

The Islamic State and the intelligence

Col. (ret.) József Kis-Benedek PhD, habil. hon. professor

Abstract:

The study assess the terrorist tendencies, the global jihadism, the appearance of the Islamic State, and the threats posed by new type of terrorism. The main focus is directed on the fight against the Islamic State. It is emphasised that all kind of intelligence and international cooperation is needed in collection of informations concerning IS. The author stresses the importance of a proxy intelligence as well.

Key words: Islamic State, terrorism, jihadism, fight, intelligence.

Absztrakt:

A tanulmány a terrorizmus tendenciáival, a globális dzsiháddal, az Iszlám Állam megjelenésével, valamint az új típusú terrorizmus által okozott fenyegetésekkel foglalkozik. A szerző a hangsúlyt az Iszlám Állam elleni küzdelemre helyezi. Az Iszlám Állam elleni hírszerzésben valamennyi eszköz és módszer bevetésére szükség van, beleértve a nemzetközi együttműködést is. A szerző kihangsúlyozza a proxy hírszerzés fontosságát is.

Kulcsszavak: Iszlám Állam, terrorizmus, dzsihádzizmus, küzdelem, hírszerzés

1. Terrorist tendencies

We are now in the early stage of a new phase of Islamic militancy. The death of Osama bin Laden in May 2011, and the outbreak of revolts across much of the Arab world, marked the end of a cycle that had commenced with the 9/11 attacks. This cycle had peaked in terms of violence around 2005 and then subsided towards the end of the decade as militant groups found their geographic and ideological space squeezed. It now looks like we are on another upswing with vast tracts of desert and dozens of towns under extremist authority in the Middle East and a new energy flowing through the myriad networks that make up the movement as a whole.

It is worth remembering that terrorism is not associated with just one group of people; it is a tactic that has been employed by a wide array of actors. There is no single creed, ethnicity, political persuasion or nationality with a monopoly on terrorism. Jihadists employ terrorism as they do insurgency — as one of many tools they can use to achieve their objectives.

Arguably, the realization of the objectives of the the jihadists through the employment of violence are delusional. Although we can question whether or not they will be able to achieve them through violent means, we simply cannot dispute that they are employing violence intentionally and in a rational manner with a view to achieving their stated goals. With that in mind, we will take a deeper look at those objectives.

It is very important to understand that jihadists are theologically motivated. In fact, in their ideology there is no real distinction between religion, politics and culture¹. They believe that it is their religious duty to propagate their own strain of Islam along with the government, legal system and cultural norms that go with it. They also believe that in order to properly spread their strain of Islam they must strictly follow the example of the Prophet Mohammed and his early believers. While all Muslims believe they must follow the Koran and the Sunnah, the jihadists allow very little space for extra-religious ideas and severely limit the use of reason to interpret the divine texts.

The jihadists' plan is to first establish a state called an emirate that they can rule under jihadist principles, and then use that state as a launching pad for further conquests, creating a larger empire they refer to as the caliphate. Many jihadist ideologues believe that the caliphate should be a transnational entity that includes all Muslim lands, stretching from Spain (Al-Andalus) in the west to the Philippines in the east. The caliphate would then be extended globally, bringing the entire world into submission.

¹ Source: Scott STEWART: *Gauging the Jihadist Movement: The Goals of the Jihadists*. *Stratfor Security Weekly* December 19, 2013 Downloaded January 2015.

Jihadist ideologues and leaders have openly stated these intentions, but they are not just rhetorical goals for public consumption. Reviews of the private writings of jihadist leaders as well as the actions taken by jihadist operatives in the field clearly demonstrate the strong intent to achieve their aims.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is not the only jihadist group to attempt to establish an emirate. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula made a concerted effort to seize, hold and govern territory in southern Yemen as a result of the Yemeni revolution in 2011, briefly controlling a substantial territory. Al Shabaab has controlled and governed parts of Somalia for several years now (though recently the group lost significant portions of it). Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb temporarily established an emirate in northern Mali in 2012, and the Nigerian jihadist group Boko Haram has attempted to establish control over areas in Nigeria's north. At present, jihadist groups such as Ansar al-Shariah are seeking to establish control over territory amid the chaos in Libya.

