

Analysis Facing Worldwide Jihadist Violence and Conflicts.

What to do?

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Abstract:

The purpose of the article is to show how the combination of Social Sciences and System Engineering can help the Analyst to improve the production of Intelligence and develop elements of strategic forecasting. The authors therefore detail the methodology through which they succeeded in integrating social science concepts into the intelligence process. To do so, they present an innovative tooled method (called hereafter Weber) that has been applied in 2016 to Jihadist violence as part of operational research. The findings of Weber are illustrated in 7 geographical poles

In our insecure and multicultural world Analysts are in the frontline. Most of the time policy-makers, diplomats or military planners' decisions rely to a large extent on Analysts' reports and estimates. But these Intelligence products should go beyond a retrospective approach that only ascertains facts. Indeed, embedded within the classic "What is happening?" query, most of the time there is also a second question: "What will happen tomorrow?". Thus, to some extent the Analyst is implicitly invited to think as a strategic forecaster. Forecasting in economics or in technology is based on specific methods and most of the time falls within the scope of quantitative approaches but it seems more difficult - by far - to make predictions where security is concerned because they relate to Individuals and their behavior - which we will refer to as societal issues in the following pages. Our aim is to explain how the combination of Social Sciences and System Engineering can help the Analyst to deliver effective analytical Intelligence on the one hand and elements of strategic forecasting on the other. We are therefore presenting an innovative tooled method that has been applied to Jihadist violence as part of operational research.

The Challenge: Facing Non-Western Societal Issues

There is no doubt that anticipating how Putin's or Erdogan's power might evolve in the coming years is a major Challenge. But these questions are connected to a State, one with a long past with identified actors, values and beliefs, means and interests. With regard to non-Western non-State actors which use extreme violence based on religious incentives, forecasting is highly risky. For that reason it seems useful to try to set up an entirely new approach.

The first stage is to take into account what prominent scholars like the late anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss called the structural attitude of "ethnocentrism" in Western Countries². This is fairly true not only with regard to non-applied knowledge but

¹. I fear the man of a single book.

². Claude LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Race et histoire*, Paris, Gallimard, « Folio », 2005 [1952], 127 p. See also: Edward W. SAÏD, *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Books, 1979, 368 p. and Dina REZK, « Orientalism and Intelligence Analysis: Deconstructing Anglo-American Notions of the 'Arab' », *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 31, n° 2, March 2016, p. 137-153.

also where security led-operational research is concerned. Some actors have tried to overcome this ethnocentric bias: indeed, since the Afghanistan War (post-2001) there has been a revival of the COIN doctrines that have been the matrix of a military anthropology renaissance, thirty years after the Vietnam War. But while the new “human terrain system”³ may have been useful for US command on the battlefield in some valleys of the Pashtun zones, the challenge is considerably different on a larger scale and one might think that the US Army failed in Afghanistan with regard to the latter⁴. Anyway, some practitioners/scholars⁵ have brought “cultural intelligence”⁶ or “socio-cultural Intelligence”⁷ to the fore. When facing societal issues some analysts have considered that it was indispensable to rely on Social Sciences. Indeed, only Social Sciences concepts allow analysts to engage with socio-cultural dynamics. The point is to be able to use the relevant concepts taken from among the numerous Social Sciences (Anthropology, Sociology, Political Sciences, History, Geography), and moreover to implement them on a broad geographical scale.

Therefore, it seems indispensable for Analysts to change their mindset when facing the Jihadist threat but also more broadly each kind of complex societal phenomenon. It is this second stage that we will be reviewing, explaining our new method and some of our findings stemming from the strategic operational research we conducted over the course of nine months (from January to October 2016) into the Jihadism in Africa and Middle-East.

³. Montgomery MACFATE and Janice LAURENCE, *Social Science Goes to War: the Human Terrain System in Iraq and Afghanistan*, New York: Oxford University Press & London: Hurst, 2014, 383 p. and previously on the ethical debate among scholars: George R. LUCAS Jr, *Anthropologists in Arms: The Ethics of Military Anthropology*, Critical Issues in Anthropology, AltaMira Press, 2009, 224 p.

⁴. See Joel LAWTON, « How the Military Intelligence Community has failed to Incorporate Sociocultural Understanding of their Operational environment », *Small Wars Journal*, April 23, 2014, 10 p. and more recently Nicolas Israël, « Le Human Terrain System, un programme de recherche opérationnelle? », *L'homme*, n° 222, avril-juin 2017, p.119-130.

⁵. Michael FRY and Miles HOCHSTEIN, « Epistemic Communities: Intelligence Studies and International Relations », *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 8, n° 3, 1993, pp. 14-28.

⁶. Montgomery MACFATE, “Cultural intelligence: “Far more difficult than counting Tanks and planes””, *American Intelligence Journal*, n° 24, Summer 2006, p. 16-25.

⁷. See Richard J. ALDRICH and John KASUKU, « Escaping from American Intelligence: Culture, Ethnocentrism and the Anglosphere », *International Affairs*, vol. 88, n° 5, September 2012, p. 1009-28; Robert R. TOMES, « Toward a smarter Military. Socio-Cultural Intelligence and National Security », *Parameters*, vol. 45, n° 2, Summer 2015, p. 61-76 and Richard M. MEDINA, « From Anthropology to Human Geography: Human Terrain and the Evolution of Operational Sociocultural Understanding », *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 31, n° 2, March 2016, p. 137-153.

