WHY ARE WE LOSING THE WAR AGAINST JIHADISTS?
Ryszard M. Machnikowski
Faculty of International and Political Studies, University of Łódź,
e-mail: rmachnikowski@gmail.com

Abstract: In the article, the author tries to indicate the social reasons for the Jihadists' effectiveness in the war against the Western world and its allies lasting for at least two decades, and the mistakes of the latter. According to the author, the key issue is the perception of Jihadists as a network of terrorist organizations and not an evolving and intensifying global armed social movement targeted at a radical transformation of both the Western and non-Western world. Focusing on the military aspect of conflict and disregarding the ideological sphere only contributes to making Jihadists stronger, while wasting resources by the West. The author hypothesizes that Jihadists will try to transfer the burden of conflict to Europe, while also changing its character - "terrorist" actions will be supported by attempts to instigate rebellion whenever social conditions allow it.

Keywords: war on terror, Jihadists, Salafism, terrorism

INTRODUCTION

When on Gathering Day, Friday, 9 Rabi 'Il, 1417 AH and thus the year of the Hijra (i.e. on Friday, August 23, 1996) somewhere in Afghanistan the leader of one of the Jihadist organizations known as Al-Qa'ida, Sheikh Usama Bin Ladin declared a war against Americans "occupying the holy land of Islam" [1], almost no one paid any attention to this event. When, on February 23, 1998, Bin Ladin on behalf of the World Islamic Front, founded together with leaders and companions from the Egyptian Islamic Group, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Bangladesh Jihad Movement and Group of Ulema of Pakistan, declared "Jihad" against Jews and crusaders [1], very few people believed that this declaration was noteworthy and carried serious consequences. It was recalled about half a year later, after August 7, 1998, when Bin Ladin's fighters simultaneously had attacked American embassies in the capitals of Kenya and Tanzania, killing a total of 223 people and wounding nearly five thousand. However, this was only a moderate announcement of the coming wave of armed Jihad, which took the world of the West as its target. Three years later, the number of victims rose to almost ten thousand - nearly three thousand people were killed and over six thousand injured in New York, Washington and the field near Shanksville. When nine days after the attacks of September 11, 2001, US President George W. Bush announced that the USA was moving to the "Global War on Terror" (GWOT) to destroy terrorists and their allies [3], almost all the world held its breath awaiting the effects of this extraordinary event. The only remaining after the Cold War era world superpower unleashed the war against just a few hundred, as it seemed at that time, daredevils united in the Bin Ladin organization and its Afghan promoters, the Taliban, who dared to attack the heart of America - the Pentagon and WTC towers. Today, after almost two decades of deadly struggles between the USA and the Western world and the global coalition of armed Jihad groups, this war continues, and hundreds of thousands of people around the world are involved in it.
During the time, both sides have caused each other and all those who had the misfortune to be on the global battlefield great damage. Both the West and the Jihadists are still far from reaching the final goals set for themselves. Nonetheless, it is becoming increasingly clear that today the latter are slowly starting to gain an advantage in the global clash, and the Western world is becoming more and more helpless in the face of their actions.

After more than 14 years after President Bush, Jr. had announced the "Global War on Terror", his successor, President Obama, once again declared that he would be able to destroy the enemy [5]. However, in recent years, the West has failed to destroy or even weaken it, but contrarily, it fueled its power with its activities, thus making it stronger. How is it possible that the military, economic and intellectual power of the West turns out to be so insufficient that it has not managed to eliminate much weaker opponents within a decade and a half of a decade? The US Armed Forces called this conflict "Long War", and everything points to the fact that these struggles will indeed continue for a long time in the future. Despite numerous successes in individual battles, the West seems to be in a lost position today in the war with "terrorists". Why is it so and what would the West have to do to win it?

