

Over the last five years, North Africa has profoundly changed. After the Arab Springs, the widespread instability engendered a power vacuum that has been filled mainly by jihadism. The emergence of the Islamic State as a regional actor fostered the process of transnationalization of the jihadist networks. This volume analyses the current geopolitical scenario and the potential consequences of these phenomena on the energy sector. In order to investigate the relationship between history and energy, the consequences of the Arab turmoil on the energy sector will be compared to the potential repercussions of a prolonged jihadist resurgence in the area. The hypothesis underlying the paper is that the Arab Springs and jihadism could lead to completely different consequences. The choice of analysing the two phenomena together responds to the need of increasing the awareness of the potential evolutions in the relationship between terrorism and energy.



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The Evolving Geopolitics of North Africa and its Impact on Energy Markets | by Sara Brzuszkiewicz

The FONDAZIONE
ENI ENRICO MATTEI
Series on



«Energy Scenarios
and Policy»



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ENGLISH

The Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM) Series on
«Energy Scenarios and Policy»

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 9 |
| 1. The So-called Arab Springs and the Current Main Political Trends in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt | 12 |
| Box 1. Key events in North Africa, December 2010 – May 2016 | 35 |
| 2. From the Arab Springs to IS | 39 |
| Box 2. Jihadi groups that pledged allegiance or offered support to IS in North Africa | 52 |
| 3. Terrorism and the energy sector | 53 |
| Box 3. Major attacks against energy companies and sabotages on energy infrastructure in North Africa 2011-2016 | 70 |
| Conclusions | 73 |
| References | 76 |

Introduction

Data drawn from the Energy Infrastructure Attack Database (EIAD) show that in the last decade there were, on average, nearly 400 annual attacks carried out by armed non-state actors on energy infrastructure worldwide, a figure that was well under 200 prior to 1999.¹ These data reveal a global picture whereby violent non-state actors target energy infrastructures to air grievances, communicate to governments, impact state economic interests, or capture revenues in the form of hijacking.

Particularly, in the case of North Africa, with the expansion of the Islamic State and its unprecedented communicative skills, since November 2014 attacking industry assets has increasingly become a tool for propaganda, which guarantees extensive media coverage and international attention.

Despite this, research on the targeting of energy infrastructure has not been fully developed, and it does not branch out across different areas of knowledge on violent phenomena in general, and the behaviour of violent non-state actors (VNSA) in particular.

For these reasons, this volume aims at providing an analysis of the multiple ways in which terrorism and the energy sector interact in North Africa.

In order to reach this objective, a diachronic perspective is adopted. This highlights the initial hypothesis, according to which the so-called *Arab Springs* and the subsequent expansion

1 J. Giroux et al. (2013).

of regional jihadism represent two different phenomena, which affected the energy sector in completely different ways.

In the first chapter, *The So-called Arab Spring and the Current Main Political Trends in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt*, a historical background of the Arab turmoil in these countries is provided and the volume analyses the subsequent scenarios that created a deep power vacuum in the region.

In the second section of the study, *From the Arab Springs to ISIS*, we analyse the concept of power vacuum and its implications.

The turmoil deposed presidents who had ruled for decades. In spite of their liberticidal policies, these rulers had represented the only alternative to chaos and domestic tensions for an extremely long period. Without them, other regional players acquired strength.

This is the case of the Islamic State, which is analysed with a focus on its expansion in North Africa and the main resources exploited to reach its goals.

These include the returning foreign fighters, who are likely to spread their strengthened commitment and what they have learnt in terms of fighting, tactic and logistic capabilities; the collective pledge of allegiance through the mechanism of *ba'ya*; the organization of an increasing number of training camps like that of Sabratha, in Libya, where the militants involved in the Bardo Museum and Sousse hotel attacks in Tunisia in 2015 probably completed their training.

The third chapter, *Terrorism and the Energy Sector*, represents the nucleus of the volume. The consequences of the Arab turmoil on energy will be compared to the potential repercussions of a prolonged jihadist resurgence in the area.

The *Arab Springs* and jihadism could lead to completely different consequences and the choice of analysing the two phenomena together responds to the will of enhancing the awareness of the evolutions in the relation between terrorism and the energy sector.

Frequently, the designation of “terrorism” represents a

symptom of intellectual laziness, which is happy with confusing in the same blame what we hardly discern.²

In order to avoid this confusion, the volume constantly connects the actual and strategic dimension of the attacks to energy infrastructure, with the ideological and historic developments of jihadism in the region, thus depicting a reliable description not only of the current scenario, but also of the potential risks of a prolonged jihadi expansion in North Africa.

2 G. Kepel (2006), IX-X.

1. *The So-called Arab Spring and the Current Main Political Trends in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt*

1.1 Arab Spring(s): An Overview of Causes, Developments and Subsequent Scenarios

Five years have passed since the *Arab Springs*³ erupted in North Africa and the Middle East.

Scholars and the media committed themselves to interpret these phenomena since their very beginning, when the new political shape of the region was still unknown, while it is hardly hazardous to say that only now, five years later, we can take advantage of the historical distance and adopt an adequate geopolitical approach.

The dust partially settled and it is possible to put the topic into perspective, thus enhancing understanding and knowledge of preludes, developments and consequences of the events, which drastically transformed the whole MENA region.

In this respect, a common misconception entails that all North African countries experienced the same kind of political

3 Personally, speaking about the events of 2011 I prefer the term “revolution” to the phrase “Arab Spring”. Where the former conveys the meaning of a mass uprising against the rulers, the latter seems to reinforce the idea of a supposed paralysis of Arab societies before 2011, as if they entered a flourishing spring after a long intellectual winter. But things are not as easy as they seem and the static nature of North Africa has always been overestimated. In any case, the term *spring* could be more effective when used in the plural form, in order to underline that the events of 2011 do not represent a monolithic phenomenon reproduced from one country to another in the same way.

and social tensions and turmoil as well as the same subsequent evolution. On the contrary, the situation of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt could not be more different.

This is not to say that some analogies are not recognizable. Indeed, the abovementioned countries and their *Springs* share some important features such as:

- Instances: Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians, Libyans and Egyptians invaded squares and streets to claim *ḥurrīa wa karāma*, “freedom and dignity”, two concepts that have been variably conjugated.
- High unemployment rates.
- Deep dissatisfaction of the youngsters, which represented the breeding ground for the protests. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, in all North African countries an increasing number of highly educated individuals appeared on the public stage, but the internal job markets proved largely incapable of fully absorbing them, thus feeding frustration and resentment.
- Widespread social imbalances, caused and exacerbated by a range of different social, political, economic and ethnical factors.
- Repressive and authoritarian power combined with extended violations of civil rights such as freedom of speech, press and assembly.
- High levels of corruption in both the private and public sectors.

Tunisia

Given these premises, Tunisia was the first country to begin the revolution. On December 17, 2010 Mohammed Bouazizi, a young Tunisian street vendor, set himself on fire protesting against the confiscation of his wares.

The act of Bouazizi marked the divide between two different eras not only for his country, but also for North Africa as a whole.

After few weeks of mass protests, on January 14, 2011 the deposed Tunisian President Zīn al-‘Abdīn Ben ‘Alī fled to Saudi Arabia, after fruitlessly trying to calm down his people with promises of mitigating repression, liberalizing the Internet and releasing political detainees.

Subsequently, after the *pars destruens*, the revolution entered its constructive phase, political parties were legalized and on January 30, the Islamist leader Rashid Ghannoushi went back to Tunisia, thus anticipating the electoral victory of his party Ennahda at the end of the year.⁴

However, the process of national pacification did not prove to be painless, as the political murders of Chokri Belaid and Mohammed Brahmi⁵ clearly demonstrate.

Globally assessed, Ennahda government has been fragmented and partly opaque on its *war on terror*⁶ and in 2014 Nida’a Tunis, a newborn consortium of secular parties, won the parliamentary elections and in the same year its leader Beji Caïd Essebsi became President.

Assessing the political paths of North African countries in the last five years, it could be highlighted that each scenario gradually assumed a number of particular features hardly comparable with those of the neighbouring countries.

Today, some protests still take place in Tunisia, mainly demanding provisions against unemployment and corruption.

Huge economic discrepancies between coastal and western internal regions, as well as social and employment imbalances

4 S. Brzuskiewicz and G. Dentice (2014).

5 Chokri Belaid was a Tunisian lawyer and an opposition leader with the left-secular Democratic Patriots’ Movement. He was killed in front of his house on February 6, 2013. Mohammed Brahmi was the founder and former leader of the People’s Movement and was killed on July 23, 2013 in Tunis. For both the murders authorities blamed the Islamist group Ansār al-Sharia, but the investigations’ results remain unclear.

6 This overworked expression was introduced in International Relations by Bush administration in 2001, after the September 11 attacks.

between urban and rural areas⁷, still characterize Tunisia.

In spite of the challenges that the country has to face, the undeniable success of the *Jasmine Revolution* leaves room for optimism and Tunisia is universally regarded as the best *democracy lab*⁸ of the whole MENA region after it completed a peaceful institutional transition.

Egypt

After Tunisia, turmoil propagated in Egypt at the end of January 2011 and on February 11, 2011, Hosni Mubarak resigned and power was transferred to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). The following year, after the first authentic electoral campaign, Mohammed Morsi, leader of *Ḥizb al-Ḥurrīa wa al-‘Adāla*, Freedom and Justice Party, became the first Egyptian President not coming from a military background.

Morsi won by a narrow margin over Ahmed Shafiq, the last Prime Minister under the deposed leader Hosni Mubarak.

Since the very beginning of the new presidency, protesters went back to the streets sharply criticizing Mohammed Morsi. Above all, the targets of people’s anger were Morsi’s inability to tackle the economic crisis and the new Constitution signed into law at the end of 2012. Critics said the new Constitution, which was hurriedly drafted by Morsi’s Muslim Brotherhood, was undemocratic and that it could allow clerics to intervene in the lawmaking process and leave minority groups without proper legal protection.

7 In fact, another urgent issue is the process of religious radicalization occurring among the youngsters living in the underprivileged outskirts of Tunisian cities. From these areas, hundreds of Tunisians are supposed to have joined the Caliphate.

8 Historically, the action of trade unions and civil society organizations represented an important resource for Tunisian stability. During the regime of Ben ‘Ali, these social resources succeeded in coexisting with the power. After 2011, they represented a tool for people’s empowerment and a bridge between citizens and governments.

The Charter had been approved in a referendum by an overwhelming 63.8% of Egyptians. However, the referendum passed on an extremely low turnout of 32.9% of Egypt's 52 million eligible voters, amid allegations of irregularities.⁹

During the brief presidency, Morsi's regime and the Muslim Brotherhood neither undertook a proper policy of democratization nor gave right answers to the request for social justice of the population.

After some months of prolonged instability, on July 3, 2013, Egyptian armed forces headed by 'Abd el-Fattāh el-Sīsī enforced a 48-hours ultimatum to intervene "on behalf of the people", ousting President Mohamed Morsi and suspending the Constitution.

Once General el-Sīsī gained power, even before he became President in 2014, a strong repression against the *Ikhwān* began, the group was declared illegal and by May 2014 from 16,000 to 40,000 Muslim Brothers or supporters had been imprisoned since the coup.¹⁰

It is undeniable that the new regime has been able to restore a higher level of stability from both a domestic and an international perspective.

After his Presidential election on June 8, 2014, el-Sīsī stated to be ready to lead Egypt towards its rebirth.

In internal politics, el-Sīsī focused his stabilization efforts on two main issues: economic reforms and securitization.

For instance, in July 2014 fuel prices had been raised, which both restrained galloping consumption and contained the government's budget deficit running above 11% of GDP.

At the same time, Egypt is benefitting from foreign aids, not only from the rich Gulf States – except from Qatar – but also in the framework of a reinvigorated partnership with Russia.

The two countries recently signed the agreement for the building of the first nuclear central in el-Dabaa, in Northern Egypt.

9 P. Beaumont (2012).

10 Amnesty International (2015).

This project had already been promoted by Hosni Mubarak, but never realized. During 2014, the economic relations between Egypt and Russia increased of the 80% and Vladimir Putin even expressed his will to help Egypt for the resumption of tourism,¹¹ to build an industrial zone in the Suez Canal area and to supply weapons to Egypt for 3 million dollars.

