Internal Conflicts and Wars A Perfect Environment for Terrorist Organizations

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The absence of a nation-state capable of power projection across borders gives terrorist organizations substantial opportunities for growth and prosperity. The vast borders are exploited for arms and drug trafficking and for polarizing new operatives for recruitment. They can also take advantage of the rugged topography that is far from being protected and monitored by central governments, to establish training bases in remote areas, especially the desert. They also use mountainous caves to house their operatives, establish surveillance checkpoints, and provide supplies, channels of communication and command centers.

The relationship between the capacity of central governments to establish security over the geographical nature of a single nation-state and the growth of armed factions and terrorist organizations in them is as inverse as that between the stability of the polities and the bifurcation and infiltration of such groups. Therefore, the successive geopolitical crises that have emerged recently have been and are yet to be major causes of the rise in conflicts and of wars globally. They have created a perfect environment for the implementation of terrorist strategies that change according to the nature of events. Therefore, before giving details and examples of some countries, it is important to shed light on the different strategies used by al-Qaeda and Daesh, as they benefit the most from conflicts and crises that afflict some countries.

Al-Qaeda's Strategies

Al-Qaeda's strategy focuses on supporting its affiliate terrorist groups in different countries. It was able to restructure its organizations in terms of leadership and cells, focused on the mechanisms of mobilization, training and recruitment, especially from the new generation, granted considerable autonomy to its operatives in terms of implementation, media and propaganda, and established local alliances between its factions and between clans and tribes. This is to consolidate and harness its relations

to serve its interests, which achieved its "spread and proliferation" without complications on the one hand, and inflicted heavy losses and negative repercussions on the region on the other.

AL-Qaeda has paid great attention to its terrorist operations against regional neighbors adjacent to the areas where its factions are concentrated, in order to expand the scope of events and achieve its inhumane goals. Domestically, it has underpinned its strategies on targeting central governments and entities allied with or supported by foreign states. It has striven to create broad grassroots to reach a consensus that will ultimately protect its members, facilitate the polarization of new operatives, and provide logistical support for its operations .

Daesh's Strategy

Daesh's strategy has recently evolved, with its shift from direct military confrontations to the adoption of insurgency and guerrilla warfare. Its ultimate goal is to inflict as much damage as possible on the entity in which it sees an "enemy" and to carry out operations that do not require large numbers of fighters, but rather affiliated small cells. Arguably, Terrorist Daesh currently adopts four strategies:

- **Attrition:** Using improvised explosive devices (IEDs), laying traps, assassinations, kidnappings, house and farm burning, and attacks against the civilian infrastructure.

- **Hitting the Economy:** Manifested in attacks on public and private economic establishments, such as oil wells, power and communication towers, shopping malls, and important archaeological and touristic sites .

- **Prisoner Smuggling:** Manifested in using the term "tear down walls", smuggling recruits and affiliates. Over the past two years, Daesh has launched attacks on prisons in Afghanistan, Congo, Syria and Nigeria to achieve this purpose.

- **Targeting Minorities:** Targeting minorities, especially religious ones, has become a key element of the organization's strategy, aiming at strengthening their isolationist tendencies, sowing discord, and planting mischief among people of the same country.

Undoubtedly, the spread of geopolitical crises and the subsequent chaos and instability contribute significantly to the growth and prosperity of extremist terrorist groups. There are live examples of some unstable situations in which the terrorist organizations,

Daesh and al-Qaeda, imposed their presence by exploiting the fragility of the internal situation of the State, and the perception that they could substitute local governments. Here we highlight three regions: Yemen, Somalia, and Iraq .

Yemen

Security in Yemen has deteriorated significantly since 2009. Yemen is marked by a rugged geography, and an important geostrategic location on the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and Bab al-Mandab Strait. It also suffers from the presence of non-governmental forces, such as the Houthis, or the southern forces that call for secession, as well as al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). There is no doubt that the absence of the national state with its national army that maintains security in all governorates has contributed to the spread of terrorist groups and increased tensions locally, regionally and internationally. The current conflict began in 2015 and it has resulted in many military and civilian casualties and deepened political, tribal, and ideological divisions .

Al-Qaeda in Yemen exploited the civil war that intensified between 2015 and 2017, but it began to deteriorate militarily in 2018 until mid-2022, then reemerged in September 2022, as its media outputs increased, and it had frequent military activities, amounting to about 122 attacks in 11 months, carried out in various ways against multiple targets. It developed its offensive capabilities using drones, launching attacks with night vision equipment .