In-depth Analyzing, not describing: the role of the Social Sciences toolkit

What is at issue is the ability of an analyst to go beyond the media coverage which, for the most part, merely describes, without going any further. There is sometimes confusion: establishing facts is not Intelligence, it is Information. Useful Intelligence for policy-makers is the result of an analytical process applied to Information. Theoretically, analysts should add value to information. Indeed, Intelligence is achieved through a specific cognitive frame but some analysts may develop an “intuitive” line of reasoning which is based on the synthesis of available knowledge. Shaping an actual analytical approach entails proceeding to a “reflexive” line of reasoning⁸ that sheds new light on what objectivity means. As Richard Heuer pointed out, “objectivity is gained by making assumptions explicit so that they may be examined and challenged, not by vain effort to eliminate them from analysis”⁹. Thus, the explicit use of Social Sciences concepts is of major help in achieving such a “reflexive” line of reasoning¹⁰.

Structured Analytic Techniques (SATs)¹¹ for Intelligence have been in fashion since 09/11 in the United States but though they constitute real progress when compared to the intuitive approach¹², they remain very far from the Social Sciences’ input in Analysis. There is no doubt that improving Intelligence falls partly under Knowledge

⁸. On the differences between intuitive and reflexive lines of reasoning, see the famous: Daniel KAHNEMAN, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013 [1st ed.: 2011], 499 p.

⁹. Richards J. HEUER, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, Center for the Study of Intelligence-CIA, 1999, p. 41.

¹⁰. See Matthew HERBERT, “The Intelligence Analyst as Epistemologist”, *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 2006, 19-4, p. 666-684.

¹¹. Robert D. FOLKER, *Intelligence Analysis in Theater Joint Intelligence Centers: An Experiment in Applying Structured Methods*, Washington, Joint military Intelligence College, Occasional Paper n° 7, 2000, 43 p.; *Structured Analytic techniques for Improving Intelligence Analysis*, CIA, March 2009, 45 p. and Stephen COULTHART (« Why do analysts use structured analytical techniques? An in-depth Study of an American Intelligence Agency », *Intelligence and National Security*, volume 31, n° 7, December 2016, p. 933-948), whose article concludes to a current underuse of SATs.

¹². Rob JOHNSTON, *Analytic Culture in the US Intelligence Community. An Ethnographic Study*, Washington, CSI-GPO, 2005, 161 p. mitigates the idea of a unique SAT. In the US IC dozens of diverse “methods” are employed.

Management¹³: data fusion in a context of information overload and merging of –INTs... are truly important¹⁴. That is why Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and more broadly data scientism is one part of the future of Intelligence. But it is very important for officials and their analysts to bear in mind that signals cannot capture the whole of reality. This SIGINT-Data illusion is the major danger of our time with regard to Intelligence and Security. Data do not record our entire environment. Societal facts produce very few metrics and are not transparent despite many prejudices. Actually, Social Sciences constitute the sole approach that allows analysts on the one hand to address socio-cultural dynamics and on the other to build a reflexive line of reasoning, which we will call “new analysis” here. Last but not least, they help reduce ethnocentrism and the risk of misperception.

Weber: an innovative and agile systemic method for New Analysis

Usually the various “methods” of scenarios do not refer to Social Sciences¹⁵. Still, the inductive and bottom-up approach in the Social Sciences field gives social scientists and (new) analysts the opportunity to observe regularities and patterns. Then, using the Social Sciences toolkit (i.e, the various disciplines and concepts) the analyst is able to find the suitable concepts that allow him to identify societal dynamics among which patterns of behavior are of high interest. Obviously, societal issues are multi-dimensional phenomena. In accordance with that, the social sciences line of reasoning is holistic. With regard to Jihadism our analysis method echoed this key feature of all social realities. By creating 53 *ad hoc* parameters¹⁶ we have been able to use them so as to

¹³. See Lieutenant-colonel Martin MENZEL, « Knowledge Development vs. Intelligence in NATO. A Problematic Delineation and its Ramifications”, *The Journal of the JPACC*, n° 22, Spring-Summer 2016, p. 38-43.

¹⁴. On metrics, see Alan BARNES, « Making Intelligence Analysis More Intelligent: Using Numeric Probabilities », *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 31, n° 3, 2016, p. 327-344 and Stephen Marrin, “Evaluating the Quality of Intelligence Analysis: By what (Mis) Measure?”, *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 27, n° 6, December 2012, p. 896-912.

¹⁵. See Hannah KOSOW and Robert GASSNER, *Methods of Future and Scenario Analysis. Overview, assessment, and Selection criteria*, Bonn, German Development Institute, 2008, 120 p.

¹⁶. Our parameters have been tailored to our study devoted to Jihadism. It means that at another scale and with another topic we would have created other kind of parameters.