In the past years the terrorist events have risen. Let us see some examples²:

The START global terror database demonstrates that major incidents have risen from less than 300 a year in the Middle East and North Africa region from 1998 to 2004 to approximately 1,600 in 2008, and increased again from around 1,500 in 2010 to 1,700 in 2011, and jumped to 2,500 in 2012, and 4,650 in 2013. This is a fifteen-fold increase since 2002, and threefold increase since 2010.

A RAND Corporation study on trends in terrorism in 2014 found:

A 58 percent increase in the number of Salafi-jihadist groups from 2010 to 2013. The number of Salafi jihadists more than doubled from 2010 to 2013, according to both Rand's low and high estimates.

Significant increases took place in the number of attacks by al Qa'ida-affiliated groups between 2007 and 2013, with most of the violence in 2013 perpetrated by Daesh (43 percent), which eventually left al Qa'ida; al Shabaab (25 percent); Jabhat al-Nusrah (21 percent); and al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (10 percent).

Approximately 99 percent of the attacks by al Qa'ida and its affiliates in 2013 were against "near enemy" targets in North Africa, the Middle East, and other regions outside of the West.

² Source: Anthony H. Cordesman: *All Spin and No Substance: The Need for a Meaningful Obama Strategy*. January 21, 2015.

http://csis.org/files/publication/150121_Cordesman_AllSpinNoSubstance.pdf
Downloaded May 2015.

Another report by the Institute for Economics and Peace found that:

Fatalities related to terrorism soared 60 percent last year, and five countries—Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Syria—accounted for four-fifths of the almost 18,000 fatalities attributed to terrorism in 2013.

The highest terrorism index in the world was for Iraq at 10. Iraq had the bloodiest record of all, with more than 6,300 fatalities. Syria had a score of 8.12. Yemen had a score of 7.31. Egypt was 6.5. Lebanon was 6.4. Iran had a score of 4.9. Bahrain was 4.41. Saudi Arabia was 2.71. Jordan was 1.76. The United Arab Emirates was 0.29. Kuwait was 0.04. Oman and Qatar were zero.

If one looks more broadly at the Middle East, which is the principal scene of U.S. military action outside Afghanistan, the United States have been involved in a low-level war in Yemen for years and seems to be losing it decisively. Yemen may seem far away, but it is on the border of Saudi Arabia and a critical center of the oil exports that feed the global economy, as well as that of the United States. Yemen is also the center of al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula—arguably the most direct terrorist threat to the United States and the west.

One can, however, identify four categories of militant activity at the moment³. There are two main groups battling for preeminence: the veteran al-Qaida and the newcomers, the Islamic State or Daesh. There are various organisations affiliated to the former and loyal to the latter. Some are getting strong, some weaker, but most are proving remarkably tenacious. There are other groups that are entirely independent, though they may have some associative links with other militants, like the loathsome Boko Haram in Nigeria. And then there are the freelancers, the self-forming networks.

The capability of the militants to do harm comes from connections between groups, and particularly between these four categories. So of the three men who launched attacks in Paris in early January, one attacked a Jewish supermarket, killing four, while the other two gunned down 12 people, including 10 members of the editorial staff of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. The former, in isolation, would have been a minor incident, albeit terrifying, and a powerful reminder of growing antisemitism in Europe. But the latter was of global significance, prompting massive commentary and attention from media and global leaders and, with its carefully chosen target, revealing deeply polarised attitudes between many in the west and many in the Islamic world. It was the *Charlie Hebdo* attack that had its origins in the visit of one of the killers to Yemen and his contact with an al-Qaida affiliate there.

³ <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/09/rise-of-islamic-state-patrick-cockburn-review-isis-new-sunni-revolution> Downloaded May 2015

2. The short history and roots of the Islamic State (IS)

The roots of the IS lie in the surge of violent Islamic activism in the Middle East of the 1980s and the effects of the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, which brought a young Jordanian street thug known as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to Afghanistan in 1989. He was too late to join the war but returned to his native land to plan attacks there. Jailed, al-Zarqawi was released in time to return to Afghanistan to create his own group, Tawhid wal-Jihad. His opportunity came with the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent uprising. Al-Zarqawi established himself as leader of the most brutal fringe of the insurgency. He was killed in 2006 as the sectarian civil war he had worked to foment intensified. If over the next four years the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), as the group called itself, suffered under pressure from the US, it was able to regroup once the foreign troops had left. Under its new leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the ISI launched new campaigns.

