

Al-Qaida Between Ideology and Technology: Electronic Jihad From September 11 to the Assassination of Bin Laden

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Abstract

More than ten years elapsed between the bloody events of September 2001 that hit the United States (US) and the assassination of al-Qaida's leader, Osama Bin Laden, in 2011. To understand the relationship between these two events and to analyze them from a political and intellectual viewpoint, the analysis must expand to include the role of the media, especially the "alternative media", and its impact as an important weapon in the hands of this "extremist" Islamic organization. Al-Qaida, which existed in the middle of 1990, pledged to use all political and military means and media (De Cessole, 2012, p.74) to fight what was called "the far enemy", i.e. the West and its allies, particularly the US (Kepel, 2004, p.113). The latter had emerged victorious from the 'cold war' that had lasted for more than half of a century and had ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, and the dominance of liberal concepts: democracy, human rights, and market economy (Al Shalabi, 2000, p.7). On the other hand, the political changes in the light of information and communication revolution led to the emergence of extreme ideas pursued by violent fundamentalist groups combining two types of extremism: religious and political (Jones Stevens, 1998), which are incompatible with the principles of democracy, freedom of opinion, expression, religion tolerance, and others (Armstrong, 2000). Al-Qaida's dialectical relationship between ideology and technology concentrates on the youth who are able to use

social networking tools, such as the Internet, Facebook, and Twitter, which "exceeded the traditional means like radio, television, and newspapers" (Penn, 2003) to recruit or to induce them to embrace the ideas and principles they seek to disseminate. To analyze and understand the role of alternative media in the war between al-Qaida and the West and its allies, we will investigate the phenomenon of the technological means used by al-Qaida to achieve its objectives and to disseminate its ideas through three major axes: The beginning of a Jihad media, the "holy" media strategy, and shedding light on the media institutions owned by this organization.

Key words: Bin Laden; Al Qaida; Alternative media; New media; Facebook; Twitter; Ideology/technology

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1. THE BEGINNING OF JIHAD MEDIA

The explosions took place on 11 September 2001 in both New York and Washington, for which Osama Bin Laden and the al-Qaida organization were accused, forming a new history of untraditional and unusual confrontation with the US. They also formed a challenge, an embarrassment, and perhaps represented unprecedented political, military, and economic shock that will remain instilled deep in the American conscience for a long time (Al Ulayan, 2005, p.9). The 9/11 attacks were "an event that cannot be erased from the archives of the collective history of the universe" (Udrescu, 2011, p.103).

On Tuesday, 11 September 2001, 19 terrorists hijacked four planes. Two of them crashed into the twin-

towered World Trade Center in Manhattan, New York, and the third fell on the Pentagon in Washington. The results were heavy: 2,995 people were killed, including 343 firefighters, 60 New York policemen, and thousands of others wounded, in addition to the 19 hijackers (Labévière, 2011, p.19).

The fire of terrorism thus rolled in the world, and historically, the statement delivered by Osama Bin Laden on 23 February 1998 defined this as a “global front to fight the Jews and the Crusaders” (Jean-Pierre, 2009, p.83), and stated that it sought to “liberate the country of the two Holy Mosques from the U.S. presence” (De Cessole, 2009). Through this statement al-Qaida openly and officially inaugurated the global “media battle” in the war against what Bin Laden called the “Crusader West”, using fax machines and audio tapes, transmitted by satellite channels and international radio stations.

The “visions” began to take shape to achieve al-Qaida’s ideas on the ground. On 26 May 1998, Bin Laden announced matters together with Ayman al-Zawahiri at the end of a meeting with his Afghan allies and in the presence of a number of leaders of militant organizations in Kashmir (Lashkar Taiba), the Army of Yemen, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and the Islamic Group—the formation of a global front against the Jews and Crusaders. This announcement (or, “Fatwa”) decreed that killing Americans and their allies, whether civilians or military, was an obligatory duty (Ibid, p. 60).

Al-Qaida’s reaction towards the West is attributed to the Arabs’ and Muslims’ negative views and their faith, whether through the long history of colonization of their countries (Al Shalabi, 2000, pp.32-44) or because of the search after the end of the Cold War for an enemy (Al Ulayan, 2005, 19), or because of the negative attitudes of immigrants and Arab and Muslim communities in the West in general. The results of a study conducted between 1999 and 2000 in 30 European countries indicated that prejudice against Muslims in Europe is more widespread compared to that felt by other immigrants before the attacks of September 2001 (Strabac & Listhaug, 2008).

