

# Terrorism and Its 'Globalization'

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**Abstract.** The rise of individualism, the end of the Cold War, and the increasing role of non-state actors have caused international relations to transform into a much more complex system. This new system has created many communities which feel themselves to be victims. Such populations may abandon rational debate and retreat into 'learned despair', only communicating through violence. Regional conflicts have spread, and this has in turn been exploited by the hegemonic powers as they seek to consolidate their positions. Many more conflicts are likely to result from the growth in world population, climate change, energy and water shortages. In this context, terrorist groups are likely to base their ideologies on the two most enduring elements of popular identity: religion and ethnicity. This paper also analyzes the term 'global terrorism', and finds that what is called 'global terrorism' is no different from earlier terrorism.

**Keywords.** Terrorism, future threats to stability, environmental threats to security, terrorist ideologies, 'global terrorism'.

The continuing rise of individualism, a universal problem in this age of information and communication technologies and increasing expectations, has eroded the fundamental values of societies, including solidarity and cooperation. Also, with regard to finding solutions to today's social problems, there is the fact that when people raise their voices against unfair treatment it is often recognized too late.

As the Cold War ended with the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the international scene changed from the common forms which had dominated international relations. Increasingly we witnessed the participation of non-state actors, including single-issue campaigners and militant groups, and this contributed to the creation of a new environment. At this time, it was realized—very late—that the conventional cause/reason analyses had lost their bearings.

Through NATO and the Warsaw Pact, dominated respectively by USA and the USSR, international relations had been compressed between two blocks. The comforts of interpretation in this plane of deconstruction ended, the participation of new civilian and non-states actors in the system led to greater complexity, and the implications of these changes were only recognized very late.

After the bi-polar Cold War era the blocks dissolved, and many of the familiar state-level conflicts ended, while other conflicts emerged. In a new, unstable and unaccustomed process, new structures were constantly developing, and these forced countries to alter their known positions, recognized

attitudes, stereotyped behavior and reactions. As a result, it has gradually become harder to estimate what elements will be drawn into the states' and non-state actors' efforts to reach their political and economic targets. If perceptions are locked onto permanent alliances and their unchangeability, it will be difficult to find out the nature of the new threats. The reductive analyses which draw their references from the sovereignty conflicts caused by the Western/Eastern composition are very deficient for interpreting the roots of today's political developments, with the new formations, changing interests, and the conflicts they cause.

From the socio-economic and socio-cultural point of view, the masses of people who feel themselves excluded, denigrated, exploited, and subjected to unfair treatment have gradually increased in number, and these 'grapes of wrath' have transformed into violence, with violence becoming an ever more widespread means of expression.

With an abandonment of rationalism, whether through 'Learned Despair',<sup>1</sup> or 'Passive Obedient Society',<sup>2</sup> or an unjust treatment psychology manifested in chosen traumas, certain societies follow these models and adopt an 'us and them' world view, which readily turns to violence based on radical religious sects and/or ethnic nationalist movements. The dialogue has turned into a monologue, settled situations have turned into conflicts, uniting has turned into disunity.

What we find is often a clear negligence of studying the root causes. In this process, where reductive analyses have lost their validity, our perceptions of terrorism must undergo a transformation and adapt to new interpretations. This is because, with terrorism having turned into an instrument applied and used by some states to obtain and carry forward their political and economic purposes and interests, the weak states, being subject to such operations, have caught an opportunity to fight the hegemonic powers.

This new era brought a transition from symmetry to asymmetry, from conventional, total and multilateral wars to low intensity fighting, from global and regional wars to local and internal conflicts, and to new traumatic war methods targeting the psychological destruction of people. At this point, some state sponsors, and religious and ethnic groups within states, whose economic and military power is not sufficient to confront the hostile or rival superior powers, have discovered terrorism as a new system of warfare to be used for reaching their aims and obtaining results.