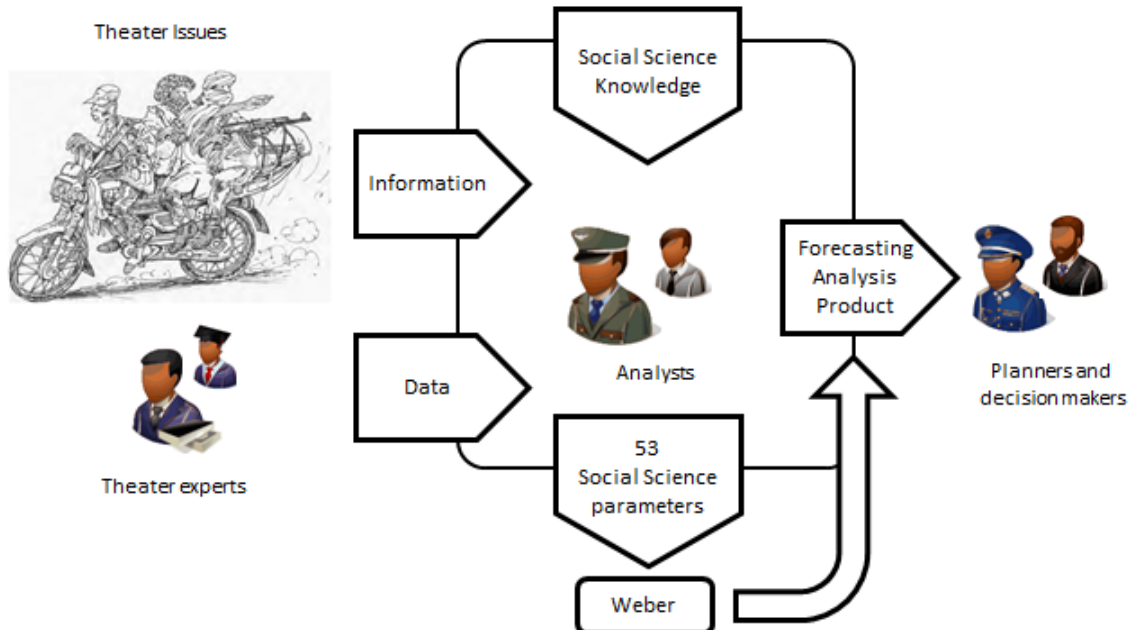
build scenarios as part of a forecasting perspective. Some of our parameters are linked to concepts of social sciences, such as the “ordered anarchy” that has been very relevant for the study (see below); or such as the role of “youth bulge”¹⁷ explaining political violence. Beyond these two examples, the 53 parameters as a whole constituted a pattern (also called “ontology”). It is noteworthy that it is mostly important to maintain a dynamic approach towards the parameters. This is a key point of our qualitative method that we have called “Weber”, in tribute to the German founding father of Sociology. Our empirical and bottom-up approach led us to identify a framing parameter in each area but this parameter is likely to evolve in the mid- or long-term. We have particularly focused on changes in framing parameters about which we have been warned by ‘weak signals’. Thus, with Weber we have been able to keep up with the changes in Jihadism and Conflicts thanks to the evolution of parameters. Moreover, most of the time, if not always, there is not one single framing parameter: it is an aggregation of parameters that causes the evolution and reflects the complex and holistic nature of societal Issues. Obviously, practicing applied foresight analysis entails including the role of external actors in the reasoning which fight or try to contain the Jihadists. Thus, we have also introduced specific parameters in our ontology that identify several mitigation measures: their effect on the course of action and notably the feedback of the jihadist actors has been taken into account by Weber. This has led us to conduct a scalable and dynamic approach to forecasting.

Following the construction of our social sciences ontology we had to overcome a major difficulty: how to set up interactions between all these parameters? We made use of System Engineering that led us to a systemic approach. At that time thanks to this tooled method¹⁸ we took a major step toward a reflexive way of reasoning. As a result, this innovative and challenging method allowed us to achieve 23 meta-scenarios, comprising 58 sub-cases of scenarios described through visualization tools. Moreover, Weber enabled us to describe 138 different behavior patterns among the Jihadist Actors. These Scenarios are distributed over the 7 geographical poles in which Jihadism is involved: from West Africa to Afpak and from Caucasus to Yemen. Our approach is

17. See the seminal: Jack A. GOLDSTONE, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991, 608 p.; “Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict”, *Journal of International Affairs*, 56 (1), 2002, p. 3–21 and also Henrik URDAL, “A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence”, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 50, n° 3, September 2006, p. 607-630; “A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence”, United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Adolescence, UN, 22th July 2011, 14 p.

18. Dominique ERNADOTE, “An ontology mindset for system engineering” in : *Systems Engineering (ISSE)*, 2015 IEEE International Symposium, IEEE, 2015, p. 454-460.

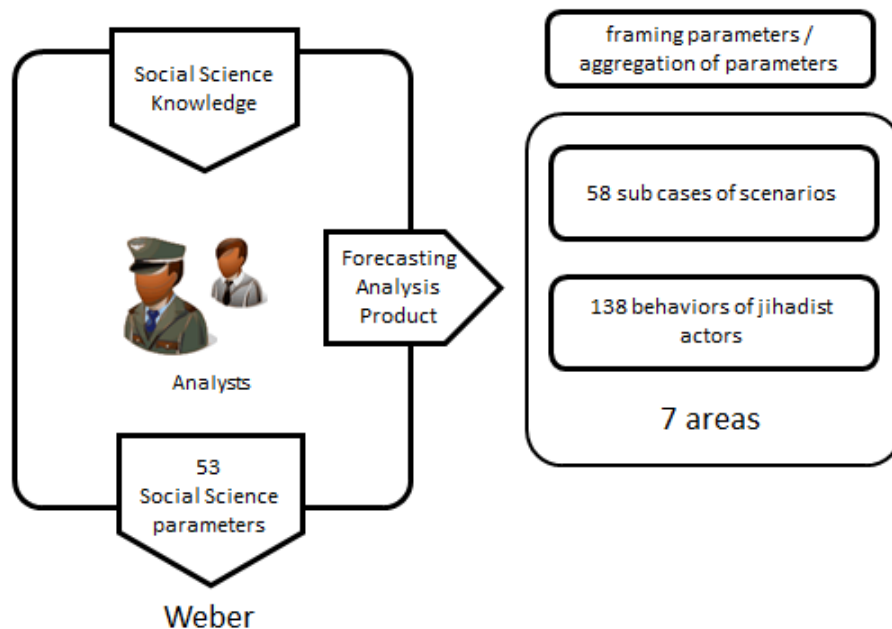
Jihadist-centric but the several jihadist actors have been studied among many other non-jihadist actors. Of course, their (violent or non-violent) interactions have been of interest. Thanks to the combination of social sciences and system engineering we have been able to describe the evolution of the jihadist actors for each geographical pole according to several criteria: radicalization-normalization, territorial anchoring-mobility, splintering-unification, localism-internationalization...etc.



