had already appeared in the Balkans and Caucasus, but in the Sahel, according to Valeria Rosato<sup>58</sup>, rather than it being a case of pure islamist ideology spreading and taking root, it is characterised by complex dynamics of instrumental

56 NAPOLEONI, Loretta. *Terrorismo S.p.A.* Milano: Saggiatore, 2008, p.58. An analogy can be drawn, for example, to the control of private transport in Northern Ireland by the IRA.

57 The scope of globalisation can be seen from the terrorist attacks devastating districts of Kabul and communities in eastern Afghanistan, in the south of the Philippines (where the state army is fighting, using heavy means, against the Salafist-jihadist groups who are claiming both their loyalty to ISIS and a piece of territory on the archipelago), Iraq, Syria (where numbers of fighters are arriving from Trinidad and Tobago, see: <https://es.panamapost.com/orlando-avendano/2017/03/08/trinidad-y-tobago-el-mayor-exportador-de-yihadistas/> - consulted on: 4 May 2018), the Horn of Africa and of course on the battleground of multipolarity in the Sahel-Sahara swath, from Mauritania to the Horn of Africa, where many terrorist groups operating in the name of both ISIS and Al Qaeda are claiming the control over vast territories, with raids targeted primarily at building up local financial and human capital (in: <https://www.investigacion.net/es/terrorismo-la-faz-oscura-de-la-globalizacion/> - consulted on: 2 May 2018).

58 ROSATO, Valeria. “Al Qaeda nel Sahel: organizzazioni ‘ibride’ tra terrorismo e crimine organizzato”, *Sicurezza Nazionale*, 3 March 2015, pp.1-13, Available at: <https://goo.gl/BsvBZ3> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

adaptation that involve different illicit actors and the local population. In this way the alliances between terrorists and organised crime are superimposed (but not mixed), and it is difficult to understand the context and how to set up effective measures – particularly in the socio-political vacuums that are able to exist in the interior of these Sahel states and whose territorial economies have historically been under the control of tribes and clans involved in organised crime.

In order to avoid simplistic clichés when looking at the complex social realities of the Sahel, the “three-dimensional” model of analysis provided by Santiago Ballina<sup>59</sup> is relevant, which reflects complex dynamics, with a first level represented by the social and cultural backbone that buttresses economic gain and ideology (second and third level) and provides the environment for the structuring and constitution of organisations. Gain and ideology are not mutually exclusive, but functionally closely related within the wider social context. It is not the motivation of the illegal actors that counts (political/ideological or profit/enrichment), but the effect of their actions and the context within which they operate.

Therefore the real threat lies not in the name of the brand, but in the ability to fill the gaps left by the states and in the way they structure themselves as functional “emerging political complexes”<sup>60</sup> and new ways of managing power, where illegal armed actors are to a certain extent legitimised by the population in the territories they control. In this sense, AQMI, Ansar al-Din or MUJAO are more dangerous in terms of their criminal rather than their terrorist acts<sup>61</sup>.

In this context, the state of conflict in the Sahel is interlaced with the welfare of the population<sup>62</sup>, and not taking into account this close tie entails the risk of instead setting up strategies to fight terrorism that could trigger radicalisation processes within the population<sup>63</sup>. The simplistic transposition of the Westphalian state has not succeeded

---

59 BALLINA, Santiago. The Crime–Terror Continuum Revisited: A Model for the Study of Hybrid Criminal Organizations, *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*. 2011, n. 6, pp.121-136. The author affirms that the coexistence of ideological and criminal elements in both organisations must not be read as a “zero sum” result, because a lot of clandestine organisations simultaneously pursue multiple agendas and display their hybrid character through strategies of adaptation that are rooted both in the sphere of profit and in the symbolic dimension of power.

60 DUFFIELD, Mark. “Postmodern Conflict. Warlords, Post-Adjustment States and Private Protection”, *Civil Wars*, vol.1, n.1, 1998, p.73. Available at: <https://goo.gl/5jxQBC> (consulted on: 1 May 2018).

61 En este sentido POVEDA, CRIADO, Miguel. *Terrorismo Global y crimen organizado*. Madrid: Fragua, 2015, p.95.

62 GRYNKEWICH, Alexis. “Welfare as Warfare: How Violent Non-State Groups Use Social Services to Attack the State”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol.31, n.4, 2008, pp.350-370.

63 The current network of illegal trafficking is no more than a continuation of the traditional transaharian caravans that involve the same families over extended periods of time (LECOCCQ, Baz and SCHRIJVER, Paul. “The War on Terror in a Haze of Dust: Potholes and Pitfalls on the Saharan Front”, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*. vol.25, n.1, 2007, pp.141-166). The kidnappings are also

in filling this socio-political gap, and family connections and feelings of belonging to a local group or community are the (only) backbone of the socio-economic fabric where ethnic and tribal groups interact to mutual benefit. This is where the jihadist groups dilute, creating new socio-economic dynamics and a true political context where the unifying religious line is used to legitimise the established order<sup>64</sup>. One example of this is AQMI: though born out of a global perspective, its strategy encompasses a limited territory, with fluid divisions and reshapings in accordance with the balance of local power. Also, within its leadership there has been a succession of different approaches in the same direction. The figure of Mokhtar Belmokhtar in particular resulted in an ideological shift towards loosening the ties to the islamist cause and intensifying its involvement in smuggling of all sorts (in contrast to the line followed by other leaders such as Abdelmalek Drouktel and Abou Zeid), which in turn led to internal power struggles. This situation determines the alternation of a “controlled” fragmentation between global and local tendencies, showing clear signs of an ongoing process of restructuring.