Parallel to this, some powerful states have seen terrorism as the means to wage a 'covert war' to increase their power, to broaden their areas of dominance, to consolidate their positions, and exercise

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<sup>1</sup> Learned Despair: American psychologist Martin Seligman carried out a series of experiments on the behavior forms of trapped people and animals. He used dogs in these experiments and applied low voltage electricity shocks on dogs kept in a cage. He applied higher voltages to the ones who go to the gate to escape. 65% of the dogs, having tried to escape for a long time, gave up trying even though the gate of the cage was opened and no voltage was applied. Seligman defines this as 'learned despair', and proves that similar processes stimulate the same behavior also in humans. The most deterministic and devastating part of this finding, similar to the conditioned reflex theory of Pavlov, is that this inability occurs in people who always fail to overcome problems, leading them into a form of inertia (Int. Ter. and the Drug Connection, Ank. Ün., Ank. 1984, p. 148-151).

<sup>2</sup> Passive Obedient Society: This concept is based on a theory of which foundations were laid by Russian scientist Pavlov. Individuals and society, by means of scaring, misleading, almost hypnotized by their own fears, are forced to confuse what is true and what it not. With the loss of value judgments and an anarchy of concepts, constantly changing enemies and slogans confuse the masses and, in the end, a passive and indifferent population is formed. The societies formed by such individuals begin to accept all things that they refused in the past, even if they are harmful, with a passive obedience. Unable to distinguish the harmful from beneficial, such societies fail to analyze relations between cause and effect, any assume what is imposed on them as if it were their own thoughts (Int. Ter. and the Drug Connection, Ank. Ün., Ank. 1984, p. 153155).

control, in spite of the fact that international law and established rules do not allow them to use such methods.

As a result, the terrorism of today has evolved away from the accustomed definitions, well-known clichés, and methods against which countermeasures have been developed, into 'a half-military strategy' using technologies which are simple but effective.

Parallel to all these developments, since terrorism has been carried to the level which questions the hegemonic relationships of the globalized world, and since people have started to raise their voices more against the injustices of the status quo, we find that violence has grown into an anonymous style of expression and communication. Terrorism, going beyond its classical meaning, has turned into a kind of communication phenomenon based on modern technologies.

The world of today has become a much smaller place in terms of information exchange, communication, decision-making and supervision mechanisms, and this is the effect of globalization. This has made the terrorists' target selection easier, as people are far more conscious of the power centers of our smaller world. People are more aware of each other, and more aware of their perceived enemies.

By contrast, the principal powers have tried to consolidate their positions by spreading their military activities, sovereignty, interests and conflicts into neighboring areas. This is designed to prevent the conflict reaching inwards, to the centers of their political culture, and it can be seen as a prevention tactic to block conflicts which would otherwise be carried to those centers by a kind of centripetal force.

As a result of all these developments, the powers who want to increase and preserve their political and economic superiority and the terrorist groups who want to reach their targets have accordingly formed a supply/demand equilibrium, that is open to cooperation.

This assessment, related to formation of terrorism today, is not only aimed at perceiving the current process, but also at making projections as to terrorism's extent and effect as a threat after mutating in its own dynamic structure. Just as no prediction could have been formulated with regard to the current sources of threat on the basis of the 1970-1990-2000 periods alone, it is also impossible to make futuristic assessments based on the present sources of threat. Because the threats in the past lost their validity, as their root causes altered, the threat sources and perceptions will lose their validity by undergoing subjective and objective transformations.

Since the strong and oppressive socio-economic model that accompanies globalization is intervening in the 'nation-state', and the information technologies age is fuelling a hunger for information, the expectations of the masses are increasing throughout the world. This combination is worth scrutinizing as it creates a fertile ground for widespread terrorism in the form of religious and ethnic organizations.

It is above all the feeling of belonging among individuals that plays a principal role in the development of identities, and in the shaping of social structures. As these may emerge as religious and/or ethnic identities in time, the terrorist actions and groups based on the radical religious and

ethnic nationalism constitute the two main movements. These protect their continued existence by the promotion of ideological justifications.

These can be seen as times in which many ideologies have lost their effectiveness and importance, rejected, and as a result externalized, and replaced by individual conjectures. Against this background, religious faith and ethnic identity are two fundamental factors which are the key elements constituting social dynamics.

Throughout history, when separatist actions based on racism are examined neutrally, it can be observed that once these movements have emerged they never disappear, no matter how conditions change on the basis of the 'time-place-opportunity and ability' triangle.