The 2011 revolt in Syria, and that country's rapid disintegration into civil war, provided a new opportunity. Working with al-Qaida central, the ISI set up a new militant group in the neighbouring country. However, lines of command were never clear. Al-Baghdadi thought the new organisation was under his authority. Its commanders, and the al-Qaida command, thought differently. The result was an acrimonious split, al-Baghdadi sending forces to take over substantial portions of eastern Syria, while appropriating large chunks of a resurgent Iraqi Sunni insurgency against a Shia chauvinist government in Baghdad. By summer last year, al-Baghdadi was ready for a big push. He launched a successful attack on Mosul, Iraq's troubled second city, and then declared himself caliph, temporal and spiritual ruler of the world's Muslims.

3. The challenge of the Islamic State

In fact, ISIS is much more than a terrorist organization; it is a terrorist state with almost all governing elements. Over the last three years, since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, the Islamic State developed from an extremist fringe and marginal faction participating in the civil war to become the strongest, most ferocious, best funded and best armed militia in the religious and ethnic war that is waged today in Syria and Iraq⁴. But first, what is the name of this entity and what are the borders of the Islamic State? From the first days of its appearance in Syria in 2011, the organization was known as ISIS. However, since the declaration in Summer 2014 of the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate headed by

⁴ <http://jcpa.org/structure-of-the-islamic-state/#sthash.mce152yP.dpuf> Col. (ret.) Dr. Jacques NERIAH: *The structure of the Islamic States*. Downloaded April 2014.

Ibrahim ‘Awad Ibrahim Al Badri al Samarra’i, alias Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi — now the self-declared “Caliph Ibrahim” — ISIS has been transformed into the “Islamic State” (*Al Dawla Al Islamiya*) in order to stress the fact that the Caliphate is not to be limited to Iraq, Syria, Israel (Palestine), Jordan and the Levant, but its ambitions lie well beyond those limited borders.



ISIS releases map of 5-year plan to spread from Spain to China⁵

According to the maps published by the Islamic State, the Islamic State will include Andalus in the West (Spain) and stretch from North Africa — *the Maghreb* — (and the whole of West Africa including Nigeria) through Libya and Egypt (considered one geographical unit — *Ard Al-Kinana*), include what is called in Islamic state terminology, *Ard el Habasha* (from Cameroon in the west, Central Africa, the Victoria lake states, Ethiopia and Somalia), the *Hijaz* (Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States), Yemen until *Khurasan* in the east — defined as the Central Asian Muslim Republics beginning with Azerbaijan and including Pakistan and the South west part of China, land of the Muslims of Turkish origin, the Uyghurs. The Islamic State includes also Iran and Turkey (named Anadol) in their entirety and parts of Europe (mainly the Balkans, more or less conforming to the borders of the defunct Ottoman Empire with the Austro-Hungarian territories).

Even though little has been published about the structure governing the Islamic State — mainly for security reasons — the Islamic State seems to be partly composed of former military officers who served in the Iraqi Army until Saddam Hussein’s ousting and its structure as follows:

⁵ Source: <http://jcpa.org/structure-of-the-islamic-state/#sthash.mce152yP.dpuf> Col. (ret.) Dr. Jacques NERIAH: *The structure of the Islamic States*. Downloaded April 2014.

The Military Council: Headed by Abu Ahmad al 'Alawani, the Council includes three members whose task is to plan and supervise the military commanders and the actual operations in the field. The members of the Council are all appointed by the Caliph.

The Shura (Consultative) Council: Headed by Abu Arkan Al Ameri, this Council is supposed to include 9-11 members, all selected by Caliph Ibrahim. Theoretically, this Council can depose the Caliph but only in theory. The main task of the Council is supervising affairs the state.

The Judicial Authority: Headed by Abu Mohammad al-Ani, the Authority deals with all judicial issues as well as spreading the message of the Islamic State by means of recruitment and preaching.

The Defense, Security and Intelligence Council: This Council may be the most important at this moment, since it is not only responsible for the personal security and safety of the Caliph, but also serves to implement orders, campaigns, judicial decisions and, of course, as the agency responsible for the collection and dissemination of intelligence. This Council is headed by Abu Bakr (AKA Abu Ali) al-Anbari, a former major-general in Saddam Hussein's army together with three other high ranking officers who served also during Saddam Hussein's presidency.