Then statements flowed, taking different forms and varying levels from time to time, according to the nature of the battle in the West. The Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, one of the organization leaders, expanded the definition of al-Qaida as a “global front to fight the Jews, the Crusaders and the Apostates”. (By “the apostates” he referred to Muslims allied with the West.) After that, he added the last item, being a prerequisite for allegiance to Bin Laden, as a prince (Abdellah, 2010).

Based on the idea that “a war without media” was a losing war, al-Qaida launched the most important stage in the age of al-Qaida’s media by the production of the first tape from the al-Sahab institution for Media Production. It was about the bombing of the American destroyer ship, USS Cole on 30 October 2000 in the territorial waters of Yemen. This beginning was an indication of the building

of an independent media institution for al-Qaida. The institution began to produce videos on training at its camps in Afghanistan as part of a media war against the Western media, especially because the events of September 11 made communication with the Western media almost impossible in the light of what was committed by the Western media in its policies that should have been in harmony with the policies of the Western countries (Hiba, 2008).

However, it can be said that the “media discourse” of al-Qaida began on a large scale after 11 September 2001. Dīaa Rashwan, a researcher and an expert at al-Ahram Center for Strategic Studies, pointed out:

Prior to that date, the organization leader Osama Bin Laden did not speak to any media except to an Arab one, but after September 11, and his media appearance was frequent in various forms. Yet, the first video of al-Qaida appeared on October 7, 2001. Afterwards, video tapes regularly appeared. But because of a pressure, that way stopped. The organization found no choice, but the World Wide Web. (Ibid.)

At any rate, the bombings of September 11, as Gilles Keppel, a specialist in the Islamic factions, says,

... is the most dynamic expression of quiet and rational process which led the Islamist movement to hit the heart of the United States. These bombings constitute neither a start nor an end for those who planned and executed them, but put in action previously prepared strategy and agreed upon and followed-up later. (Keppel, 2004, p.113)

After the US occupation of Iraq in 2003, a new era for the media began and it was looked at as the most dangerous age in its evolution, which “depended on conveying its media messages by leaving terrible effect on the recipient everywhere, through showing horrible scenes of slaughtering hostages in a scary way on the World Wide Web, to make the world busily talk about such atrocities” (Ibid., p.114).

Perhaps al-Qaida Media is characterized by excitement, as it

relies on real excitement, mystery and talismans broadcast from unknown spaces to well-known ones, and this way alone there is a lot of excitement, as well as highlighting some of the erotic porno pictures of cutting heads with swords, and blowing up American tanks. (Saleha, 2008)

Miqdadi also noticed that al-Qaida media belongs to the school of “central totalitarianism”, which relies on “a vertical information message” that moves from top to bottom, without interaction (Ibid.).

The media role of al-Qaida is still the focus of attention of many, especially the American media experts, “as many specialized centers analyze messages contained in the media discourse presented by al-Qaeda, either through the net or video clips, or press dialogues, so as to recognize the military situation of the organization” (Hiba, 2008).

For this reason, we find that the most obvious example is the treatment of the media recordings of the al-

Qaida leader, Osama Bin Laden. On 10 October 2001, the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, announced that it was possible to use recordings of Bin Laden and other leaders in the organization to strike the US directly. Important media outlets in the country such as ABC news, CBS news, Fox News, and CNN refused to broadcast recordings of Bin Laden. On the other hand, the US administration did not object at all to broadcast the interview of Bin Laden in December 2001 in which he expressed his pride in the success of his explosions (Lamloum, p.113).

In any case, the organization managed to spread in many regions of the world, so much so that the superpowers were unable to eliminate it or control the expansion of its spread to new places because of its efficient media, which managed to overcome all breakthroughs and successfully exploit communication technology. The al-Qaida organization showed efficiency in using this technology in terms of: creating websites, forums, magazines, and radio through which its messages were broadcast from anywhere in the world, and in any place, at any time.