Another goal of el-Sīsī's administration has been the realization of the 4 billion dollars project to double the capacity of the Suez Canal, which will more than double canal revenues, from 5 billion to 12.5 billion dollars.¹²

During the *Egypt Economic Development Conference* held in Sharm el-Sheikh in March 2015, el-Sīsī definitely affirmed his willingness to attract foreign investments announcing fifty projects for about 40 billion dollars to an audience of international politicians and investors.¹³

As far as the process of securitization¹⁴ is concerned, the main example is the anti-terrorism law signed by el-Sīsī in August 2015.

The new law imposes fines ranging from 200,000 to 500,000 Egyptian pounds – about 25,500 to 64,000 dollars – for publishing news about terrorist acts and police activities

11 Apparently, tourism relations between Russia and Egypt remained unaltered even after the disaster of Metrojet Flight 9268, the Russian airplane disintegrated above the Northern Sinai on October 31, 2015. Shortly after the crash, the Islamic State's Sinai Branch, mainly constituted of as Anṣār Beyt al-Maqdis, claimed responsibility for the incident.

12 "Al-Sisi Ascendant", *The Economist*, Sep 20th 2014: <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21618908-general-has-good-first-100-days-at-cost-political-freedom-al-sisi>

13 The Egyptian government expects to attract foreign investments ranging from \$8 billion to \$10 billion by the end of the current fiscal year, which ends in June 2016, according to a press statement by Egyptian Minister of Investment Ashraf Salman in January 2015.

14 In this context, the term *securitization* could be defined as the mechanism according to which every aspect of nation's life is managed and looked at through the *security lenses*, and State's security becomes the first priority. Usually, the securitization rhetoric is used with the aim of move other issues to the background, such as civil rights or privacy.

which do not comply with the official statements of the Egyptian Ministry of Defence. The law also imposes a minimum of five years in prison for the “promotion, directly or indirectly, of any perpetration of terrorist crimes, verbally or in writing or by any other means”.

The law defines terrorist crimes as any act aiming to harm public order, social peace, or national unity: this definition seems to be highly discretionary and subjective, thus enabling authorities to use it against every kind of dissent.

In this respect, the resolute approach aimed at reestablish the country’s international diplomatic and economic role did not stopped violence. On the contrary, Egypt is now experiencing a new phase of political violence, which is not characterized by open clashes between civilians and police but by attacks and bombings against police by unidentified armed groups as well as by police operations, with more than 300 victims before the end of 2015.

In the framework of the securitization process, the Egyptian President’s worst enemy is political Islam. He does not make any distinction between armed terrorists and Islamic political movements that contest his power and this is the reason why in 2013 he outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood.

At the same time the complete identification of political Islam with terrorism, which is one of el-Sisi’s core narratives, led to the strong support for the Libyan General Khalifa H̄aftar and for the parliament of T̄obruq, opposed not only to the jihadi groups that paid allegiance to IS, but also to the Islamic militias of Tripoli.

Globally assessed, it seems to be indisputable that Egypt has still many challenges to face, especially in the security sector and in the relationship between mainland Egypt¹⁵ and territories characterized by thick jihadist presence and weak State’s control, like the border with Libya and the Northern Sinai.

15 A complete assessment of Sinai current insecurity and an overview of local

For the future, it will be interesting to analyze the developments of el-Sīṣī's promises on economic¹⁶ and security issues, as well as Egypt ability to reach a sufficient level of stability both from a domestic and regional perspective.

Morocco

If the so-called *Egyptian Spring* and the legendary weeks of Tahrir Square are bound to represent two pillars of contemporary Arab history, the events occurred in Morocco in the same period are quite unknown.

In fact, at the same time as Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, a sort of gradual, small-scale revolution took place in the Kingdom of Morocco.

At the beginning of 2011, a large group of young dissidents created the February 20 Movement (M20F) with the goal of soliciting constitutional reforms, the release of political prisoners, acts against corruption and the development of an *adult* political culture.

Therefore, in the following months demonstrations and rallies occurred all over the country. In fact, in the demands of M20F some differences with the other uprisings are recognisable: unlike their companions in the other countries of the region, Moroccans did not ask for the ousting of the Monarch and the discontent did not lead to the total fracture between authorities and demonstrators.¹⁷

In addition to the partially different claims of the people, it was the reaction of the King to mark an alternative fate for Morocco compared to that of the neighbouring countries.

Indeed, it is not erroneous to state that the Royal Family

jihadi groups and attacks on energy infrastructures will be provided in the subsequent sections of the present study.

16 In May 2015, Standard & Poor's upgraded its outlook for the country from "stable" to "positive."

17 S. Brzuskiewicz (2014).

seized a large part of the revolutionary strength of people speeding up a number of measures before citizens' impatience exacerbated.

Right on February 21, 2011, the *Conseil Economique et Social* was established and in a few weeks the *Commission consultative de révision de la Constitution* was created as well.

On July 1st, a referendum welcomed the new Constitution, approved by 98.5% of Moroccan voters.

Compared to the political paths of countries like Libya or Egypt, the course of the events in the Kingdom of Morocco leaves room for optimism.

Nonetheless, some issues remain unresolved, such as the claims to Sahrawi statehood¹⁸ and the relationship between monarchy and democracy.

Unlike Libya and Egypt, Morocco and Algeria are experiencing a state of apparent calm. In July 2014, Morocco celebrated the first fifteen years of the Kingdom of Muhammad VI, an enlightened monarch who appears to be more farsighted than his neighbouring presidents.

Thanks to his tight economic and security collaboration with the West, the King benefits of good relationships with his European and American allies. Meanwhile, Morocco also receives uninterrupted praise from the powerful Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), especially for a number of impressive projects such as the Tangier Free Trade Zone and the solar power plant in Ouarzazate, realized in partnership with a Saudi company.

Looking forward, the King is expected to continue his aggressive policy of foreign investments' attraction and to

18 The delegation of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and the majority of refugees are located in Algeria, but el-Layyoun, in Western Sahara, is the capital city. Nowadays, the referendum postponed for a long time could represent the best solution. Independence and wide autonomy may constitute the two options available. At the same time, the fact that Moroccan settlers represent 88% of the inhabitants of the region challenges the effectiveness of the very idea of a referendum.

maintain his openness towards gradual and limited political reforms.

Algeria

Along with Morocco, Algeria is another country often overlooked in the *Arab Springs* narratives. The cause of this tendency relates mainly to the complexity of Algerian recent history, that only few decades ago experienced a violent and prolonged civil war.

In fact, Algeria has been the stage of popular protests in the period 2011–2012. As assessed in the scenarios of the neighbouring countries, the main instances of the protestors included unemployment, inflation, corruption and restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly.

However, even though a number of fundamental preconditions were analogous to those leading to regime-change in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, it did not occur in Algeria. Not only did President ‘Abdelaziz Bouteflika remain in office, but he was also re-elected in 2014, at the age of 77.

The Algerian government has been capable to restore the status quo before a full *Algerian Spring* bloomed, thanks to a number of initiatives and favourable circumstances.

First, since the very beginning of the protests, the government lifted the state of emergency and established a Reform Commission.

Secondly, unlike the case of Tunisia and Egypt, a large amount of current assets and revenues from the energy sector were available to calm down the people.

Revenues deriving from the energy sector have been invested in major infrastructure works to modernize the country and – as excellent deterrent – they minimized the risk of internal revolts granting social order by answering in part to the population’s demands.¹⁹

The army and security forces, who were able to take the

19 Z.M. Barka (2009).

full control of the situation without launching a violent and internationally *noisy* repression, provided a third advantage for the power.

President ‘Abdelaziz Bouteflika, head of the regime since 1999, managed to find a balance between the interests of the ruling class, the military élite, and the population.

From an international point of view, in the last few years Algeria has tried to be the last stronghold of the stability in the area.

The relevance of the Defence, Security and Intelligence sector has been a distinctive feature of Algerian foreign policy in the last five years. A great portion of revenues from hydrocarbons is used in this field, the army is the biggest in the region and many steps have been taken in order to strengthen the international role of the country.

In 2010 for instance, Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger created the Joint Operational General Staff Committee (CEMOC).²⁰

Furthermore, the security sector represents the second field of partnership between Algeria and the European Union after energy.

In 2011, Algeria witnessed in many neighbouring countries strong democratic demands soon followed by the risk of political Islam’s revivals, occurred while global jihad was performing its itinerary of fragmentation and internationalization.

In such a complex scenario, ‘Abdelaziz Bouteflika increased his efforts to preserve the role of his country in North Africa and the Sahel region.

In spite of these efforts, at the end of 2012, with the French intervention in Mali, the Algerian position became increasingly delicate. The risk was that of a spill-over of the Malian conflict, which had already brought thousands of refugees to cross the Southern Algerian border.

The war reinvigorated the action of jihadi groups like Anṣār al-Dīn, but Algeria finally decided to grant France its airspace and to host the peace talks at the end of 2012.

20 Institut Thomas More (2010).

In a retaliation against this securitizing attitude, at the very beginning of 2013, the internal stability of the country was put at risk by the attack at In Amenas gas plant near the Libyan border.

The In Amenas hostage crisis began on January 16, 2013, when a brigade of the jihadi group al-Murabitūn, led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, took expat and Algerian hostages at the gas facility.

The Algerian state oil company Sonatrach operates the gas field jointly with the British firm BP and the Norwegian Statoil, and the number of expats employed is about 800. The death toll raised to 38 hostages and 29 members of the commando.

After the execution of Hervé Gourdel, a French tourist kidnapped and beheaded in Algiers on September 24, 2014 by a group affiliated to the Caliphate²¹ and the progressive *jihadization* of neighbouring countries like Libya, the risk for Algeria increased and the role of the Maghreb stronghold against terrorism seemed difficult to be played.

Algeria is now threatened by the jihadist extremism that has never been completely eradicated and risks to offer fertile ground for the spread of Da'ish-affiliated groups.

At the same time, Algeria is going through a political and economic crisis that is making the country's future growingly uncertain.

Besides, the recent agreement on Iran's nuclear program between Tehran and the 5+1 world powers proves to be hard to accept for Algeria, who is clashing with another great rival – Saudi Arabia – with no results.

In this scenario, corruption flourishes, the population is impoverished, and discontent regarding the government's activities is not limited to the economic sphere.

At the beginning of 2016, President Bouteflika disclosed the draft Constitution. The most relevant changes relate to the recognition of the Tamazigh, the language of Berbers, as official

21 The group was *Jund al-Khilāfa*, “Soldiers of the Caliphate”, once part of al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and now ally of the Islamic State.

language in all public institutions and the assertion in favour of workplace gender equality, while the President will be eligible for two mandates only.²²

In February, Algeria's parliament has adopted a package of constitutional reforms that authorities say will strengthen the country's democratic stature, but opponents doubt it will bring real change.

The reforms are meant to prepare the State for a smooth transition amid concerns over the health of 79-year-old President 'Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

The package also prevents Algerians with dual nationality from running for high posts in public office, which has sparked criticism among the Franco-Algerian community.

It foresees the creation of an independent electoral commission and recognition of the roles of women and youth. Freedoms of assembly and the press will be explicitly guaranteed.

Yet, even though Algeria no longer claims to be the stronghold against jihadism, its regional and international partnerships and the reforms it is implementing will make it possible at least to contain the terrorist threat.

In any case, President Bouteflika's health conditions and the consequent issue of the succession to power are tangible problems and it will be interesting to look at the developments that will occur after the presidential elections of 2019.

Libya

With regard to Libya, the political scenario of the recent years has been even more complex than that of the neighbouring countries.

The context preceding the Libyan revolution was partially similar to Tunisian and Egyptian situations, but many peculiarities distinguished Libya from the rest of the region.

The Libyan population in 2011 counted little more than

22 The term-limit was lifted in 2008 to allow Bouteflika to run for the third time.

6 million over a territory of 1 million 800 square kilometres, compared to Egypt that counts over 85 million inhabitants over 1 million square kilometres.

In addition, Libya enjoys enormous hydrocarbon reserves, the largest known oil reserves and the second-largest natural gas reserves in Africa. Moreover, the high quality of Libyan crude oil and the proximity of its oil and gas deposits to Europe mean it continues to enjoy a ready market for those resources.²³

In spite of these advantages, Libya shared some typical features of the *Arab Springs* bloomed in Tunisia and Egypt, such as widespread dissatisfaction and a large amount of under-24,²⁴ while the State was not ready to provide everyone with a stable job.