The Islamic State Institution for Public Information: Headed by Abu Al Athir Omru al Abbasi. The Islamic State spokesman was Abu Mohammad al-'Adnani who was killed in a military raid and who may have been replaced by Abu Ahmad al 'Alawani⁶.

The composition of the Islamic State shows clearly that the decision of the US administration to dismantle the former Iraqi armed forces was a huge strategic mistake.

The Islamic State does not seem like a passing phenomenon. The structures being established indicate that even if the actual leaders of the IS are killed, the system has created a succession procedure that will allow it to survive, just like al-Qaeda survived the killing of Osama Bin Laden. Uprooting the IS phenomenon will be a long and arduous road. Without creating a chasm between the IS and the local population, and without reaching a long and lasting political solution

⁶ See more at: <http://jcpa.org/structure-of-the-islamic-state/#sthash.mcel52yP.dpuf>

that will put an end to Sunni-Shiite rivalries in Iraq and to the conflict in Syria, the chances of success will remain negligible.

The success of the Islamic State in conquering large parts of Syria and Iraq (as big as the UK) demonstrates the fragile nature of the countries in the Middle East and the volatility of the security problems in the region. The Islamic State is a relative newcomer to the Middle East terror and Islamic extremist groups that arose over the past 50 years. Its forerunner was 'al Qaeda in Iraq' (AQI), a group formed in 2006 by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. AQI was so violent and extreme that Osama bin Laden dissociated al Qaeda from AQI. At the same time, Iraqi Sunni tribes formed the Awakening Movement (Sahwa) to combat AQI. Zarqawi was killed later in 2006 by a U.S. air strike. AQI was weakened by the Sahwa and did not resurface as a significant force until 2011 when the group, now under the name Islamic State of Iraq, joined the fighting in the Syrian civil war. The change of name (ISIS/ISIL) and leadership with al-Baghdadi did not diminish the group's propensity for extreme violence. ISIS originally affiliated with Jabhat al Nusra, a group associated with al Qaeda, but soon split to display a willingness to fight any and all in the Syrian conflict⁷.

Members of the Islamic State are planning to carry out major terror attacks against targets in the United States or in Europe. There is evidence that the organization is running a sleeper cells around the world, outside of Iraq and Syria. The goal: to gain a greater foothold in the Islamic world – politically and militarily⁸. The intelligence community has since discovered that IS is working to recruit foreign fighters to carry out terror attacks abroad, an alarming fact revealed by a former member of Al Qaeda. In addition, many people were recently arrested in Europe over IS connections, which could be considered as a proof for the recruitment. Taking into consideration that IS is more formidable than Al Qaeda, (IS is) better equipped, they're better manned, they're better resourced, they're better fighters, they're better trained than the Al Qaeda in Iraq that our forces faced. It is a global expansionist, global jihadist organization it is swollen with foreign fighters and suicide bombers who will go wherever the organization tells them to go.

The real threat presented by the Islamic State is to the West itself, thanks to the vast and unprecedented numbers of Westerners who have joined the jihad in Iraq and Syria. European security services are already overwhelmed by the size and scope of this threat, with hundreds of European jihadists returning home every month, fresh from battle on behalf of the Islamic State, and ready to cause mayhem and recruit others for the jihad.

⁷ Source: <http://www.henley-putnam.edu/articles/intelligence-and-the-islamic-state.aspx> downloaded May 2015.

⁸ Source: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4578270,00.html> Intelligence: Islamic State Planning Terror Attack in US, Europe Posted on August 17, 2014. downloaded May. 2015.

4. The struggle against the Islamic State

The Islamic State should look like, involving *the aggressive* application of U.S. and allied airpower in combination with local proxies on the ground. This approach is attritional — there will be no “big wins” in this fight — and imperfect, but it is the only practical strategy at present. Putting large numbers of American boots on the ground in Iraq to defeat an uprising would be a fool’s errand now. That said, the addition of superb American Special Operations Forces, the world’s most lethal covert killers, to this strike package will degrade the Islamic State’s military capacity over time, meaning years not months, and will lead to its ultimate defeat in the Middle East. If nowadays we can speak of proxy wars, in the field of intelligence we can use the expression proxy intelligence as well. In this case it means a cooperation with the Syrian opposition, with the Kurdish Regional government and a third (future) option the cooperation with Iran, of course depending on the nuclear issues.

