THE EVOLUTION OF TERRORISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST: From Jihadists to cyber criminals?

تطور الإرهاب في الشرق الأوسط: من الجهاد إلى المجرمين السيبيرانيين

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Abstract

Terrorism, whether practiced by individuals, or by groups is not a new phenomenon. However, it has never been as violent, ruthless, massive, and dangerous for the whole humanity as the terrorism waged in the Arab world and elsewhere, in the name of jihad (holy war) and some presumed Islamic precepts in the last decades.

Terrorist organizations labeled "Islamic" by their mentors, such as Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and their affiliated groups, have achieved some success in spreading terror nearly everywhere. However, they have, so far, failed to achieve the objectives related to restoring the "Caliphate" or undermining the influence of the Western powers in the Arab world.

These failures have already left the way to the weakening of structured terrorist organizations and the emergence of isolated groups or individuals that will resort to a new form of threats through the use of the cyber device and modern technology.

Keywords: Terrorism; Cyber-terrorism; The Middle East; Al-Qaeda" prophecies; Islamic State (ISIS).

الملخص

لم يمثل ارهاب الأفراد أو الجماعات ظاهرة جديدة. لكن لم يكن الارهاب عنيفا، شرسا، منتشرا و خطيرا على الإنسانية جمعاء كالإرهاب الذي اجتاح العالم العربي و بقاع أخرى باسم الجهاد و تعاليم اسلامية مزعومة, في العشريات الأخيرة.

خفقت التنظيمات الارهابية الملقبة "بالإسلامية" كالقاعدة و الدولة الاسلامية و أتباعها نجاحا نسبيا في نشر الرعب في الكثير من الاماكن، لكن لم تفلح الى يومنا هذا في تحقيق الأهداف المتعلقة بإعادة تأسيس الخلافة أو تدمير هيمنة القوى الغربية على العالم العربي.

سمحت هاته الاخفاقات اضعاف المنظمات الارهابية المهيكلة وظهور جماعات أو أفراد معزولة التي ستستعمل شكلا جديدا من المخاطر بفضل الوسائل الالكترونية والتكنولوجيا الحديثة.

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كلمات مفتاحية: ارهاب، ارهاب الكتروني، الشرق الأوسط، القاعدة "تنبؤات" الدولة الاسلامية.

Introduction

This subject sketches out the evidence that terrorism is perceived as one of the primary threats to international security and stability today. What remains to see, however, is how terrorism will evolve in the future? What forms would it take, and would it remain as ideological and religious as it used to be?

Since the analysis pertains to the prospective dimension, it appears necessary to apprehend the evolution of the terrorist menace along with its ideological references, actions, modes of operation, and its adaptation to the world geopolitical context and technological innovations in military device, computing and information fields.

Finally, behind the expected evolution of terrorism, it remains to question whether this threat will decrease or become more destructive.

To apprehend the evolving character of terrorism meaningfully, it seems worth to state some preliminary observations:
 -The difficulty in defining terrorism stands as an obstacle to the comprehension of this phenomenon and its eventual mutations. The notions linked to terrorism may be defined from ideological perceptions, challenges, and related interests.

Therefore, could the resistances to colonial yoke, the tyranny exercised by a despotic regime, political exclusion, racial discrimination, and social injustice be easily considered as forms linked to terrorism?

-This article will be circumscribed to the terrorism that exalts the pursuit of religious objectives and ideals through violence because of the absence of a consensus on the definition of this phenomenon.

In order to limit the scope of our investigations, this study delves exclusively with terrorists that inscribe their fight in line with jihadism that calls for the extermination of impious people, the destruction of foreign powers hostile to Islam and its civilization and for the restoring of a Caliphate where only *sharia* (Islamic law) will be fully implemented.

Thus, this study will neither cover the groups which use violence to express extremism, be it populist or liberal, or those that resort to violence to defend causes believed to be legitimate by the international law, such as the wars of liberation from colonialism, self-determination for politically or economically enslaved people and fights against racial or confessional discrimination.

-The diversity of notions related to the religious dimension, such as political Islam, religious radicalism, extremist Islam, fundamentalism, and Jihadism is so large and complex that the choice of denomination remains subjective.