After making their cause and: aims heard by violence-based actions, the separatist terrorist organizations work together with other illegal organizations (as these are equally against the system), and they all continue their struggles with tactics that aim to support each other in 'political and operational areas'.

The terrorists may retreat underground, or live a long period as sleepers and in silence, when there are conditions which do not suit them, or when their ideology is questioned. However, in spite of this tactic of withdrawal and postponing, they never depart from the aims that they decided to make their reason of being.

Separatist terrorist organizations, religious radicals, and ethnic nationalists, are all naturally supported, politically and economically, by some circles which are seeking to reach certain aims. Eventually this required categorical support enables these types of terrorist organizations to maintain the identities they have created, as well as their continued existence.

Once their continued existence as separatist terrorist organizations and their ability to preserve their identities are ensured, these characteristics transform the terror groups so that they become centers of attraction. The characteristics make them entities that should be supported, from the 'political and economic' points of view, both by some states and non state powers in their efforts to realize their aims and purposes.

Radical religious and ethnic separatist terrorist organizations need to preserve their existence for a long term in an effort to realize their purposes, and this is essential to their nature. In time they become hungry for political and economic support and open themselves to cooperation, based on transmitted parameters and changes. No terrorist organization would survive without the support of one or more states, or non-state actors, in the form of political or economic backing, or physical, covert or explicit support.

It is a proven fact that at the time of their foundation and emergence all terrorist organizations define themselves as idealist, and they believe in such idealism, but after some time, for financial reasons, they form relations and cooperate with criminal organizations.

In order to meet their logistical needs, for accommodation, arms, explosives, communication assets, fake passports, identity cards, propaganda means, and intelligence activities, terrorist organizations need funds.

Once they grow numerous, and transfer their activities from the local perspective to the international arena, their financial requirements increase. Accordingly, they begin marketing their malicious activities, and they associate more with powerful circles who could support them, rather than with organized crime organizations.

At this juncture some states and/or non-state actors intervene in terrorist activities to realize their objectives. Frequently, terrorist organizations move their activities beyond their own objectives in order to provide armed and political services to others.

Since the activities of organized crime organizations are especially focused on the smuggling of humans, arms, drugs and nuclear materials, a parallel system starts to work. The two types of organization feed off each other, and create structures utilizing human resources, communication, transportation, and protection networks, and aiming to meet the logistical requirements of the terrorist organizations.

Looking into the future, one can only estimate that there will be increasing local and regional conflicts, with limited conflicts transforming into a new war and pay-back method. When making predictions about the world in the years 2015-2025-2050, one can only perceive increasingly widespread terrorism.

The reasons for the prediction of growing conflict are found in the fact that each threat has its own sources and roots as to time, space and conditions. In 2000, the world sustains a population of 6.1 billion, which will grow to 7.2 billion by 2015, and 9.1 billion by 2050. The resources necessary for preserving our life and welfare will be shared by a further 1.1 billion new people 8 years from now, and 3 billion new people 43 years from now. This should be a satisfactory evidence of increasing threat perceptions.<sup>3</sup>

Dwindling primary energy resources (petrol, natural gas, coal, etc.), which are necessary to maintain our well-being, and decreasing water resources, which are essential for life, and the resultant depletion of agricultural land, make future conflict more unavoidable.

It is wise to consider that 80% of the increase in the world's population will take place in under-developed and developing countries, so that, by 2015, 45% of the global population will be in four countries (China, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia), by 2025, 60% of the global population will reside in 6 countries (China, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iran, and Bangladesh), and, by 2050, 80% of the world's population will be concentrated in Asia and the Middle East. It can be foreseen that the sources and root causes of the threats caused by these changing equilibriums will undergo a considerable alteration.

Asia and the Middle East will see increases in population density. These are areas where energy reserves are concentrated (67.8% of the oil reserves are in Middle East, 80% of natural gas reserves are in the Middle East and Asia). In view of the demographic variations mentioned, the conflicts due to the displacement of the centers of gravity will become much more severe.

