

Rise, Birth, and Defeat of Daesh

Sir,

The originality of the organization called “Islamic State” is that it is quite different in its mode of operation from all the other jihadist movements, including the Al-Qaida. Its use of terror is particularly spectacular and meant to affect the public, horror is not hidden but is part of their propaganda, just like terror is meant to paralyze. The following examines the rise and decline of this organization.

How do you explain the birth of the Islamic State Organization?

The core of the organization is an indirect creation of the American intervention in Iraq in 2003. This latest clumsily and systematically marginalizes the Sunnis, who as early as July 2003 rebel and benefited of the organizations of a state whose structures have not been broken - special services, republican guard, and fedayeen. Soon after the insurgency of Fallujah and the sexual scandal of Abu Ghraib Prison (2004), the Sunnis will be joined by radical Islamists led by the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The Ba’ath and Saddam’s followers are coopted in radical Islamism, more mobilizing.

What has allowed the organization to grow?

After the death of al-Zarqawi caused by the Americans (2006), Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi gradually imposes itself. Nothing is solved in 2011 when US troops leave Iraq. Terrorist actions go on. What journalists have named the Arab Spring is an opportunity for the Islamic State of Iraq to make a move to Syria. The opening is made by al-Julani who organizes the sympathizers in the country. The proximity of the Turkish border, which allows the passage of Jihad volunteers and profitable oil traffic, will later bring the troops of al-Baghdadi to Syria. Talks are held between al-Baghdadi and al-Qaeda, and a temporary alliance is built between the two movements.

In 2013, al-Baghdadi will break it, considering his movement more radical. The organization of Al-Baghdadi invests Raqqa, becoming the capital on the Euphrates - at a good distance from the coast held by the regime - and soon proclaims the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham. The movement receives concrete support and funds from the Gulf - Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates - and Turkey. Volunteers flock and pass freely through the Turkish border.

In 2014, al-Baghdadi decided to return to Iraq with well-trained, disciplined, and highly indoctrinated troops. Paradoxically, Mosul, the second city of Iraq, collapses almost without a fight. In their flight, Iraqi troops left important equipment and finances. The fall of Mosul brings an extraordinary aura to the movement. Taking advantage of the boon, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaims himself caliph and announces that the border erected by the European imperial powers between Syria and Iraq no longer exists. Soon after, his troops invest the Sinjar where they will massacre the Yazidis and reduce women into sexual slaves while crucifying Christians. They, thus, gain a reputation of extreme ferocity while unexpectedly they penetrate in the Kurdish region. Al-Baghdadi’s troops reach Gwer and Makhmur, 40 km away from Erbil, the capital. On August 8, the phone call given by the Kurdish leadership to obtain US aid allows in record time the US aviation to stop net the advance of thousands of jihadists.

From there, the conflict comes much more static; the Kurds try to hold a front of nearly a 1000 km, thanks to the sophisticated armament provided by Germany and other European allies. In Syria, Kurds who occupy a very large part of the Syrian Turkish border organize themselves. They manage to fight Daesh heroically in Kobane, thus bringing American aid that will allow them to be used as proxy forces.

What made it possible to defeat the Islamic State organization?

The Islamic State organization was defeated first by the de facto alliance between the United States and its allies, militias in Syria, and to a lesser extent in Iraq, both organized by Iran. The severe bombardments inflicted from summer 2015 to spring 2016 by Russia also impacted them heavily. Finally, it

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was by land assaults, first by Iraqi forces and Kurds of Iraq against Mosul, later by the offensive mainly conducted by the Kurds of Rojava on Raqqa, the capital of the movement. The jihadists fought with a lot of determination in both Mosul and Raqqa and were defeated because Calif had officially territorialized the essentially desert area they controlled.

If the systematic use of terror using techniques already used by the Mongols has been shown to pay off to paralyze the adversary, territorializing has proved to be a trap. When one is a guerrilla, it should not pretend to territorialize what it has liberated (The Vietnamese never pretended to control their territory, the ground was controlled by day by the French or the Americans, and the population was controlled at night by the Vietnamese). When a guerilla pretends to control territory, it can do it with a weak adversary unable to direct ground confrontation. When reorganized Iraqi troops and Syrian Kurdish forces well equipped were ready

to fight on the ground offensively against Daesh, it was not possible for the Islamists to resist the combination of ground forces with tanks, heavy weapons, and air force. Al-Baghdadi, achieved a tour de force, exceeding his means. He isolated himself, defying all his opponents including Jihadists organizations as well as states that contributed to his rise. To end with a note of humor, if Iranians Shiaism has a hidden Imam, now, Sunni jihadists in the Daesh version have a hidden caliph.

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