The reasons for the unsuccessful campaigns of the West against Jihadists vary substantially. First of all, the Western world is not only unable to understand its enemy, which is even admitted by the senior members of the military [23], but does not even want to properly name the situation in which it found itself. Considering the fact that it devotes huge expenditures to the recognition of the enemy, it is all the more astonishing. Every day, thousands of state service analysts, universities and private "think-tanks" make efforts to identify Jihadists’ activities and provide a huge amount of analysis. Despite their efforts, Western societies do not realize the situation in which they found themselves. In addition, the West does not apply adequate determination to its actions, neither does it have the proper fighting strategy, nor use relevant tactics of action, remaining always one step behind in this clash. The Jihadists’ cognitive, volitional and strategic advantage proves that the much scarcer resources at their disposal are appropriately used and multiplied by them, while the West wastes or cannot take advantage of its own ones appropriately. What is more, it is Jihadists who are able to effectively use their enemy's resources to achieve their own benefits. The hitherto result of these struggles should not come as a surprise, as well as the expected effect [19], unless the West makes a fundamental change in both its thinking and its actions, which unfortunately is not indicated at the moment.

I. ONLY “TERRORISM” OR GLOBAL REBELLION?

The first and fundamental mistake of the West is to view Jihadists only as another "terrorist organization", which confers a presumption that the fight with them lies primarily in the armed struggle with their terror (ism). Whereas, Jihadism is more than a network of minor terrorist organizations [16] - it is in fact a global military armed social movement that is growing in strength, whose aim is to carry out a fundamental social and political transformation, both in the Western and Muslim world [36]. The goal of almost all Jihadist organizations is to act for the rebuilding of the institution of Caliphate, and after its formation permanently expand, initially in the Muslim lands, and then in lands that Muslims never managed to conquer before in history [37]. The ideological foundations of this movement are
various "fundamentalist" interpretations of the Muslim religion, i.e. those stemming from Islamism of the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as those from the Wabisian faction of Muslim faith or Asian deobandi schools, which are often referred to as Salafism [4]. These religious and ideological trends constitute an amalgam of traditional contents, enriched by more contemporary interpretations of fundamentalist trends in Islam, also inspired by the achievements of radical European thought. Therefore, both the dimension and the religious and ideological goals are a key element for understanding the identity of this movement, which is of a syncretic nature, although the "Salafis" themselves declare that they derive only from the sources of Islamic faith [13]. It is worth noting that contemporary Salafism as a religious current contains both currents that strive to achieve their goals with peaceful methods, as well as those that consider violence as an indispensable element of their own activity. Such groups are quite commonly referred to as Jihadist groups [12]. They are global in nature, taking advantage of opportunities resulting from the globalization of modern societies. Their characteristic feature is the use of armed struggle in almost all of its forms: armed conquest of land deprived of military protection, conduct of war where they can oppose their enemy with significant forces, use guerrilla warfare where they are clearly weaker than their enemies, and they appeal for "terrorism" in those societies where they cannot yet use other forms of violence. Wherever they succeed in conquering a territory, acts of genocide directed against the local population, which is considered "unfaithful" or unprotected, are encountered.

As is usually the case with social movements, Jihadism also has an undefined organizational form - it consists of numerous organizations and units scattered almost all over the world, connected with each other by networks of various contacts and connections. These organizations are multiplying and undergoing transformations - new ones are created instead of those liquidated. Nowadays, a very important space for the operation of this movement is virtual space (cyberspace) that is an increasingly important platform for propaganda, communication and recruitment of new members, which significantly supplements traditional forms of action of social movements [8].

Attacking "civil" (non-combatant) targets, i.e. the form of political violence, which is called "terrorism" is not obviously an autonomous goal of this social movement, but only one of the means leading to the achievement of strategic, tactical and operational goals. It is used extremely skillfully and made it possible, in less than two decades since the public announcement made on an ongoing conflict, to accomplish one of the key goals of the Jihadist movement - the revival of the Caliphate (Islamic state) in the Levant, and make further attempts to build bridgeheads or "provinces" of the Caliphate in Africa and Asia. It was thanks to the "terrorist" activity that Jihadism managed to introduce its ideological agenda into the global media circulation, which increased interest in it, and due to the 9/11 Attacks it was incorporated into the inner circle of the only global superpower's greatest enemies, which made Jihadists able to manipulate the foreign policy of both this country and other Western countries. As a result, this movement significantly increased its recruitment capacity [32] and led to a very serious social crisis in the Western world, primarily in Europe, by breaking down "multicultural" societies along religious-ethnic lines [20]. These remarkable successes were certainly paid for with the deaths of some of the movement leaders, with its precursors, Usama Bin Ladin and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in the first instance, as well as a number of high-
level activists of Jihadist organizations and thousands of their regular fighters. However, every lost person is immediately replaced, regardless of the position occupied, by new leaders or ordinary recruits. In this way, Donald Rumsfeld’s famous question of whether the US troops are able to eliminate more militants than the Jihadist organizations are able to obtain [10], is verified unambiguously negatively. The death of each leader or a regular participant of the movement attracts next persons, so that it can grow and gain in importance.