30% of the world's population, expected to reach 7.1 billion in 2015, will be endangered by a lack of water, while over 30 countries, particularly those in the Middle East, Northern Africa and Central Asia, will provide for their water requirements from cross-border running waters. The water shortages

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<sup>3</sup> *Climate Change 2007, The Physical Basis*, <http://www.ipcc.ch>.

will increase due to global warming and the growth in population. These facts all show that sharing water will become an issue of primary importance in the foreseeable future.

Today, developed countries hold 11% of energy resources while their share of total consumption is 80%. On the other hand, under-developed and developing countries hold 89% of the resources, but use only 20% of total consumption. These are very significant concerns for threat perceptions of the future.

Countries holding most of the energy resources in their soil, either due to their increasing population or their increasing prosperity, are forced to increase their consumption accordingly. The disadvantages this brings for industrialized countries, which do not have such energy resources, could turn into new conflicts.

Climatic zone displacements, unpredictable rainfall, and draughts due to global warming will turn some areas of settlement into places where human life is not possible, causing migrations of up to 2 billion people by 2050. This new 'migration of the nations' will cause cultural conflicts, which are even now evident as new threat perceptions of the future.<sup>4</sup>

The predictions of UN Global Warming Reports state that in the next century 30% of the world's current land mass could lie under water. In consideration of this, the conflicts of the future will be for survival rather than increasing and preserving prosperity, and in turn, the level of violence could be beyond our imagination.

Leaving for a moment the threat perceptions of future, and returning to the history of terrorism, most of the ideologically based terrorist organizations have been forced to leave the arena since the subjective and objective parameters supporting their very existence have been eliminated. However, violent movements which based themselves on one or both of two factors have survived, although somehow transformed, and it seems that their survival will go on for much longer, perhaps even to eternity. These two factors, the roots of which have not undergone an alteration, although there have been formal changes, are 'religion' and 'ethnic (racist) nationalism'.

Today, although the primary reason for terrorist movements and conflicts may differ, the part of their thinking reflected to the surface is generally based on religion and ethnicity, and it is globalized under such identities. The reasoning for and timing of the inclusion of 'global terror' as a phrase in the literature should be studied in more detail. Terrorism, which has existed throughout the history of humanity, and which it appears will throughout the future of humanity, goes beyond the local, country specific, regional levels and becomes global. The existence of this global status should be investigated.

The milestone for terror's being mentioned with the adjective 'global' is generally thought to be the 9/11 airplane attacks on World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington (USA). In spite of the overseas operations of the USA in retaliation for these imaginative and startling attacks, the globalizing of terrorism was not mentioned as a claim or as a reality, and not turned into a theory. If, based on this terrorist attack suffered by the USA, terrorism is considered to gain a global identity with global targets, then the attacks of ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for Liberation of Armenia) and JCAG (Justice Commandos for Armenian Genocide) between 1975 and 1986, which took place over five continents, in twenty-two countries, including 699 operations, and killing seventy-two people, thirty-nine of whom were Turkish diplomats and their families, could well be the first

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<sup>4</sup> *Climate Change 2007, The Physical Basis*, <http://www.ipcc.ch>.

examples of the global terror.<sup>5</sup> Or the terrorist operation of Al-Fateh and PFLP (Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine) against Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, or the hijacking of Lufthansa planes to Entebbe, should be acknowledged as having a global identity in terms of their targets and geographical location.

In the 1970s, where the said overseas terrorist acts took place, 'global terrorism' and the threat of it were not even named. This necessitates making a more credible identification for this concept.

The heterogeneous character of a terrorist organization's membership, in contrast to organizations where the terrorists belong the same nation, race or religion, could be considered as a basis for the 'global terrorism', taking the 9/11 attacks as a milestone. Yet this is unacceptable.

The geographical spread, the variety of the targets of the operations, and the different religious and racial ties of the members of the organization, do not constitute the emergence of a new concept, nor require us to coin a new term which puts the words 'terror' and 'global' together. So the question 'what are we to understand as global terrorism's definition?' still remains unsolved.