In January 2011, protests against Mu'ammar Gheddafi began in all major cities, as well as first clashes between protestors and police.

On February 15, a huge number of relatives of deceased political prisoners gathered in front of Tripoli court to protest against the incarceration of their lawyer Fathi Tirbil, a human rights activist.

Therefore, protests were reinvigorated all over the country, and Gheddafi loyalists reacted aggressively against the increasing number of tribes and factions moved to the rebels' side.

On March 17, the United Nations Security Council approved a no-fly zone over Libya adopting Resolution 1973.

Few months after the international coalition entered the conflict, on October 20 Gheddafi was captured and killed in Sirte by a group of rebels and the National Transitional Council (NTC) took control over the political roadmap for the immediate future.

Even though the first phase of Libyan Civil War had ended, the country was still characterized by persistent instability and intertribal clashes when in summer 2012 the newly elected General National Council (GNC) replaced the NTC.

23 R.B. St. John (2011).

24 According to UN figures, 45.1% of citizens are less than 24 and the growth rate is 3%.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of 2014 protests erupted once again, in response to the General National Congress refusal to disband after mandate expired, and in May General Khalīfa Ḥaftar launched ground and air operations against militant Islamist groups in Benghazi.

The process leading to the co-existence of two distinct parliaments, the parliament of Tripoli and the internationally recognised parliament of Ṭobruq, was completed.²⁵

The government of Ṭobruq was supported primarily by Egypt,²⁶ Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and more discreetly by Algeria, as well as Zintan militias of Tripolitania. On the other side, the Tripoli government, self-named Government of National Salvation, enjoyed the support of Islamist coalition *Fağr Lībiya*, “Libyan Dawn”, which included armed militias but also exponents of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood belonging to the Justice and Construction Party and some members of the former National Congress. From an international perspective, Tripoli was assisted and financed more or less overtly by Turkey, Qatar and Sudan.

Given these premises, on March 16, 2014, troops of General Ḥaftar launched *ʿAmalīya al-Karāma*, “Operation Dignity” against Islamist groups in Bengasi.

During 2014, UN staff pulled out, embassies shut, foreigners evacuated as security situation deteriorated and Tripoli international airport was largely destroyed by fighting.

At the same time, the Islamic militants’ penetration in the country strongly increased, *Anṣār al-Sharia* seized control of most of Benghazi and in October local Islamist groups in Derna pledged *baʿya*, “allegiance”, to the Islamic State and the city became part of the Caliphate.²⁷

This pledging showed the strength of IS which, for the first time, did not expand over a geographically contiguous territory,

25 A. Engel (2014).

26 M. El-Menshawly (2014).

27 The city of Derna was included by IS in the so-called *Wilāyat al-Barqa*, Cyrenaica Province.

thus conforming to its strategic mantra *baqa' wa tamaddud*, “stay and expand”.

As a matter of fact, one of the main consequences of radical violent penetration in Libyan cities, has been the increasing awareness of the need to find a common strategy and create one national government as soon as possible.

Indeed, after a number of negotiation rounds led by Bernardino Leon, the former UN Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), the new Representative Martin Kobler announced in January 2016 a new, Tunisia-based interim government led by Fayez Serragħ.

Under the UN plan, the eastern parliament, the House of Representatives, will be the main legislature. It will work with a second chamber, the State Council, formed from the reinstated General National Congress (GNC) in Tripoli.

While foreign pressure insists to tackle the threat from Islamic State militants, Libya’s internationally recognized parliament, based in the east, has rejected a main article in the UN accord as well as a proposed list of ministers. In fact, hardliners in both camps rejected the agreement at the outset.

A new government would need to have the full control of Tripolitania in order to exercise power effectively, but armed groups hold sway there and brigades of former anti-Gaddafi fighters still settle feuds in the streets with anti-aircraft cannon.

As far as the hypothesis of an international intervention is concerned, Libya needs to strengthen the Government of National Accord before the United States and European allies opt for any military action against the Islamic State in the country. With all probabilities, Westerners are months away from launching a new military campaign in Libya, despite mounting concern about the group’s spread there and its attacks on oil infrastructures.

Undoubtedly, one possible answer will be to make long-term commitments to build strong Libyan institutions and rule of law, which can lead to a Libyan state that will be a sustainable partner for regional security.

1.2 Regime Change: Differences and Recurrent Patterns among North African Countries

From the introductory historical overview of the period 2011–2015, two main points have to be highlighted.

Firstly, it is undeniable that a number of similarities between the events of North African countries can be identified.

In each case, the protests removed political leaders who had ruled their countries for decades,²⁸ leaving behind a deep power vacuum. All of them could be regarded as despotic and authoritarian dictators and these countries shared preconditions of the *Arab Springs* such as social unbalances, unemployment and corruption.²⁹

On the other hand, equating King Muhammed VI with Ḥosnī Mubarak or Ben ‘Ali with Gheddafi could be totally misleading.

Summarizing, the recurrent patterns among North African deposed rulers included:

- Liberticidal policies (limitations of freedom of speech, expression, press, assembly)
- Tolerance to or involvement in cases of corruption and bribery
- Dual attitude towards political Islam (Islam-*friendly* vs scapegoating)³⁰
- Relative weight of foreign aid and assistance
- Huge securitization of the State.

By contrast, many differences occurred between the abovementioned rulers:

- *Muhammad VI*: he maintained his control over Morocco because he had been able to act like a sort of enlightened

28 Mu‘ammar Gheddafi: 1979-2011, Ḥosnī Mubarak: 1981-2011, Zīn el-‘Abdin Ben ‘Ali: 1987-2011.

29 See E. El-Katiri et al. (2014), pp. 4–5.

30 See G. Kepel (2004).

monarch, not only during the turmoil but also in the previous years.

Today he still is amir *al-mu'minīn*, “Prince of the Believers”, a title that makes his judgments unquestionable, but his openness towards people’s instances remains undeniable.

In 2004, he approved the *mudawwana*,³¹ a new Family Code which considerably restricted the legal gender gap. Furthermore, in 2011 Morocco welcomed a new Constitution, which included a better protection of minorities and their languages.

- *‘Abdelaziz Bouteflika*: he represents the continuity ruler. He is 79 years old and in the last few years, probably driven by younger advisors, stroke the right balance between reform and tradition, democratization and repression. Consequently, it will be extremely interesting to see how Algeria will react to the election of the new President in 2019 and how the apparently dormant tensions will develop.
- *Zīn el-Abdin Ben ‘Ali*: along with Mubarak, he could be regarded as the paradigm of the pre-2011 Arab ruler. He was secular, self-oriented, authoritarian and tolerant of corruption. As far as secularism is concerned, it is worth saying that it was valued mainly to foster the securitization process and not nurtured for a global social improvement.
- *Hosni Mubarak*: historically, he presented the same features as his Tunisian neighbour. Nevertheless, the two countries are hardly comparable because of the very different demography and economy. The relative weight of tourism is surely a common characteristic, like the economic risk caused by the huge losses in this sector.³²

31 The English translation of the 2004 Moroccan Family Law can be found at <http://www.hrea.org/programs/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/moudawana/> .

32 Egypt’s Minister of Tourism, Hisham Zaazou, said that the country could

- *Mu'ammār Gheddāfi*: as a matter of common knowledge, the ousted ruler of Libya has been one of the most complex figures of contemporary Arab history. His political and social attitudes are hardly comparable with the paths of the neighbouring counterparts. After seizing power in 1979, Gheddāfi created a unique State in the region. Indeed, the Jamāhīriya³³ presented the traits of a classical rentier state³⁴ imaginatively combined with a sui generis socialism and a particular vision of Islam as a universal religion.

1.3 The Rise of Terrorism in the Region

Unfortunately, in spite of all the similarities and differences among North African rulers, what really has unified the region since 2011 has been the proliferation of jihadi cells as well as an escalation of jihadi network's transnational attitude.³⁵

Indeed, the power vacuum engendered by the *Arab Springs* speeded up both processes, thus preparing the ground for the current expansion of *Da'ish*³⁶ and the partial resurgence of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

have lost \$281 million a month as a result of the decision made by Britain and Russia to suspend flights to Sharm El-Shaikh following the Sinai plane crash of October 31, 2015. A bomb is believed to have brought the Russian aircraft down, killing all 224 people on board. During the period 2010–2014 Egypt tourism revenues ranged from 12,5 to 7,5 billion dollars, with the lowest value in 2013 at 5.9 billion dollars.

In Tunisia, according to a memorandum by the Central Bank of Tunisia (BCT) covering the first 10 months of 2015, tourism revenues have recorded a fall of 33.4% compared to the same period in 2014. It happened mainly after Bardo (March 18, 2015) and Sousse (June 26, 2015) assaults.

33 The term had been coined by Gheddāfi himself and can be translated as “the government of the masses”. Gheddāfi derived this word from the Arabic *ḡumhūrīya*, “republic”, but used the plural *ḡamāhir*, “masses” instead of the singular *ḡumhūr*, “public”.

34 H. al-Beblawi and G. Luciani (1990).

35 See B. Lia (2015).

36 *Dai'sh* is the Arab acronym for *al-Dawla al-Islāmīya fi al-'Iraq wa al-Sham*, “The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/Sham”.

The collapse of political and judicial institutions, occurred partially like in Egypt and Tunisia, or totally like in Libya, created conditions of semi-anarchy that fostered a new wave of armed Islamism.

In fact, the Arab uprisings provided the premises of Islamist resurgence in another way: revolutionary violence, both tangible and ideological, found in the symbolic repertoire of religion a powerful catalyst. The most popular slogans in North African squares in 2011 invoked *'aish*, “bread”, *ḥurrīya*, “freedom”, *'adāla*, “justice” and *karāma*, “dignity”, concepts that have been easily exploited by violent Islamists once that secular forces proved to be unable of responding to citizens’ demands.

The process is bidirectional: revolutionary violence gained strength from religious keywords and symbolism, at the same time extremist narratives used the revolutionary energy and citizens’ betrayed expectations to show up as the only meaningful alternative to chaos.

Moreover, exploiting the increasing capillarity of Islamist networks internationally linked to IS – like *Anṣār al-Sharīa Libia* (ASL) – jihadist groups compensated for the sudden scarcity of services to citizens, according to a recurrent pattern *da'wa – hisba*³⁷ widely tested by the Caliphate in Raqqa and Mosul.

Given these premises, in the widespread chaos that followed the turmoil, North Africa became an increasingly tempting region for jihadi groups, lone wolves, mercenaries and smugglers.

Particularly, after the removal of Mu’ammar Ghaddafi, Fezzan – the Southern region of Libya – became a sort of safe-haven for every kind of trafficking and the conflict between the armed groups who loosely backed both political sides left room for Islamic State to take control over Sirte, Gaddafi’s home city, and parts of the coast.

From Sub-Saharan Africa through Fezzan not only migrants, but also weapons, fighters and probably even human organs are

37 *Da'wa* is the call to Islam, while *hisba* is a word encompassing the meaning of encouraging good deeds and prohibiting the evil ones.

smuggled all over North Africa and often reach the broad Middle East.³⁸

Therefore, weapons and fighters are moved from a crisis area to another. For instance, weapons from Libya are supposed to reach the North of Sinai Peninsula, an extremely problematic territory in which tribal claims overlap the activity of jihadist groups such as *Anṣār Beyt al-Maqdis* (ABM).³⁹

At the same time, especially after Russian engagement in the conflict, Arab fighters of the Islamic State previously deployed in Syria and Iraq, are now going back to Libya and Tunisia to spread their idea of jihad in their motherlands.

Trying to contrast this phenomenon and the spill-off of Libyan conflict, in February Tunisia has completed a 200-km (125 mile) barrier along its frontier with Libya and will soon install electronic monitoring systems, but the returning foreign fighters remain one of the biggest risks for North African stability.