New Analysis is more than Geographical Intelligence (GEOINT)

The aggregation of our parameters not only refers to the evolution of time but also configures space. In order to facilitate the perception of complex Issues, Weber offers diagrams whose results are drawn on maps for each sub-case of a scenario. Compared to Geographical Intelligence (GEOINT) tools especially Geographic Information Systems (GIS) which rely on layers of geographical data, Weber combines various kinds of facts inasmuch as our parameters come under geographical, economic, demographical, societal and cultural realities. More importantly, unlike the GEOINT tools that synthesize only geographical real-time Intelligence, Weber is an actual tool

method that allows the analyst to process material from the distant past, from the recent past and real-time, relying on multivariate issues so as to provide foresight analysis. Weber has been conceived for producing new Analysis, not for targeting and striking as GEOINT often does. Thanks to its social sciences ontology configuration Weber delivers a tailor-made approach in accordance with the area and with the scale. It can be implemented at various echelons. Being agile, it enables a great flexibility inasmuch as parameters, framing parameters and their aggregation can be permanently readjusted. Weber is analyst-centric: this is a tooled analytical method, not software. By browsing dozens of parameters, Weber allows end-users to overcome human cognitive limits and especially to avoid extrapolating the past trends, as is often the case in regular analysis: it broadens the scope of reflections. Our method allows numerous stakeholders who are at odds on a topic or who do not share the same mindset, like academics and practitioners, to communicate via a common language. Actually, it goes much further as it allows the merging of opposite views – a traditional weakness of qualitative analysis. Lastly, as an early-warning-system, Weber allows its users to identify signs of fragility on which it is possible then to focus so as to anticipate a likely course of action. Our method designed to map the possible helps the analyst to perform the following operations: integrating data already available in different scenarios to grant them a new meaning and extending data collection by eliciting new requests to invalidate or confirm scenarios.



Six months after our operational research came to an end; it is possible to highlight some predicted issues. With regard to Algeria we underlined that “national Salafism” would be a major driver of change in the social and political fields. No later than March 2017, a former Prime Minister (who remained close to the government) relied on it word for word as part of the ongoing legislative campaign. As far as Mali is concerned, we stressed the fact that a geographical and ethnical change would happen. Indeed, the ongoing threat is now no longer only in the North among the Tuaregs but also in Central Mali, among the Fulani. In Syria we foresaw that a merging of Jihadist Groups would happen in the case of the fall of Aleppo under AQ’s Flag: it happened in Idlib in March 2017.

Beyond the anticipations our method allowed us to make, Weber’s interest also lies in the fact that when facing a scenario about to occur, the analyst can keep all courses of action open; never utterly closing another scenario once open and thus addressing the high mobility of the local configurations.

The blurred delineations of Jihadism on the ground

Moreover, our aim was to conduct operational research and to produce some actionable analysis, as follows. On the broad geographical and extended timescale we chose, some issues emerged as prevalent. Since ISIS’ proclamation of a Caliphate in June 2014, analysis has been overwhelmed with its eschatological discourse, based exclusively on Religion. Analysts must not be subdued by the recent media manifestations of the jihadist phenomenon. Just as the analyst must not project his own meanings system onto actors’ behavior, in line with the “mirror-imaging” logic of ethnocentrism, he must avoid being mystified by the words used by jihadists to convey their struggle. One of the key skills of the analyst is to interpret actors’ discourse within the economic and societal context that gives it all its meaning. The recourse to a social science approach leads the Analyst not to be under the salient influence of a religious explanation of Jihadist phenomena. Throughout our research we have been careful to look beyond Jihadism so as to identify the actual grounds of allegedly religious violence. Our ontology-structured method helped us in so far as we have parameterized the different ways religion can act on human groups. By the same token, Weber induced us to make aggregations of parameters using social sciences concepts. By design our tooled method did not lead us to overestimate the role of religious beliefs.

This research was conducted during the year 2016, when ISIS in Syria and Iraq was at the height of its power. But as shown in the following pages our tooled method led us to reach findings which, while addressing the various forms of threat that ISIS will develop, focus on AQ in the 7 poles. Be that as it may, one of the key issues was the social embodiment of the so-called “jihadist groups”. It is useful to utilize such an expression but it is obvious, that except for ISIS, the limits between all the “ihadist groups” are relatively blurred. Combatants in Syria, Yemen and Mali can move from one group to another rather easily and in several areas people who are peasants by day can behave as Jihadists by night. The more a jihadist group is locally entrenched the more it can rely on occasional fighters. We took into account this blurred approach of Jihadism on the ground.

From a global point of view, mostly in the “crescent of crisis” identified by Z. Brzezinski¹⁹ as early as January 1979, the uneven level of violence employed by AQ shows that local governance prevails in what is more a brand than an organization. Everywhere in the World, and especially in Africa, Al-Qaeda (AQ) began ten years ago to adopt a new tactic: “landfilling” within the societies where they were, with a long-range aim. By marriages²⁰ facilitated by polygamy - a natural way to set up political alliances by blood - AQ militants established strong ties with tribes and they kept a low profile with lesser recourse to violence from that time on. Then, in some areas - for instance in coastal Libya - as early as January 2012 (through “Ansar al-Charia”) and in Syria (creation of “Jabhat al Nusra li-Ahl ash-Sham”), and in Northern Mali in January 2013 (co-rebellion of Jihadists and Tuaregs) the AQ local entities arose suddenly. Our aim was to study several courses of action of AQ and ISIS after this surge and to anticipate the courses of action AQ could take in other countries; for instance in Yemen or in Algeria. We tried to foresee the way AQ local entities might arise suddenly – or might not arise. Clearing the jihadist agenda in the 7 geographical poles was the first issue. This was done following our tooled method and using the visualization diagrams to make it more understandable for policy makers and military planners.