In the Sahel, the way the jihad embraces the “close enemy” (common to both “ideological umbrellas” of Al Qaeda and ISIS<sup>65</sup>) determines circumstantial alliances, while the political instability of the region ensures ongoing business as well as guaranteeing its own survival. Therefore, one should not interpret the nexus between terrorism and crime through the rigid dichotomy “ideology *versus* profit”: jihadism contains hybrid elements, so that the two dimensions are not competing with each other but complementary to each other<sup>66</sup>. Therefore it is preferable to adopt a perspective that focusses more on the broad context of action of a clandestine violent organisation. In other words, it is a situation of mutual dependence with complementary agendas, depending on the circumstance, which must not be understood as alternative phenomena but deeply interrelated.

This explains why the fight against terrorism, as was underlined by the UN Security Council<sup>67</sup>, cannot be carried out exclusively through military force, but needs adopting an integral focus that includes economic and infrastructure growth, reduction of

---

often carried out and handled by groups that have not taken up the jihadist cause but take advantage of the lucrative volume of business, where relations with terrorists are of a purely instrumental nature and do not always take place in a climate of serene collaboration.

64 For this see also COBO, FUENTE, Ignacio. “La amenaza híbrida: yihadismo y crimen organizado en el Sahel”, *Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, Documento de análisis n.57, 2014, Madrid.

65 According to Lina Jatib, “Although ideology plays an important role in the way ISIS operates, its strategic objectives are not determined by ideology. Instead they revolve around acquiring money, resources and power” (in MARTIN, Javier. op. cit., 2017, p.117).

66 The definition of an organised criminal group as agreed by the UN Convention against Organised Transnational Crime held in Palermo in December 2000 (Annex 1 of General Assembly resolution 55/25) is perfectly applicable to terrorism.

67 See the report *Peace and Security in Africa*, Meeting of 13 May 2013, UN Security Council.

poverty, promotion of governance, strengthening of state institutions, extension of social services, education and fight against corruption.

In the Sahel, which is seeing the “Coming of Anarchy” as suggested by Robert Kaplan<sup>68</sup>, terrorism and transnational organised crime take shape, without real boundaries, as “moving centres of power” which are specific to each territorial entity. This explains how state-internal conflicts can take the guise of wars of liberation, or reformist revolts with a more markedly political bias, or wars between warlords or secessionists pursuing economic-predatory interests (like in the case of the two Sudans or in Darfur)<sup>69</sup>.

The replacement of inter-state wars by intra-state wars has conferred a leading role on organised crime in many war economies (including the aspect of post-war rebuilding), where their coexistence with terrorists creates enabling environments for the convergence of both, resulting in a “hybridisation”<sup>70</sup> with mutual benefits<sup>71</sup>.

The Italian National Antimafia and Antiterrorism Prosecutor Franco Roberti<sup>72</sup> defines ISIS more starkly as a genuine “Mafia state”, due to the indissoluble, tight complementarity and strategic interdependence of the two actors and their respective decisions, where terrorism itself acts as an entity that regulates the rivalries between criminal organisations, while the latter mould both the organisational structure and the objectives of the former. In this sense, jihadism in the Sahel is closer to the South American drug dealers than to the proclaimed “nationalism” of ISIS<sup>73</sup>. Similarly, the great number of terrorist attacks occurred in 2016 and 2017 are designed to defend its leadership in running the businesses that sustain it – a situation strongly reminiscent of “imperial capitalism”<sup>74</sup>.

Hence, the lines between terrorist and criminal organisations dissolve and one group can convert into the other and vice versa; its hybrid character manifests itself in

---

68 KAPLAN, Robert. “The coming anarchy”, *Athlantic Monthly*, vol.273, n.2, 1994, pp.44-76. In this article, the expansion of areas of conflict after the end of the Cold War was interpreted as the beginning of a new era characterised by new approaches to warfare.

69 For an analysis of the dual causality of these conflicts, see COLLIER, Paul and HOEFFLER, Anke. “Greed and grievance in civil war”, *Oxford Economic Paper*, n.56, 2004, pp.563-595. Available at: <https://goo.gl/UbaXyf> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

70 See also in this context the world Development report of the World Bank for 2011. Available at: <https://goo.gl/piWuLL> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

71 DE LA CORTE, Luis. “¿Por qué crecen los vínculos entre terrorismo y crimen?” *Cuadernos de la Guardia Civil*, n.50, 2014. Available at: <https://goo.gl/u8Fa9b> consulted on: 2 May 2018).

72 DIREZIONE NAZIONALE ANTIMAFIA E ANTITERRORISMO. *Relazione Annuale*, Rome, 2016 pp.143-144. Available at: <https://goo.gl/gr7nwB> (consulted on: 31 January 2018).

73 NAPOLEONI, Loretta. Terrorismo, l’obiettivo della lotta armata jihadista in Africa è difendere il business della droga, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 20 March 2016. Available at: <https://goo.gl/jUNrxx>. (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

74 See interview with Loretta Napoleoni with Vice magazine of July 2017. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mAAafpixtA> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

the strategies of adaptation between the sphere of gain and the symbolic dimension of power<sup>75</sup>. The actual change of structure of the terrorist organisation converges towards a structural model of organised crime and, as pointed out by Sánchez y Yubero<sup>76</sup>, “if originally Al Qaeda opted for the construction of a pyramidal model, currently both Al Qaeda and ISIS are opting for a network-based structure which is characteristic of criminal organisations”. It is difficult to determine whether it is the organised crime model that is shaping the kind of terrorist activity or whether it is terrorism choosing how to finance itself. What is certain, however, is that the most important factor behind the explosion of terrorist power in the Sahel is its interconnection to transnational crime, which one might call its *raison d'être*<sup>77</sup>.