Exactly as the so-called Afghan Arabs few decades ago,⁴⁰ thousands of individuals are now going back to Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Algeria and Egypt without being de-radicalized, but only temporarily disengaged.⁴¹

The future of Islamic State's expansion in North Africa is highly unpredictable also because of the differences existing between this region and the so-called *Syraq*.⁴²

Unlike countries such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen, North Africa is not characterized by deep sectarian divisions, so the Caliphate could hardly rely on internal religious bias to fully import its

38 T. Kodjo (2015).

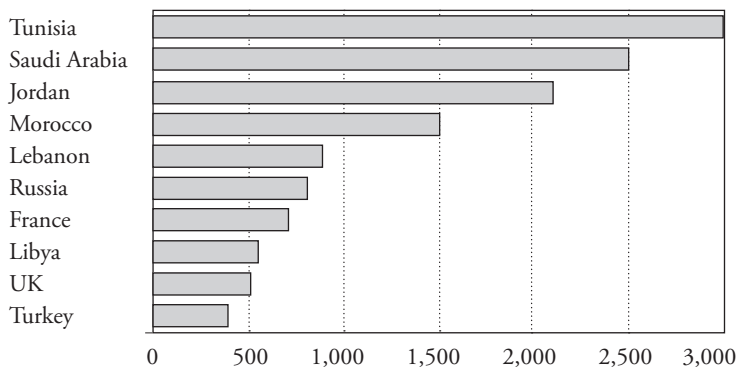
39 For example, Ansār Beyt al-Maqdis has been responsible for a number of attacks to the Arab Gas Pipeline, which used to cover about 40% of Israel energy requirement.

40 Arabs who fought against Russia in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989 and then went back to their countries of origin.

41 For the difference between de-radicalization and disengagement see A.P. Schmid (2013).

42 *Syraq* is a neologism used in geopolitics to indicate Syria and Iraq, especially referring to IS-controlled territories.

Figure 1.
Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq



Source: Soufan Group, International Center for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence Upper estimated used.

project. For instance, in countries like Libya or Tunisia about 100% of Muslim people are Sunnis and tension runs mainly on tribal divides, while the Caliphate needs a target like a vulnerable religious alterity to completely display its intrinsic virulence.

At the same time, the current phase of global jihad and the action of the Islamic State are showing unprecedented adaptation skills, ranging from the persecution of the near enemy, mostly Shia Muslims, to international terrorism and alliances with groups operating in non-contiguous territories.

Nowadays, it seems hard to predict the consequences of these trends. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that one of the main mechanisms deployed by the regional jihadist networks to carry out their project is the notorious *oil for weapon*.

The significance of the energy sector for violent extremists becomes evident from three main points of view. Firstly, oil smuggling and connected businesses are tools for financing their mission. Secondly, once in control of energy infrastructures, they

could use their faculty of blocking supplies as an instrument of pressure against *apostate* regimes and foreign powers. Finally, attacking energy plants and foreign companies represents an extremely effective means of propaganda and a strong communicative weapon.⁴³

In the following sections of this study, the real dimensions and implications of these phenomena will be analysed, along with the historical developments of the triangulation mad of North African political instability-terrorism-the energy sector.

43 For an exhaustive analysis of Islamic State's communication and medial attitudes see M. Maggoni and P. Magri (2015).

Box 1

Key events in North Africa, December 2010 – May 2016

2010

December 17 *Mohamed Bouazizi, a young Tunisian man, commits suicide in front of the headquarters of the regional government in Sidi Bouzeid protesting against the requisition of his activity.*

2011

January *Protests erupt all over North Africa. Major protests over food prices and unemployment take place in Algiers, with two people being killed in clashes with security forces.*

January 14 *Tunisian President Ben 'Ali is overthrown.*

January 25 *Thousands of Egyptian protesters gather in Tahrir Square demanding the end of President Hosni Mubarak's regime.*

February *Algerian President 'Abdelaziz Bouteflika lifts 19-year-old state of emergency, a key demand of anti-government protesters.*

February 11 *Hosni Mubarak resigns and transfers his powers to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF).*

February 20 *In Morocco, the February 20th Movement is created with the aim of soliciting constitutional reforms and the release of political prisoners. In Libya, clashes between loyalists and rebels continue.*

March 17 *The UN Security Council imposes a no-fly zone in the Libyan airspace and authorizes a military action to protect civilians.*

April *Algerian President Bouteflika sets up a committee tasked with suggesting constitutional changes aimed at "reinforcing democracy".*

July 1st *A referendum welcomes the new Constitution in the Kingdom of Morocco.*

- August** *Suicide attacks against military targets occur in Algeria.*
- October** *Parliamentary elections take place in Tunisia. Ennahda Islamist party wins, but falls short of an outright majority.*
- October 20** *Mu'ammār Gheddāfi is captured and killed by rebels in Sirte.*
- October 23** *The National Transitional Council officially declares liberation of Libya from the tyranny.*
- December** *In Tunisia, human rights activist Moncef Marzouki is elected President by the Constituent Assembly, Ennahda leader Hamadi Jebali becomes Prime Minister.*

2012

- June 24** *Egypt's election commission announces that Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi has won Egypt's presidential runoff.*
- August 8** *The General National Congress replaces The Libyan National Transitional Council.*
- September 11** *The US ambassador in Libya Christopher Stevens is killed in Benghazi along with three other embassy officers.*
- December** *Egyptian Islamist-dominated Constituent Assembly approves draft Constitution that boosts the role of Islam and restricts freedom of speech and assembly. Citizens approve it in a referendum, prompting extensive protests by secular opposition leaders, Christians and women's groups.*

2013

- January** *Dozens of foreign hostages are killed by Islamist al-Murabitoun group, now affiliated to the Islamic State, in four-day siege at In Amenas gas plant. Algerian special forces storm the site.*
- July 3** *Egyptian armed forces headed by 'Abd el-Fattāh al-Sīsī act on the 48-hours ultimatum to intervene "on behalf of the people", ousting President Mohamed Morsi and suspending the Constitution.*

| | |
|------------------|--|
| July | <i>In Tunisia, assassination of opposition politician Mohamed Brahmi prompts mass demonstrations, a general strike and calls for the government to resign.</i> |
| August 14 | <i>Rab'a al-Adawiyya massacre. Egyptian security forces raid two camps of protesters in Cairo: one in al-Nahda Square and a larger one in Rabaa al-Adawiya Square. The two sites had been occupied by supporters of ousted President Mohamed Morsi. According to Human Rights Watch, a minimum of 817 people and more likely at least 1,000 are killed in Rabaa Square. According to the Egyptian Health Ministry, 638 people are killed on August 14, of which 595 civilians and 43 police officers, with at least 3,994 injured.</i> |
| 2014 | |
| January | <i>In Tunisia, Parliament passes the country's first Constitution since President Ben 'Ali was ousted in 2011.</i> |
| March 24 | <i>An Egyptian court sentences 529 members of the Muslim Brotherhood to death. By May 2014, approximately 16,000 people, mostly Brotherhood members or supporters, had been imprisoned since the coup.</i> |
| April | <i>In Algeria Bouteflika gains another term as President.</i> |
| May | <i>Former army chief 'Abd el-Fattāh el-Sīsī wins presidential election in Egypt.</i> |
| June 29 | <i>The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) proclaims a caliphate, for the first time referring to itself as the Islamic State (IS).</i> |
| October | <i>Nida'a Tounes, which unites secularists, trade unionists, liberals and some players from the Ben 'Ali era, wins largest bloc of seats in parliamentary election, overtaking the Islamist Ennahda.</i> |
| November | <i>Sinai-based armed group Ansar Beyt al-Maqdis pledges allegiance to the Islamic State.</i> |
| December | <i>Nidaa Tounes candidate Beji Caid Essebsi becomes President after decisively beating outgoing President Moncef Marzouki in run-off elections.</i> |

2015

February *Egyptian aircraft bomb Islamic State positions in eastern Libya after extremist group released videos showing killing of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians.*

March 18 *Islamic State extremist group claims responsibility for an attack by three gunmen on the Bardo Museum in Tunis, in which 21 people, mainly foreign tourists, are killed.*

June 26 *Islamic State gunman kills 38 people, mainly tourists, on beach at resort of Sousse, in Tunisia's worst terror attack. Government announces closure of extremist mosques.*

October *National Dialogue Quartet, made up of General Labour Union, Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts, Human Rights League, and Order of Lawyers, wins Nobel Peace Prize for helping transition to democracy in Tunisia.*

December 17 *The internationally recognised parliament of Tobruq and the parliament of Tripoli sign an agreement for creating a unified national transitional government in Libya, appointing Fayez al-Serrağ as Prime Minister.*

2016

January 7 *One of the most violent terrorist attacks since the ousting of Gheddafi occurs in Zliten. A car bomb explodes in front of a police-training centre, killing 60 people.*

2. From the Arab Springs to IS

2.1 The *power vacuum* after the Arab Springs

Like many other terms relating to the study of MENA region and Muslim-majority countries, *power vacuum* is an overused definition often only superficially investigated.

We choose the term power vacuum to describe the transitional period that followed the *Arab Springs* not only in North Africa, but also in the Middle East.

The turmoil deposed presidents who had ruled for decades. In spite of their liberticidal policies, these rulers had represented the only alternative to chaos and domestic tensions for an extremely long period.

Moreover, their administrations used to consist of the only people who detained high levels of ruling expertise and sufficiently strong *wasta*: political, ethnical and familiar ties to different social groups, used to strengthen their own authority in return for favouritism and privileges.

Since 2011, this ruling class has been prevented from returning to political power, normally through the implementation of considerably strict laws.

For instance, Libyan political isolation law (PIL) enforced in 2013 banned anyone who held an institutional role from September 9, 1969 to October 23, 2011 to take part in post-Ghaddafi institutions,⁴⁴ and contained provisions which

44 R. David and H. Mzioudet (2014), p. 6.

are probably more severe than those regarding the Iraqi de-baathification process.⁴⁵

At the beginning of 2015, Libya's internationally recognised Parliament of T̄obruq has revoked the section of the law that banned Gaddafi-era officials from taking part in politics.

As far as Tunisia is concerned, on January 14, 2011 President Ben 'Ali fled into exile in the face of nationwide popular protests, but left behind a massive political party apparatus, that of his ruling Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD).

Decree Law 27 adopted on April 18, 2011 established the High Independent Authority for Elections (ISIE) and contained the country's first legal prohibitions on the political participation of former regime officials through a prohibition on anyone who had held a function within the RCD during the past ten years or had called for the re-election of Ben 'Ali in 2014. The ISIE then drafted Decree Law 35, which adopted prohibitions that excluded former RCD officials from candidacy in elections. Article 15 of this decree excluded three categories of individuals: those who assumed positions in government under Ben 'Ali, with the exception of those who did not belong to the RCD, those who held positions of responsibility within the structures of the RCD and those who called for Ben 'Ali's re-election in 2014.

In Egypt, Mubarak's National Democratic Party (NDP) was dissolved shortly after the January 2011 uprising, its headquarters dramatically torched by protesters and its assets transferred to the state.

In July 2014 in fact, the Supreme Court cancelled the former provision that banned leaders of the National Democratic Party to run for parliamentary elections.⁴⁶ Nationalist figures, including some from the Mubarak era who were mostly absent

45 A. Varvelli (2013), p. 9.

46 Ahmed Ezz for instance, former NDP secretary-general who was among Gamal Mubarak's closest associates, was freed from prison in August 2014 and then tried to run for office again.

in 2011 and 2012, have retaken center stage.⁴⁷

However, in spite of these attempts to return to the national arena, during the transitional period the power vacuum in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt represented the fundamental feature of the political scenario.

Even without experiencing a real *Spring*, Algeria and Morocco partially suffered from the same consequences of the turmoil as the other North African countries and it is not hazardous to state that the power vacuum ceased to be a national problem and soon became a regional issue.

The security crisis that began to affect the whole area was – and still is – characterized by three main intertwined phenomena: trafficking, momentous migrations and internationalization of jihadism with the subsequent success of Islamic State’s expansion.

As far as trafficking is concerned, drug trade is one of the major issues. It is related both to a crackdown by authorities and the smugglers’ ability to refine their methods thanks to closer collaboration with international criminals.

For instance, according to Egypt’s National Council for Battling Drug Addiction, use of recreational drugs among Cairenes over 15 has rocketed from 6% to 30% since 2011.⁴⁸

Arms trafficking is another growing issue. Libya has been haemorrhaging the weapons stockpile of its former leader, Muammar Qaddafi, thus reinforcing the Malian route via Tunisia and Algeria and the Egyptian route, which conveys weapons to Sinai and the Gaza Strip.

The second dimension of the abovementioned security crisis relates to the uncontrolled migrations occurring since 2011.

