

Inside the islamic-fundamentalist ideology : For them, what is the West ? What is terrorism ?

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Dealing with the islamic fundamentalist and revolutionary groups, european and western experts tend to concentrate on what these organisations do, and neglect their historical background, as well as their beliefs and doctrines. Thus this article dealing with the ideology, origins, traditions etc., of two of the most dangerous islamic-revolutionary groups in the Middle-east, the egyptian Islamic Jihad (sunni) and the lebanese HizbAllah (shi'a).

1- Common characteristics of the islamic-revolutionary groups

- A DIVINE MISSION : All of these groups consider themselves as part of a millenarian movement created by divine will, through the Prophet Mohammad, and whose historical mission is, first, to create one united world of islam, and then spread islam to the limits of this planet. The most recent sign of god's will has been the islamic revolution in Iran. The Islamic Jihad in Egypt, the Hizballah in Lebanon, as well as all the islamic groups worldwide, are, too, smaller instruments of the divine will, created to spread the message of the islamic revolution as widely as possible, in the islamic umma, first, then all around the world.

- **A MANICHEIST WORLDVIEW** : Manicheism is the moral compass of the islamic-revolutionary ideology, a worldview marked by an absolute division between islam and infidelity. A state of total and pitiless war exists between absolute good (the islamic movement) and absolute evil (the global infidelity, or arrogance). The n°1 weapon in the hands of the muslims in this fight ? The Jihad, or war against the unbelievers. For the islamic groups, Jihad is not one weapon between many others, a mere possibility in a war between dar-a-islam (the house of peace) and dar-al-harb (of war), but an absolute duty. “Only the sword can remove the idols of this word”, says “al-Faridah al-Gha’ibah” (“The neglected duty”, the doctrinal booklet of Egypt’s Islamic Jihad, including Sadat’s death sentence, circulated in Egypt towards 1980).

- **AN UNIFIED UMMA THROUGH JIHAD** : Sunni and shi’a alike, all islamic-revolutionary group have a total repulsion for nationalism and the nation-states in which they operate; all of them fight for the great, all-encompassing islamic state, covering the totality of the middle-east and south Asia, to begin with. As said Ibrahim al-Amin, the Party of God’s spokesman (Beirut, 1984) : “ Our political work in Lebanon is not defined by the geography of Lebanon but by the geography of islam, which is to say by the geography of the world’. But this strategical contempt for the nation-state goes hand in hand with a tactical interest in Lebanon, Egypt, etc., as possible bases for an islamic revolution : Iran has been such a base since 1979. But after Egypt, for example, is constituted as an islamic state, its triple and immediate mission will be to recreate the califate, liberate Jerusalem and ultimately dissolve itself in a reunited islamic umma.

2 - For the Islamic Jihad of Egypt : what’s the West

Better than assumptions or educated guessing we have, in this case, access to a recent and internal text, written by Aboud Alzumer, a former colonel in the egyptian’s army intelligence service and one of the incarcerated leaders of the Islamic Jihad. Aboud Alzumer wrote this piece

beginning of 1993, and tried to smuggle it from his jail, but it was seized by the prison's guards. This text can be considered as the doctrinal position of the Islamic Jihad's leadership on "the West and us". What does he say ?

- THE WEST IS THE ENNEMY OF ISLAM : "We have to remember the long history and conspiracy from the Crusade's wars untill the slaughter of the islamic Khelafa [califate] in 1924. But the matter did not stop at this point and the West aggressively continued to keep the islamic world under its control, so that it could suck its wealth and resources and keep it as a market for its consumer products" ... "Imperialism [has] implanted the devil's seed and put into power secular rulers (...) following the path drawn by the West... These rulers who have a skin like ours are able to achieve the immediate goals of the West (...) westernize and secularize the islamic world and crush anything islamic". "What is going on in Bosna-Hercegovina, with serb forces raping women, sowing destruction and bloodshed is the crusader's black hatred of islam and its people".

- THE WEST IS NOT QUALIFIED TO LEAD THE WORLD : "The West presents a dark picture of rotten morals with the absence of dignified values, the large scale and unprecedented Aids epidemic alcohol and drug addiction"... "Also, the West has not succeeded in utilising advanced science and technology for the welfare of humanity [but for] arms race and owns a destruction capability to destroy the earth tenth of times ! (...) The West no longer has any qualifications to lead, except through military might"... "How could one respect the western call for principles when they do not respect them unless they serve their aims ?" [Examples of Algeria, Palestine, Bosnia-Herzegovina, etc.]

- THE FUTURE OF THE WEST IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD : "The shining future will be for islam at Allah's will. If the west continues in its policy of neglect of the rising islamic force, and continues to support the pro-West governments in which its share of support is declining day after day, and to lose its support hour after another. If the West stays like this, without a review of its accounts, it will lose

the area of the islamic world, with the help of Allah. [Example of Iran, Algeria, Israël & Palestine, Yugoslavia, Somalia, etc.]. "Future relations [between islam and the west] depend on the west in the first place. If they want good, then they must change their attitude from now on. If they think they can stand against the people's determination, then it is a mirage disappearing very quickly. The West will then gain more and more huge investments of ennemies as a result of what its hands have done".