¹⁹. See Justin VAÏSSE, *Zbigniew Brzezinski. Stratège de l'empire*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 2015, 448 p.

²⁰. See Abdoulaye TAMBOURA, *Le Conflit touareg et ses enjeux géopolitiques au Mali*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2016, p. 99-100.

The effect of foreign actors' "disaggregation strategy"

Since the October 2015 Russian intervention in Syria, the evolution of jihadist groups has mainly resulted from the competing strategies crafted by the Russians and the Americans to curtail their social anchorage. We are currently facing two types of "disaggregation strategy"²¹, aiming at breaking the ties between the moderate rebels and the jihadist groups. As we emphasized earlier, Weber helps us to integrate the impact on jihadist groups provoked by foreign actors' mitigations into our scenarios.

The US strategy although predominantly focusing on counterterrorism is two-pronged, targeting the jihadist group leaders and striving to train and equip the moderate rebels. However, this disaggregation strategy is doomed to fail, for in addition to better arming the moderate rebels, they must be helped to build temporary administrations in order to pacify the reconquered territories. As Michael Mann points out the radius of political administration is always smaller than the radius of military conquest²².

The Russian strategy was until recently far more difficult to figure out. Until October 2016, foreseeing that some moderate rebels would set up agreements with the Syrian regime would have been unrealistic, beyond the few truces that occurred to evacuate besieged territories, such as Dereya. Everything suggested that the moderate rebels would engage in further radicalization and join jihadist groups in order to obtain protection from the Syrian regime's crackdown. Our tooled methodology inducing the analyst to elaborate diverging scenarios could have helped to devise two lines of thought: the radicalization of moderate rebels and, contrariwise, their normalization. At that time, the existence of the Astana discussions wasn't publicly available. It therefore also shows how our method that relied only on open sources could be substantially enhanced with the integration of classified Intelligence.

The aim of the Russian strategy is to fragment the Syrian rebellion, to isolate the moderate rebels by further radicalizing Islamist groups. Since the fall of Aleppo (December 2016) the jihadist group "Jabhat Fateh al-Sham" has been seeking to establish a new front out of Salafist and rebel groups in the Idlib province. While so far the Salafist groups have tended to fragment for security reasons during conflicts, there is a movement of unification that relies on the prevalence of a local agenda. However, this unification process is accompanied by the emergence of splinter groups that remain

²¹ David KILCULLEN, *The accidental Guerilla*, Oxford University Press, 2010, 346 p.

²² Michael MANN, *The sources of social power*, I, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1986, 2012, p. 142 and p. 175.

faithful to Al-Qaida's global agenda aiming at attacking the Western World. Syria's civil war is an effective hotbed for those radicalized splinter cells which can plot all the more easily against Europe as they remain clandestine and do not take the forms of a constituted jihadist group.

The “Tribal wall”: the pathway to political realism when Jihadists are isolated within societies

Political Islam in Yemen prevails - by far – on the political scene but also on the battlefield. However, Al-Qaida in the Arabic Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS are small entities compared to the numerous strong political and military forces. Their ability to attract combatants is weakened by the fact that most of the middle- and high-ranking leaders are Saudis. Since its inception in Yemen in the 2000s, AQAP has not succeeded in establishing strong ties with Yemenite tribes. Compared with other Salafist Yemenite Units, they have been perceived as Foreigners, which they are. The Jihadist threat is landlocked and limited to two governorates (Abyan, Shabwah). The fact that there are only two bordering countries, Saudi Arabia (SA) and Oman, does not facilitate any kind of external support. In a context in which proclaiming an Emirate has been a major example of political tradecraft in several “Jihadistans” (land of Jihad) so as to attract foreign combatants, AQAP and ISIS cannot rely on that.

With regard to the Jihadist Threat in this country, Weber helped us to establish three main drivers of change. A strong rise in the Iranian support to the Houthis, not only by delivering arms but by being on the ground²³, would have a major effect on the Jihadist cells and units. It would give a weak ISIS the Opportunity to use the “takfirist” doctrine against the Shias. This would lead to ISIS’ reinforcement and potentially to a military competition with AQAP. If not able to “yemenize” its ranks and to build alliances with and within the tribes, AQAP’s only remaining choice would be to set up an agreement with the strong secessionist “Hirak” movement²⁴. This second driver of change would be a hyper-realistic attitude from AQAP to ensure its survival. This is not unlikely: one of Weber’s major findings is that AQAP is an effective agile organization whose local subunits are currently behaving as a political actor, for instance in Yemen.

²³. But it would be a side effect of a major political Iranian decision: a way to make from the conflict in Yemen a proxy war against Saudi Arabia.

²⁴. Despite the fact that the “Hirak” movement does not rely on radical Islam doctrines, ties had already been established between Hirak and AQAP at the end of the 2000s.