In this context, Muhammad Abu Rumman, a Jordanian researcher who specializes in the Islamic groups' affairs, believes

that Al-Qaida exceeded the electronic competition and succeeded in fighting the psychological war efficiently with the most professional, technical, and well-trained security and media establishments. Al-Qaida was able to develop its own security on the virtual network to become one of the most prominent secrets of success in its steadfastness, communication, and electronic Jihad. (Hiba, 2008)

There are those who believe that al-Qaida media shares effectively in the development of the organization's intellectual and organizational capacity at a global level, by employing communication technology efficiently in the field of the media, specifically in terms of tools. "The recruitment of ICT has helped the organization to transform it to a global phenomenon, and change it from a local organization limited intellectually, geographically and operationally to a global wide organization." (Ibid.).

During the years immediately after September 11, the voice of the organization rose high, and its leadership managed to exploit the new technologies and the errors committed by the opponents to develop its activities. Consequently, the organization managed to carry out a major advertising campaign, and to achieve constant and secure communication in multiple languages with supporters and potential recruits of the organization in various regions of the world. The war, the blockade, the dry-up, the oriented media, and other means that the enemies adopted, (i.e. the US, Europe, and its allies) neither succeeded in scaling the role of al-Qaida nor eliminating it. The information network witnessed a battle no less severe than the battle on the ground between al-

Qaida and its opponents, which ended in a landslide victory for those 'tramps' as Louis Attalla called them. The biggest proof of this victory is the continuation of the al-Fajr Media Center in disseminating information on the network in large sizes. The international intelligence agencies were unable to prevent or overthrow the publisher (George, 2008).

The American and European intelligence officials attributes the prosperity of al-Qaida propaganda activities to "the organization's ability in building a secure base in the western tribal areas in Pakistan" (Al Sheikh, 2009). Some American officials have a deep sense of embarrassment, as al-Qaida looks more capable than America in delivering its message online. Therefore, the question that arises is: "How can a man sitting in a cave excel, in communication, the greatest community of communication in the world?" (Ibid.)

In the context of disclosure of the secrets of the war waged in the virtual world between Al-Qaida and the United States, the French-German Arte TV network broadcast an important documentary film entitled *Al-Qaida Code*, which depicted how al-Qaida enjoys itself throughout the countries of the "kings of propaganda". The film was shot in Paris, New York, London, Berlin, Toronto, Oslo, and Tripoli of Lebanon. This film shows aspects of the conflict between America and al-Qaida in the virtual world. The film also shows the officers at the American Academy of "West Point watching for long hours al-Qaida propaganda movies in order to identify and understand (the enemy)" (Ibid.).

2. TECHNOLOGY IN THE SERVICE OF AL-QAIDA

Perhaps the most beautiful description that can be applied to al-Qaida is that it is a "virtual" phenomenon serviced by the internet machine to circulate its principles. Al-Qaida, without the audio visual media and the electronic communication means, would not have a tangible physical presence. The French writer, Gilles Keppel, a "specialist in Islamic groups", says that it is a phenomenon that cannot be realized, "despite entering September 11 from the widest doors" (Abdul Haleem, 2010, p.113).

Abdul Aziz Bin Saqr, Head of the Gulf Research Center in Bahrain, says the following:

The terrorist groups started their march by using information and communication technology represented by the fax machine in broadcasting and disseminating the organization communiqués and statements of its leaders, until the (war fax) term appears as a sign of widespread use of extremist organizations of the fax machine; and the official bodies inability to control this new medium in communications. (Sharaba, 2009)

Modern communication tools of al-Qaida developed by moving from using fax and mobile phones to the

Internet. The relationship of the Islamic movements and groups with the Internet actually began in the early nineties of the last century by the Muslim Students Associations in America.

The purpose of having access to the Internet was to know that the suspicions arose against Islam, so as to refute them. This step was preceded by an attempt of the Qadiani sect resident in America. The availability and diversity of sites produced an increasing and good opportunity to reflect on the behaviour of the Islamists about technology in general and the Internet in particular (Al Tahawee, 2010). The Islamists' relationship with the Internet slowly developed to become the main tool in their media discourse, especially when the fighting organizations appeared, on top of all organizations.

The religious movements, including al-Qaida, targeted their relationship with the modern media, especially the Internet, so as to achieve three goals, namely:

The first objective—to use the network in lifting the siege on these movements, especially in the media aspect.

The second objective—to employ the Internet in presenting these movements' images and conceptions about the Islamic religion and to create awareness and communication among their site's visitors.

The third objective—it was related to what Islamic groups think of the Internet as a capable means in unifying the Islamic nation, even though by default (Abdul Haleem, 2010, p.97).