All these transformations and adaptations to the status quo made the organization's situation the focus of attention and investigation to identify the reasons, especially after Saif al-Adl (Mohamed Salah al-Din Zaidan) assumed the central leadership of al-Qaeda, and confirmed the rumors of his son Khalid's arrival in Yemen in 2020 to wage a battle known as "Ibn al-Madani". To consolidate his influence, he married the daughter of an influential tribal leader, and led the organization's media arm from late 2022 and early 2023. His rise, orchestrated by his father, could restructure the organization, giving it a new push toward a new international goal .

Somalia

Somalia is characterized by its significant geographical location on the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, and by widespread violence and political instability. With the growing counter-terrorism campaigns waged by regional and international communities, as well as the efforts of the local federal government, there are yet significant security concerns and threats. In 2022, more than 3,000 violent incidents and 6,500 confirmed

killings were recorded. Somalia suffers from a fragile infrastructure at all levels, in addition to the need for further capacity-building and support in the police and army to provide protection and security since they are constant targets of terrorist attacks .

Most terrorist attacks carried out by Daesh in Africa are carried out in Somalia, where cells affiliated with several organizations are active, including: al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab, and ISIS-Somalia that defected from al-Shabaab. All of them are designated as terrorist organizations internationally, as they target many entities with their crimes, including: the police, army, federal government, armies of Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia, the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), foreign officials, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), and clans and tribes supporting the government.

In early 2022, al-Shabaab and ISIS-Somalia carried out about 2,400 attacks, although the two groups witnessed several failures and increasing pressure from counter-terrorism efforts locally, regionally and internationally. Most areas mired in crisis and instability remained easy prey to daily attacks, such as the administrative region of Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, Hiran, Banaadir, the administrative region of Mogadishu, Bay, Bakool, Juba, Galguduud, Puntland, and Mudja. Kenya has also seen attacks in Garissa, Lamu, Wajir and Mandera counties.

Iraq

Iraq suffers from multiple religious and political allegiances, civil unrest, widespread crime, and environmental and health threats. This has facilitated things for terrorist organizations, especially Daesh, which has relentlessly continued its activities over the past two years and intensified its crimes in its zones of influence, exploiting the many internal problems and the nature of the geographical terrain familiar to its members. The areas of Salah al-Din, Kirkuk and Diyala, which include valleys and mountain ranges, are among the most important geographical areas of activity of the organization, in addition to the vast deserts that contributed to its expansion .

Terrorist Daesh in Iraq has reformulated its combat strategy based on the new reality, and has relied on the implementation of these two strategies: "wars of attrition" and "hitting the economy" since they do not require a large number of fighters and aim to spread chaos, destabilize statess, increase societal and sectarian violence, and reduce national resources. Conversely, Daesh has reconnected with citizens and factions where it operates to secure means of self-financing, including engaging in illegal

economic activities, ensuring the provision of weapons and vehicles, smooth recruitment, and securing food, medicines, and anything else it needs for subsistence and survival.

The group is trying to increase its influence in Iraq's religious Sunni civil society to find a religious sanctuary in line with its beliefs. In general, the areas that are at risk to this day are the sub-districts of northern and eastern Iraq and in the capital, Baghdad. Daesh remains a real threat to the security and stability of Iraq and the entire region. The attacks and operations in Iraq demonstrate the extent to which Daesh exploits any downfall or loophole in even the strictest security measures in Baghdad.

Conclusion

The foregoing shows that al-Qaeda and Daesh have increasingly exploited internal conflicts to carry out their terrorist and criminal agendas, particularly in the three aforementioned countries. Meanwhile, they continue to seek operational expansion regionally and internationally. Moreover, the weakness of political systems and the unresolved issues in several regions play a major role in their resilience to counter-terrorism operations. Thus, there should be increased pressure through military operations to combat terrorism, which are important not only in capturing or killing important leaders, but also in identifying critical information to understand the logistics, hierarchy and organizational basics of these terrorist groups, while being aware of the potential consequences of the use of excessive military force, which may lead to civilian casualties, and developing effective solutions to these crises .

The international community must also take caution in its fight against terrorism by supporting governments and civilian and democratic leaders. It must also dry up the financing wellsprings of terrorist organizations, improve the rule of law, policing and judiciary, consult with civil societies, including clans and tribes, fight corruption, support economic improvements, especially in terms of employment, and draw public attention to the threats posed by these terrorist organizations.