North African countries have always represented a place of origin, transit and destination of migrants. What characterizes

47 M. Dunne (2015), p. 6.

48 ‘Trafficking in North Africa Boom Boom’, *The Economist*, August 17, 2013: [<http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21583671-north-african-governments-struggle-stem-illegal-flow-arms-and-drugs-boom>].

the actual unprecedented situation is that the collapse of national institutions, especially in Libya, fostered human trafficking.

Owning a boat and organizing daily Mediterranean crossings became a job for many petty criminals. Moreover, according to many accounts of anonymous Libyan smugglers, during the Gheddafi era it was necessary that migrants arrived in Europe, while now it is enough for smugglers to make them board.

Unquestionably, what the smugglers mean to say is that Mu'ammarr Gheddafi used migrants as a tool to exert pressure on Europe,⁴⁹ while now they are a fruitful business and therefore the living conditions during their stay in Libya and journey are seriously worsened.

There is another issue that obstructs local authorities from fighting inhuman treatment of migrants: in Algerian, Tunisian,⁵⁰ Libyan and Egyptian legislations, the specific offence of trafficking in persons does not exist, while in Morocco it is criminalized through Article 2-274 of the Criminal Code but there is not a clear definition of the crime.⁵¹

Predictably, human, drug and weapons trafficking soon became a tool for financing terrorism. New kinds of collaboration between jihadist networks and organized crime appeared in the region, thus enabling violent extremist to increase their strength and mobility.

49 Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan is currently adopting the same kind of pressure policy. In February, he threatened to send millions of refugees in Europe to the bloc's member states, just as NATO agreed to deploy ships in the Aegean Sea to ease the migrant crisis: [<https://euobserver.com/migration/132233>]. According to UNHCR, Turkey hosts 1,840,000,00 refugees: [<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48e0fa7f.html>] .

50 Although prior commitments to enact draft anti-trafficking legislation remained unfulfilled, Tunisian governments prosecuted and convicted an increasing number of trafficking offenders using existing trafficking-related laws.

51 UNODC (2013).

The *power vacuum* engendered by the *Arab Springs* speeded up two processes, the proliferation of jihadist cells and the internationalization of terrorist networks, thus preparing the ground for the current expansion of Da'ish and the resurgence of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

At the same time, after Russian engagement in the conflict, Arab fighters of the Islamic State previously deployed in Syria and Iraq are now going back to North Africa without being de-radicalized or disengaged.

Therefore, it is misleading to depict the Caliphate as a sort of exotic product imported from the *Shām*.⁵²

Firstly, as mentioned before, a high number of its active supporters and sympathizers come from North Africa.

Secondly, the region has been the cradle of some of the most significant experiments of political Islamism as well as violent jihadism.⁵³

Only through an enhanced knowledge of the local scenarios, it will be possible to fully understand the actual risks and the differences between the jihadi galaxy in North Africa and the project of the Islamic State.

2.2 Violent radicalism in North Africa

Unsurprisingly, given the complexity of the topic and the relevance of the terminology used to deal with it, a conceptual premise is necessary: *violent radicalism* stands for something different from *political Islam* and they are not synonyms.

Violent radicals, as the very term says, choose violence as their main political resource and strive for a rebirth of Muslim societies, a global palingenesis that will persuade Muslims

52 *Shām* is the Arabic toponym for Syria, but it indicates also the whole Levant region consisting of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Israel.

53 The differences between Islamism and violent jihadism will be analysed in the following sections of the chapter.

to conform to the model of the Prophet Muhammad and the *Khulafā al-Rashīdun*, “Righteously Guided Caliphs”.⁵⁴

On the contrary, the concept of political Islam implies neither violence nor other illegal means to create and spread political attitudes and moral beliefs.

Contemporary political Islam is not interested in a forced dismantlement of national institutions. As the governments of the Muslim Brotherhood⁵⁵ in Egypt (2012–2013) and Ennahda in Tunisia (2011–2013) clearly show, these kinds of socio-political organizations, in spite of all their failures and weaknesses, have been able to insert themselves in the electoral competition and act in the framework of formally democratic republics.

For all these reasons, the effective distinction between Muslims, Islamists and violent radicals or jihadists, which is now widely accepted by scholars,⁵⁶ will be used in this volume.

While Islam is the faith of 1.4 billion people, Islamism or political Islam is an ideology that strives to derive legitimacy from Islam. Islam and Islamism are not synonymous and from an identity-related perspective, Islamists tend to define themselves only through their religious identity.

The subject of the present analysis relates to the third component of this sort of terminological triangle: the abovementioned terms *jihadism* and *violent radicalism*, which imply the use of terror and violence both as tools for fighting opponents and recruiting potential supporters.⁵⁷

During the last two decades, Al Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has been the premium brand of North African jihadism. Prior to 2006, the organization was known as *al-Ġamā‘a as-Salaḫiyya*

54 Abū Bakr (632-634), ‘Umār (634-644), Uthmān ibn Affān (644-656) and ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (656-661).

55 The deposed President Mohammed Morsi was the leader of *Ḥizb al-ḥurriyya wa al-‘adāla*, Freedom and Justice Party, the political branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.

56 S. Cagaptay (2010), B. Rubin (2007) and G. Kramer (2004).

57 For an in-depth analysis of the term jihad and the history of jihadism, see D. Cook (2005).

li al-Da'wa wa al-Qitāl,⁵⁸ “Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat”. Nine years ago, the group joined the qaedist network and became one of the region’s wealthiest armed radical groups, thanks to various kinds of trafficking and ransoms paid in return for the release of hostages.⁵⁹

More precisely, in 2006 four jihadist groups, the Algerian-majority Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat and the Moroccan, Libyan and Tunisian Islamic Combatant Groups, as well as other small groups from countries such as Mauritania, Mali and Niger, created an alliance with the international network of al-Qa’ida, thus becoming AQIM.

According to a process that will be later experienced also in the case of the Islamic State, the new affiliation implied a change of strategy that placed the local activity within the broader galaxy of international terrorism.

AQIM’s opening strike occurred on April 11, 2007, with three simultaneous suicide bombings in Algiers, targeting the Government Palace, a police station, and a gendarmerie post. The date was chosen to commemorate the fifth anniversary of al-Qa’ida’s first attack in North Africa, the bombing of the Ghriba synagogue on the Tunisian island of Djerba.

The organizational structure of AQIM reflected the importance of hierarchy, which is typical of al-Qa’ida since its very birth in 1988 in Pakistan, based on the absolute loyalty to Osama Bin Laden, the Saudi leader inserted among FBI most wanted terrorists only in 1999.

AQIM uses drug smugglers and petty criminals to obtain weapons and other equipment such as 4x4 vehicles, GPS and satellite phones. In turn, it provides protection to smugglers who can circulate more freely in the region.

As for the hypothesis of a contemporary partial resurgence

58 It has been created in 1998 by one former GIA commander, Hassan Hattab.

59 K. Sidibé (2012) claims that 90 per cent of AQIM resources come from ransoms paid in return for the release of hostages, but it is difficult to estimate the amount.

of AQIM activities and their internationalization,⁶⁰ it has to be highlighted that on November 20, 2015 Al-Mourabitoun, a group which had previously pledged allegiance to al-Qa'ida, attacked a hotel in Bamako, Mali. They took more than 100 hostages, killing 19 before security forces ended the siege.

Few weeks later AQIM gunmen attacked a restaurant and a hotel in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, killing at least 28 people.

On March 13, 2016, AQIM performed an attack in the town of Grand-Bassam, Ivory Coast, killing at least 16 people, including 2 soldiers and 4 European tourists.

Second only to IS, AQIM enjoys global media exposure on activist Internet sites, but unlike other al-Qa'ida franchises, it has managed to maintain its indigenous leadership. The group has become known for fearsome suicide attacks and partially succeeded in incorporating the jihadi outfits from neighbouring Morocco and Tunisia.

AQIM has then focused on the northern Sahara, carving out safe havens and threatening weak government forces particularly in Mali after 2012.

From an ideological perspective, the two pillars of al-Qa'ida's narrative are *tawhīd*⁶¹ and the aggressive propaganda against Western *Salībiun*, "Crusaders".

Even before its formal merger into al-Qa'ida, the GSPC had endorsed the global jihadi rhetoric. In December 2007, AQIM bombed the UN headquarters in Algiers, echoing Zarqawi's attack on the UN offices in Baghdad in July 2003. However, AQIM's leaders focused most of his threats against "Crusader France", accusing Paris of supporting the apostate regimes of North Africa, and against Spain, pledging to "purify" Ceuta and Melilla as a step toward reconquering Andalusia, the Arab al-Andalus of the Golden Age of Islam.

60 J-P. Filiu (2009).

61 The term comes from the root *wā - hā - del*, relating to the concept of "one" and means "Oneness of God". It is an extremely powerful assertion of

As mentioned before, AQIM was born from an indigenous galaxy of jihadist groups, and the chaos that followed the *Arab Springs* has been exploited by al-Qa'ida-linked jihadi groups not only pragmatically, but also symbolically and rhetorically.

Indeed, the failure of political projects such as those of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Ennahda in Tunisia, served as confirmation that democracy is an inherently flawed political system and a foreign import that only supports the interests of Western powers.

Consequently, they called on Muslims to abandon the ballot box and fight for the implementation of a Shariah-based government.

In these calls to arms, al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups continue their strategy of attempting to exploit local instability and conflict to open up new fronts for jihad and strengthen their movements.

To give an example, since 2011 Ayman al-Zawahiri, the current leader of al-Qa'ida, has posted many web-messages about Egypt, his homeland. He alternatively blames foreign powers, Christians and spineless Muslim Brotherhood.

Indeed, scapegoating is one of major qaedist narrative strategies and finding more than one scapegoat means catalysing the anger of different interlocutors and possible recruits. Moreover, the fight *fi sabīl Allah*,⁶² “in the path of God”, becomes the only solution for more than one contemporary problem.

2.3 Birth and Expansion of the Islamic State in North Africa

As in the case of al-Qa'ida, Islamic State installed its action in North Africa over a complex substratum of chaos, insecurity

monotheism and constitutes the foremost article of the Muslim profession of faith, *al-shahāda*. Therefore, one of the most common epithets that jihadists use for their enemies is *mushrikun* (sing. *mushrik*), literally “those who practice idolatry and polytheism”.

62 Qur'an 9: 40.

and violence, and there are multiple analogies between the two premium brands of international jihadism.

At the same time, al-Qa'ida and the Caliphate models largely differ from an organizational and strategical perspective.

Although attempts to form *proto-states* have been a constant feature of contemporary jihadism over the past 25 years, in the post-2011 Middle East, such attempts have multiplied and succeeded to an unprecedented extent, primarily because of the Islamic State's expansion.

In fact, over the past 25 years, jihadi insurgents have repeatedly announced the formation of caliphates or emirates in countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Caucasus, Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Gaza and northern Mali, but very few of these *proto-states* have actually controlled territory.

A credible hypothesis on the relationship between the two eras of Islamic terrorism should depict the Islamic State as both an evolution of al-Qa'ida model and an unprecedented experiment of jihadist territorial control.

As far as the first perspective is concerned, it is not hazardous to state that the embryo of the Caliphate of Abū Bakr al-Baghḏādī originated from al-Qa'ida at the beginning of 21st century.

In 2001, a progressive scission between al-Qa'ida veterans of Afghanistan and the Iraqi branch began after Abū Musab al-Zarqāwi, a former Bin Laden's companion who had ran training camps in Afghanistan, founded his own group, *al-Tawīd wa al-Ġihād*.

In 2004, the group became known as al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) and Bin Laden appointed al-Zarqāwi as head of the branch, probably in order to contain his autonomist attitudes.

Two years later al-Zarkāwi⁶³ was killed, but the process that would have led to the birth of ISIS had been inexorably triggered.

Yusuf Darāni and Abu Hamza al-Muhāgir have been the

63 Al-Zarkāwi used to say that the US invasion of Iraq would have been a real blessing for his groups, as it could have increased the jihadist global attractiveness in exchange of largely tolerable damages. History proved him right, at least until Russian intervention against IS in 2015.

following leaders of AQI until 2010, when Abū Bakr al-Baghdādi was elected.

In 2011, after the world had known that Bin Laden was dead, al-Baghdādi did not paid allegiance to Ayman al-Zawāhiri: the scission was completed.

Strengthening its presence in the framework of the Iraqi civil war and expanding its territory in Syria, the first Friday of Ramadan 2014, in June, al-Baghdādi declared himself Caliph in the main mosque of the conquered Iraqi city of Mosul.