Al-Qaida realized early that the real battlefield is the Internet; after receiving hard blows, in the framework of the so-called (war on terrorism), the organization, moved from fighting on the ground to the electronic domain, which has proven effective in attracting followers and reshaping their minds, in order to recruit them later in small groups which can make by their bloody actions a bang that remains the top news on TV and in newspapers. It is not necessary that the internet presence reflects the organization size and nature. What you need in today's world is to become active and to have the tools to influence, especially the (technical ones). This fact is realized early by al-Qaida; therefore, it showed interest in forming media groups, which have far away net links with the leaders of the organization, lest they are targeted. (Al Daini, 2008)

The terrorism echo in the media is a structural element in terrorist activity. The media serve as the "oxygen" that revives the terrorist action, through advertising and publicizing it. Whenever that action was bloody and violent, it received and focused on major media coverage. Within this horizon, the terrorist action that would be strengthened through the media turned into "a political contact", because it came out of the narrow realm to the public space, and gained the identity of the message it conveys, threatening and directed against the laymen (Abdul Haleem, 2010, p.11).

Al-Qaida expanded using the Internet network in its discourse according to its security circumstances and because it was prosecuted in the traditional media channels. As the Egyptian expert in Islamic movements—Dhiaa Rashwan—says, "Jihadist

organizations resorted to this method extensively only after September 11." (Saleha, 2008)

The criterion for al-Qaida, therefore, is that the Internet is more secure rather than speedier as the Internet is less public than the TV stations, but security measures made it difficult for al-Qaida video tapes and communiqués to find their way to these stations. Besides, some TV stations refused to broadcast them. In the Internet, however, broadcasting is done by some individuals stationed in areas difficult to reach. Consequently, this method has characterized al-Qaida's work since this time.

Think of the example set by the French thinker, Gilles Kepel in his book *Sedition: The War in the Heart of Islam*, on the way of communication between the al-Qaida leader and the press, especially the journalists of al-Jazeera as a model for the process of arranging a meeting, registering and sending it, and then broadcasting it to spread the values, goals, and perceptions of al-Qaida—a process that could take a month or sometimes two. Keppel says that an interview with the al-Qaida leader Osama Bin Laden with the al-Jazeera correspondent, Tayseer Allouni, was registered on 21 October 2001 but was broadcast only in December. Bin Laden did not announce then his personal responsibility for these bombings, but he said: "The values of the West, led by the United States, destroyed the great symbol of the enormous twin towers which represented freedom and human rights; all that have just become smoke." (Kepel, 2004, p.161) The al-Jazeera channel broadcast a video on 17 October 2001, in which Bin Laden and several of his followers showed delighted in the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center (Labévière, 2011), even though Bin Laden said in this tape: "I would like to say to the world that I did not plan the current attack, which apparently was personally motivated action." (Anonymous, 2001)

However, it seemed crystal clear that al-Qaida did not want the Internet alone to be the tool, but wanted it to be a method from which to move to the most traditional and prevalent media, which is what actually happened. Many media rely on the Internet. The Iraqi academic researcher Kazem Miqdadi confirms this fact by saying:

Al-Qaida is trying through its various institutions to present news in a way which forces traditional media to transmit such news to a wider audience. It is from time to time that we watch the important events broadcast on the Internet by al-Qaida and forced traditional media, particularly the TV stations to transfer it to a wider public for the interest of al-Qaida. (Saleha, 2008)

By choosing the Internet in particular and the media in general, the radical Islamist groups including al-Qaida took advantage of the assumed energies that depended both on the axis of communication, information, propaganda, and attracting followers, or on the funding level and goal setting (Udrescu, 2011, p.106).

Thus, all evidence indicates that the Internet has fallen into the grip of al-Qaida, a tool more powerful and more

widespread than any other. It is, as described by a media expert, “the Kalashnikov (AK 47 rifle), and the rocket of terrorist organizations now” (Al Sheikh, 2009).

Since the bombings of New York and Washington in 2001, followed by other explosions in Jerba of Tunisia, Bali, Mombasa in 2002, then in Riyadh, Casablanca in 2003, Madrid in 2004, London and Amman in 2005, and Algeria in 2010 in addition to hundreds of operations in Baghdad, we have been receiving the voice of Bin Laden at spaced periods, accompanied by video cassettes in which he congratulated his followers on the losses inflicted upon the “infidels”, on the one hand, and threatens those infidels of new retaliation if they do not leave the Muslim countries or if they are subjected to Islamic tradition, which contradicts with the principles of secularism in the countries of old Europe (De Cessole, 2009, p.11).

