The return of global jihad?

The humiliating US withdrawal from Afghanistan is likely to provide impetus to terror organizations in the Middle East, but the Taliban isn't expected to give them the infrastructure they need to execute mega-attacks as they did the previous time they were in power.

By Yoav Limor / Published on 09-03-2021

The world was stunned by last week's terrorist attack at the Kabul International Airport. It wasn't just the death toll or the humiliation suffered by the United States. The suicide bombing brought global jihad back into the headlines, and, to be more specific, it has created a feeling that what has just happened in Afghanistan is a prelude to the return of the global jihadi terrorism that struck the world through much of the past two decades.

[…]

According to a **report** released by the **Institute for National Security Studies**, there was a decline of some 14% in suicide bombings in 2020 in comparison to the previous year. The decline is part of an ongoing trend since 2018. Most terrorist attacks were carried out by Salafi jihadist organizations adhering to Salafist ideologies that seek to return Islam to its original pure form - to the ancestors (salaf) - and to impose Sharia law.

[…]

Yoram Schweitzer, a former senior Military Intelligence officer and head of the **INSS** Program on Terrorism and Low-Intensity Conflict, cautions that "we are always making the same mistake of basing our forecast for the future on our past experience."

"Al-Qaida and ISIS will try and take advantage of the situation to awaken the masses, but they don't have the infrastructure they used to. In 2014, the Sunni provinces in Iraq were weak because they were neglected by the Iraqi government and so they didn't put up a fight in Mosul. In Syria, the central government was weakened by the civil war. Al Baghdadi gambled by establishing the Islamic State – and failed. He overstepped the mark when he thought he could come out well from an altercation with the rest of the world."

Schweitzer concurs that the Taliban won't give terrorist organizations carte blanche to operate from Afghan territory. "They have learned their lesson," he says. "I believe this can only happen in failed states like Yemen or Somalia where jihadi-Salafist organizations can blossom. The chances of this happening in other states are very low unless there is another Black Swan event like the Arab Spring."

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