



Terrorism and Political Violence Association
Student Research Network
Coordination and Research Team

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By Francesco Finucci



(Image: Global Panorama/ Flickr)

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Nagorny-Karabakh: escalation threatens peace

On the 5th of April, a ceasefire ended intense fighting in the Nagorny-Karabakh region. The military confrontation had escalated dramatically during the past four days, leading Azerbaijan and Armenia – the countries claiming sovereignty over Nagorny-Karabakh – into a vicious circle only interrupted thanks to a meeting in Moscow between the two parties. There is caution concerning the responsibility behind the latest eruption of the conflict – albeit some consensus seems to exist that Azerbaijan may have ignited it. Indeed, a statement from the *International Crisis Group* read: “There is little verified information to date about the immediate causes of the flare-up, casualties or precise changes in the tactical dispositions of the forces”. The escalation is part of a prolonged conflict, with severe clashes erupting regularly, as on 10th December 2015, when Azerbaijan shelled the region. Thomas De Waal – an expert on the conflict – underlined in a

column for *The New York Times* that a solution must be found quickly. The Nagorny-Karabakh conflict, De Waal wrote, has never been resolved by a proper peace agreement, and the opening of a new conflict would be nightmarish, due to the sophisticated weaponry owned by the warring parties.

Nigeria: military offensive against Boko Haram

Further information emerged this week concerning the ongoing offensive carried out by the African Union's Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to tackle Boko Haram. On the 5th of April, Cameroonian general Bouba Dobrekeo told *Anadolu Agency* that a military operation by Cameroon and Nigeria led to the death of about 300 militants, while almost 2000 hostages were freed. The statement was followed up by Nigeria's Brig. General Rabe Abubakar, who claimed on the 6th of April that some 800 Boko Haram militants had surrendered during the three weeks up to that point. Furthermore, by presenting a rehabilitation camp recently opened, the Nigerian government also invited fighters to abandon insurgency. However, albeit weakened, Boko Haram doesn't seem to be willing to give up. After footage of Boko Haram's Abubakar Shekau sparked debate about his upcoming surrender, the group reappeared in a new video, dismissing news about their end.

Libya: unity government

Following the arrival in Tripoli of a new unity government, Tripoli's rump executive made public the decision to step down in order to prevent further bloodshed. Tobruk rival administration is deemed still operating.

Syria/Iraq: IS renewed attacks, Nusra's spokesperson killed, deadlock in Mosul

A controversial statement by Syrian military sources was published by *Reuters* claiming some 300 workers went missing at Al Badia Cement Company, with 175 of them having been killed by Islamic State forces. The news came just a few days after al-Nusra's admission that the front's spokesperson Abu Firas al-Suri was killed during an airstrike carried out by the United States. Moreover, the Islamic State seems to have held position in Mosul (Iraq). Despite the Iraqi army's widely publicised operation, Mosul is still controlled by the group, *The Wall Street Journal* reported.

CAR: French forces withdrawing, UN peacekeepers under trial

As a signal of the country's slow but decisive recovery, on the 6th of April France began to withdraw soldiers deployed during the recent eruption of violence that afflicted the Central African Republic until the May 2015 disarmament deal. The long shadow of the conflict is not gone, however. Indeed, three UN peacekeepers have gone on trial in the Democratic Republic of Congo, two of them for having allegedly raped minors, while the other is accused of attempted rape. The trial, *BBC News* reports, stemmed from the choice by more than a hundred people to denounce sex abuses by UN and French forces operating in CAR during the conflict.

Panama Papers: 33 firms on US blacklist, China's censorship

Among the findings originating from the Panama Papers, an interesting insight into terrorism and political violence: Mossack Fonseca's records – *The Irish Independent* reported – show the company's relationship with suspected financiers of terrorism, arms dealers and nuclear weapons proliferators. Also interesting from this point of view is China's reaction to the scandal: Xi's government silenced Chinese media, with no mention being made about the involvement of Chinese elites into the investigation.

Brussels attacks: new footage and Abrini's arrest

Further developments took place in the investigation after the 22nd of March Brussels attacks. One is the release of new footage of the “man in the hat” allegedly involved in the bombing of Brussels' airport. The footage covers the moments the man left the place by foot. The other is the arrest on the 8th of April in Brussels of Mohamed Abrini, the main suspect to be the “man in the hat” mentioned above. The arrest was followed by numerous raids carried out by police forces, most probably in order to prevent an outcome similar to the one after the arrest of Salah Abdeslam.

New counter-terrorism in Turkey, Denmark, Russia

Four alleged Islamic State members were arrested in Denmark on the 7th of April. Following the arrests, the Danish government announced tougher counter-terrorism laws including preventing citizens from entering areas where these groups operate. Turkey made a similar announcement, promoting the stripping of citizenship from citizens supporting terrorism. Finally, the Russian government is considering the idea of establishing a national guard. The National Guard will tackle terrorism and organised crime.