Built to cope with a strategic scale, Weber helps to draw global conclusions. A third driver of change generated by the “tribal wall” would be a consequence of an evolution in Saudi Arabia’s policy in the peninsula. Anticipating war fatigue and the escalation of the costs attendant on leading the Arabic coalition, it could decide to set up a non-public alliance with AQPA using the “takfirist” line of reasoning. As a consequence, AQPA would not be targeted by SA and would help it to fight the Houthis. To upgrade its military forces, it could be allowed by SA to proclaim an Emirate, in which Sharia is applied - a classic religious incentive to attract combatants. For AQPA it would compensate its inability to find actual support among the Yemenite population. A side-effect of this realistic alliance between the two enemies would diminish AQPA’s threat in Saudi Arabia, making the Sudeiri’s fight against ISIS in their Kingdom easier. No doubt these courses of action would be facilitated by the context of “ordered anarchy” in place since 2015 in which no central actor arises because each draws strength from anarchy.

Resilient ideologies and ill-devised counter-insurgency strategies

In Nigeria, the main drivers of Boko Haram (BH)’s evolution lie in the counter-insurgency campaigns crafted by the government. Since the huge crackdown in Maiduguri in July 2009, which caused the death of a thousand civilians, the jihadist insurrection has been fueled by each military action in the Borno State, instead of being eradicated. Before that bloody crackdown, which dramatically increased the number of its followers, BH was a violent Salafist sect without any social anchorage.

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF) set up in 2015 by Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Benin and Niger under the aegis of France and the United States seems currently to be bearing fruit but at a great cost for civilians. An ill-devised counter-insurrection strategy has weakened the society's economic fabric and exposed the Lake Chad population to starvation. Therefore, this strategy is likely, in the long run, to increase the attractiveness of BH, which offers its members lucrative prospects in a disaster area.

Besides, the Nigerian and Cameroon government rely on a classic counterinsurgency tool which consists in building up local militias to hold and secure territories cleared of insurgents. In Nigeria these Civilian Joint Task Forces (CJTF) are effective in detecting and repelling insurgent activities. But Weber helps us to envision that this classic tactic could be easily overcome. Just as, from 2010 onward, the Taliban succeeded in infiltrating the tribal militias set up by the American forces and in undermining the trust put in them,

Boko Haram fighters who are deeply embedded in the local population will likely use the same strategy.

Until now it is precisely this deep entrenchment of Boko Haram fighters in the local population which means that the insurgency remains limited to the Borno State. But it is not uncommon for jihadist movements to emancipate themselves from the ethnic group that spawned them. This would lead us to consider two possible outcomes. BH could merge for instance with Fulani groups in Nigeria and create a new transnational threat along the Fulani settlement areas that will reach the center of Mali. Or, in the case of a BH collapse, the Salafist ideology's attraction in Nigeria could allow organizations originating in different ethnic groups, namely the Hausa or Fulanis, to fill the vacuum and wage a new jihad. In that case, the Salafist ideology would further develop its ability to denounce economic grievances and the elites' corruption. In Libya, far before the Fall of Sirte, we gave warnings about the fact that South-West (Tuaregs) and South-East (Tubus) of the Country could be the next two Jihadist hubs. They are now. Lastly, with regard to Yemen, we foresaw that AQPA would remain landlocked in the central governorates unless it set up ties with the tribes so as to landfill in the society.

However, Weber helps the analyst to envision new types of evolution, assuming what we term a framing parameter change occurs. In line with the politics of jihadist alliances, ISIS could help BH to emancipate itself from the constraints of social entrenchment and embark on an internationalization process. Could deeper pressure from ISIS on BH maintain its unity or accelerate its fragmentation? If ISIS succeeded in upholding Boko Haram's cohesion this could lead to the group's internationalization. Such a process - which would encourage an influx of foreign combatants - will put a country like Chad - which is already affected by social unrest and threatened by Libya's collapse on its north border - at great risk.

The Desert as a Laboratory to widen the ethnic boundaries of Jihadism

With regard to Jihadism in the Saharo-Sahelian Strip (SSS), geography rules. Long before the Arab awakening, Northern Mali became a shelter for Jihadists after they failed to settle in North Africa facing three authoritarian States hostile to political Islam (Algeria, Tunisia and Libya). It also became a major hub for Jihad's militants. Thus, Northern Mali is connected to the other African Jihadistans located in the North: Libya, Algeria and Tunisia. But this is not only a shelter, but has also been a hub for jihadists escaping from

Libya since the Defeat in Syrte (December 2016). But above all the Jihadist groups have made a laboratory of the SSS: they can set up alliances between all the Jihadists converging from the different parts of the strip and carry out an ethnic mix embodying the transnational project of Jihadism. This laboratory remains and is working today; and there combatants also draw resources from nomadism²⁵. Analysts are aware of the Jihadist agenda in Mali: as they tried to do in 2013, their aim is to go down southwest along the Niger River so as to reach the wealthier part of the Country. This move has already begun without yet being an uprising: there are hints of a discrete mobilization in Mali's central region with a low intensity of violence. Weber enabled us to understand that Jihadism in Mali is also taking an ethnic form. In 2013 in the North, most Jihadists were of Arabic or Tuareg origin. Since then, Jihadist proselytism has spread to other ethnic groups, notably the Fulanis in the center of Mali. There, socio-economic tensions and cultural dissent add up to Jihadism. With this aggregation of parameters new groups have appeared: unlike in 2013, AQIM is no longer alone. Ansar Eddine, the Katiba of Macina and even a subunit of ISIS blossomed after the French intervention to stop the 2013 Jihadist offensive. Complying with the Defence Treaty France signed with the new Independent State of Mali, France intervened in 2013 and remains on the ground at the outpost combating Jihadists and their Tuareg allies. It means that France cannot quit. The French Army's presence is a long-term one. But the duration of occupancy of Mali by the French (the former colonizer) is having a profound effect on the sources of violent mobilization: Weber helped us to identify the latent evolution of the ideological incentives in Jihadism. Salafism, the Ideology of Jihadists, is by its very nature transnational and transethnic. In Mali the latter situation is becoming a reality. But day after day the ongoing presence of the former colonizer's Army enables its perception as the one of a neo-colonial occupying army. An aggregation of parameters - national Salafism - is emerging that is likely to extend the attractiveness of Jihadism. Moreover, whereas jihadist groups used to embark on a fragmentation process to strengthen their local entrenchment, this doesn't preclude their sudden unification for tactical or political reasons. In Mali, a new merger has just appeared (March 2017), named "Group for the support of Islam and Muslims" which encompasses elements of AQIM, Ansar Eddine, Katiba of Macina, and Al Murabitun. Weber could help the Analysts to foresee these phases of fragmentation or unification to help craft the suited mitigation measures or military responses.