II. LOSING THE IDEOLOGICAL WAR

Focusing the West’s efforts only on the military fight against “terrorism” has removed from its sight a key phenomenon being dealt with, i.e. an ideological confrontation, which made it impossible to take action to effectively “suppress” the ideological enemy of the once open societies of the West, that is the Jihadist movement.

Once the Second World War ended and the Western world faced the threat of Soviet communism, the leaders of Western countries realized that in addition to the material threat Soviet Russia with its "Marxism-Leninist" ideology was also a serious ideological threat, which forced the West to take the fight also in the ideological field. It should be noted that today the main battlefield is the social consciousness of the masses - both Muslim and non-Muslim, and in this conflict the West to date remains without particular chances to dominate or even regain the field occupied by Jihadists. The West deprived itself of the ability to produce "great ideas" that could be real competition for the Salafi ideas. Only the marginalization of the ideology of the fighting Salafism, the depreciation of its significance and the radical limitation of recruitment possibilities would allow for achieving victory in confrontation with it. Meanwhile, almost all of the activities undertaken by the West, especially after September 11, 2001, brought about adverse effects - they increased the significance of the conflict provoked by Jihadists, publicized their ideology, and thus drastically increased recruitment abilities. The West has disregarded or failed to notice the significance of both the ultimate goals of the global Jihad and the means of achieving these goals (other than "military"), although they have been exactly known for at least more than a decade.

III. WHAT AND HOW DO JIHADISTS SEEK TO ACHIEVE?

In 2005, Jordanian journalist Fouad Hussein published his book "Zarqawi: The Second-Generation of Al-Qaeda" [25] based on talks and interviews with the then leaders of the Jihadist movement, including the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of the so-called Al Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers (Iraq) and Egyptian Saif al-Adel, the then No. 3 in the so-called Central Al-Qaeda. The author described the alleged great Jihadist plan that had been drawn up for nearly 20 years and aimed at conquering the world. Although the publication aroused some interest in the West, it was quite commonly ignored, including calling it "a fake". Whereas, it pointed quite precisely both to the final intentions of the Jihadist movement and to the actions that this movement wanted to take to fulfill these intentions.

A great victory was to be attained before the year 2025 by going through seven "phases" of the conflict.
Why are we losing the war against Jihadists?

The first phase, known as "Awakening", was to be initiated by the attacks of September 11, 2001 and end with the capture completed by Americans in April 2003. It was rated as very successful – due to the attacks on New York and Washington it was possible to involve Americans into a global war, prompting them to invade Muslim lands, first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq. Thus, the Jihadists opened up a battlefield with the West in their own area, where they could count on the support of their own populations and where Americans and their allies became an easier target. The second phase referred to as "Opening Eyes" was to last until 2006 and consist in the transformation of numerous local Jihadist organizations into a broad global social movement (sic!). The US aggression into Muslim lands was to facilitate the conviction of Muslim masses that the West was indeed a deadly enemy of Islam and allow wide recruitment to Jihadist groups deployed throughout the world. Iraq was to become the center of world Jihad and spread from there to the entire Greater Middle East and Central Asia.