The US Senate reached a conclusion that linked between terrorism and the media, particularly in the picture element. In a report on “Terrorism and the Internet” the US Senate pointed out that there was excessive use of the Internet by al-Qaida in the battle of controlling hearts and minds, and that there were serious concerns of US citizens’ vulnerability to the Internet sites of al-Qaida and their being influenced by them (Al Sheikh, 2009). The report, entitled “Islamic violent extremism, the Internet and the growing terrorist threat at home” adds that have been “a wide spread media system run by media association belonging to the organization, which intensively exploits the Internet” (Ibid.).

This was supported by Gabriel Weimann, the researcher at the American Institute for Peace, in his book *Terrorism on the Internet* when he said:

The Internet is a good arena, and a new challenge. The number of fundamental sites has increased since the announcement of the establishment of the global front to fight the Jews and the Crusaders from about 12 sites in 1998 to about 4,800 sites now. (Ibid.)

The resort of al-Qaida to the Internet was not only because it is a tool able to publish media discourse safely, quickly, and widely, but also because it is the most important tool of connection and communication between the executive branches of the organization and its infrastructure, which is often separated by vast geographical distances and safer security conditions that prevent it from achieving practical communication, as well as being an effective tool for collecting donations directly or by Islamic charity societies associated with the organization.

In short, the images displayed to users of the Internet, as the French thinker Régis Debray says, “are full of endless meanings” (Debray, 1992, p.29). The use of images and propaganda is based on “passing an idea” (Ibid, p.68). But al-Qaida went on using media technology, especially the Internet, to apply its ideology by establishing what might be called “electronic tombs”,

in which Islamic sites established on the Internet acted as a large number of tombs to glorify the jihadists who had been killed in suicide attacks, or in clashes with the US Army in Iraq or Afghanistan (Abdul Haleem, 2010, p.118).

3. AL-QAIDA MEDIA ESTABLISHMENTS

The organization media face the strongest communication devices and media organizations in the world. The US has recruited dozens of agencies and study centres, hundreds of media and security experts, to confront and reduce its impact. al-Qaida media is produced, implemented, and distributed by four centres of media production which broadcast their messages online, namely, al-Sahab Centre—which is attached to al-Qaida presidency, al-Furqan Centre—which belongs to al-Qaida in Iraq, and the Media Committee Centre—which is the branch of the organization media in North Africa, in addition to the Voice of Jihad centre—which is interested in al-Qaida activities in the Arabian Peninsula (Askar, 2008).

Since 2000, al-Qaida established its media production company, namely the al-Sahab Foundation in reference to the clouds in the misty mountain peaks in Afghanistan. Until 2005, this organization was the largest and the most important in the al-Qaida information network centres that relies on sending its publications to satellite channels such as al-Jazeera station.

Sometimes the organization broadcasts some recordings on the Internet for short periods, but there has been large technical progress exploited by this institution, which began to expand transmission by showing videos directly on the Internet, and utilizing a global network of anonymous website officials to secure transmission of these materials. In 2005, al-Sahab released 16 video recordings and substantially improved the quality of materials produced by making videos of many languages in 3D technology (Abu Atta’, 2007).

In this context, Muhammad Amir, the Director of the Pak Institute for Peace Studies, a centre think tank particularly in Lahore, Pakistan, says: “If you want to stop al-Qaida on the media front, you will have to forget Osama Bin Laden and focus on the information technology director in this organization.” (Ibid.). Whitelook says:

Al-Sahab can now record and produce videos in a surprising speed. This was demonstrated when troops stormed the Pakistani “Red Mosque” in Islamabad on the tenth of July 2007, an incident that left eighty people dead. Then Al Zawahiri issued quickly a video in which he described the raid as a criminal act of aggression. (Ibid.)