²⁵. See two outstanding articles: Denis RETAILLÉ, « Du paradigme sahélien du lieu à l'espace (mondial) mobile », *L'information géographique*, n° 75 (1), 2011, p. 71-85 and Denis RETAILLÉ et Olivier WALTHER, « Guerre et terrorisme au Sahara-Sahel: la reconversion des savoirs nomades », *L'Information géographique*, n° 75 (3), 2011, p. 51-68.

“Ordered anarchy” and jihadist politics

Weber has allowed us to understand that jihadist groups are always developing within specific forms of conflict. These forms of conflict both foster and constrict the jihadist group's evolution. We established that among these forms "ordered anarchy", first coined by Evans-Pritchard²⁶, is, in countries like Libya or Somalia, the main driver of such an evolution. In the field, powerful groups oppose the restoration of a central state and share a classic tribal mentality which is committed to the preservation of an equal relationship between tribal segments. The fact that ISIS remained mainly sealed off in Syrte until its complete defeat in December 2016 reflects that social structure's type. The jihadist groups are unable to rebuild the social fabric by fomenting sectarian tensions as was the case during the Syrian civil war, but must comply to it, by constantly shifting their strategy and organization. In line with that forced compliance Islamic state's evolution in Libya could be predicated on its ability to contract firm alliances with Tuareg or Toubou groups.

However, our tooled method allows the analysts to consider, in each scenario, changes in the framing parameters. For instance, since the fall of Syrte, the main driver of ISIS' evolution in Libya would no longer be its ability to build alliances with local groups but its mastery of jihadist politics, namely the art of merging with pre-existent Salafist or Jihadist organizations. That is why jihadist politics has become a framing parameter in the "ordered anarchy" context. Therefore, ISIS could eventually choose to merge with AQIM. The recent unification of jihadist groups in the north of Mali under the banner of AQIM mentioned above could be an organizational change intended to oppose such a merger with ISIS by which middle-level combatants can be tempted. This sudden unification process could be the warning sign of a true internationalization process of this new jihadist group, able to attract a flow of foreign fighters according to the logic of inter-theater mobility.

But the Libyan theater has allowed us to discover a major shift in Al-Qaeda's strategy which the fight against the Islamic State may overshadow. Whereas the group until now sought to strengthen its social anchorage to oppose any endeavors to reunify the Libyan territory under the sway of a sovereign State, henceforth the jihadist group strives, behind the scenes, to take part in the state building's process. A strategy of integration with central political institutions has thus replaced a strategy of local rooting with a view to the proclamation of an Emirate. With the establishment of the

²⁶ E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD, *The Nuer*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1937.

Government of National Accord (GNA) in March 2016, for the first time a State backed by the international community could be exposed to the leverage of a jihadist group like Al-Qaeda.

A Jihadist group normalization: hopes and fears

After almost forty years of conflict, the Afghan population weary of civil wars is looking forward to a Taliban engagement in a peace agreement with the government. This expected case of a Jihadist group's normalization would be a major shift which could induce policy-makers to devise innovative strategies elsewhere. From now on, such a normalization process could be fostered, which would give a glimpse of a political outcome stemming from jihadism. This process could inspire information operations seeking to bring a jihadist group to standardize itself through a series of actions aimed at changing its organization or its environment.

However, Weber should prompt us to think not only in terms of jihadist groups' evolution but also to envision their mutation due to a qualitative breakup. One cannot preclude that a jihadist group might transform itself into a political party and accept to comply with the rules of electoral competition. Islamist or jihadist ideologies are not set in stone once and for all; they are sensitive to local contexts and may acknowledge the legitimacy of popular will to promote their goals. Thus, in the wake of a peace agreement with the Afghan government the Taliban could, for instance, opt to form a political party with an armed wing, like the Lebanese Hezbollah.

But in the meantime, such a deal between the Taliban and the Afghan government backed by foreign actors could create a tremendous opportunity for ISIS to entice disgruntled jihadist fighters to join its Afghan cells. Indeed, in the so called "Khorasan province", ISIS features an unusual ability to build new organizational forms. Instead of taking the risk of fighting under its own flag, the group is establishing sleeper cells in preexisting jihadist networks. These sleeper cells are hard to detect and can disclose their unity at the last moment, when they attack. Such a new momentum could represent a serious threat to Pakistan. Jihadist fighters' mobility has existed without interruption on either side of the Durand Line since the Soviet invasion in 1979; the massive return of combatants to Pakistan after such a peace agreement could destabilize the frail balance of powers in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. It is therefore on this jihad's historic land that ISIS could rebuild its Caliphate to overthrow the Pakistani

government. The takfirist strategy of ISIS intended to excommunicate all unbelievers could encounter an ideal playing field in the Pakistani ethnic and sectarian mosaic.

