

Writer Claims US Lost, Al-Qa'ida Won War on Terror

Article by Chief Editor Abd-al-Bari Atwan: "Fifth Anniversary of New York's Conquest"

Al-Quds Al-Arabi

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In his recent series of speeches which he delivered on the 5th anniversary of the 11 September events, President George Bush insisted on stressing that his administration was winning the war on terror and listed a number of achievements in that regard, such as depriving the terrorists of their safe haven, drying up their financial sources, killing and capturing some of their leaders, and preventing many attacks before reaching US territories.

The facts on the ground give a totally different picture and also assert at the same time that the US President continues with the policy of lies and fallacies that had entangled his country in two losing wars, the loss of more than 3,000 of its military and 20,000 injured, and the destruction of its image in the world as a liberal democratic power.

A fundamental expression was absent in all Bush's recent speeches and statements, namely, that the world has become safer after the start of the war on terror and the invasion and occupation of Iraq because this is not so and even became more dangerous and chaotic since Al-Qa'ida organization became stronger and more dangerous and its leader is still alive managing the battle against the United States and the West from his hideout despite the hundreds of billions spent to capture him and bring him to American justice as the American President had promised.

President Bush was right when he said that the war on terror prevented many of the attacks targeting the American territories but the credit for this achievement does not go to the American security services' competence but to the preventive strikes as demonstrated by the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which absolved Al-Qa'ida and other extremist organizations from a difficult and almost impossible mission, that of sending the jihadists to New York, Miami, or Los Angeles to kill the Americans because more than 200,000 of the latter are in Iraq and Afghanistan and are a valuable prey for the jihadists.

Al-Qa'ida organization won the war on terror because it planned and succeeded in dragging the United States into wars outside its territories which it is not qualified to fight, to say nothing of victory in them, and more seriously, it would be defeated if it remained and defeated if it withdrew because the material, human, and political losses in both would be very massive.

Al-Qa'ida organization leader Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin personally told me when I met him at the end of November 1996 that he could not defeat the United States by fighting it inside its territories but would accomplish the biggest strategic achievement if he succeeded in getting it out of its lair and dragging it to wars in the Muslim world where he could face it on his own ground and amidst his public. The 11 September events were apparently the bait that Al-Qa'idah's leader used to achieve this great strategic aim.

The US war on terror, which had international and Arab sympathy at the official and popular levels, did in fact succeed in destroying Al-Qa'idah's infrastructure to a great extent and deprived it of a safe haven where it had established its own state, enjoyed freedom of movement, and established training bases and a huge financial network of investments. But the arrogance of US power and the reliance on advisers putting Israel's interests above US ones undermined all these achievements with the invasion of Iraq on the basis of a number of lies that the US Senate exposed the most notable ones, the denial of the relationship between President Saddam Hussein and Al-Qa'ida organization.

Very briefly, the United States did not emerge the winner from any of its wars in the Arab and Muslim worlds but suffered big losses over the past five years that are threatening its collapse as a great empire and which can be listed as follows:

First: The war on terror turned Al-Qa'ida from a local regional organization into an international one with branches spread in various parts of the world and its operations covering several areas of the world, starting from Madrid through Istanbul, Bali, Casablanca, Taba, Sharm al-Shaykh, and ending with London. It could become more dangerous if its increasing efforts to produce and possess chemical and biological weapons succeed.

Second: Al-Qa'ida organization stopped being a hierarchal structure and became a loose horizontal one. The US administration made a big strategic mistake by achieving this transformation, canceling the organization's centralism, and turning it into an ideology attracting many of those frustrated by the US policies in the Muslim world.

Third: The US war on Iraq did not only achieve the Al-Qa'ida organization leader's dream of fighting the Americans (40,000 soldiers) on an Arab Islamic land but also of creating the proper political and sectarian climate that allows the rebuilding of training bases and preparation of the new jihadist elements to fight not only in Iraq but probably in the Gulf region at a later stage so as to bring down the regimes or fight the US influence in this region that is rich with oil and its reserves.

Fourth: The wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon destroyed America's image in most parts of the Muslim world, made it easy for the extremist organizations to recruit jihadists, and the US mistakes of torturing detainees, raping some Muslim women, and committing massacres against civilians (Hadithah and Al-Fallujah in Iraq) made it difficult for Muslim governments allied to the United States to cooperate in the war on terror.

Fifth: The spread of the Islamophobia phenomenon in Western societies, and the European and American ones in particular, did not lead only to the fall in the integration of at least 40 million Muslims in their new homelands but led the second and third generations of Muslim communities to lean toward extremism as a reaction to the campaigns of hatred waged against them by the popular media and the policy of intimidation followed by governments, especially in Britain, in order to maintain the popular support for continuing the wars against the Muslim world and justify their massive humanitarian and material losses.

Sixth: The United States lost its war to win the Muslims' minds and hearts and even the minds and hearts of its own citizens. Despite spending \$1.5 billion annually on financing media campaigns, newspapers, and television channels, Al-Qa'ida still won this war through the electronic jihad whose supporters run the internet. The tapes of Al-Qa'ida's leader and his deputy are press scoops that the channels vie to broadcast without exception. The organization also succeeded in relying on the alternative media, the internet, to deliver without restrictions its ideas and programs to various parts of the world.