From that moment on, *al-Dawla al-Islāmiya fil al-'Iraq wa al-Shām*, the Islamic State of Iraq and Siria (ISIS) became known simply as the Islamic State.

This change should not be underestimated, as it conveys significant ideological implications. Removing the names “Iraq” and “Syria” meant furtherly distancing the new project from every kind of nationalistic echoes: the jihadi horizon is now al-Umma, the Islamic community worldwide and the Caliphate aims at unifying territories disregarding the colonial heritage of their borders.

From the reconstruction of its origin and its expansion in the Middle East and North Africa in the last two years, it becomes evident that IS differs from al-Qa’ida in many respects:

- Territorial expansion as inherently necessary for the survival of the Islamic State. IS has been able to export its *tamaddud*, “expansion” mantra even in non-contiguous countries, as the case of the Libyan enclaves clearly shows. Consequently, the franchising model of al-Qa’ida is no longer applicable to the structure of IS.
Surely, al-Qaeda also wants to establish an Islamic Caliphate, but it has taken a long-term approach.
- The near enemies (Shiites and local religious minorities) represent a priority compared to the distant enemies (the West and the Crusaders in the Caliphate’s narrative).⁶⁴

64 A. Plebani and P. Maggiolini (2015).

- Increased communication skills⁶⁵ and boosted ostentation of violence.
- Unprecedented appreciation of foreign fighters' different origins: al-Umma is a pan-Islamist, a-national project and IS jihadists are proud of the multi-ethnic community they have been able to create in their territories.
- IS gradually abandoned a radicalization mechanism that was typical of the al-Qa'ida era: the blaming of the victims. Indeed, in order to reduce the unavoidable emotional impact of violence against civilians, jihadism has largely exploited this mechanism, which is based on the principle of "it's their fault", "they asked for it".

On the contrary, Caliphate's power of attraction seems to be strong enough not to require this process, as if it was at a higher level of self-confidence: "we no longer need to justify ourselves".

Together with the ideological evolution, the Islamic State is continuing its expansion in North Africa. It is possible thanks to three different resources:

- The returning North African foreign fighters, who are likely to spread not only their strengthened commitment, but also what they have learnt in terms of fighting, tactical knowledge and logistic capabilities.
- The standard collective pledge of allegiance through the mechanism of ba'ya, a loyalty oath to the Caliph.
- The organization of an increasing number of training camps like that of Sabratha, in Libya, where the militants involved in the Bardo Museum and Sousse hotel attacks in Tunisia in 2015 probably completed their training.

According to IS's ideologues, there are four main steps

65 For an in-depth analysis of IS communication see: A. Atwan (2015) and A. Fisher (2015).

towards the complete institution of the Caliphate: *al-hiğra*, “migration” in *islamically*-ruled territories, training and partition of the fighters in operational units, the full collapse of the enemy, *tamkin* and *tamaddud*, respectively “stabilization” and “expansion” of the project.⁶⁶

As far as North Africa is concerned, it is hard to say that IS overcame the first step.

In any case, the increasing number of returning *muğahideen* in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt and the potential consequences should not be underestimated and the latest defeats of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria could strengthen this phenomenon.

In the next years, North Africa will certainly have to face the dilemma between criminalization and reintegration of these young jihadists, but the process is bound to fail unless national institutions will fully understand whether they are de-radicalized or simply temporarily disengaged.

After this historical reconstruction of the genesis of al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb and the Islamic State, the third chapter will be centred on another fundamental issue concerning the current scenario of jihadism in North Africa, that is to say the significance of the energy sector for terrorists and violent radicals.

66 These steps have been explained in the first issue of Dabiq, the IS’s magazine, which is focused on the declaration of the Caliphate and its ideological foundation: <http://media.clarionproject.org/files/09-2014/isis-isil-islamic-state-magazine-Issue-1-the-return-of-khilafah.pdf> .

Box 2

Jihadi groups that pledged allegiance or offered support to IS in North Africa

Algeria *Al-Murabitūn: active in Mali, they represent a risk for Algeria as proved by the In Amenas attack in January 2013. Pledge date: May 2015.*

Jund al-Khilāfah in the Land of Algeria. Pledge date: September 10, 2014.

Minor groups such as The al-Ghuraba Brigade. Pledge date: July 25, 2015.

Tunisia *Okba Ibn Nafaa Battalion. 2014 – Support.*

Jund al-Khilāfah in Tunisia. Pledge date: March 31, 2015.

Muğahideen of Tunisia of al-Qayrawan. Pledge date: May 18, 2015.

Libya *Shura Council of Shabab al-Islam Darnah Pledge date: October 6, 2014*

Wilāya al-Barqa. Pledge date: November 10, 2014.

Wilāya Fezzan. Pledge date: November 10, 2014.

Wilāya Tarabulus. Pledge date: November 10, 2014.

Fighters in Misrata. Pledge date: December 25, 2015.

Shura Council of Ajdabiya Rebels. Pledge date: December 31, 2015.

Egypt *Jund al-Khilāfah in the Land of Kināna. Pledge date: September 23, 2014.*

Wilāya Sina' (formerly Anṣār Beyt al-Maqdis), Pledge date: November 9, 2014.

Muğahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem (MSCJ), 2014.

Source: siteintelgroup.com

3. *Terrorism and the Energy Sector*

The Mediterranean region represents a fundamental energy area for two main reasons. First, the Mediterranean Sea is a key transit area for oil and gas supplies that from the Middle East, Russia and the Caspian reach European ports as well as the US market. Second, it is vital for intra-regional trade of hydrocarbons between North African producers and South European consumers.

As far as the relationship between politics and energy is concerned, the political outcomes resulted from the uprisings appear too limited and heterogeneous to imagine a radical change in the traditional energy dynamics in the Mediterranean.

The emergence of a space of democracy, economic development and social inclusion foreseen during and in the immediate aftermath of the uprisings has not yet materialized. Rather, in the main energy producing countries the revolts have created questionable and significantly different results.

Uncertainty and security concerns affect also the energy sector: the power vacuum engendered by the *Arab Springs* has been filled by jihadi groups, which consider energy an extremely powerful resource from economic, political and communicative perspectives.

For these reasons, the potential consequences of the proximity between terrorism and energy require an in-depth analysis.

The turmoil that has occurred in the region since 2011 is unlikely to have the same impact as jihadism: the two phenomena,

despite their obvious links, are completely different as they represent two opposite attitudes towards the energy sector.

3.1 Attitudes towards the Energy Sector: The Evolution from the Arab Springs to Contemporary Jihadism

The energy sector is, by far, the most vital one in almost all Arab countries. For instance, it is responsible for 35% of Algerian GDP, 98% of total exports and 62% of total revenues, while in Libya it represents 60% of GDP, 99% total of exports, and 96% total revenues.⁶⁷

Egypt is the largest non-OPEC oil producer in Africa and the second-largest dry natural gas producer on the continent. The country also serves as a major transit route for oil shipped from the Persian Gulf to Europe and to the United States.

Therefore, in the last five years many scholars have focussed their research on the alteration of energy consumption, production and investment patterns in response to political changes in the Arab world.⁶⁸

Given the importance of MENA energy supplies, the political unrest in the region fuelled fears about the risks of energy supply disruptions.

With international oil and gas prices beginning to rise from 2010, there was serious concern among political and market actors.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, the short-term effects on oil and gas markets of the turmoil in the MENA region in general and North Africa in particular, have been less dramatic than feared.

With the spread of anti-government protests from Tunisia through Egypt in January 2011, concerns were raised about oil traffic through the SUMED pipeline and the Suez Canal. In the first ten months of 2010, crude oil and refined products flows through the Canal amounted to 1.96 b/d.

67 Source: OPEC.

68 See: H. Darbouche and B. Fattouh (2011), and G. Bahgat (2012b).

69 H. Darbouche and B. Fattouh (2011), p. 1.

However, concerns about the disruption in oil shipments through Egypt did not last long. It became clear during the early days of the unrest that the Egyptian army was determined to ensure that no disruption to the operation took place.

Even in the case of the upheaval in Libya, which put an end to the four-decade long rule of Muammar Ghaddafi, reality has been better than expectations.

The ousting of the ruler brought production to a stalemate; however, despite slow return of political and security stability, the following Libyan authorities have been able to bring production back to the pre-insurgence levels in a short period, even in a civil-war context.

In terms of volume of crude oil, the Libyan disruption resulted in a loss of 1.6 b/d, in addition to 136,000 refined products.⁷⁰

A key outcome of the Arab uprisings has been a significant increase in the prices needed by the producers to manage their fiscal positions. Stated differently, the surviving Arab regimes and the new ones need to meet the basic needs of their population. Failure to meet these expectations would contribute to the growing radicalization and opposition.

Such a strategy requires increasing public spending on crucial socio-economic necessity such as jobs and subsidies.⁷¹ These issues are likely to represent long-term challenges for North African countries, which might be related to the so-called *resource curse theories*.

According to these theories, resource endowments are not a blessing but a curse – one that constrains growth, feeds corruption and fuels conflict.

The theory of a “curse of natural resources” can be traced back to the 1970s. The subsequent two decades saw the emergence of a significant body of research proposing a link between resource production and various socio-political ills.

70 H. Darbouche and B. Fattouh (2011), p. 9.

71 G. Bahgat (2012b).

Numerous resource-exporting countries have failed to diversify their economies away from the extractive sector even if they have developed other economic sectors and they remain dependent on extractive revenues. Compared to North Africa, such failure is most pronounced among some of the Gulf countries, which, though certainly more prosperous than they would have been without oil and gas, remain highly vulnerable to price shocks.

Linked to arguments about the centralization of wealth is the charge that natural-resources abundance retards political change and entrenches regimes, which finds its milestone in the concept of rentier state.⁷²

The members of the *rentier elites* capture natural-resource rents and use them to create patronage networks that consolidate their power. It is argued that these elites have strong vested interests in maintaining the status quo and thus act to suppress criticism and potential political challengers through a sort of tacit agreement with citizens: low fiscal pressure in exchange of low democratic demands.

This phenomenon is a self-reinforcing mechanism in which centralized wealth serves to consolidate the political hold of the ruling elite.

Another suggestion derived from the *resource curse theories* is the alleged propensity for more social conflict in the interested countries.⁷³

Indeed, large resource revenues are supposed to create something that is worth fighting for. Moreover, even if there is no active conflict, these revenues still tend to generate much higher levels of military spending, which not necessarily contributes to internal stability.

Unquestionably, this body of research presents more than one shortcoming, essentially attributable to the will of finding a *one-size-fits-all* explanation, which is neither possible for all

72 H. Beblawi and G. Luciani (1987).

73 P. Collier and A. Hoeffler (2004).

resource-abundant countries in general nor for North African states in particular.

Moreover, these theories do not take into account the abovementioned difference between the two related phenomena of the *Arab Springs* and the *transnationalisation* of jihadism in the area.

As stated before, the effects on oil and gas markets of the turmoil in the MENA region in general and North Africa in particular have been less dramatic than feared.

This has happened for a fundamental reason, which underlies both the political and economic points of view: the rulers who conserved power (Algeria, Morocco), new rulers (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya), and more generally national institutions proved to have same interests, objectives and perspectives as before.

The relationships national power/energy and international relations/energy did not changed, as the examples of Egyptian and Libyan production clearly demonstrate.

A momentous, unprecedented ideological shift in the way of perceiving energy did not occur, and this made it possible for energy markets and North African countries to deploy a sufficient level of resilience after the turmoil.

Here lies the most significant difference between the *Arab Springs* and the jihadi expansion: if the former phenomenon did not imply a radical change, the latter is very likely to reverse the attitudes towards energy.

With the current jihadi expansion, the rational-choice behaviour as we used to know it disappears, the ideological and pragmatic coordinates fall through.

In the jihadi worldview, the *forma mentis* and the vision of the State deeply differ from those of the standard rulers and this is likely to affect the energy sector.

This fundamental shift emerges both from the trends in terroristic attacks on energy targets and in the ideological and doctrinal constructions created by the jihadi galaxy to justify these operations.

The number of attacks on energy targets increased

dramatically in 2013 and 2014, as the number of attacks in 2014 surpassed the total for any year in the 1980s.⁷⁴

Attacks on oil and gas facilities pose a significant risk worldwide and are a regular topic in online jihadist forums.

A range of discussions and literature available in online jihadist propaganda legitimise or advocate these kinds of attacks.