The third phase, known as the "Uprising" was to last from 2007 to 2010. The target of the attack was to be Syria, Turkey and also Israel. This phase, as we already know, went completely differently than it had been planned by Jihadists - it was in those years that Iraq was brought to a successful though, as it turned out, short-term “stabilization”, as the effect of of to the proper methods of fighting Iraqi rebellion applied by General Petraeus. Neither could Jihadists take the flame of war to the countries neighboring Iraq or attack Israel effectively, since they were totally eliminated by American troops and allied Iraqi militias called nomen omen the Sunni Awakening movement (Ḥarakat al-Ṣaḥwah al-Sunnīyah).

Likewise, the fourth phase planned for 2010 - 2013 and described by Jihadist strategists as "Overthrowing (Middle Eastern) Regimes" was different than what Jihadists had planned, as it was done by ... the West itself. It supported the series of so-called "Arab revolutions", which weakened authoritarian, but quite stable, Middle East regimes effectively fighting Jihadist militants in their areas, especially in Libya and Syria. Initially, the Jihadist movement did not play any role in those revolutions, including ideological ones. It seemed then that after the death of Bin Ladin from the hands of American commandos, this movement was in a deep defensive and would not regain its former influence. However, the withdrawal of all American troops from Iraq, which also took place at that time, enabled the continued destabilization of Iraq and even neighboring Syria, where under the conditions of the civil war the Islamist forces could once again spread their wings. The Jihad option gained a new appeal, especially in the face of serious errors in the policy of Barack Obama, who promised support for "moderate" forces in Syria, that he subsequently renounced.

Thus, the actions of the governments in London and Paris and the policy of the new American president, Barack Obama allowed Jihadists to return to the previously planned "course". The regime of Colonel Gaddafi in Libya was overthrown by the raids of English, French and American air forces and the operations of special forces of these countries, and Syria ruled by President Assad was effectively destabilized by the actions of Western special services, so Jihadists had only to fill the vacuum created by the West in the Middle East - what they still continue to perform successfully to this day. This Western "help" in destabilizing the MENA region allowed Jihadists to smoothly move to the fifth phase, i.e. the announcement of the establishment of the Caliphate. It was planned for the years 2013 - 2016 and occurred almost exactly in the middle of this period: on June 29, 2014. Although the so-called Islamic State in Iraq was announced already in 2006, it
was only a sign of willingness not the possibility of Islamist insurrection in Iraq. Abu Bakr al Baghdadi’s announcement of the creation of the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant on April 8, 2013 was a false start and a source of conflict with the second most important Islamist organization in the region - the Al-Nusra Front subordinated to the so-called Central Al-Qaeda and its leader, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri. However, the offensive Islamic State offensive in 2014 in Iraq allowed for the maintenance and expansion of the authority of "Caliph" in significant areas of Iraq and Syria. Soon after this declaration, numerous Islamist organizations in Africa and Asia began to recognize the power of al-Baghda and create local branches of the Caliphate created by him. Another goal set by Jihadists was effectively implemented, but this time almost exclusively with own forces.

It is time, therefore, for the transition to the sixth phase, or "Total Confrontation" between the Caliphate and the Western forces, which is expected to last until 2020. This phase presupposes an intensified armed struggle that will be completed by the achievement of the seventh final phase, i.e. the "Final Victory" of Jihadists in a global clash in the first years of the third decade of the 21st century. This will mean the creation of a global Caliphate covering the entire globe when, as it is assumed, one and a half billion Muslims will rise and eventually defeat the forces of unbelievers. Radicalization and dragging in its favor a large part of the global Muslim Ummah is necessary for the sixth phase to take place. It is likely that the terrorist attacks in Europe and the USA are aimed at persuading Western states to send armed forces, including land forces, to the Levant region, and on their own territory to intensify the repression of "high risk environments", i.e. Muslim communities. This will increase mutual distrust and set Muslim and non-Muslim communities against each other. In this way, it should increase the circle of those who can be recruited into the ranks of fighters of the Islamic State and other Jihadist organizations, and then mobilized them for the final fight.