The narrow path when jihadists face a powerful and resilient authoritarian State

In Algeria, the situation of Jihadism is very different from that in the other 6 poles. Thus, for a decade, terrorist activity has remained constant at a low level of intensity. The Algerian State overcame a civil war (1991-1999) that was a first strong and long Jihadist assault. During the war, it acquired in-depth experience whose main result was the adjustment of the Algerian Army to domestic terrorism. By the same token, Algerian Stateness increased: States which survive Wars and especially Civil Wars thereafter emphasize their authoritarian side, i.e. their ability to exert efficient coercion and social control. Currently, the Jihadists of Al-Qaida in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and ISIS are landlocked in the mountainous Forests of Kabylia. Jihadist Combatants operate rarely and only in very rare ambushes and skirmishes against the Algerian Army. On the battlefield the Jihadists were strongly defeated 20 years ago and what remains is undermined. AQIM losses show month after month that militants are aging. AQIM Maquis are not succeeding in recruiting young people. Moreover, among Muslim Countries Algeria is the one that sent the lowest number of Fighters to Syria, namely around 200²⁷. These indications show that the threat in Algeria might be outside the Maquis. Actually, updated academic research shows that since the seventies the authorities have encouraged the islamisation of the Society. It lasted until after the Civil War but the Muslim Brotherhood has been replaced by Salafism. Quietist Salafism supported partly by the Gulf States plays a growing role in Algeria. In theory, this kind of orientation in radical Islam is opposed to the recourse to violence. But the point is that Algerian Society is under the influence of Salafism.

In Algeria the main query is: how and where will AQIM trigger a new assault? Facing this query our tooled analytical method helped us to foresee several courses of action. It made it easier to identify the hurdles which Jihadists are facing. They hinder the radical groups' attractivity. Indeed, there is no doubt that the memory of the recent Civil War discourages recourse to a new wave of indiscriminate violence. Unlike in Libya

²⁷. <http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/>

or in Mali (one of Algeria's bordering countries), AQIM and ISIS cannot benefit from the influx of foreign combatants. But Salafism in Algeria reveals a very peculiar feature: it is a "national" Salafism, something that could be considered an oxymoron in other parts of the Islamic world. Indeed, by its very nature Salafism moves beyond the Nation: yearning for the re-shaping of the primitive *Umma* (community of believers), it is a transnational side of Islam. Moreover, the Caliphate proclaimed by ISIS in the Middle East is of no religious value in North Africa: it cannot have any ability to mobilize. From a Jihadist point of view, Algeria is in isolation, because it is a very peculiar Jihadistan, which is slightly under the influence of the globalized *Umma*. Weber helped us to understand that in this authoritarian State the quasi-unique driver of change could be the interruption of the regular political course of action, for instance after the death or the resignation of the old and ailing President Bouteflika before the end of his mandate (2019). Such a situation could foster a framing parameter that would actually be an aggregation of parameters: the classic political motives of a fight against corrupt and ungodly elites on the one hand and national Salafism in the other. There is no doubt that AQIM has learnt from its past; that is to say its defeat after the recourse to extreme violence against the Algerian population²⁸. The end of the Bouteflika era could be a window of opportunity for AQIM to use proxy political actors and at the same time a tailored use of violence. Thanks to the salafisation of Algerian society AQIM could set up an Islamist conglomerate in the political field that it would lead. At the same time, it could use a moderate level of violence only against Political Elites, carefully sparing the population. By operating within (via the conglomerate) and outside (via assassinations) the political field, AQIM could hope to gain support among the population. Despite their actual current weakness, Jihadists will find leverage in the progress of Salafism in Society to make another surge, provided they use a moderate level of political violence.

Weber is a useful tool which helps in understanding the ongoing changes of Jihadism and its likely course of action in the coming years. What are the material elements - such as territorial anchorage - which the Islamic State must continue to have to feed the imaginary of its faithful? Many weak signals have already allowed us to envisage a mutation in Islamic State strategy. Outside the lands of the Caliphate, ISIS is currently building close relationships with existing jihadist groups without demanding any public allegiance from them. A policy of social anchoring is replacing a territorial anchoring strategy. We might expect the emergence of a new group that combines AQ's social grounding and ISIS media outreach, invisible on the ground and omnipresent in people's

²⁸. There were several mass slaughters during the second part of the nineties.

minds. The mobilizing power of Islamic state's ideology, especially in western countries will not wither in the short term. Moreover, as Max Weber emphasized, people's actions are never the mere consequences of the religious doctrines that inspire them. These doctrines, like Salafism, are always reinterpreted in terms of actors' interests and values²⁹. While so far Salafism has had a transnational dimension, forms of national Salafism are likely to occur which will reinforce the jihadist cause at the grassroots level.

This tooled analytical method offers an evolution of strategic foresight. In building Weber we aimed to combine what doubly lacks in Analysis: the use of Social Sciences' notions and concepts on the one hand and Systems Engineering on the other. Social sciences radically transform the work of the Analyst: they allow him to cope with the holistic nature of social, cultural and religious phenomena. Tomorrow's New Analyst must be Social Sciences-minded: this is the sole way to improve Strategic Analysis and to move beyond the descriptive stage, provided that he accepts to adopt a reflexive line of reasoning, namely in setting Ontologies. But the limited abilities of the human brain, even in a large team of Analysts, lead to adopting the complementary combination of mathematics and computing, namely Systems Engineering. As it is agile, it can digest the qualitative aspect of new Analysis and, being viewable, it makes Policy Planning easier. For our operational research, Weber has been Jihadist-Centric but its agility allows parameterizing it around an area or focusing on other kind of threats than Jihadism. Moreover, it can be deployed at different scales, including tailored to micro ones.

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²⁹ Max Weber, *Economic Ethic of the World Religions*, in: *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1963, 340 p.