Since the terrorist attacks in the USA called '9/11' provide the birth date for this term, and as we know the organization behind these attacks is referred to as Al-Qaeda, is it possible to define 'global terrorism' in categories provided in this single, narrow box? With an operating capacity in a vast geography (global from the geographical point of view), with its militants belonging to various nations (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Algeria, UK, Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, Somalia, etc.), is it scientifically possible to define Al-Qaeda as a global terrorist organization, forgetting its Sunni-Wahhabi roots? Al-Qaeda's being turned into a manifesto, with various organizations sharing the same views and hatred carrying out their operations using the title Al-Qaeda in some form of 'franchising' system, with a horizontal structure rather than a vertical one, could be given as an example of global terrorism. At this point, what gains a global identity is not the operation under the franchise of Al-Qaeda, but the ideological standing of those organizations.

There is an internal contradiction in the arguments aimed at a definition of global terrorism (from the point of geography and homogeneity). One point of reference of far-reaching significance remains, and it focuses on the fact that the socio-political order imposed by globalization is what in fact globalizes the terrorism. In summary we can say that 'globalization has turned terror into a global phenomenon'.

Nevertheless, in spite of this interconnection between the globalized order and global terrorism, this theory is just hollow rhetoric from the scientific point of view. This is because globalization faces a dynamic process within itself, with unique parameters. As such, terrorism updates itself and adapts to new conditions, it changes and acquires a different dynamic structure and identity. So the theory that one of these independent and distinct dynamic processes is the result of another, in other words, that global terrorism is the result of globalization, contradicts scientific reality.

At this point we can support the claim that interference in nation-states results from the pressurizing and self-imposing socio-economic model of globalization, accompanied by the widespread information opportunities of the communication era, and the claim that this causes a more

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<sup>5</sup> *Strategic Analysis, ASAM Publications, Ömer Engin Lütem, issue 89, p. 44.*

severe terrorism, turning it into a way of expression, the basis of which is violence. We cannot, however, agree from a deterministic point of view, that it has 'created' terror.

In comparison with the recent past, when communication means were not at today's level, and when one-sided information sources or means of communication were available, today it is not easy to exercise control on the news sources. People have much higher expectations of the authorities, and raise their voices against unfair treatment, and the age of information has created a global human society with an unlimited hunger for information.

Accordingly, one of the primary reasons for the delusion of identifying the words 'terrorism' and 'global' derives from the unrestricted access of people to information in whatever part of the world. As a consequence of the speed of the information network and its wide-reaching availability, which have converted societies from a closed model into an open one, we can be led to delusory results. For example, about attacks which existed before, but which we neglected through lack of information. Merely because their number has increased we are prone to accept global terrorism as a new concept.

In fact, terrorism always existed, from the Roman Empire of Tiberius and Caligula, to Hasan Sabbah's Hashashis, the Sicari of the Israelis, the first and second reigns of terror of the French Revolution, with the law applied by the Paris Revolutionary Court presided over by Robespierre,<sup>6</sup> the Narodnaya Volya and Narodnicks in the Russia of the Czars,<sup>7</sup> the separatists of Corsica, the Tamil guerillas, the Contras of Guatemala, ETA and the IRA.

The emergence of terrorist violence as products of the West's contradiction with its own values caused meant the imprisonment of terrorism within the boundaries of a state ended, although there had been no need to turn it into a global threat. Only after terror's transformation into a new kind of war in societies which are insulted, externalized, exploited or imposed, and 'others', have people come to realize that it formed a common threat to the entire humanity.

This new kind of terror or covert war has become a source of power for the neighboring countries and the radical religious and ethnic communities therein. They do not require improved and superior technology, a strong and healthy economy, large armies, a sophisticated armament system, but only require limited but dedicated human resources, which are very cheap, but very effective and traumatic with regard to their outcome.

Some dominant powers transferred power and interest conflicts to the surrounding countries, rather than see the conflicts reach inwards to their centers. They imposed it on the 'others' for the purpose of reinforcing and making permanent their own existence, and in order to control and direct the communities, and the surrounding countries. They started transferring such wars to these areas, making use of terror as an instrument, and creating a new dilemma. This era of new and global terrorism can be defined as a reversal of a centrifugal force and a transformation of the attracting power of the centers into repulsion.

