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Charlie Hebdo: “zombie”, a new terrorism paradigm

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France: geographically at the heart of the Europe and the heart of its culture in terms of freedom. A journal: that like any media, represent the freedom of speech. A Jewish market: supposedly crowded few hours before the beginning of the Shabbat. Those have been the targets of the terroristic attacks that have kept the world with bated breath for 55 hours and that resulted in the death of 16 civilians, 2 police officers and 3 terrorists.

We have been posting notes and comments (www.itstime.it) to what was happening since immediately after the shooting at Cherlie Hebdo, throughout all the manhunt, till the conclusion of the blitzs in Dammartin-en-Goële and Porte de Vincennes. What was clear soon after the release of the videos on terrorist escape from the satiric Journal was the confirmation of the evolution of terrorism which is shaping as an “hybrid war”: a new war scenario determined by the diversity of the actors that are in the running, arms and targets and the battlefield which is identified by attackers’ possibilities and victims’ vulnerability and not by geographic aspects.

First of all we are it has been clear that the threat is diffuse as the number of **returnees trained** in one of the numerous training camps is enough to generate a systematic issue to the extent that the are precisely the greatest threat brought in each European countries.

Moreover, claims over the responsibility of the attacks supports the analysis of the **problematic relationship between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State**: the two brothers that attack Charlie Hebdo claim their affiliation to AQAP (Al-Qaeda of the Arabic Peninsula), IS declare from Mosul its authorship for the massacre, Coulibaly from Paris claims to be of Daesh. The latter affiliation relates to IS using a vocabulary generally perceived as negative by militants themselves but “mandatory” in France for media after French authorities indications in September 2014: thus the best way to get the message through.

However, what is the most striking confirmation regards terrorists’ profile and their way of action.

Firstly, **terrorists are military trained to use firearms in urban environment**. That supports British MI5 reports about specific trainings and expertise in Syrian battlefields, where the scenario is mainly urban. A confirmation of the military training can be also traced in the ultimate decision

to go out of the typography and engage with the special forces instead of choosing the “martyrdom”.

Their training is not about logistic aspects, rather it is only focused on operative procedures specific for a situation. In this regard it is highly important to analyse how the two attacks were related to each other: the police has not probably foreseen this connection when the shooting of the policewoman happened. However, was the connection planned in advance or was that a reactive reply to Charlie attack? **Probably it has developed according to a general agreed plan but following an improvisation modality:** the second attack was the operative support of a fighter to a companion in difficulty, aimed at multiplying authorities’ efforts. It hasn’t been a multiple attack (planned) but a **multiple reply (reactive)**.

Furthermore, **old ways of understanding terrorism**, both by authorities and academics, as composed of cells and lone wolves are no longer valid.

Cells are small autonomous groups, expert in performing specific roles, embedded within a command and control chain well coordinated and sufficiently rigid.

Lone wolves are not coordinated individuals, with poor operative skills, highly dangerous for their capability in improvisation.

What we refers as **hybrid war is made by zombie**.

In the cyber domain zombie are infected computers that remain harmless until an external stimulus activate them towards a specific target.

In the hybrid war what we call **zombie are individuals that are expert and trained to fight, that find themselves into semi-structured and flexible nets, characterized also by “sentimental” and soft links, and that hit following an “internal” or “external” reasons** (Note: Dabiq, the IS magazine indicated the Charlie’s director as one of the targets)

So no more cells, no more lone wolves, but only zombies.

At this point it is licit to wonder what are our arms to fight this hybrid war. Generally, it is fundamental that moderate Islam stands up and dissociates itself from acts like those happened in France. However, the main challenge that Europe has now to face has to do with legislation. The media are today discussing what went wrong with the intelligence to allow terrorist to commit such an attack. They have been known and monitored since years but they eventually managed to ravage Paris in a three-days chaos. **There is an impellent need for a solid legal and normative framework** that can allow intelligence forces and authorities to monitor and stop suspected people. Monitoring activities, especially focused on flight records and the Internet as the main source for auto-radicalization and the medium for propaganda, have to be regulated so to determine the needed level of authorization and the allowed scope of investigation in accordance with the privacy regulation. All these regulations should be aimed at stopping people suspected of providing assistance to those who are willing to leave Europe to join jihad militants in the East to be trained and those who come back from those areas.

Having said that, Paris events have once again demonstrated that our Institutions are **a step behind our enemies** that are instead extremely able to exploit our vulnerabilities.