Many Muslims refute the adjective of "Islamic" terrorism or even radicalism in order to duly avoid the amalgam between Islam and calls for violence raised by the advocates of Islamophobia in the Western world, notably. Still, many terrorist groups claim their belonging to Islam, whether through propaganda based on spiritual precepts, and doctrinal foundations, or in terms of objectives to attain.

If this study highlights a prospective dimension, it does not, however:
-take into consideration probability techniques and analytical paradigms peculiar to prospective studies which remain equivocal and hazardous or,
- attempt to initiate different scenarios related to the evolution of the terrorist menace or to confront one of these scenarios against another on a simplistic and speculative basis, as favoured by prospective studies that rely analytically, and practically on hazardous and quite often, impotent hypotheses.

The prospective approach of this study will pertain to empirical analysis and heavy tendencies of crucial phenomena which concern violent movements that have generated incidences on the geo-political configuration of the world and the social and religious structures.

The study is divided into four distinct but complementary parts:
-The First part probes the history of terrorism in modern times by referring to different categories of terrorists and the various causes they have fought for. Among the kind of terrorism that this study will dwell on is related to "Islamic" terrorism. The term between inverted comas seems necessary to distinguish the partisans of an interpretation of Jihadism (holy war) from devout Muslims who practice their faith for religious and not for political purposes.

-The second part delves to the objectives or "prophecies" Al-Qaeda intended to fulfill by the 2020 horizon with the setting up of the Caliphate in order to restore the splendor of the early Islamic State. It evaluates the failures and the success reached by this organization and assesses the evolution of "Islamic" terrorism in the Arab world.
-The third part scrutinizes the negative impact generated by "Islamic" terrorism through its failure to topple over the Arab regimes it regarded as apostate or pro-Western or reduce the influence of the Western powers on Arab Affairs.
-The final part pertains to the evolution of terrorism from a military form to a cyber threat using new technologies.

I-Overview of Terrorism Tendencies:

Terrorism may be defined, generally, in terms of four characteristics:

1- The threat or use of violence,

2- A political objective: the desire to change the status quo

3- The intention to spread fear by committing spectacular public acts, and

4- The intentional targeting of civilians.

If "Islamic" terrorism responds to these features related to using violence, creating a large-scale terror, and killing civilians, the second objective (political objective) remains equivocal and does not seem evident when confronting realities and the behavior of terrorist organizations.

The empiric observation shows, rather, that the organizations waving jihadism do not pursue political goals, as such. Their agenda seems to serve the interests of the parties they have depicted as enemies: apostate Arab regimes and the impious Western World.

A political scientist, Hassan Barari rightly argued that the Islamic State (ISIS) for instance, was not an ideological or religious movement, but a political one and that its violence is embodied in the structural violence the Middle East that has been entangled in since many decades (Barari, 2019, p17). It remains, however, that no sound and convincing explanation was given to sustain the argument that the jihadist war the Islamic State and Al-*Qaeda* have been waging, pursues political objectives. The declarations, and slogans disclosed by these organizations have, certainly, a political tone and content, but in practice, its violent acts have no political meaning. They are only subversive actions to propagate chaos in the Arab world in particular.

 For the interest of whom, one may ask?

Probably not for the own designs of the Islamic State, and certainly not for the triumph of Islam as ISIS has trumpeted all around.

The study's aim is not to recall the causes of terrorism expressed on a religious basis. It does not also go back far into history to capture the heavy tendencies of this phenomenon.

For reasons linked to limit the scope of "Islamic" terrorism, the following elements will not be taken into consideration:

-Terrorism of ideological inspiration such as that expressed in the 1960-70s by the group of Carlos, Red Brigade in Italy, Baader-Meinhoff gang in Germany, Action Directe in France, Tupamaros in Venezuela and Sendero Luminoso in Peru.

-The armed groups who fought for national causes such as the Palestinian Resistance and Fuerzas Armada Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC),

- Insurgency groups that hold temptations of independence. Among these groups, we can cite, for instance: the Basque underground organization in Spain (ETA), Sin Fein in Ireland, Tuareg tribes in Northern Mali and Niger, Ibos in Nigeria's Biafra, Chiapas in Mexico, Shan, Kayan, Arakan, and Rohingya in Burma.

Other groups can also be mentioned such as Mukti Bahini in Bangladesh, Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Front National de Libération of Corsica and the Front de Libération de la Provence (France) and separatist groups in Katanga (ex-Congo), Cabinda provinces in Angola, Ogaden and Oromia in Ethiopia, Casamance in South Senegal, Khalistan in India, Chechnya, Yakutia, Ossetia and Ingushetia in Russia.