On top of “institutional” financing<sup>78</sup>, the control of the desert highways allows them to take part in this “economy of terror” through trafficking of drugs, arms, oil<sup>79</sup>, precious stones, medicine<sup>80</sup>, wildlife and ivory<sup>81</sup>, in addition to human trafficking<sup>82</sup>

75 WANG, Peng. “The Crime-Terror Nexus: Transformation, Alliance, Convergence”, *Asian Social Science*, vol.6, n.6, 2011, pp.11-20. This perspective could warrant a closer look — given the proven *liaison* between the FARC and ETA — into the coincidence of the gradual ending of ETA hostilities and the switching of Central and South American drug traffic routes from the Iberian Peninsula to West Africa.

76 SÁNCHEZ, Verónica and YUBERO, Beatriz. “Influencia de las redes criminales de carácter transnacional en los conflictos”, *Centro Superior de Estudios de la Defensa Nacional (CESEDEN)*, Documento de trabajo n.12, Madrid, 2016, p.12. Available at: <https://goo.gl/UP3T6z> (consulted on: 24 April 2018).

77 See White House report “*Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime*” of July 2011 (in: <https://goo.gl/AX4fzS> - consulted on: 3 May 2018) and the report for the US Congress “*Terrorism and Transnational Crime: Foreign Policy Issues for Congress*” of June 2013 (in: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/R41004.pdf> - consulted on: 3 May 2018).

78 As donations from supporters (state or non-state) are based on *zakat* (alms), in order to sidestep controls the *zakat* are channelled through the *hawala* (“trust remittance”), i.e. transfers based on a person’s word and using intermediary companies. Another option is plain crowdfunding via social networks or international prepaid cards (en BALLESTEROS, MARTÍN, Miguel, Ángel. Op. cit, 2017, pp.133-136).

79 In 2017 the *Atlantic Council* estimated the annual value of the illicit oil trade in Nigeria between 3 and 8 billion dollars. The local ISIS affiliate, Boko Haram, influences the Nigerian economy. Nigeria displays its support for the Iranian model and is not aligned with Riyadh, especially where the supply policy for oil is concerned. For the same reason, ISIS has decided to invest in Libya rather than Yemen, to continue building up its stakes in oil smuggling, which it has consolidated in Syria and Iraq (in: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/downstream-oil-theft> - consulted on: 2 May 2018).

80 In: <http://www.africafundacion.org/spip.php?article29314>.

81 See joint report from UNEP and INTERPOL of 2014 “*The Environmental Crime Crisis*”, which examines organisations operating in the Darfur civil war and pinpoints Boko Haram, Al Shaabab and the government-friendly militia group Janjaweed as those who profit the most from this trade (in: <https://www.cbd.int/financial/monterreytradetech/unep-illegaltrade.pdf> - consulted on: 2 May 2018).

82 See report by Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *The Illicit Superhighway: Transnational Organized Crime in Africa*, 22 May 2017 (Available at: <https://goo.gl/7MB5Fo> - consulted on: 4 May 2018).

(including extortion and kidnapping<sup>83</sup>), leading to the forcible displacement of the latter type of “goods”, either within the same region or towards our continent, guaranteeing further sources of revenue besides creating — thanks to their vulnerability and volume — a veritable economic and social fabric at their service<sup>84</sup>.

Taking drug trafficking as an example, the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) 2017 report<sup>85</sup> dedicates the last of its five parts to “the problem of drugs and organised crime, illicit financial flows, corruption and terrorism”, proving the direct financing through, and implication of many terrorist groups in, drugs trafficking. Groups exhibiting the Al Qaeda and ISIS brands are happy to participate in this joint venture, with Boko Haram and AQMI particularly involved, but also the Taliban of Afghanistan, FARC in Columbia, the Shining Path of Peru, or the insurgent groups of Myanmar<sup>86</sup>.

Alain Rodier defines Boko Haram as a “narcoterrorist movement”, which habitually cooperates with Al Qaeda movements to facilitate the flow of cocaine and heroin that crosses the Sahel<sup>87</sup>. The combination of criminal acts with the drugs business has transformed the jihadist project, insofar as “the use of the nationalist-religious narrative continues to be the basis [...] to obtain new recruits for the cause, which has stopped being purely political-religious and now extends to establishing a criminal economy.”<sup>88</sup>

Referring to Boko Haram, Abdoulaye Diop, Minister of Foreign Affairs in Mali, said in commentaries about the situation in Agadez (Niger) during the summit in the European Parliament of November 2017: “Today the region of the Sahel is faced with terrorism and organised crime [...] the Sahel is the stage of a global challenge: if we fail and the dam we have built collapses, it will be a threat for the whole world, beginning with Europe”<sup>89</sup>. Against this obvious fact, one has to take into account that

---

83 For a general overview, see BERGEN, Peter et al. “Jihadist Terrorism 16 years after 9/11, a Threat Assessment”, *New America*, 11 September 2017, pp.47-48. Available at: <http://newamerica.org/internationalsecurity> (consulted on: 3 May 2018).

84 These methods are complemented by practices of international trade such as VAT fraud in international transactions or extending loans to companies which immediately fold and are not reinstated: the so-called “Uber-ization of terrorism” (in: [http://www.schwarzthal.com/IMFT\\_UBER.pdf](http://www.schwarzthal.com/IMFT_UBER.pdf) - consulted on: 2 May 2018).

85 UNODC. *World Drug Report*, Viena, 2017. Available at: [http://www.unodc.org/wdr2017/field/Booklet\\_5\\_NEXUS.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/wdr2017/field/Booklet_5_NEXUS.pdf) (consulted on: 30 January 2018).

86 See PASTOR, GÓMEZ, María, Luisa. “Drogas, delincuencia organizada y su financiación”, *Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, Documento Informativo n.9, Madrid, 2017, p.6.

87 In: [https://www.lejournalinternational.fr/Il-jihadismo-in-Africa-il-terrorismo-dimenticato-2-2\\_a3723.html](https://www.lejournalinternational.fr/Il-jihadismo-in-Africa-il-terrorismo-dimenticato-2-2_a3723.html) (consulted on: 1 May 2018).