Within the wider legitimisation of violence waged against civilian targets, mostly termed “defensive actions”, jihadist media and literature has defined the need not only to conduct operations against oil installations within the Arab world, but also to undertake operations against energy-relevant sites and companies in the West.

In the jihadist worldview, Islam has come under the systematic attack of a global *Zionist-Crusader alliance*, as shown, according to jihadists, by the continued presence of foreign troops in Islamic countries.

Energy-related companies are merely agents of this alliance as they create profit through their activities. Therefore, attacks against these companies constitute a component of the wider defensive jihad.

Moreover, according to the jihadi perspective, the *kuffār* “infidels” *alliance* flourishes thanks to the corrupt and westernized regimes of King Muhammad VI in Morocco, Bouteflika in Algeria, Esebsi in Tunisia, el-Sisi in Egypt, and Serraj in Libya.

Oil and gas, perceived by jihadists as gifts from God to the true believers, are defined as Muslim property.

The fact that between 66 and 75 percent of available oil is currently in Muslim-majority countries is instrumentally used to foster and spread this perception.

The particular theological legitimacy of targeting oil sites has been expressed since 2004, when the Islamic Center for Studies and Research published a book an al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) ideologue, ‘Abd al-Aziz bin Rashid al-Anzi.

74 National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism (2015).

The book, entitled *Ruling on the targeting of oil complexes and the implementation of the rulings regarding the economic jihad*,⁷⁵ divides oil-related targets into four types: wells, installations, pipelines and individuals.

With the expansions of al-Qa'ida's franchise in the mid-2000s, the ideology behind targeting oil- and gas-related targets has also spread beyond its foundations in the Arabian Peninsula.

In November 2008 for instance, al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) released a video shortly after the release of two kidnapped Austrian tourists that shows various operations undertaken by the group. Most of these operations are carried out using IEDs⁷⁶ and include the June 2008 trackside bombing of a freight train that was transporting oil or gas, the destruction of which caused a large fire. On that occasion, eight Algerian soldiers were killed.

Furthermore, the status of energy infrastructure as targets of both standard attacks and *'amaliyāt istishādiyya*, "martyrdom operations" is not the only risk posed by the proximity between terrorism and energy.

In the following section of the volume, the potential jihadi uses of energy will be analysed in detail in order to underline all the major threats and the differences existing among the various national jihadist strategies.

3.2 The Significance of Energy for Terrorists and Violent Radicals

Al-Qa'ida integrated terrorism in the era of technical reproducibility. From that moment on, terrorism wants to eliminate every hypothesis of accident or exceptional event when carrying on an attack.⁷⁷

Gilles Kepel has been the first scholar to underline this new component of global jihadism, i.e. the need of being a key

75 E. Kohlman (2006).

76 Improvised Explosive Devices.

77 G. Kepel (2006), p. 16.

player of history and performing a leading role from a tactical, strategical and communicative perspective.

In order to achieve these goals, energy is likely to represent an extremely useful resource. Indeed, in a short-term perspective, jihadists could exploit energy in three fundamental ways.

Firstly, oil smuggling and connected businesses may be tools for financing their mission. Even if there is no clear evidence that this is happening extensively in North Africa, jihadists want to reproduce the Syrian-Iraqi model and implement this practice in the Maghreb.

Secondly, once in control of energy infrastructures, they could use their faculty of blocking supplies as an instrument of pressure against both the *apostate* regimes and foreign powers. So far, this risk seems less likely to occur than the former, but its significance and potential consequences should not be underestimated.

Thirdly, attacking energy plants and foreign companies represents an extremely effective means of propaganda and a strong communicative weapon. Radicalization is a program of social engineering, and the communicative power of the current era of jihadi expansion is targeted both towards near and far enemies, the *unbelievers*, and potential recruits, who increasingly appreciate the strength of jihadi groups through the media and social networks.

As far as the financing function of oil smuggling is concerned, Libya is by far the most endangered North African country.

On April 4, 2016 the UN Security Council has renewed until July 31, 2017 the measures imposed by its resolution 2146 (2014) on the prevention of illicit crude oil exports from Libya. Acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter in adopting resolution 2278 (2016), the Council extended measures requiring a vessel's flag State to take the necessary measures to prevent ships from loading, transporting or discharging crude oil from Libya.

The text also requires Member States to prevent vessels

carrying Libyan crude from entering their ports, and to prevent their nationals, entities or individuals on their territory from engaging in any financial transactions with respect to such crude oil.

Furthermore, the Council extended, until the same date, the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the Libya Sanctions Committee established under resolution 1970 (2011). It requested that the Government of National Accord confirm to the Committee as soon as it exercised sole and effective oversight over the National Oil Corporation, the Central Bank of Libya and the Libyan Investment Authority.

Western and Libyan officials believe fuel smugglers use the same networks, vessels and ports that make Libya a regional hub for trafficking weapons and humans. In recent months, Spanish, French and Maltese officials have begun tracking the movements of vessels in the Mediterranean, hoping to stop the illegal trade.

Moreover, in the multipronged Libyan chaos, shutting down fuel-smuggling routes could undermine networks that also bring migrants to Europe from Libya.

Fuel smuggling is providing a significant source of revenue for local armed groups and criminal networks in Libya, according to a UN Security Council report on Libya.⁷⁸

Fuel smugglers are tough to arrest because the complex trades involve European intermediaries and are done in international waters.

Western governments had been cautious about working with Libyan institutions until a unity government has been formed. Western officials say tracing the origin of the fuel is further complicated by the fact that much of the subsidized fuel sold in Libya is imported.

Furthermore, Libyan militias often benefit from smuggling of all kinds, thus concentrating the amalgam of different local, regional and international players and interests.

According to the regional jihadi perspective, the second

78 B. Faucon and S. Said (2016).

function of the energy sector is to exert pressure on national institutions and foreign powers that collaborate with them.

Indeed, once in control of energy infrastructures, jihadists could use sabotages and their faculty of blocking supplies as an instrument of pressure against their enemies and a means of local and regional destabilization.

The third way in which jihadism could exploit energy concerns the communicative dimension.⁷⁹

Attacking energy plants, foreign companies and more broadly Western and westernized interests in North Africa represents an effective means of propaganda and a powerful communicative resource.

During the whole history of jihadism and in particular after the emergence of al-Qa'ida model in the 1990s, targets have been chosen for their symbolical significance.

This is not to say that terrorism does not follow pragmatic considerations. Nevertheless, the symbolical strength of a target is often the ultimate reason underlying the choice.

The terroristic act is a *dialogue* and an exchange with the international audience. After al-Qa'ida, it has also become a virtual space for a specific relationship with the media.

This relationship partially imposes tactics, strategies and targets, which must be as visible as possible.

The case of Palmyra is a recent example of this kind of targets' choice.

Palmyra is a wide archaeological site in the Syrian Governorate of Homs, which has been occupied by the Islamic State since the half of 2015.

On June 27, 2015, the jihadists demolished the ancient Lion of *al-Lāt* statue, and by the end of August 2015, it was reported that they had blown up the 1st-century Temple of Baalshamin and the Temple of Bel with explosives.

When Palmyra was recaptured by Syrian government forces

79 For an in-depth analysis of IS's communication strategies see: M. Maggioni and P. Magri (2015).

in March 2016, IS fighters blew up parts of the 13th-century Palmyra Castle.

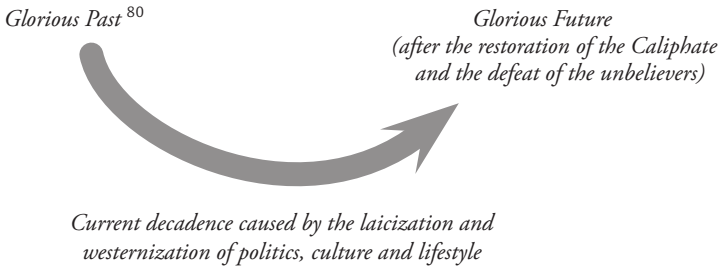
Unquestionably, in the case of historical sites one of the strongest reasons for the attacks responds to the absolute opposition *tahwīd/shirk*, uniqueness of God/polytheism, exemplified by the message of Islam as opposed to the pagan heritage.

This is not the case of energy plants and infrastructure. Nevertheless, beyond the ideological aspects of the destruction, there are other, more practical, reasons behind Caliphate's destruction of historic sites.

Attracting the world's attention through the destruction of such sites, particularly given the extensive media coverage and international condemnation that comes afterwards, is one of jihadi primary aims.

Furthermore, despite the images showing extreme destruction, IS has also been making use of the antiquities to finance their activities, as it may happen in Libya for instance.

Moreover, oil and gas may respond to jihadi communicative strategies in another way. Indeed, they may enter the typical narrative of jihadism, which is based on a sort of archway structure:



Three fundamental referents correspond to the three

80 The idealization of a glorious past responds to what Maha Azzam (1986) defines *The Golden Age syndrome*, referring to the Golden Age of Islam, traditionally dated from the 7th century to the 13th century.

analysed functions of financing, pressure and propaganda.

Insurgent groups and populations under jihadist control are the main players and beneficiaries of the financing function. As far as energy as a tool of pressure is concerned, the primary targets are national governments and companies working in the region. Finally, international audiences, the media and potential recruits represent the real recipients of jihadists' communicative strategies.

Given the heterogeneity of North African countries' scenarios, it is conceivable that each function predominates in different countries of the region.

A comparison among Algeria, Libya and Egypt, the most resource-abundant North African countries, seems to corroborate this hypothesis.

In Algeria, the destabilization function clearly prevails. The 2006 merger of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) with al-Qa'ida, now known as al-Qa'ida of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), marked a revival in the Algerian jihadi movement.

In the following years, it engaged in the mission of gradual eroding the increasingly weak State of 'Abdelaziz Bouteflika.⁸¹

Many attacks involved bombing buses carrying oil sector employees and this recalls an emerging trend within Algeria to target the energy sector by attacking soft, mobile targets in line with al-Qa'ida's call to attack energy resources.

The In Amenas hostage crisis is a case in point, as it demonstrates the prevailing destabilization function.

It began on January 16, 2013, when al-Qa'ida-linked terrorists affiliated with a brigade led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar took 146 expat hostages and about 700 Algerian workers at the Tigantourine gas facility near In Amenas, operated by the Algerian Sonatrach, the British BP and the Norwegian Statoil.

By January 19, 39 foreign hostages were killed along with an Algerian security guard and 29 jihadists.

81 See Chapter 1.

More recently, on March 18, 2016, jihadists attacked with mortars facilities exploited in partnership between Sonatrach and BP-Statoil in In Salah.

This attempt had no impact on facilities and production and the security measures enhanced after the In Amenas crisis have been effective.

Nevertheless, the attempt clearly demonstrates that the risks for the energy sector are still widespread in the region and do not come from the Islamic State's affiliates only but also from rival and/or minor groups.

By contrast, the financing function seems to dominate the jihadist relationship with energy in Libya.

Oil smuggling and connected businesses may be tools for financing the jihadi project and, with a sort of domino effect, profits from smuggling could be used to foster other illegal trades and businesses such as those of weapons and traffic of migrants.

As far as Egypt is concerned, the communicative aspect is probably the most important one.

Over the first two years after the 2011 uprising that ousted the former President Hosni Mubarak, there have been dozens of attacks on energy pipelines in the Sinai Peninsula, repeatedly halting gas supplies to Israel and Jordan.

In 2011, in compliance with the Israeli requests, Egypt increased the military presence on the ground by 1,400 units. This choice partially clashed with the Camp David Treaty of 1979, which requires the number of Egyptian troops to be smaller in Zone C⁸² than in the other zones because in the Zone C the territory is controlled jointly with Israel.

Nonetheless, the increased Egyptian deployment significantly diminished the attacks on the Arab Gas Pipeline, the Northern Sinai facility that provided for about 40% of Israel's energy necessities.⁸³

82 Zone C includes the Sinai section closest to the Gulf of Aqaba.

83 S. Brzuszkiewicz (2013).

After the uprising, saboteurs began thwarting the flow through Sinai pipeline explosions, which ultimately led the Egyptian government to terminate the gas sale agreement with Israel in April 2012.

Currently, Israel no longer depends on Egyptian gas: in 2015, a seven-year agreement was signed between the Israeli Tamar reservoir partners and Egypt's Dolphinus Holdings Ltd.