All these movements are as disparate as versatile and as complex as unpredictable to be analyzed in analogy or in comparison to terrorist groups that advocate a religious fervour.

-Violent conflicts known as conflicts between tribes, ethnics in the Central Republic of Africa, Congo, the region of Great Lakes, Liberia, and Sudan.

-Armed conflicts based on religious grounds such as the war in Yemen which opposes Shia-Zaidi groups by led the *Houtis* against the sunnization of the country pursued by the successive governments of this country.

Besides, the categorization of these groups varies according to ideological perceptions (Chechnya, Ogaden, for instance) to the forms of struggle: pacific or non-violent (Sin Fein, ETA), resistance to foreign occupation (*Hezbollah* in Lebanon and *Hamas* in Palestine).

The scope of the groups using violence to achieve political objectives is too wide to enable a long-term or in-depth analysis. Therefore, the focus of this study will treat groups of declared "Islamic" obedience and whose impact may transcend the borders of their localization. These groups have greatly attracted the attention of the international public opinion through their over-advertised violent acts.

Some of these groups still constitute a threat to the security and stability of the Middle East and North Africa. This fact explains the importance of scrutinizing their mutations and evaluating the capacity of their dangerous operations.

II-"ISLAMIC"TERRORISM: BETWEEN PROPHECIES AND REALITIES:

The organizations which appeared in the Middle East to spread radical Islam or the interpretation they made of the religious precepts have resorted to jihadism as a violent

rejection of religious schisms believed to have deviated from the true teachings of the initial Islam. This orthodox interpretation referred, as it was assumed, to the political and religious   practices during the prophet's era and pursued by the rulers or Caliphs of the Islamic community. These Caliphs called *khalifat Rassul Allah (*successors of God's Messenger, "Peace be Upon Him") represent "the illustration of the continuity of the prophetic authority linked not to its dimension related to the revelation but to the assets linked to temporal authority, essentially"(Djait, 1989, p 62).

In its initial intentions, Jihad did not envisage converting other people but simply to establish the authority of god through the domination of Islam. "The combat conducted by a jihadi aimed at making "the hand of God" higher and the world submitted to God, and not necessarily to bring others to its faith"(Djait,1989, p71).

Jihad as practiced by Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State did not aim at spreading the divine mercy and grace but to impose through violence, killings, and terror, a rigorist form of Islam that gives importance to superficial religious practice, and cultural obscurantism. Therefore, religious exegesis (*ijtihad*), autonomous scientific spirit, and religious tolerance were simply banned from the agenda and the praxis of these organizations.

For instance, the road map of Al-Qaeda, as disclosed in the predictions of this organization stresses mainly the need for killings, bringing down regimes in the Arab world, persecuting atheists and fighting the domination of the Western world.

2.1-"The prophecies" of Al-Qaida:

In a book entitled: ″AL-Zarqawi-Al-Qaida-New Generation, ″ published in in 2005, Fouad Hussein, a Palestinian journalist reported the prophecies made by Al-Qaida about the evolutionary trend of this movement and its progressive achievements (Musharbash, 2005).

His primary source was Seif Al Adl, an Egyptian terrorist suspected of participating in attacks against American Embassies in Dar Salam and Nairobi in 1988.
According to Seif Al Adl, the strategy of Al-Qaeda set out a temporal itinerary to achieve the establishment of an Islamic State or Caliphate that will shine over many parts of the world. This process would evolve through 7 sequences:

1-"The Renaissance″:

From 2000 to 2003, the attacks of 09/11 aimed at inciting the USA to declare war to Muslims and provoke their "awake."

2-″Open eyes: ″

Until 2006, to bring the conspiracy of the Western world to be aware of the "Islamic community" and evolve Al-Qaida into a movement located in Iraq with bases in other Arab countries.

3-"<u>To stand and stay up</u>:"

From 2007 to 2010, the focus rests on Syria in order to train future jihadists. Attacks will be carried out against Turkey and Israel, as the attacks on this country will make Al-Qaida more credible. Iraq and Jordan will also be threatened.

4-" <u>Fall of hideous Arab regimes</u>:"

From 2010 to 2013, the intention was to topple over the unwanted Arab regimes. The weakening of these regimes will leave the way to the continuous strengthening of Al-Qaida.