88 MESA, GARCÍA, Beatriz. *La falsa yihad. El negocio del narcotráfico en El Sahel*. Cádiz: Dalya, 2014. p.103.

89 In: <https://altreconomia.it/europa-soldi-migranti-niger/> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

seated in the parliament of Niger, presided by Mahamadou Issoufou, and described by *The Economist* as a “solid ally of the West”<sup>90</sup>, one finds drug dealers and rebels such as the deputy Ibrahim Alambo, brother of Aghali Alambo, former leader of the Tuareg rebellion that ignited the country between 2007 and 2009. And Issoufou’s personal adviser, Abta Hamidine, is considered very close to AQMI. Also seated in this parliament is Chérife Abadine, drug lord in the region of Agadez<sup>91</sup>, while many ex members of the Niger Movement for Justice (MNJ), the soul behind the Tuareg rebellion and simultaneously the overseeing body of illicit trafficking, are currently controlling the northern regions<sup>92</sup>. In neighbouring Mali, a similar toxicity can be found, with members of MOJWA (Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa) seated in parliament<sup>93</sup>.

Beyond this political mingling, as early as at the end of 2014, a report of the US federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) reinforced the idea that international jihad was also being financed by drug trafficking, highlighting the relations between AQMI and the Mexican and Columbian cartels. This symbiosis was also confirmed by data from the Centre of Intelligence against Terrorism and Organised Crime (CITCO) in Madrid, where at least 20% of the terrorists in prison have a previous criminal record connected to drug trafficking<sup>94</sup>. It appears from this that the ISIS *holding* entertains cells in Mexico (Ciudad Juárez and Puerto Palomas), while the Sinaloa cartel, together with Columbian drug dealers, is involved with AQMI and Hezbollah. All share the same elements in terms of tactics, guerrillas and propaganda: the management and methods of exercising power used by drug cartels in South America do not differ from those employed by these jihadist groups<sup>95</sup>. One of the Al Qaeda leaders in the Sahel, the Algerian Belmokhtar, is notorious for being the nexus between Chavez-loyal groups and Islamic fundamentalism<sup>96</sup> on the route that runs from Venezuela to Guinea Bissau. The Vice President of Venezuela himself, Tareck el Assaïmi, of Syrian origin, is considered by the USA and Israel a leader of Hezbollah who — on allowing an intense network of criminal trafficking — has at the same time favoured an overlap between contexts of subversion from the far left from the Chavist realm with islamist cells<sup>97</sup>.

90 In: <https://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21710826-america-has-been-revving-up-its-efforts-against-range-terrorist-groups-taking> (consulted on: 1 May 2018).

91 In: <http://www.occhidellaguerra.it/missione-niger-traffici/> (consulted on: 31 April 2018).

92 RANIERI, Luca. “Niger, il perno strategico del Sahel”, *Limes*, Rome, November 2015.

93 In: [http://www.cope.es/audios/noche/falsa-yihad-negocio-del-narcotrafico-sahel\\_279937](http://www.cope.es/audios/noche/falsa-yihad-negocio-del-narcotrafico-sahel_279937) (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

94 In: <https://www.interris.it/intervento/ecco-come-si-finanziano-i-terroristi> (consulted on: 1 May 2018).

95 In: [http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2017/11/03/il-narcoterrorismo-di-isis-spa-dalhashish-alla-cocaina-al-captagon-lintesa-con-i-cartelli-piu-potenti\\_a\\_23265893/](http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2017/11/03/il-narcoterrorismo-di-isis-spa-dalhashish-alla-cocaina-al-captagon-lintesa-con-i-cartelli-piu-potenti_a_23265893/) (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

96 In: <http://www.lindro.it/litalia-le-rotte-dellafrica-e-le-logiche-comuni-della-criminalita-organizzata/> (consulted on: 23 April 2018).

97 BOCCOLINI, Massimiliano y POSTIGLIONE, Alessio. *Sabara, deserto di Mafie e Jihad – Come narcos, separatisti e Califfi minacciano il Mediterraneo*. Roma: Castelvecchi, 2017. These authors also

Terrorism and organised crime, two phenomena distinguished by their final strategic objective, share the same skill and methods of action to use the empty expanses that the Sahel offers and create new forms of “sovereignty”, preventing social, economic and democratic development. This in itself constitutes the true hybrid threat for security. With the appearance of ISIS, radicalisation processes have been accelerated and are motivated more by personal aspects than by profound ideological convictions, which is why the narrative they use has also attracted Muslims with a criminal background, favouring the connection between crime and jihadism; a connection which is becoming more and more visible in the way these organisations act, determining their areas of influence<sup>98</sup>. And although it cannot be asserted that ISIS’ strategy is geared to recruiting followers from among this group and provoking the criminal synergies that have ensued, the fact is that its narrative plays on many of the vital urges that persons of such a background are partial to. This is apparent in that ISIS not only tolerates criminal activities to obtain finance, but also supports it through its doctrine which states that such activities are correct if they serve the ends of the jihad.

One may therefore conclude that the terrorist phenomenon in the Sahel, whose cause feeds on contexts of local political and socio-economic conflict, takes on complex features, consolidating itself as a “network-centric” system, which is functional thanks to the hybrid management of multiple conflicting interests. The latter can either be their own, or relate to a (local, regional and global) political level, or be derived from third “exotic” parties, such as transnational crime. It thereby acquires a structure of power which is typical of a “Mafia state”.

## Conclusions

This article sets out a perspective to place the terrorist phenomenon in the Sahel within the context of current geopolitical dynamics, which are characterised by an increasingly globalised and interdependent international system whose multipolar nature is still being shaped. Defining terrorism in the Sahel without the framework of multipolar competition is a futile effort, as it is vital to understand how local conflicts, terrorism and illicit trafficking blend into the relational system of this region in an interrelated way, turning this complex threat into a functioning reality.