Seventh: The US wars cost the American taxpayer more than \$350 billion so far as expenditures in Iraq and Afghanistan. This amount of money is enough to settle the debts of all the poor countries and fight diseases like epidemics like AIDS, cholera, and malaria. This created anger among the Third World countries. When these countries ask for assistance or the cancellation of debts, they get firm rejection answers. But when the United States wants to fight wars in the world that kill hundreds of thousands, then the billions are ready.

Eighth: Al-Qa'idah's operations created panic and terror inside the United States, a panic that turned into a big industry called how to protect domestic security. The expenditures on this security have so far reached \$130 billion. In other words, the war against Al-Qa'ida organization has cost the US treasury about \$500 billion, something the socialist bloc could not achieve throughout 90 years of existence and before its collapse.

The question being asked now is not how to turn these losses into victories because this is almost an impossible task and the incumbent administration does not have the time, support, resources, and creative ideas for getting out of this quandary but the question is what the next administrations can do to correct the disastrous mistakes, restore balance to the US policy so as to reduce the losses, at least in the foreseeable future.

The United States failed to win the war on terror with military and security means and now finds itself alone and isolated with its allies deserting it daily. Some of them are falling because of their close alliance with it, as is the case with Aznar (Spain) and Berlusconi (Italy) and very soon Blair (Britain) and others, because of the growing hostility to the United States and the emergence of a world front against it under the name of the new left with symbols whose popularity is increasing in the entire world like Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

The 11 September events will chronicle the end of the US empire because all the empires collapsed when they yielded to the arrogance of power and all of them were defeated by small countries or movements when they expanded their wars and conquests beyond their capabilities.

The signs of weakness are now apparent on the face of the barbaric US empire and the Lebanon was one of these signs because it was the first time that the US administration asked others to fight its wars and because it became incapable of undertaking such a task as its forces were scattered. How to deal with the Iranian nuclear dossier is probably the real, quick, and dangerous upcoming test of the firmness and strength if this US empire, the greatest in history.

(Description of Source: London Al-Quds Al-Arabi in Arabic -- London-based independent Arab nationalist daily with an anti-US and anti-Saudi editorial line; generally pro-Palestinian, tends to be sympathetic to Bin Ladin)

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Saudi Columnist Argues Al-Qa'ida Stronger Today, Warns Worst Still To Come

Article by Abd-al-Rahman al-Rashid: "11 September: What Next?"

Al-Sharq al-Awsat (Internet Version-WWW)

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Five political, military, and security years have passed since the 11 September attacks until it seemed to many that most of the evil was over except for some new cells and limited terrorist operations. But, in my view, the worst is still to come. The second chapter of the confrontation will not be less violent than the first one, not because Al-Qa'ida itself is capable of carrying out attacks similar to the 9/11 ones but because the grounds that gave birth to Al-Qa'ida and dozens like it in the Arab region have returned to action with greater strength and in the end they must produce other international terrorist activities that will take us back to square one.

One is surprised how societies do not learn from the mistakes that led to this catastrophe and involved the international forces in our situations and how to manage our affairs? The mistakes were in the places, means, and the messages and here they are returning as they were in the past that preceded 9/11. Though some want to believe they are innocent, and they definitely look innocent, but the lesson is in the endings. The September events came from the years of ideas that led to the recruitment, preparation, financing, and the dive deep into almost all the Arab societies.

While appreciating the viewpoints of those who sum up the crisis by linking it to what is happening regionally, they are forgetting the roots of the problem are a destructive call that will find many justifications. The Westerners see it as a problem linked to the loss of the means of expression and the peaceful civilian rejection, that is, the democratic approach. The region's governments say it is the offspring of the missing justice in the Middle East, such as the Palestinian cause. The truth is that all of them are avoiding their direct responsibility by blaming

the political climate, which is true as a whole but is not the core of the problem. There is a contagious and dangerous disease in the region called extremism and it cannot be blamed on the lack of democracy or the Palestine cause alone. Bin Ladin, the head of the extremist movement, considers elections unbelief and did not include the Palestine cause in his messages except in his later years. History is a witness that he did not prepare a single battle against an Israeli target over 10 years.

I reiterate that Al-Qa'ida as an ideology is stronger today than it was in the past and the reason is that while the security services hunted down its cells and destroyed many of them, very little was done to contain its ideology and its civilian organizations that are operating in broad daylight. The reason is that there are two parties that accept this dangerous situation. One believes it is a temporary surge that will abate with time and therefore avoiding the confrontation is the best solution. The second party thinks that the overt ideological and financial support establishments have no connection with the dangerous extremism. In both cases, I can say definitely that the result will be one, the return of violence in a bigger way and with it the return of the major countries to interfere in the details of our affairs and forcibly insist on changing the curricula, closing the establishments sponsoring extremism, and sealing the door of terrorism.

The groups themselves will ignite the fire in the world again and this world will come to us announcing that this is harming its security and is inside its borders and that will not accept the assurances as it did in the past.

(Description of Source: London Al-Sharq al-Awsat (Internet Version-WWW) in Arabic -- Influential Saudi-owned London daily providing independent coverage of Arab and international issues; editorials reflect official Saudi views on foreign policy. URL: <http://www.asharqalawsat.com>)

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