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Understanding Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: responses to terrorist tactics and insurgent strategies

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Propositions

Accompanying the PhD Thesis

Understanding Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Responses to terrorist tactics and insurgent strategies

By Sergei Boeke

1. Terrorism is not Mali's most important affliction but one of the symptoms of underlying societal fractures.
2. Partnering with Sahelian governments to fight terrorism risks overlooking their role in creating or sustaining the phenomenon.
3. While written around two hundred years ago, Carl von Clausewitz's opus 'On War' remains relevant to contemporary armed conflicts.
4. The political parameters of Operation Serval and Operation Barkhane made it inevitable that the first would be successful and the second would not.
5. While AQIM has transitioned to a strategy of insurgency, the international response remains rooted in the paradigm of counterterrorism.
6. Quantitative state fragility indexes offer no added value.
7. Leadership decapitation is an important component of Western counterterrorism and COIN efforts but there is little to show for its effectiveness.
8. It is practical but not logical for the military to lead a counterinsurgency policy.
9. Discipline plays a bigger role at University than in the Military.
10. The reaction to terrorism shares some characteristics with the COVID-19 pandemic: fear stoked by media reporting, a misunderstanding of risk and statistics, and government overreaction.