In the Sahel, global competition manifests itself through a system of “permanent conflict”, where terrorism and the multiplications of the crisis present themselves as a “logical” effect and phenomenon of economic globalisation, providing a favourable

---

highlight the collaboration of his father Carlos, a member of Saddam Hussein’s Baath movement who subsequently linked up with Hezbollah and Iran and became active in handling passports to allow fugitives of Syrian origin to go to Venezuela and create these cells.

98 RAJAN, Basra et al. “Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the new crime Terror Nexus”, *International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence*, Occasional Paper 2016, London, p.6. Available at: <https://goo.gl/8cRxc6> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

framework to all these non-state illicit actors<sup>99</sup>, the true winners of globalisation. The centrality of power as a form of control over primary resources and their supply chains still constitutes the central pillar and the trigger of geopolitical competition, where globalised post-modernity gives rise to these new warriors, alliances and methods of “combat”<sup>100</sup>. Seen from this angle, it is therefore essential to decipher the real “paradigm” of Islam that inspires terrorism in the time/space context of the Sahel, because in accordance with Alice Martini<sup>101</sup>, each “regime of truth” is the product of relations of power that exist within a specific context and, as already pointed out by Michael Foucault, there is always a direct relationship between the creation of knowledge and power<sup>102</sup>, and wherever there is power, there is “resistance”.

The “trivialisation” of terrorism is a luxury we cannot afford, and the narrative that is often used to categorise and simplify a conflict down to an ethnic or religious cause is reminiscent of a “clash of civilisations” à la Huntington, requiring a holistic interpretation that ignores complexity and thereby rejects geopolitical analysis itself. Moreover, the use of this simplification can give rise to thoughts (and strategic agendas) on the essence of the conflicts which often do not serve to interpret, but rather to predict the same historical event.

Thus, if on the one hand the so-called “ethnic conflicts” that the two Sudans are experiencing are competitions of a political, economic and social nature ignited by ethnic considerations, one should look for the same factors behind the jihadist phenomenon instead of treating it as a “holy” war – much as its ideological totem seems more globalised<sup>103</sup>. Simplification under the ethnic or religious banner simultaneously allows justifying the most disparate alliances in the Sahel, so that tribal gangs become freedom fighters, traffickers or terrorists according to the circumstances.

Jihadist terrorism, whose brands are trying to achieve the universal ideological monopoly of the movement, does not bear any direct relation to Islam. As a movement of radical eversion to obtain socio-political power, jihadism instrumentalises the Islamic religion which — not being monolithic — gives rise to multiple interpretations and facilitates subjective deviations. Thus Jihad is turned into an instrument to legitimise subversive political action and becomes a tool of almost infinite recruitment which feeds on the socio-economic breeding ground of the Sahel, where the positive effects

---

99 NÚÑEZ, VILLAVERDE, Jesús. “Guerras de ayer, de hoy y de mañana”, *Esglobal*, 10 May 2016 Available at: <https://www.esglobal.org/guerras-de-ayer-y-de-manana/> (consulted on: 4 May 2018).

100 For more on this topic, see KLARE, Michael. *The Race for What's Left: The Global Scramble for the World's Last Resources*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012.

101 MARTINI, Alice. “Terrorismo, un enfoque crítico”, *Relaciones Internacionales*, Grupo de Estudios de Relaciones Internacionales (GERI) – UAM, n.28, 2015, p.193.

102 FOUCAULT, Michael. *Microfísica del poder*. La Piqueta: Madrid, 1992, p.187.

103 GARCÍA, ALMEIDA, Fernando. “Reflexión sobre los conflictos étnicos y el desarrollo en el África Subsahariana”, *Estudios Geográficos*, vol.72, n.270, 2011, p.27. Available at: <https://goo.gl/QRx4Kq> (consulted on: 5 May 2018).

of globalisation have never reached and mutual dependence is still highly asymmetrical. Under this emblem, subversion is proposed as a socio-political alternative to the elites of these rentier states or to the anti-Sunni, pro-Western regimes, or those dominated by a particular ethnic group, or whatever the combination of local elements that sustain this hazy amalgam of political, social and/or economic grievances.

This leads us to consider jihadism as a local threat<sup>104</sup>, where its action, albeit legitimised by a final universal objective — such as the caliphate, the *umma* and the fight against a Western oppressor —, is always localised and geared towards the struggle for local political power. Hence, the answer is to be found in the local political and socio-cultural context<sup>105</sup>. A local jihad, under whichever terrorist brand, would find its strict hybridisation with organised crime justified, with which it shares objectives and methods, offering itself in a symbiotic way as an “emerging political complex” or a new way of managing power in the territories it controls, thereby providing some form of legitimisation to the population.

In a parallel way, if this nexus manifests itself as a “Mafia-system” in the West, in the Sahel where sovereignty is “limited” or hybrid, more extreme phenomena of insurgence and terrorism proliferate, using violence to implement *de facto* non-state political authoritarianism. This striving of organised crime is an instrument of attack in the political arena which coincides with the radical political movements that are seeking alternative socio-political control under the banner of political Islam. In the Sahel, every single route is subject to this union, and by incentivising instability, the proliferation of terrorist organisations along the old desert highways from Libya to Nigeria constitutes an indispensable territorial nexus for transnational organised crime<sup>106</sup>; both share an equal interest in permanent conflict and its corollary of thriving economic ventures<sup>107</sup>: a true hybridisation where armed violence participates both in the criminal and in the political objectives<sup>108</sup>.

Therefore, rather than letting oneself be guided by categorisations, groupings of brands, contingent alliances or internal struggles around the universal leadership of

---

104 As Núñez Villaverde highlights: “each group has its own agenda and plans for a specific territory and it would be wrong to say that each of their actions relates to an order received from somewhere ...”. (NÚÑEZ, VILLAVERDE, Jesús. Op. cit., 2018, p.42).