IV. INfiltration Into Europe - preparation for opening a new front?

It can also be assumed that mass immigration from countries of the MENA region and Central Asia to Europe and North America that we observe today, is used by Jihadi strategists to infiltrate their own fighters into the European area of dar al Harb. When estimating that only 1% of immigrants entering Europe are Islamic radicals, and given the number of more than 1.5 million immigrants nowadays [24], this gives an opportunity to infiltrate around 15,000 Jihadists. [28] The effects of only a dozen or so of them were clearly visible in the last two years on the streets of Paris, Nice, Brussels or Berlin - it is possible to imagine what effects would have been multiplied at least a thousand times. Then, the images known today from Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen or Nigeria would repeat themselves, this time in areas of Western Europe. The European Commission, which plans to send immigrants to all European countries [35], even those in which Muslim clusters are relatively small today, ensures the "even distribution" of the "jihad forces" in Europe. In this way, the West itself can once again help Jihadists in an attempt to achieve their goals, that is, conquest further territories, or at least bring armed rebellions there.

It is worth noting here that the Islamic State has enormous experience in such a slow but persistent infiltration into foreign territories, since it penetrated Syria in this way and strengthened its presence there. Abu Bakr al - Baghdadi extremely
skillfully used the chaos of the civil war in Syria to transfer the activists of his organization to the areas of this "fallen state". According to documents captured in the city of Tal Rifat in 2014 [30], the expansion of his influence began with the sending of small intelligence groups operating under the cover of "mission" units (dawah) to Syria, with the task of gathering information about the leaders of local communities. Their next goal was to win favor among the most influential local families, including using the method of "getting married" by young fighters. Then members of the Islamic State security apparatus could gradually take control of the local communities, using their influence and even blackmailing local notables with previously collected "compromising materials". And those who had resisted were systematically and ruthlessly liquidated. The person responsible for these activities was to be the former colonel of military intelligence of Saddam Hussein's Air Force, Samir Abd Muhammad al-Khifawi known as Haji Bakr. After his death in January 2014, documents were found that illustrated the structure of the Islamic State and the phases of its creation in the Syrian lands. His work was supervised by a security apparatus, modeled on the structures functioning in the time of Saddam Hussein, when his secular state was based on numerous special services, trained *nota bene* chiefly in Moscow.

Therefore, an assumption can be made that among the Islamic State fighters infiltrated into Europe there are also professionally prepared people whose main task will be gathering information about the enemy and methods of using its weaknesses. If we were to expect a continuation of the Jihad strategy, which was outlined in 2005 in a Jordanian journalist's book, it could be supposed that the Islamic State will gather information about the possibilities of using local Muslim communities already present in the Western world, including Europe, and will try to expand their control over them, just as it had happened in Syria before the Caliphate was announced there. Once this goal is achieved and the number of Jihadist fighters is sufficient, the Islamic State will strive to make a series of simultaneous terrorist attacks in many European countries [11], possibly by using weapons of mass destruction, to deepen the crisis and ultimately destroy indigenous people's relations with the influx Muslims and their descendants. The mistrust caused by the fear of an attack by their fellow citizens will reach a critical point and prevent the daily functioning of the Western "multicultural" society. It also seems obvious that such events will meet with a sharp reaction from the indigenous European population that will resolutely support European radical and anti-immigrant parties opting for the deportation of immigrants, which may only feed growing animosities - the gates to a total social conflict will open up in Europe [6]. This is evident today when politicians like Geert Wilders, Marine Le Pen and Lutz Bachmann are gaining the ever-growing support of the electorate. The Islamic State will try to use this opportunity for subsequent armed attacks in the West, but this time not just "terrorist" nature.

It must be remembered that violence, including that of a "terrorist" nature, is only a means to achieve goals. Terrorism is used to manipulate Western societies and their political classes, to force them, by means of intimidation, to take actions conducive to achieving further goals by Jihadists. In terms of internal politics, these goals are to arouse aversion and deepen antagonisms between Muslims and non-Muslims, increase the layers of fear, distrust and misunderstanding leading to further atomization of Western societies and separation of the Muslim community. In international politics, Jihadists' aim is to bring about new outbreaks of conflict
between Western and Muslim countries - nothing contributed more to the growing popularity of global armed Jihad, and thus recruitment possibilities of Jihadist organizations than images of Western Muslim cities bombarded by the Western air forces and the villages or territories of Muslim countries under Western occupation, even if the Western world calls it "liberation". Also they perceive this conflict as long-term, hoping that with the passage of time further goals will be achieved, or at least their achievement will be significantly closer.