The struggle against the Islamic State (IS) organization led by the United States and its allies appears thus far to be something of a Sisyphean war: ineffective, limited to scratches on the surface of the jihadi pyramid, beyond the roots of the phenomenon, unable to end the civil wars in Syria and Iraq, and relegated to serve as another layer in the existing chaos in Syria and Iraq, and soon perhaps in part of Lebanon as well⁹.

The Syrian chaos in particular evokes conflicting interests among the various forces. At the center are President Bashar al-Assad and his regime; for its part, the Western coalition is unable to determine its position toward them.

Turkey is entering this labyrinth and giving mixed messages. Iran, Hizbollah, and the Kurds are also players, and their position in the various equations is not clear. Iran, after years of being the nuclear terror of the West, has become an ally of sorts of the United States.

However, the more the fight against IS takes the form of airstrikes and Western leaders do not even venture to hint that they might send ground troops into Iraq and Syria, the more attention is diverted from another aspect of the IS problem. Alongside IS are many other such elements — the “classic” al-Qaeda; Jabhat al-Nusra, which is supposedly more moderate than IS; the Taliban, which is poised to take over Afghanistan again once the United States leaves; other violent jihadi groups throughout the world; and several hundred Islamist clerics, who by virtue of the freedom of the internet, are galvanizing their flock and moving them in apocalyptic directions. The West should be worried by the question of what causes so many young and not-so-young people from the West, Muslims and non-Muslims who have converted to Islam, second- and third-generation immigrants, to be so influenced by IS/jihadi propaganda that they join the

⁹ Source: Reuven Paz *The Islamic State: Another Angle of the Threat in INSS Insight No. 631, November 19, 2014.*

struggle in relatively large numbers. This phenomenon is not new. It began during the struggle against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, and a similar situation developed during the war in Iraq in the 2000s. Those were years of phenomenal growth for the jihadi internet, which brought the Islamist struggle to every young person with a keyboard. Even beheadings were shown on the internet since 2002. Nevertheless, there were few such incidents and the number of volunteers was limited. Furthermore, in Iraq in the 2000s, most of the volunteers for jihadi organizations were Saudi extremists, but particularly over the past year, volunteering for IS and similar organizations seems to have become much more international, diverse, extensive, and on the rise. More and more, volunteering for the jihadi ranks in Mesopotamia has become similar to volunteering for the International Brigades organized in the 1930s for the Spanish Republicans' struggle against fascism. These volunteers serve as very fertile ground for the influence of the propaganda of IS and other such organizations. This propaganda says that the organization's struggle in Iraq and Syria is a heroic struggle to save the entire Muslim world, which is suffering/oppressed/deprived (*mustaz'afin* in the Islamic term) due to tyranny that is ultimately, according to their belief, a clear result of a Western, "crusader" plot.

5. Intelligence on the Islamic State

The basic question is how to use intelligence capabilities on IS? First of all: better intelligence is needed by using fusion centers and intelligence sharing. This means all kind of capabilities should be used. The penetration into this organisations is not easy at all. We can not forget the US lost the majority of his HUMINT capabilities by leaving Iraq. Actually the using of superior intelligence-gathering capabilities and satellite technology to collect information on the activities of the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group in Iraq and then sharing with the allied governments are highly important. One major intelligence gap is that of human intelligence. There are few intelligence officers on the ground identifying, recruiting, and directing agents against the Islamic State. That's a big problem. After all, while satellites show footage of a town, or phone intercepts the content of a conversation, an intelligence officer running a network of sources offers human satellites. Thinking assets of native face, tongue, and cultural understanding, human sources can infect the enemy's beating heart. These ears and eyes are the crown jewels of intelligence work¹⁰. Today, the (admittedly superb) Jordanian intelligence service leads this human-intelligence effort. But they desperately need more ground-level support. Further complicating matters is the fact that the Islamic State has learned from its predecessors. Where al-Qaeda in Iraq reli-

¹⁰ Source: <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/390431/intelligence-and-islamic-state-tom-rogan> Downloaded may 2015.

ed on cell phones and other such communication platforms - and therefore received unwanted nighttime knocks from U.S. Special Forces - the Islamic State is now hyper-paranoid about its signal-intelligence vulnerability. Wherever possible, its leaders "stay off the grid." If the enemy isn't on a cell phone, the NSA's vast mainframes generate nothing but heat. Ruling out Special Forces deployments (needed to direct air strikes), refusing to deploy sufficient air assets (needed to fill urgent taskings), and ignoring the dire political consequences of these choices, the intelligence can not do anything. As a consequence, the Islamic State's ambition of a Middle East sectarian purge looms ever closer. Intelligence is never a perfect art, but even (and perhaps especially) in great risk, the bold and calculating practice of it is a necessity. The U.S. military is extraordinarily capable, but, just as an inexperienced fisherman cannot fish without knowing where to cast his nets, a military devoid of tools and intelligence can only "cast" sporadic fire in the strategic darkness¹¹.