105 ROSEMBLATT, Nate. “All Jihad is local: What ISIS’ Files Tell Us About Its Fighters”, *New America*, 20 July 2016, p.34. Available at: <https://goo.gl/hsddY3> (consulted on: 1 May 2018). The author underlines that the key to the dilemma is to be found at local and territorial level, as shown by the rapid success of the ISIS brand.

106 GARZÓN, Juan, Carlos et al. *La diáspora criminal. La difusión transnacional del Crimen Organizado y como contener su expansión*. Washington: Wilson Center, 2013.

107 DE LA CORTE, Luis. op. cit., 2014, pp.20-21.

108 The formation of MUJAO from AQMI is a case in point where a balance seems to have been attained between a local network of local criminals and breakaway AQMI militia members (See SÁNCHEZ, Verónica y YUBERO, Beatriz. Op. cit., 2016, p.26).

jihad and thereby embracing a nebulous fight against global terror, the response must be reconducted to a local level, taking into account specific political, economic, social and territorial factors<sup>109</sup>. Political and local jihad requires a political and local response, where a bottom-up approach is crucial, involving local clans and tribal groups and their grievances.

At the same time, the *intermestic* nature of the Sahel requires a response at regional level. The perspective needs to be inverted: jihadism is the symptom, not the cause of conflict in the Sahel. It is important to understand that it is the structural instability itself that favours this radical hybrid threat. The ultimatum for security in postmodern times consists in filling these empty spaces.

In this sense, short-term security responses, though vital, can slip into the dynamics of permanent conflict<sup>110</sup> which — like emergency humanitarian aid — does not achieve any long-term tangible results in socio-political terms while exacerbating the same factors of instability. The ongoing global effort against the holy war and to curb the massive exodus towards Europe could be reduced by setting up other kinds of initiatives with a political flavour and “regional” character.

Enhancing regionalism is thus proposed as a tool to mitigate the effects of geopolitical competitions; a relational “filter” that could favour the diversification of socio-economic structure, the creation of local value chains and their inclusion in the global circuit, while simultaneously including social struggle in the political context, moving from a radicalisation of Islam to an *Islamisation of radicalism*, with positive effects on the process of nation-building. Regionalism as a form of “balance of power” within the postmodern relational complexity, lowering conflict potential, as the best response to the “*intermestic*” nature of the Sahel, where domino effects are the norm and the proliferation of terrorism (and conflict) in nearby states requires a “security scheme” to act as a filter, which would integrate the Sahel into the policies of the Maghreb in a coherent way.

A realistic definition of an active role for the European Union within multipolarity must needs include the creation of a geopolitical space with direct influence on the EU’s extended southern border towards the Sahel – a kind of “Euro-Mediterranean NAFTA”; an irrevocable solution that must be actively sought and forged, since we cannot afford the luxury of chasing after terrorist threats or their culminations on the old

---

109 Moreover, the intertwining of ideological interests between terrorist groups and jihadist brands, because of the confusing mass of rivalries and interests and the fact that the local societies are fragmented into tribes and clans whose relations change continually, makes it difficult (particularly for Westerners) to understand what is going on, who are the friends, who are the enemies and their effective strength – resulting in a high probability of errors in planning any intervention. The same dilemma arose previously in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans, Somalia, and – following the Arab Spring – the conundrum continues in the Sahel without a solution in sight.

110 The intensification of so-called jihadist terrorism and the most significant instances of restructuring occurred in the wake of operation “Barkane” and the establishment of the G5 Sahel.

continent. It is not a matter of option. Perhaps this necessity will finally incite the EU to exercise its soft power and to act in a realistic and truly integral and comprehensive way as the geopolitical actor it is, instead of adopting a multilateralism which is more “*loquens*” than “*eloquens*”<sup>III</sup> as in the sense of Cato’s adage “*vir bonus dicendi peritus*”.

## Bibliography

- ABUKHAIL, Assad. “The 8 proxy wars going on in Syria right now”, *The Huffington Post*, 24 November 2014. Available at: <https://goo.gl/TPJfAf> (consulted on: 13 February 2018).
- ARQUILLA, John y RONFELDT, David. *In Athena’s Camp. Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1997. Available at: <https://goo.gl/mjmXDw> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2001. Available at: <https://goo.gl/AYvMnA> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- BAGAJI, Ali Yusufu et al. “Boko Haram and the Recurring Bomb Attacks in Nigeria: Attempt to Impose Religious Ideology through Terrorism?”, *Cross-cultural Communication*, vol.8, n.1, 2012, pp.33-41. Available at: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/cc/issue/view/162> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- BALLESTEROS, MARTÍN, Miguel, Ángel. *Yihadismo*. Madrid: La Huerta Grande, 2017.
- Diagnóstico geoestratégico del conflicto en Malí. *Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, Documento de Análisis. n.14, Ministerio de Defensa, Madrid, 2013.
- BALLINA, Santiago. “The Crime–Terror Continuum Revisited: A Model for the Study of Hybrid Criminal Organizations”, *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, n. 6, 2011, pp.121-136.
- BAUMANN, Zygmund. “Times of Interregnum”, *Ethics and Global Politic*. vol.5, n.1, 2012, pp.49-56. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3402/egp.v5i1.17200> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- BECK, Ulrich. *Sobre el terrorismo y la Guerra*. Barcelona: Paidós, 2003.
- BERGEN, Peter et al. “Jihadist Terrorism 16 years after 9/11, a Threat Assessment”, *New America*, 11 de Septiembre de 2017. Available at: <http://newamerica.org/internationalsecurity> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

III In reference to the positive rhetorical viewpoint of Marco Flavio Quintiliano, as he expresses it in book XI of his work “*Institutio Oratoria*”, in 90-96 AD (see PENNACCINI, Adriano. *Quintiliano, Institutio Oratoria*. Milano: Giulio Einaudi, 2001).