The destabilization of the authoritarian Middle East regimes has significantly contributed to giving the global Jihad a new impetus and increasing the effectiveness and scope of its operation. Therefore, political violence that is applied point wise aims to reach a fundamental social change, both in Muslim societies and among indigenous peoples - achieving transformation is a feature characteristic of the functioning of social movements and the Jihadist movement is no exception. Jihadists effectively apply the principles of extreme "social engineering", that is, sowing extreme terror to create social conditions conducive to the development of situations allowing for attaining further goals.

It can be estimated that over the past two decades, this movement has succeeded in bringing the achievement of goals into reality - the creation of the Caliphate rebuilt on the ruins of Syria and Iraq and its survival in the face of a coalition of Western states is its undeniable success. Jihadists will certainly intensify their efforts to expand the conflict field, including relocation of the battlefield from the MENA region to Western Europe, where they may receive support of part of the "radicalized" local population [28]. Shifting the burden of activities to the enemy rear echelons will help relieve the battle front in the Greater Middle East and allow further expansion of the Islamic State in these areas, thus making the situation of the West much more difficult. It can therefore be expected that terrorist activities in Europe, including the subsequent terrorist attacks in European countries, will be continued in the near future to lead to their deepening destabilization.

CONCLUSION

Western countries, especially European ones, are largely helpless against the various tactics of Jihadist activities and are not prepared to prevent them. The West also has no means to effectively neutralize the hostile Salafi ideology, allowing the Jihadist movement to develop and attract new supporters. The West does not have any ideological alternative that would be able to effectively prevent radicalization of members of its own population, especially the youth, belonging to the second and third generation of immigrant descendants. This cannot be a great surprise, because Western societies base their existence on individualism, materialism and hedonism of increasingly alienated individuals deprived of deeper social ties and have ceased "productions" of great ideas that can stimulate human imagination. The progressive erosion of Western communities resulting from the disappearance of deeper social ties increases the attractiveness of global Jihad - this movement gives its members support not only in the idea, but also in a broad social structure (global "radical" Ummah), enabling individuals to take root, offering dedication for the community realizing the Muslim dream of uniting in the Islamic State and then its armed expansion, as it was in the days of Muhammad. This is an attractive alternative to the materially sophisticated but ideologically empty proposition of Western civilization,
so it is no wonder that an ever-greater part of its society responds to the battle call of Jihad. As long as the Jihadists are able to mobilize the masses, the conflict at the military level will continue and will become increasingly intensified.
REFERENCES

Why are we losing the war against Jihadists?


DLACZEGO PRZEGRYWAMY WOJNĘ Z DŻIHADYSTAMI?

Streszczenie: W artykule autor stara się wskazać społeczne przyczyny skuteczności dżihadystów w toczącej się od co najmniej dwóch dekad wojnie z światem zachodnim i jego sprzymierzeńcami, oraz błędy tego ostatniego. Kluczową kwestią jest, wg. autora, postrzeganie dżihadystów jako sieci organizacji terrorystycznych, a nie rozwijającego się i przybierającego na sile globalnego ruchu społecznego o charakterze zbrojnym, nastawionego na radykalną transformację zarówno świata zachodniego, jak i nie-zachodniego. Skupianie się na militarnej płaszczyźnie konfliktu i lekceważenie płaszczyzny ideologicznej przyczynia się tylko do czynienia dżihadystów silniejszymi, przy jednoczesnym marnotrawieniu środków przez Zachód. Autor stawia hipotezę, że dżihadyści będą starać się przenieść ciężar konfliktu do Europy, zmieniając także jego charakter – akcje „terrorystyczne” będą wspomagane próbami wzniecenia rebelii, gdy tylko warunki społeczne będą temu sprzyjały.

Słowa kluczowe: wojna z terrorem, dżihadyści, salafizm, terroryzm