A US specialized security report tried to follow up a visual media product of al-Qaida’s media institutions from the moment of production to the moment of being watched by viewers. The report-writers imagined the Talisman Taliban and the confidential journey as follows:

When Bin Laden wishes to deliver a speech, a reliable photographer is summoned for a safe house somewhere in Pakistan to film and edit it. Then the video is stored on a very small memory chip, and handed over to the (carrier). The chip usually passes through many persons for camouflage, and then a certain agent receives it and uploads it on the Internet in Default Pakistani cafe. Upon subjecting al-Qaida tapes to technical analysis operations, specialists confirm that al-Sahab studio is provided with some of the best technologies in the world. The file is protected by a ciphered system almost impossible to penetrate. It is a system used by intelligence agencies in various countries around the world. This piece of information reinforced the conviction that elements of al-Qaida are not just hiding in caves; it is possible that the media show their products on the Internet in less than a week of recording. (Al-Sheikh, 2009)

Apparently, it seemed clear that there was inflation in al-Qaida videos and messages that gradually swept the space since 2002. And there have been many organizations and terrorist movements that have produced this kind of movie and message, and abundantly broadcast them over the Internet in several languages, through al-Sahab, al-Fajr, the Global Islamic media front, and others (Kimmage, 2010). In any case, the relationship between messages, videos, propaganda, and terrorist bombings has become interrelated (Udrescu, 2011, p.106).

Despite what we have said about the importance of al-Qaida's 'media machine institutions' and its role and effectiveness, the observer of the media issue of this organization could notice a fall in its momentum and its impact on the people.

Akram Hijazi, the Jordanian researcher and academic, believes that the last months of 2007 saw distinguished and abundant media influx. Apart from his first speech on 7 September 2007, after a long absence Osama Bin Laden delivered a speech to the people of Pakistan on 20 September 2007, followed by another speech to the people of Iraq on 23 October 2007 and another one to the people of Europe on 29 November 2007. Ayman Al-Zawahiri followed in Bin Laden's footsteps. He commented on the events of the Red Mosque in Pakistan on 11 July 2007 and on the honouring of Salman Rushdie on 10 October 2007 by the Queen of Britain, and on 4 November 2007 he announced the accession of the Islamic Fighting Group in Libya to al-Qaida (Hijazi, 2007). However, the following years have proved that the media is contrary to all expectations of the last months of 2007. It began to witness a steady decline in its quantity, type, and its ability to influence the Arab and Islamic street. This decline was for two reasons:

(a) **The Gaza War 2006:** There were changes in the Arab arena, starting from the Gaza War in 2006, which made the public's sympathy focus on those who "fight Israel" on the field, instead of those who stand in the shadows as ghosts doing nothing, but threatening. At the same time, they occupied themselves with the Arab governments instead of focusing their energies and abilities on facing Israel, which proved a fragile state after the

confrontations of Gaza, and southern Lebanon in 2008.

(b) **The Arab Spring 2011:** The Arab popular movement, or the "Arab Spring", shows that toppling regimes is the people's option rather than that of the organizations that fight in secret, and that peace may happen without the need for taking up arms in the face of regimes, as happened in Egypt and Tunisia, for example.

The clear and direct question remains: Did the Arab Spring have impact on the media institution and discourse of al-Qaida?

It is possible to find an answer to this question in the detailed report issued by the American International Research Center based in New York. This report states that

the revolution of Egypt, in particular, has defeated most important claims in justifying terrorist operations. This revolution has proven its ability to bring about change peacefully and without any resort to violence, while the repeated speech of al-Qaida focuses on the armed violence as the only way for changing regimes. This analysis pointed to the change in the Arab revolutions which renounced violence and weakened Al-Qaida argument and put it in a historic impasse, because the Arab revolutions proved practically that there are other ways of change. The results of these revolutions oppose al-Qaida approach, which represents a vicious circle of armed violence and bloodshed. (Al-Ghamri, 2011)

This principle did not fall alone, but took with it other principles that are considered some of the most important tools of al-Qaida: i.e. convincing its leaders that the operations leave behind enormous bangs explosions that make al-Qaida constantly exist in the World media coverage, while the Egypt revolution proved through its 'peaceful and civilized' character to have attracted all written and visual media, and remained the main daily news subject. Therefore, there was an agreement on many of the discussions that took place in the West, that the revolution in Egypt, in particular, has put al-Qaida's ideas and principles into a historic and strategic dilemma (Ibid.).

CONCLUSION

After the assassination of Osama Bin Laden by the CIA in Pakistan on 1 April 2011, the question that arose was: Will al-Qaida try to exploit the death of its leader to make a new start in his media discourse after a long period of stagnation and retreat that made him lose his contact with the Arab masses?