- BOCCOLINI, Massimiliano y POSTIGLIONE, Alessio. *Sahara, desierto de Maife e Jihad. Como narcos, separatistas e Califfi minacciano el Mediterraneo*. Roma: Castelvecchi, 2017.
- CALDUCH, Cervera, Rafael. “España, ¿nuevo escenario del terrorismo yihadista?”, *el Mundo*, 20 de agosto de 2017. Available at: <https://goo.gl/Jq8Y8C> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- “África: dimensión geoestratégica de las operaciones militares”, in *África futuro escenario de operaciones militares*, monografía n.139, Madrid: Escuela de Altos Estudios de la Defensa, 2014 (ISSN-e:2255-3479).
- “Impacto estratégico de la crisis del Sahel”. *Panorama Estratégico*. 2013, n.1, Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa e Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, pp.115-138.
- CAMPANINI, Massimo. “L’islamismo yihadista da Al-Quaeda all’IS”, Roma: *Istituto Studi Politica Internazionale*, Documento de Analisis n.290, 2015.
- CARBONE, Giovanni y CASOLA, Camillo. “Dal Sahel al Corno d’Africa: le aree di instabilità e le aree di crisis in Africa Subsahariana”, *Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale*, Dossier n.122, Roma, 2016.
- COBO, FUENTE, Ignacio. “Las migraciones en el espacio Euro mediterráneo: causas y perspectivas de futuro”. *Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*. Documento de Análisis n.53, Madrid, 2017. Available at: <https://goo.gl/4TL722> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- “La amenaza hibrida: yihadismo y crimen organizado en el Sahel”, *Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, Documento de análisis n.57, Madrid, 2014.
- COLLIER, Paul. “Civil Wars. The Global Menace of Local Strife”, *The Economist*, 22 de mayo de 2003. Available at: <https://goo.gl/qzpHHh>. (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- COLLIER, Paul and HOEFFLER, Anke. “Greed and grievance in civil war”, *Oxford Economic Paper*, n.56, 2004, pp.563-595. Available at: <https://goo.gl/UbaXyf> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- COOPER, Robert. “El Estado postmoderno”, *Revista Académica de Relaciones Internacionales GERI-UAM*, n.1, Madrid, 2005, pp.1-10. Available at: <https://goo.gl/ei98A8> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- CORDESMAN, Anthony. “Lessons of the 2006 Israeli Hezbollah war”: *Center of Strategic and International Studies*, Washington, 2007.
- D’ANGELO, Valerio. “Hostis antes portas. El poder, la guerra y la figura del enemigo en las relaciones internacionales”. *Revista UNISCI*. n.38, Madrid, 2015, pp.35-67. Available at: <https://goo.gl/tjCsxZ> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- DE LA CORTE, Luis. ¿Por qué crecen los vínculos entre terrorismo y crimen? In: *Cuadernos de la Guardia Civil*. n.50, Madrid, 2014. Available at: <https://goo.gl/u8Fa9b> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

- “¿Hasta qué punto convergen el terrorismo global y la criminalidad organizada?: parámetros generales y escenarios críticos”, *Revista del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, n.1, 2013, pp.151-172.
- DEMMEERS, Jolle. *Theories of Violent Conflict: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2012.
- DIREZIONE NAZIONALE ANTIMAFIA E ANTITERRORISMO. *Relazione Annuale*, Roma, 2016. Available at: <https://goo.gl/gr7nwB> (consulted on: 31 January 2018).
- DUFFIELD, Mark. “Postmodern Conflict. Warlords, Post-Adjustment States and Private Protection”, *Civil Wars*, vol.1, n.1, 1998, pp.65-102.
- FAGAN, Pierluigi. *Verso un mondo multipolare, il gioco di tutti i giochi nell'era Trump*. Roma: Fazi, 2017.
- FOUCAULT, Michael. *Microfisica del poder*. Madrid: La Piqueta, 1992.
- FUMAGALLI, Giuseppe. “Terrorismo in Africa: le complicità dei regimi autoritari”, *Revista del Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale*, 11 aprile 2016. Available at: <https://goo.gl/nZDg57> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- GALBRAITH, John, Kenneth. *The age of uncertainty*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1977.
- GALLINARO, Eleonora. Sahel: Niger e Mali, la trappola della Guerra Santa nel deserto. *Affari Internazionali*, 18 de enero, 2018. Available at: <https://goo.gl/dW-BYKY> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- GARCÍA, ALMEIDA, Fernando. “Reflexión sobre los conflictos étnicos y el desarrollo en el África Subsahariana”, *Estudios Geográficos*, vol.72, n.270, 2011, pp.7-33. Available at: <https://goo.gl/Qrx4Kq> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- GARZÓN, Juan, Carlos et al. *La diáspora criminal. La difusión transnacional del Crimen Organizado y como contener su expansión*. Washington: Wilson Center, 2013.
- GRYNKEWICH, Alexus. “Welfare as Warfare: How Violent Non-State Groups Use Social Services to Attack the State”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol.31, n.4, 2008, pp.350-370.
- GOURDIN, Patrice. « Al-Qaida au Maghreb Islamique (AQMI) », *Question Internationales*. n.58, 2012, pp.18-20. Available at: <https://goo.gl/523iTg> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- KAPLAN, Robert. *El retorno de la Antigüedad. La política de los guerreros*. Barcelona: Editorial B, 2002.
- “The coming anarchy”, *Athlantic Monthly*, vol.273, n.2, 1994, pp.44-76.
- KEATINGE, Tom. “Black Market. How the charcoal trade fuels Al Shabab”, *Foreign Affairs*, 18 de noviembre 2014. Available at: <https://goo.gl/5ypRGo> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