Attacks against oil-producing countries and the US economy by using cyber-terrorism were also planned.

5-" <u>The coming of Islamic State or Caliphate</u>:"

Between 2013 and 2016: the influence of the USA in the Arab world would be reduced, and Israel would have been weakened. The hope was that the Islamic State would succeed in creating a new order.

6-″ <u>Total confrontation</u>: ″

After 2016 with the proclamation of the Caliphate, the struggle between the believers and the atheists will be declared as predicted by Usama Ben Laden.

7- ″<u>Final victory</u>: ″

The remaining of the world will be so much depressed by the 1.5 billion Muslims, that the coming of the Caliphate will be a success. This phase will be completed by the horizon of 2010.

As a comment to the prophecies advanced by Al-Qaeda, some remarks have to be ushered:

-Some "prophecies" have been achieved since the publication of the book, such as the military intervention of the USA in Iraq and Afghanistan, the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and its extension to Tunisia, an Libya, and to the Sahel- Sahara region after the "Arab Spring" revolutions,

-Some facts were not predicted, such as the terrorist attacks in Paris, Madrid, and London,

-Some prophecies did not happen such as the reduction of US influence in the Arab world and the weakening of Israel,

- Some hypothetic questions related to the strength and viability of the Islamic State were not stated.

2.2- The historic Sequence:

The jihadist movement has evolved through three steps which reflect the change in the forms of the combat, the nature of the operations, and the objectives to attain by this movement:

-<u>First step</u>**: "**The genesis of Islamic armed groups:"

In modern times, a revolutionary Islam was born after the proclamation of the Islamic Republic in Iran in 1979. This republic had a significant impact in terms of religious proselytism, and its mullahs became renowned for their opposition to the Western world and conservative Arab regimes.

Jihadist groups appeared in the Middle East and North Africa in the 1970s. For instance, there was the creation of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) led by Ahmad Hussain Agiza Abbud Al Zumar which attempted to overthrow the Egyptian regime and set up an Islamic State, but did not resort to armed violence in order to fulfill these objectives. The Egyptian *Al-Jamaat Al Islamiyah,* or Islamic Groups (IG) led by Sheikh Omar Abdurrahman bore the same objectives as EIJ. However, like this organization, IG did not carry out noticeable violent attacks against the Egyptian regime during the whole 1970 decade.

Violent Jihadist groups came to emerge in the Arab world after the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet troops in December 1979. Many elements of these groups were trained in Peshawar, Pakistan and fought along the Afghan Islamic militias. These groups targeted at first, the Arab regimes which they depicted as impious and as puppets in the hands of Western countries.

It was the Maghreb region and not the Middle East that has witnessed large scale "Islamic" upsurges well before the so-called Arab-Spring revolutions that swept large swathes of the Arab world in 2011.

Indeed, the first significant "Islamic" upsurge occurred in Tunisia, when the *Ennahda* movement tried to use the rigging of local elections and the rise of social discontent for political purposes during the events that rocked the southern city of Gafsa in 1980.

However, the first massive insurrection with "Islamic" coloration in the Arab world started in Algeria in 1992 and lasted nearly a decade. According to the leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), this violent upsurge was a response to the postponement of the second round of the general elections which their movement was poised to win with a large majority.

The Libyan regime has been also under attacks from the Libyan Islamic Fighter Groups (LIFG) since 1996, until they were disbanded shortly after. Nevertheless, these groups were reported to have participated in the downfall of the regime of Kadhafi after the bloody events that took place in Libya in 2011.

In the Middle East, resistance movements with Islamic inclinations such as *Hamas* in Palestine and *Hezbollah* in Lebanon engaged in an anti-Western stance and skirmishes with the Israeli army. Both movements were able to attract broad support from the Arab masses and overshadowed the secular Palestinian resistance led by *Fatah* and leftwing parties. Therefore, the demise of progressive forces in the Arab world after the end of the cold war left the way to a shift from preaching the ideology of national liberation to Islamic liberation. This move has weakened the nationalist regimes in Iraq and Syria.

Frustrations over the hegemony of the US on the world affairs, the aggressive policies of Israel forces against the Palestinians in Gaza, the political demise and economic failure of the Arab regimes, and the spread of the Salafi ideology have encouraged the emergence of *Al-Qaida*. Such a movement did not fail to become the most dangerous enemy of the Arab regimes and of Western interests. It opted, then, for a strategy that transcends the geographic settings of the Arab world.