Ayman Al-Zawahiri, the second man in al-Qaida, issued a videotape on 8 June 2011, in which he mourned Osama Bin Laden. On the one hand, he called for the continuation of war against the United States, and on the other hand he praised the popular revolutions raging currently in Syria, Yemen, and Libya. In that tape, Al-Zawahiri confirmed "the need to continue Jihad to expel

the invaders from the lands of Islam and clear it from injustice". In that speech, he threatened the US by saying it would "regret greatly for the assassination of the organization leader" (Al-Quds, 2011).

Does this mean that preparations are under way for an operation or perhaps for more than a retaliatory operation to avenge the killing of Sheikh Al-Qaida, to reorganize its followers who are the street and the international media as well as the politicians' talk for over a decade? Will we see soon the production of a huge military action and a confident media discourse, of which its absence put the organization at the stage of aging? Does the language of violence launched by this organization against the US as the leader of the "Crusading West" still exist, as it is the most effective way to deal with the contemporary Jewish crusade invasion of the Arab and Islamic nations? Has this all ended forever and was the killing of Bin Laden not the way in which America, announcing the demise of "al-Qaida violence", found for itself and the world new enemies and more serious violence?

The answer to the previous questions, whether negatively or positively, is based on the knowledge of the true position that the first man occupied in managing the media institutions and in the employment of media tools to pass the political and religious discourse of the organization. In this regard, Dr Diaa Rashwan, an expert at al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, "believes that the credit for finding the media strategy through which al-Qaida was able to get to the world is attributed to Osama Bin Laden himself" (Askar, 2008).

In fact, what Diaa Rashwan refers to is not the whole truth. If his words are true and apply to the early stages of the organization when Bin Laden used to guide and control al-Qaida media discourse, the emergence of bright names in the media empire of the organization over the past years has seemed clear to be at high levels of efficiency in dealing with high-tech media. Thus, we can put our hands on the other face of the truth of the media: it is the face that helps us to imagine the future, which shows the ability of the organization in using the media, whether by the same efficiency or perhaps more efficiently than it was before the death of its leader.

Despite the fact that the death of Bin Laden, as some believe, was a crucial point between two important phases in the life of al-Qaida, even at the media level, which some observers believe will be weaker than it was, due to the charisma that the first man in the organization enjoyed,

relying on this point as it is the truth which will govern the future discourse of al-Qaida, will not be based on objective grounds nor show a high degree of neutrality. As long as the organization still exists militarily, and its media changed long ago to a well established one not based on the nature of the main commander's character, as much as it is based on the efficiency of media cadres that have appeared over the organization years. (Al-Quds, 2011)

The fact proven by the media discourse after September 2011 is that the military field factor is the "thermometer" of its media performance. Hence, those who want to identify the future of this performance compared with its past and present should linger and watch the basic confrontation between the organization and the "Crusader West", as the organization calls it, namely the military action field.

In any case, it is ironic of the "war of images" between al-Qaida and its Western enemies and their Arab allies that "Bin Laden emerged as a star on the media pages on September 11, 2001, but his image came out of the media ignored when he was killed on May 1, 2011" (De Cessole, 2009, p.11). Nevertheless some, such as the French diplomat Jean-Christophe Rufin, say "Bin Laden became bigger after his death than he was alive; he will become a reference character, like Mohammed and Salah Al-Din, and he will remain a symbolic figure in the future." (Jean-Christophe, 2011)

The military aspects: The final result of al-Qaida's role in its relationship with the US (the biggest enemy) represents a success, as it intentionally or unintentionally dragged the US after September 11 into two 'preventive wars' in Afghanistan and Iraq, using 132.000 military of whom 90.000 were from the US in an international coalition of 37 countries. The US used 170.000 US military and a high financial cost amounted to 1204 billion dollars dedicated to the war in these two countries, not to mention the budget that amounted to 130 billion dollars each year to follow up its security operations (Sylvain, 2011).

As for the outcome of the conflict between al-Qaida and the West in general and the US in terms of intellectual aspect, we fully agree with the view of the French scholar Pierre Clermont who sees in political Islam represented by al-Qaida, "the grand phase in facing of modernity against the West". Clermont linked al-Qaida to the totalitarian communism, which also rejected modernity more extremely (Clermont, 2004). Therefore, political Islam lives in an imaginary world with a unilateral vision that makes it a movement of which one "cannot figure out its reactions, and thus, any dialogue with it becomes impossible" (Sylvain, 2011)

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