It is possible that when one addresses directly the cause-result relations of today's global terrorism, which are left to a confusion of concepts and definitions, one finds that the fact causing this mental confusion and global terrorism is in fact a very plain one. Either the mental confusion caused by the

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<sup>6</sup> Larousse Encyclopedia, 1985, Istanbul, volume 11.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., volume, 11, p. 341.

variability of global dynamics, or the incredible disinformation campaign which is the natural result of the information age, has forced people into a mental laziness, and instead of reaching their own 'fact' through research, investigation and questioning, they absorb and accept the 'facts' of others as if their own. So the term 'global terrorism' does not have a scientific basis.

The sources which define the 'global terrorism' concept as a common threat to humanity should objectively answer the question of why they failed to define terrorism as 'global' or 'a common threat against humanity' when it was aimed Latin America, Europe, the Middle East or the Far East.

The conclusions of this paper do not of course mean that terror is not a strong and anonymous threat. Terrorism is an undeniable threat, because, in addition to its damage, it targets normative values and perceptions of humanity. Our behaviors are based on normative value systems, as a set of unwritten rules forming our lives and our perceptions, but these are totally strange to the members of terrorist organizations. According to terrorists, the set of rules which are valid for our personal and social lives are obsessions, artificialities, and deviations. This is because all the values forming terrorist behaviors and their thought structures are normative ones within their own subjective worlds. A terrorist organization's identity is either ideological, religious or ethnic-nationalist, and their judgments will not change at any time or under any conditions.

The primary aspect that differentiates terrorists in ideological organizations is their sense of belonging and identity. People's sense belonging forms a reverse pyramid, beginning with the immediate surroundings. At the base of the pyramid is belonging to the nuclear family (parents and siblings), then the close environment (relatives, friends, school, professional colleagues, etc.), belonging to one's own society (large family), belonging to the locality (neighborhood, village, city, country), and in the end, belonging to the nation as a large society, and this turns a geography into a motherland with the spread of national ideas.

Isolating people from their sense of belonging means cutting the roots which are the arteries connecting them to life. The sense of belonging of terrorists have been formed, however, on a very different basis. The individuality of terrorists has been destroyed. They have gained a collective identity, so their only sense of belonging is to their organization. They are isolated from their past and deliberately taken away from their former affiliations, which are defined as harmful to their normative values. So terrorists see their organization as a source of life, and define their belonging to the organization as a reincarnation.

Since the strongest sense of belonging people can has been shown over time to be to religion and ethnic identity, these two factors in the development and forming of terrorists' identities play a dominant role. As a matter of fact, terrorist movements and groups based on radical religion and ethnic nationalism are the most threatening ones. Because of this, terrorist organizations formed through racist nationalism and radical religious components have a high level of dedication, leading to a much greater severity of violence in comparison to other types.

We should also emphasize that Islam's relation and even identification with violence and terror after 9/11 is a totally subjective approach, if not a deliberate tactic. It is impossible to say that Serbian nationalism/racism in Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo, dominated by orthodoxies, is different to, or less than, that of the Taliban with its Wahhabi origins in Afghanistan.

Societies which lack hope transform themselves and prioritize religion, forming narrow and closed spiritual societies (congregations) with a closed circuit of relations. Ethnic groups consider themselves to be unjustly treated and become racist-nationalist ones. The founding sensations for these two are identical at one point. Another common element of radical religious terrorist organizations and racist separatist terrorist organizations is the effort to preserve their identities, although they have been transformed objectively with the passage of time.

Racist and separatist terrorist organizations, forming illegal structures to challenge the system, publicize their causes through violent operations. After that they transform themselves into political movements and continue their struggle with tactical practices, and the political and military fields support each other. The terrorists may go to underground when conditions are unfavorable, or have a long dormant periods, but they never renounce their cause in spite of these temporary tactical retreats or displacements.

Today, when one the radical religious and ethnic-nationalist types of terror, which allegedly provide terrorism with a 'global' identity, in spite of artificialness and partisan character of this definition, it is clear that terrorist operations will become an integral part of global life for a very long time to come. In fact, this is an undeniable reality. Although this conclusion is not very hopeful, we can state that terrorism will continue its existence, exploiting any technological means, in varying and ever more devastating forms.

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