- Second phase: "provocation of the far enemy:"

This phase was marked mainly by the strategy followed by Al-Qaida in provoking the "far enemy "by initiating severe attacks against the USA, such as the New York World Trade Center (9/11) and against US embassies in Dar Salam in Tanzania, and Nairobi in Kenya.

France did not escape Al-Qaida *force de frappe*. Indeed, a Northern Suburb of Paris was hit by terrorist attacks in September 2015 that caused the death of 20 people.

This phase was also marked by a" target policy" carried out by Al-Qaeda with the bombing of the offices of the Paris-based satiric newspaper, Charlie Hebdo, in January 2015 in reprisals for publishing cartoons regarded as offending Islam and the Prophet Muhammed (Peace be upon him).

Third phase**:**" Unpredictable and irrational violent acts:"

In the shadow of Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State came to arise when, in 2014, its jihadi fighters, combining religious fanaticism and a kind of military expertise, succeeded in causing serious defeats on a supposedly well-equipped Iraqi army (Barari, 2019).

After the death of Al Zarqawi, an organization called Unicity and Jihad or Al-Qaida in Mesopotamia (Iraq) was set up by Abu Omar Al Baghdadi. This organization was given a new name of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISIS), and Omar Al Baghdadi became its leading figure in 2010.

ISIS promptly extended its impact in Europe by carrying out deadly bombings in Brussels (airport), Maalbeek (metro station) in March 2016, Nice (truck attack on the seaside promenade) in June, and Berlin (Christmas market) in December, the same year. Bombings were also carried out against British targets: Manchester Arena in May 2017

and London Bridge in the following month. Violent attacks also occurred in Barcelona in August 2017.

ISIS was accused or suspected of having implemented these attacks, which were considered as spectacular. However, some of these attacks, such as the suicide operation committed against the *Bataclan* Theater in Paris in November 2015 and which caused 138 victims, were regarded by many observers as unpredictable and irrational.

The objectives of ISIS seem to aim at expanding terror, creating a psychosis and large scale turmoil, without, however, attaining tangible gains or political advantages. The escalation in terrorist actions seemed to have been, then, the paramount objective sought by ISIS.

To sustain this strategy of escalation, ISIS started to recruit youngsters mainly from Morocco, Tunisia and some European countries (such as Belgium, France, and Britain), train terrorists in Syria, awake "dormant cells," convince converted Europeans to Islam to join Jihadism in Iraq and Syria and incite "lonely wolfs" to act.

The resort to individual killers was highly unpredictable and very striking. Nevertheless, in this case, the death toll was also impressive: Mohamed Merrah killed seven people in the French city of Toulouse in 2012, Mohamed Bouhlel drove a truck into crowds celebrating Bastille Day in Nice in July 2016 killing 86 people, and Abderrahmane Bouanane stabbed ten persons in the Finnish town of Turku in August 2017.

The apparition of lonely wolfs, in the image of Anders Breivik who committed attacks on civilians in Norway in 2011, was however, limited to a few cases where the terrorists acted outside organized groups of cells. Still, individuals that were engaged in terrorist acts have benefited from the aid of accomplices (Sueur, 2005) such as Amedy Coulibaly, author of the attacks in the Paris suburbs of Vincennes, and Montrouge in January 2015, and Mehdi Nemmouche accused of having assaulted a Jewish Museum in Brussels, and killing four people.

Fourth phase**:** "Attacks on the close enemy."

This step is still going on. It has been marked by a new and decisive fact in the modern history of terrorism. Indeed, in opposition to Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State was able to acquire its vast chunks of territory (in Iraq), a regular army (formed out of remnants of the Saddam troops and jihadist recruits), and an embryo of economic basis with the control of some oil fields situated in the Western parts of Iraq.

This "sanctuary" process could also be observed with groups affiliated to ISIS trying to have a foothold in Libya and the Sahel-Sahara region.

2.3-Factors of the success of the Islamic State:
The emergence of ISIS and its growing popularity in Iraq were due to policies this movement has followed by:

-restituting power to local notables and persecuted tribes by the Shia-dominant regime in Iraq,

 -imposing taxes through several Islamic tax categories such as *Kharadj, khums, Zakat*, and dime whose collected money was distributed to needy families,

 -smuggling of oil (1.5 billion barrels /d) and of antiquities, payment of ransoms for the liberation of Western hostages) as well as the traffic of slaves, and migrants.