3 - The lebanese HizbAllah : a persistent danger

Clearly, the lebanese HizbAllah remains remains an extremely dangerous organization - perhaps the most sophisticated terrorist group in the world. Of course, it has changed its tactics and successfully engaged, in the summer of 1992, in the lebanese electoral process [12 fundamentalist deputies in the lebanese parliament on a total of 110]. Before that, HizbAllah had also published, for the first time ever, the names and functions of all its leadership, all the members of his majlis al-shura. But even though it has obviously entered a more political phase of its history, and with the obvious help of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and fo several other middle-eastern "hezbollahi" groups, the lebanese HizbAllah still has the capacity to strike abroad, as two events in march 1992 have shown : March 7, 1992 : the murder of the security officer of the israeli embassy in Ankara, Turkey; March 17, 1992 : the spectacular destruction of Israël's embassy in Buenos-Aires, Argentina.

Tactical moves on the lebanese or Middle-eastern politico-strategical scene, necessity to accomodate the syrian leadership's regional policy, all this is true; but one should not forget the ideological and sectarian background of the Party of God. Indeed, HizbAllah is the heir of :

- A MILLENIUM OF SHI'ITE EXTREMISM, of struggles against a wordly power by definition always illegitimate and unjust. Its doctrine is

one of protest for all the discontented, the downtrodden in the Arabic and Muslim world;

- A TRADITION OF SECRECY, conspiracy and deceit as old as shi'ism itself. Within the islamic world, from the very beginning and most of the time, the shi'ites were persecuted, martyred and reduced to clandestine activities. To survive 12 centuries of riots and massacres, persecution and conquests requires a formidable ability to adapt and retaliate. These communities which faced what is probably the longest struggle for survival in history developed an unequalled practice of mystery and conspiracy. Just imagine that in the sole domain of terrorism, the shi'ites have an incredibly rich collective history going back a millenium. In Europe, the very oldest forms of clandestine armed struggle, wether nationalist or revolutionary date back to the end of the 19 th. century...

From these immemorial experiences, Shi'ism drew its modus operandi which is that of a sect. It covers many aspects (theological, legal, ritual, etc.) but above all it trains the novice in the practice of an extraordinary battery of techniques of mental discipline, dissimulation and devious moves, which have been given the general name of "taqiya" (the precaution). The takiya is both an order for caution in the face of danger and a method for not revealing esoteric secrets. It arose at the time when the Umayyad caliphs invented a test to detect the Shi'ites : people were forced to insult Ali and his family, and anyone who objected was immediatly put to death. The Shi'ite behaves externally like a Sunni, while preserving his original beliefs and allegiances, which require him to struggle against and to reverse the existing power. In a non-Shi'ite territory -- and that includes Sunni states-- the Shi'ite has for 12 centuries led the life of a conspirator, scorning in private what he praises publicly, and he only applies the moral laws wihtin his community. The takiya becomes compulsory "when human life is in danger without an equivalent prospective gain." This prohibits a believer from stupidly committing suicide in a moment of exaltation, but authorizes any sacrifices profitable to the community.

- A LONG PRACTICE OF VOLUNTARY SACRIFICE for the benefit of the community ("Shahadat") and a marked taste for martyrdom. One of

the tapes recorded by Khomeini in 1978 for his followers in Iran gives a exact definition of the clear thinking, voluntary martyrdom :

“People say that the hero is the engine of history. This is wrong. The soul of history is the martyr. So bare your chests to the army, for the Shah will make use of the army, and it will obey him. We are told that the soldiers are troubled, that they do not know what to do, but they will obey orders. How could they disobey when they are bound by military discipline? One day, they will rid themselves of the devil’s discipline, and will adopt that of God. In the meantime, if the order is given and they fire on you, bare your chests. Your blood, and the love that you will bring to them in dying, will convince them. The blood of each martyr is like the sound of a bell that will awaken a thousand living beings.”

“Takiya” and “chahadat”... plus the proven art of manipulating the major modern media, all of this gives Islamic terrorism a style and a flavor all of its own. These actions are always conceived theatrically and dramatically, in three acts : (a) warning; (b) impressive strike; (c) reverberation effect.

- The target is specifically warned and threatened, at times by high-ranking officials, and in a dramatic manner;
- The act is carried out with an overwhelming violence;
- Immediately afterwards, when public opinion and the media are still shocked, a psychological campaign of deception and demoralization is triggered, as an echo, designed to increase tenfold the effect of terror.

Example : last year’s bombing of Israël’s embassy in Buenos-Aires followed exactly this pattern.

Conclusion

Through these examples we have seen that the revolutionary-islamic trend is not a religious fundamentalism among others (christian, jews, hindus, sikhs etc.)

- This movement has a deliberate practise of violence (insurrections, military coups, terrorism etc.). Moreover, one cannot see how this movement could globally be reconciled with the West, as, in its view, the mere existence of the western economic, political and cultural systems is an intrinsic attack on islam. Radical muslims, for example, consider capitalism as a crime.
- This movement is international and now spreads to the limits of the islamic world : arabic islam, african islam, irano-indian islam, malay islam and central asian islam. It also has bases in the western states and metropolises as various events have shown since the mid-eighties, from the bomb-wave in Paris in 1986, to the World trade Center car-bomb in 1993. ■