- KLARE, Michael. *The Race for What's Left: The Global Scramble for the World's Last Resources*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012.
- LABÉVIÈRE, Richard. *Terrorisme, face cachée de la mondialisation*. Paris: Pierre-Guil-laume de Roux, 2016.
- LECOCQ, Baz y SCHRIJVER, Paul. “The War on Terror in a Haze of Dust: Pot-holes and Pitfalls on the Saharan Front”, *Journal of Contemporary African Stud-ies*, vol.25, n.1, 2007, pp.141-166.
- LÓPEZ, MUÑOZ, Juan. “Criminalidad y terrorismo, elementos de confluencia es-tratégica”, *Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, Documento n.83, Madrid, 2016, pp.1-21.
- MARTIN, Javier. *Estado Islámico, geopolítica del caos*. Madrid: Catarata, 2017.
- MARTINI, Alice. “Terrorismo, un enfoque crítico”, *Relaciones Internacionales*, Grupo de Estudios de Relaciones Internacionales (GERI) – UAM, n.28, 2015, pp.191-199.
- MAZZONE, Carolina. “La competizione tra Al-Quaeda e Daesh in Africa Sub-Sa-hariana”, *Revista CeSI (Centro Studi Internazionali)*, 13 May 2016. Available at: <https://goo.gl/PyNNfY> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- MAZZUCATO, Mariana. *The Entrepreneurial State: Debunking Public Vs. Private Sec-tor Myths*. London: Anthem Press, 2015.
- MESA, GARCÍA, Beatriz. *La falsa yihad. El negocio del narcotráfico en El Sahel*. Cádiz: Dalya, 2014.
- “La transformación del Yihadismo en el norte de Mali: de causa política a economía criminal”, *UNISCI*, DiscussionPaper, n.34, enero, 2014, pp.103-118. Available at: <https://goo.gl/qYZ2JD> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- MOTYL, Alexander. “Time for a hybrid warfare against Russia”, *WorldAffairs*, 25 No-vember 2014. Available at: <https://goo.gl/rnS6LE> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- NAPOLEONI, Loretta. “Terrorismo, l’obiettivo della lotta armata jihadista in Africa è difendere il business della droga”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 20 de marzo de 2016. Available at: <https://goo.gl/jUNrsx> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- *errorismo S.p.A.*. Milano: Saggiatore, 2008.
- NÚÑEZ, VILLAVERDE, Jesús et al. *Terrorismo Internacional en África, la construc-ción de una amenaza en el Sahel*. Madrid: Catarata, 2009.
- NÚÑEZ, VILLAVERDE, Jesús. *Daesh, el porvenir de la amenaza yihadista*. Madrid: Catarata, 2018.
- “Guerras de ayer, de hoy y de mañana”, *Esglobal*, 10 May 2016. Available at: <https://www.esglobal.org/guerras-de-ayer-y-de-manana/> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

- PASTOR, GÓMEZ, María, Luisa. “Drogas, delincuencia organizada y su financiación”, *Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos*, Documento Informativo n.9, Madrid, 2017.
- PENNACCINI, Adriano. *Quintiliano, Insitutio Oratoria*. Milano: Giulio Einaudi, 2001.
- POVEDA, CRIADO, Miguel. *Terrorismo Global y crimen organizado*. Madrid: Fragua, 2015.
- RAJAN, Basra et al. “Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the new crime Terror Nexus”, *International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR)*, Occasional Paper, London, 2016. Available at: <https://goo.gl/8cRxc6> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- RANIERI, Luca. “Niger, il perno strategico del Sahel”, *Limes*, November 2015.
- ROLET, Hélène. « L’armée française à l’épreuve de la guerre hybride dans le Sahel », *Revue Défense Nationale*, n. 765, 2016, pp.1-5.
- ROSATO, Valeria. “Al Qaeda nel Sahel: organizzazioni ‘ibride’ tra terrorismo e crimine organizzato”, *Sicurezza Nazionale*, Roma, 3 de marzo de 2015, pp.1-13. Available at: <https://goo.gl/BsvBZ3> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- ROSEMBLATT, Nate. “All Jihad is local: What ISIS’ Files Tell Us About Its Fighters”, *New America*, 20 July 2016. Available at: <https://goo.gl/hsddY3> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- SÁNCHEZ, Verónica y YUBERO, Beatriz. “Influencia de las redes criminales de carácter transnacional en los conflictos”, *Centro Superior de Estudios de la Defensa Nacional (CESEDEN)*, Documento de trabajo n.12, Madrid, 2016, pp.1-46. Available at: <https://goo.gl/UP3T6z> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- SCHORI, Liang, Christina. “Terrorismo y delincuencia, la convergencia de ambos mundo”, *ES Global*, Madrid, 16 November 2016. Available at: <https://goo.gl/1jvptu>. (Consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- SCOTT, Stewart. “Tracking global terrorism”, *Stratfor*, 18 de enero 2018. Available at: <https://goo.gl/XG3b5n> (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- SØRENSEN, Georg. “Big and important things.En: IR: Structural realism and the neglect of changes in statehood”, *International Relations Journal*, vol.23, n.2, 2009, pp.223–239.
- SUBHAYU Bandyopadhyay et al. “The Toll of Terrorism Terrorists not only exact a direct human cost, they can cause innumerable economic problems too”, *Finance & Development*, vol.52, n.2, 2015, pp.26-28. Available at: <https://goo.gl/SVtDYH>. (consulted on: 2 May 2018).
- UNITED STATES INSTITUTE FOR PEACE (USIP). *The Jihadi Treath, ISIS, al-Qaeda, and beyond*, Washington, DC, 2017. Available at: <https://goo.gl/f9Jofy>. January (consulted on: 2 May 2018).

WANG, Peng. “The Crime-Terror Nexus: Transformation, Alliance, Convergence”,  
*Asian Social Science*, vol.6, n.6, 2011, pp.11-20.

WILLIAMS, Paul. *War and conflict in Africa*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012.

---

*Submitted: December 14, 2018.*

*Accepted: March 15, 2019.*

---