-<u>The future of the Islamic State</u>:

   In the last years, ISIS has come under massive attacks of the US-led coalition and counter-terrorist operations carried out by the Iraqi army whose capacities of combat and investigations have been significantly reinforced by the technical support and expertise of US military advisers.

   The defeats of ISIS increased with the intervention of the Kurdish militias (*Peshmergas*), which were hostile to Salafi ideology and Panarabism propaganda waved by circles nostalgic of the Saddam Hussein era. The gas attacks, perpetrated by the Iraqi army against the Kurds in 1988, are still vivid in the collective memory of the Kurdish people. Indeed, it was reported that between 3.200 and 5.000 Kurds have been killed and 10.000 injured, as a result of this this massacre which occurred in Halabja, a town located in Northern Iraq.

   ISIS's decline was further hastened by the reversal of policy operated by the Turkish authorities under mounting pressures from its NATO allies and the European Union. Turkey initially supported ISIS in the hope that this movement would continue its fight against the regime of Bashar Al Assad, remnants of Saddam Hussein's era and the Kurdish militias. All these parties were regarded by the Turkish authorities as hostile to the stability of their country.

III-THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE IMPACT OF Al-QAEDA AND THE ISLAMIC STATE AND THE LESSONS DRAWN FROM THEIR EXPERIMENTS:

   Much ink was spilled to assess the adverse incidences generated by the emergence of Al-Qaeda and ISIS. However, it seems that some precise factors have debilitated the strength of these movements and which may be summed up as follows:

  -The climate of terror induced by the bloody, and in some case, massive attacks fomented by Al-Qaeda an ISIS have increasingly eroded the credibility of these movements even in the eyes of some Muslims who initially supported their jihad.

-The media effect produced by the attacks made by Al-Qaeda and ISIS, whether against targets in the Arab world or Europe, had an inversed impact since the attacks have harmed more civilian people than targeting military symbols of corrupt Arab regimes. Images of the bloodshed and carnage conveyed by mass media around the world may

have increased a deep resentment toward ISIS strategy, in particular. Many attacks carried out in some European countries were regarded by, even some radical Islamists, as irrational and contrary to the message of the Islamic religion.

-Generalized attacks carried out by *Boko Haram* around Lake Chad that is interlocked between three countries: Nigeria, Cameroons, and Chad seem to have no immediate strategic objectives, material advantages, or even non-disclosed or undefined long-term goals. These attacks have targeted, indifferently, the troops of these three countries, causing a significant number of casualties since 2019.

-ISIS has lost much of its territory because of the effective counter-terrorism operations of the Iraqi forces. Therefore, one of the foundations that symbolize the erection of a State (territory) has been largely undermined.

-The eventuality that Al-Qaeda or ISIS have lost control over affiliated groups activating in the Middle East or the Sahel-Sahara region, despite the declared allegiance given by these groups to both organizations. Even some spectacular terrorist attacks like the ones which occurred in European countries were carried out by groups or individuals that had no structural links or hierarchy obedience with either Al-Qaeda or ISIS.

-Both movements have become murky, as they were overwhelmed by terrorists looking for individual fame and public exposure. Many groups regarded as terrorists in the Middle East, such as *Jabhat Al-Nusra* in Syria, *Ansar Eddine* in Mali do not need financial assistance or religious guidance. In this vein, many Emirs would like to attract attention to their "Hauts faits d'armes" (military exploits) and not be overshadowed by the "stars" of the "Islamic" terrorism such as Usama Ben Laden, Ayman Al- Zawahiri or Abu Mosab Al- Zarqawi.

-Competition between *Al-Qaeda* and ISIS went further to reach bloody fights between their respective troops, as it happened in Iraq and Syria where Al-Qaeda affiliated *Jabhat Al Nusra* got into clashes with ISIS fighters that resulted in the death of hundreds of jihadists. This competition was further illustrated when the announcement of "the restoring of the Caliphate" by the leader of *Al-Qaeda* in the Levant in June 2014 was soon followed by the creation of the "Emirate in the Levant" by Jabhat Al-Nusra in November the same year.