It aims to convey 5 billion cubic meters of gas through the now defunct East Mediterranean Gas pipeline, which used to bring gas in the opposite direction from Egypt to Israel.

After the pledge of allegiance of the strongest local jihadi group *Ansār Beyt al-Maqdis* (ABM) to the Islamic State in November 2014, which transformed ABM in *Wilayat Sinai*, "The Sinai Province", attacks are likely to change their goals.

Indeed, now the target of jihadi anger is not Israel but Jordan and Amman's role in the United States-led coalition against the Islamic State.

One of the latest statement by *Wilayat Sinai* proclaimed: "Not gas will reach Jordan until the Caliphate gives its permission".⁸⁴

Moreover, the Islamic State deals with the need to attract new recruits for its *glocal*⁸⁵ project mainly through an efficient communicative propaganda.

The Sinai Peninsula perfectly fits this purpose because it is a land of widespread discontent and multiple reasons of resentment: against the State, the neighbouring Israel, and the lifestyle migration in the South.⁸⁶

84 'ISIS-linked group attacks Sinai pipeline to Jordan', Al Arabiya [http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/01/08/ISIS-linked-group-claims-attack-on-Sinai-pipeline-to-Jordan.html].

85 Characterized by both local and global goals and push factors. See: G. Steinberg and I. Werenfels (2007).

The term 'glocalization' has been suggested by the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman to indicate individuals and groups maintaining interpersonal social networks and cultural features that combine extensive local and long-distance interactions.

86 See: N. Karkabi (2013).

Indeed, the decades-long marginalization and exclusion of local Bedouin populations by the central state turned Bedouins into potential allies of jihadists.

3.3 Outlooks

As far as the future perspectives are concerned, local governments and international players in North Africa should take into consideration three major risks.

Firstly, as a matter of common knowledge, in the Iraqi and Syrian territories controlled by the Islamic State the relationship between jihadism and energy has taken a step further.

From Raqqa (Syria) to Mosul (Iraq), the Caliphate has been able to acquire some features of a *proto-state*.⁸⁷ It succeeds in providing the population with some basic services and a primitive form of welfare.

In order to perform these tasks, IS utilizes oil revenues among other sources of financing. Therefore, the use of energy is not merely tactic but largely strategical and responds to a wider project.

When controlling territory, jihadi *proto-states* from IS-rule in Mosul to Shabaab's administration in Southern Somalia, have proved comparatively effective in administrating and governing civilians, devoting significant resources to the provision of services, a sharia-based justice system, a commitment to training ideological cadres to administrative and military duties, organizing councils for tribal mediation.

Following the analysis of the energy's significance for terrorism in North African countries, one fundamental question emerges as the main doubt for the future: is the *proto-state* use of energy likely to occur in North Africa too?

Claiming to provide a definitive answer to this question may be premature and simplistic. Unquestionably, the current

87 B. Lia (2015).

North African scenarios are very different from those of the Sham.⁸⁸

Even though some examples of basic civilian services' implementation by jihadists appeared in cities like Derna and Sirte in Libya, the phenomenon has smaller dimensions compared to that of Syrian and Iraqi territories included in the Caliphate.⁸⁹

Therefore, in short and medium-terms it is unlikely that the jihadi exploitation of the energy sector will shift from a tactic – (financing illegal activities, destabilizing, communicative) attitude to a strategic and *proto-national* one.

Nevertheless, attacks on energy installations may be a precursor to more sustained efforts for their eventual capture and use by the terrorist group, a strategy that could prove to be more effective.

The second North African risk, which is much more likely to occur, is a gradual loss of long-term productive capacity.

Indeed, even small-scale attacks prove capable of damaging infrastructure, weakening companies' resilience, forcing governments to overspend for the securitization of plants and pipelines and causing power outages in the neighbouring areas.

Thirdly, it should be highlighted that the energy sector has become a major focus for targeted cyber-attacks and is now among the top five most targeted sectors worldwide.⁹⁰The financial implications of cyber-terrorism represent a developing strand of terrorism studies, and the risk of systematic recruitment of young North African people holding unprecedented IT expertise is tangible.

In order to contrast these risks, local governments are expected to implement measures aimed at reducing internal

88 Syria and Iraq.

89 For an analysis of Caliphate's difficulties and weaknesses in North Africa, see Chapter 2.

90 Symantec, *2016 Internet Security Report* [<https://resource.elq.symantec.com/LP=2899>].

rivalry, restoring the monopoly of violence, and preventing transnational mobilization and assistance to jihadi *proto-states*.

Practitioners involved in combating jihadism should take notice of both internal and external dynamics, given that the *glocal* nature of the current wave of jihadism in general and the IS's project in particular makes it possible for jihadists to easily switch from the domestic to the transnational perspective.

Box 3

Major attacks against energy companies and sabotages on energy infrastructure in North Africa 2011-2016

- July 12, 2011** *Egypt. Near el-Arish, unidentified assailants detonated an improvised explosive device attached to a natural gas pipeline that supplies Jordan and Israel among others. A security guard and his family were injured in the attack. This was the fourth attack on an Egyptian pipeline in northern Sinai in 2011.*
- July 30, 2011** *Egypt. In Sinai, unknown assailants attempted to storm a gas station. When confronted by army officers, they targeted a cooling system linked to a gas pipeline from a distance firing rocket-propelled grenades. As the result of the attack, a gas pipe was broken. No casualties were reported in the incident and no group claimed responsibility.*
- September 27, 2011** *Egypt. In el-Arish, three gunmen opened fire on a gas pipeline with small arms. The gunfire caused the pipeline to explode. The blast wounded one civilian and caused an unknown amount of property damage. The gunmen also planted multiple improvised explosive devices around the pipeline. The bombs would later be discovered and defused by Army experts before they could be detonated. No group claimed responsibility.*
- August 14, 2012** *Egypt. Assailants attacked the Sheikh Zuwayed power station in North Sinai governorate. They attempted to kidnap two power station employees but were driven off after exchanging gunfire with Egyptian military forces.*
- January 16, 2013** *Algeria. Assailants seized control of a gas complex near In Amenas town, Illizi province. The jihadists held approximately 800 people hostage during the siege, demanding the release of jihadists captured in Mali in exchange for the safe release of the captives. At least 40 hostages were killed during the incident*

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|---------------------------|---|
| | <i>and 29 assailants died in the raids. In addition, eight hostages and an unknown number of assailants were injured. Jihadists stated that the attack was in response to Algeria allowing France to use its airspace to launch air strikes on armed groups in northern Mali. The attackers demanded the release of 100 Algerian prisoners to northern Mali and an end to French attacks in the region.</i> |
| August 10, 2013 | <i>Libya. Assailants detonated an explosive device at a power station in Sirte. The station was damaged which led to power outages in the area. No group claimed responsibility for the incident.</i> |
| September 15, 2013 | <i>Egypt. An explosive device detonated near a gas pipeline between Cairo and Ismailia cities. No casualties were reported; however, the explosion suspended oil supplies to three cities.</i> |
| October 23, 2013 | <i>Libya. An explosives-laden vehicle was discovered and defused near a power station in Janzour village, near Tripoli. This was one of two related attacks by the same assailants on this day.</i> |
| May 23, 2014 | <i>Egypt. An explosive device detonated near a gas pipeline in al-Tawil town, North Sinai governorate. There were no reported casualties; however, the pipeline was damaged in the blast.</i> |
| August 7, 2014 | <i>Egypt. An explosive device detonated at a gas pipeline near Sheikh Zuweid town. There were no reported casualties, although the pipeline was damaged in the blast. No group claimed responsibility for the incident; however, sources attributed the attack to Ansar Beyt al-Maqqis (ABM).</i> |
| August 8, 2014 | <i>Egypt. Assailants threw an explosive device at a power station in Minya governorate. This was one of two attacks on power stations in Minya on this date. There were no reports of casualties in the attack, but 18 villages lost power.</i> |

- August 11, 2014** *Egypt. An explosive device detonated near a gas pipeline in 10th of Ramadan city, al-Sharqia governorate. There were no reported casualties but the pipeline was seriously damaged in the blast.*
- December 28, 2014** *Libya. Assailants attacked the Sidra oil export terminal in Sirte district. Two assailants were killed in the ensuing clash. No group claimed responsibility for the incident.*
- February 4, 2015** *Libya. IS affiliates attacked the al-Mabrook oil field, killing 12 people.*
- March 18, 2016** *Algeria. Militants attacked the In Salah gas plant operated by Norway's Statoil and BP with rocket-propelled grenades on Friday, but there were no casualties or damage. Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility for the attack.*

Source: Global Terrorism Index.

Conclusions

The number of attacks on energy targets increased dramatically in 2013 and 2014.

Critical Energy Infrastructures have been subjected to increasing terrorist threat, which relates to the growing political and economic instability in oil and gas producing regions.

Attacks on oil and gas facilities pose a significant risk worldwide and are a regular topic in online jihadist forums.

As far as energy geopolitics is concerned, here lies the most significant difference between the effects of the *Arab Springs* and the potential effects of a prolonged jihadi expansion: the *Springs* did not imply a radical ideological and operational change, while jihadism is very likely to reverse the former attitudes towards energy.

With the current jihadi wave, the rational-choice behaviour disappears, the ideological and pragmatic coordinates fall through.

The *forma mentis* and the vision of the State deeply differ from those of the standard rulers and this is likely to affect the energy sector.

In a short-term perspective, jihadists could continue exploiting energy in three major ways, following the aims of financing, destabilizing, doing propaganda.

Firstly, oil smuggling and connected businesses may be tools for financing the jihadi mission. Jihadists could reproduce the Syrian-Iraqi model and implement it in the Maghreb.

Secondly, once in control of energy infrastructures, they

could use their faculty of blocking supplies as an instrument of pressure against both the apostate regimes and foreign powers. So far, this risk seems less likely to occur than the former, but its significance and potential consequences should not be underestimated.

Thirdly, attacking energy plants and foreign companies represents an extremely effective means of propaganda and a strong communicative weapon. Jihadism uses it both for intimidating enemies and attract new recruits worldwide.

Unquestionably, each North African country has its own peculiarities and features. Therefore, the financing aim predominates in Libya, while in Algeria the primary objective is the destabilization of the weak regime. By contrast, groups operating in Egypt and the *Wilayat Sinai* – once *Ansār Beyt al-Maqdis* (ABM) – seems to pursue a primarily communicative goal, even though many attacks perpetrated on energy infrastructure caused serious damages to plants and gas pipelines.

As far as the future is concerned, in short and medium-terms it is unlikely that the jihadi exploitation of the energy sector will shift from a tactic attitude to a strategical and *proto-national* one.

Nevertheless, attacks on energy installations may be a precursor to more sustained efforts for their eventual capture and use by the terrorist group, a strategy that could prove to be more effective.

The second North African risk, which is much more likely to occur, is a gradual loss of long-term productive capacity.

In Nigeria in 2006, a sequence of low-key attacks against energy installations led to a decrease of nearly 1 million barrels per day (bpd) and a subsequent increase in the price of crude.

Indeed, even small-scale attacks prove capable of damaging infrastructure, forcing governments to overspend for the securitization of plants and pipelines and causing repeated power outages.

Moreover, the energy sector has become a major focus for targeted cyber-attacks and is now among the top five most

targeted sectors worldwide. The financial implications of cyber-terrorism represent a developing strand of terrorism studies, which needs further research.

By destabilizing energy security in countries, which may be in their interest, jihadists have to deal with the problem of trying to enhance their own energy security. The same results could be attained by capturing – as opposed to destroying – energy installations throughout the Middle East. It will be important to continue analysing the development of this strategy, as attacks on energy installations may be a precursor to more sustained efforts for their eventual capture and use by the terrorist group.

All these operational strategies lie on a strong ideological platform. Unquestionably, it could not exist an effective counter-narrative without understanding of jihadi narratives.

Developing alternative ‘threat scenarios’ will be an essential part for companies security plans, and security experts should be capable to answer what if questions regarding the evolution of threats and increase in level of risk.

Moreover, radicalization must undergo future research because it is a prerequisite to understand the mechanisms of support and cutting these mechanisms is a way to contrast terrorism.

For these reasons, scholars of terrorism studies and geopolitics should work together with energy experts. A strict cooperation will be required in order to increase the awareness of the relationships existing between ideology and strategy, doctrinal push factors and secular economic interests.

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