These antagonisms also rubbed off terrorist groups operating in the Sahel-Sahara region, where a great rivalry has opposed Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) to the group of Belmokhtar and *Ansar Eddine* to the Unified Movement for Jihad in Western Africa (MUJAO) for instance.

Such examples attest that whether Al-Qaeda or ISIS are by no means homogenous or have direct control on presumably affiliated groups.

-Just as *Al-Qaeda* and ISIS were not able to topple over the regimes in Syria and Iraq, neither the *Shabab* in Somalia, nor *AQIM* in Mali, or *Boko Haram* in Nigeria was able to incite "Islamic" upsurges or popular uprisings in the countries where they operate.

-Whether in the Middle East or the Sahel-Sahara region, "Islamic" terrorist movements and groups failed to avoid aggressive policies of the Western powers, notably the USA which took decisions regarded as a humiliation by large segments of Arabs and Muslim peoples such as the displacing of the American Embassy to Jerusalem and the peace plan proposed by the American President to find a solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

The French military intervention in North Mali (*Barkhane* operation) has continued, despite the bloody activism of jihadist groups and the widespread protests as those organized by civil associations in Mali.

IV-DEMOCRATIZATION AND MODERNIZATION OF THE DESTRUCTIVE CAPACITIES OF "ISLAMIC" TERRORISM:

4.1-The end of globalized terrorism?

The failure to establish a perennial Islamic State, to topple the Arab regimes out of power or to stop Western powers from meddling in Arab affairs indicates that terrorism may have come to its end, at least, in its globalized form and transnational dimension.

The CIA's report "on the 2030 State of the world" has predicted the withering away of terrorism as a significant threat to the security and stability of the States. However, pockets of terrorist groups may remain as instruments in the hands of corrupt and closed political regimes to ensure their survival (National Intelligence Council, 2012).

Similar to the tiny violent leftist groups that skimmed Latin America in the 1960-70s and contributed, at their expenses, in the consolidation of US-led liberalism through the weakening of military dictatorships and the toppling out from power of socialist regimes, and also like violent extreme left-wing factions in Italy and Germany which had contributed, at their expenses, in weakening powerful communist parties in Western Europe, facilitating the downfall of the Soviet Union, and consecrating the triumph of the US-led capitalist model, Islamic terrorism has implemented, at its expenses, the mission that it was earmarked for.

These missions aimed at:

-ending Pan Arabism, which was followed by the fall of secular regimes in Iraq, Syria, and Libya. The demise of nationalist leaders has resulted in the massive migration of Christians of the Orient as those of Jordan's Palmyra and to the persecution of the Copts in Egypt. Furthermore, Arab monarchies and the Gulf States regarded as conservative, and ideologically pro-Western, have started to acquire a more important role in Arab affairs and in the Arab League (Iratni, 2018,p110). Increasing oil revenues, the support of Western powers, have certainly strengthened the bargaining powers of the Arab

monarchies and Gulf States. These monarchies were, relatively, kept aloof from the" Arab spring" turmoil that rose in 2011, thanks to the support of the Western powers (Barari, 2015, p103).

In addition,, these monarchies came to, strongly back up radical Islam, and even Jihadist groups whose importance increased thanks to the impact of the" Arab spring revolutions." This was the case of Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, and in the Sahel-Sahara region.

-propping up the passive resistance to Israel policies in Gaza, as highlighted by the timid reactions made by the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Palestinian movement,

- fragmenting the Arab world through divisions along religious affinities as in Iraq and Syria. The Sunni-Shia divide became more tangible and more violent with the increase of power rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia and their scramble for regional leadership.

The strategy behind the use of Islamic terrorism may consist of avoiding the concentration of energy resources at the level of an Arab or Muslim political unit. In such a way, the emergence of an autonomous Arab or Muslim power able to challenge the interests of the Western world may not be possible.

It is not the intention of this paper to dwell on the" conspiracy theory" against the Arab world or to consider the phenomenon of "Islamic" terrorism just as a historical accident. In this controversy, the role of this kind of terrorism remains equivocal.

4.2. Ideological and Structural fragmentation of the disparate movements:

The Middle East and the Sahel-Sahara may remain the regions where terrorist groups would survive in their diverse and fragmented forms because of their unstable feature of these regions, the ideological reference of these terrorist groups, the corruption of the regimes in place, increasing unemployment, and foreign interference.

The terrorist threat may not come from a centralized organization since Al-Qaeda may be in delinquency and ISIS in extinction, but from bottom-up, as predicted by many political analysts. Therefore, the symbolic link between these disparate groups may rest on the ideology of Al-Qaeda and not that of ISIS.

It may be possible in the future, that the traditional networks of terrorism (structured organizations) may be marginalized by continuous counter-terrorist policies pursued by different State apparatuses, by security forces, and judicial measures.

Terrorist operations may be less and less military. The new technology device may be used more and more by isolated individuals and tiny groups that have no connections with other groups and may express less and less objectives based on ideological and religious precepts.

4.3-The new forms of terrorism:

If the new technologies linking computing to internet devices have rapidly and greatly increased prosperity, material comfort, and the wellbeing of humanity, they have nonetheless, contributed to disclosing new threats and new forms of terrorism through the use of cyberspace.

Simply defined, a cyber-crime is a crime committed on a computer network. But, cyber terrorism, as stated by Dorothy Denning before the Commission of the Armed Forces of the House of Representatives in 2000, is "the convergence of cyberspace and terrorism. It refers to the illegal attacks and threats against computers, networks, and stocked information in order to intimidate or exercise pressures on a government or its people for political or social purposes. Furthermore, to be regarded as cyber-terrorism, an attack should be accompanied by violence against persons or properties or cause enough damage in order to create fear. This is the case, notably of attacks that cause death or wounds or those which ignite explosions or cause important economic damages. The severe attacks against non-vital infrastructures may be related to cyber-terrorism according to their impact. The attacks that cause damages to non-essential services or that represent a costly inconvenience are not considered as terrorist acts"(Klein, p23).

Therefore, cyber-terrorism is linked to attacks on computers and related devices and intends to cause substantial human or material damages in order to spread fear and terror as much as possible.

The "Atlas of terrorist Islam" has indicated the new operational forms of this new terrorism (Guidère, 2017, pp 28-29):

 - Temptations to infiltrate the computing networks,

-Recuperation of data related to sensitive domains, such as armies, enterprises, and scientific research.

- Destruction of data and installation of the virus,

-Disclosure of sensitive information such as secret defense, strategic projects, bank secrets),

- Occasional and damaging actions, such as electric and water breaks,

- Jamming of missile-guided systems and systems guided planes and vehicles,

As examples, Cyber-attacks occurred against the British TV Channel in Avril 2015, US Command in the Middle East in 2016, and recently against the British Health System, where 200.000 users were aggrieved.

The devastating effect of cyber-attacks which can touch anybody came from the fact that:

- The world is more and more globalized, interconnected, and automatized,

- Chips that are used in instruments such as heart pacemakers, security systems, sensitive organisms, alarm systems, and thermostats are more and more connected.

In 2020, there will be more than 30 billion interconnected chips that can be easily manipulated.

Another significant risk may target persons or groups since the lethal synthesis process and very contagious viruses with an extended period of incubation may render the quarantine of contaminated people more complicated.

The current generation of terrorists will not have to move around or commit a suicide operation. It needs only to master the innovations concerning computing and information technologies.

However, this possibility raises a major theological and a moral obstacle for the candidates who seek martyrdom through death sacrifice in order to be awarded the vast gardens, *houris* (women who will accompany faithful believers in Paradis) as well as delicts, and libations in God's paradise, according to Islamic eschatology. However, it remains highly hypothetical that fatwas (religious pronouncements) would be incepted to transcend this dilemma.

CONCLUSION

Terrorism coined with Islam in the practice and declarations of the organizations that have committed severe human and material damages in the Arab world and elsewhere proved complicated to analyze and apprehend meaningfully. The most complex, however, was to detect its future evolution.

The evolving character of terrorism in the Arab world mainly will depend on the capacities of the structured terrorist organizations to preserve their cohesion, gain more recruits and attract support for their struggle against "impious, corrupt and alienated" regimes in the Arab world and against the interests of foreign powers in this region. It will also depend on the abilities of the Arab regimes and concerned Western countries to fight terrorism not only on military ground but also by using other instruments such as de-radicalization of the youth tempted by jihadism, economic development, and the attenuation of racial discrimination, political marginalization and social injustice, whenever and as much as possible.

The future of terrorism in its disparate and diffuse forms may be more and more linked to the increase of criminal acts made through the resort to cyber support, and unfortunately, to bacteriological arms.

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