The source of its power is its radical Islamic, anti-Shia, and anti-Western message. The fact that US intelligence agencies failed to properly assess ISIS's potential power.

Therefore, the international community must update its conceptual, intelligence, military, and political thinking so as to map the threat and identify a suitable response to the developing regional reality. The way to formulate understandings on active cooperation, such as intelligence sharing, needs to be considered¹².

No one can reliably predict the future of the challenge of the Islamic State with precision. Intelligence analysts are expected to use the past as a baseline, understand and accurately report the meaning of present events, and provide a cogent assessment of future threats. The reality is that intelligence analysts are part of the frontline fight to protect the nation from terrorism and other security threats. The geostrategic situation radically changed over the past five years. The Arab Spring unexpectedly destroyed both the old political order and the stability that political order provided. In the chaos, Islamic extremists flourish. In particular, a new threat dimension emerged from the IS. The dramatic rise of the Islamic State confounds the U.S. the West and the Middle East. All strategic security policies and terrorism studies must be reevaluated in response to the rise of the Islamic State.

The western strategy is the military defeat of the Islamic State by Western airpower and commandos, aided by local proxies, will set the stage for the strategic defeat of their movement. What must follow is a version of a „special war“

¹¹Source: <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/390431/intelligence-and-islamic-state-tom-rogan>

¹² Source: *INSS Insight No. 616, October 15, 2014 Considering a New Strategic Course*
Gabi Siboni

tailored for counterterrorism, combining offensive counterintelligence, denial and deception, and long-term manipulation of the jihadists leading to their collapse and self-immolation. If we are not willing to apply non-lethal counterintelligence techniques against the Islamic State, we may wish to consider giving up now. Applying offensive counterintelligence in a strategy based on penetration and provocation is a messy business, and there will be mistakes, but it is not based on killing. The assassination is a legitimate technique against virulent terrorists, but it is a dangerous tool that must be applied carefully. Offensive counterintelligence, strategically applied, is highly effective. There is considerable false morality if we are willing to use drones to kill thousands of terrorists — and along with them hundreds of innocents from “collateral damage” — not to mention occupying countries for years with awful humanitarian consequences, but we are unwilling to wage special war, which is far less expensive in blood, treasure, and morality¹³.

For law enforcement and intelligence agencies the biggest problem has been posed by the leaderless resistance model employed by grassroots jihadists. Most counterterrorism intelligence efforts have been designed to identify and track people with travel, communication or financial links to known terrorist groups¹⁴. Such methods have proven effective. Still, one of the many difficulties in identifying grassroots jihadists is that such links may not exist, and the relationship between grassroots operatives and terrorist groups may be ambiguous — and government agencies simply do not fare well in dealing with ambiguous things.

Beyond the lack of links or solid links, another significant problem for security agencies lies in the sheer volume of potential grassroots actors. There are simply too many actors for the authorities to effectively monitor all the time. Monitoring a single individual's actions and communications full time requires an incredible amount of resources, especially if translation is required. When monitoring hundreds or even thousands of individuals, the problem is magnified significantly.

Because of resource constraints, law enforcement and intelligence agencies are forced to conduct quick assessments and prioritize their surveillance efforts. This often means focusing on grassroots operatives who have contact with a terrorist entity and ignoring those who do not because of the severity in the potential threat they pose on the threat spectrum. This prioritization of scarce resources often allows other grassroots operatives assessed as posing a lesser threat to conduct their operational planning without police surveillance detection. Of course, even jihadists who pose a lesser threat can still kill people.

¹³ Source: <http://20committee.com/2014/09/11/defeating-the-islamic-state-a-how-to-guide/> *Defeating the Islamic State: A How-To Guide*. Downloaded May 2015.

¹⁴ Source: Scott Stewart: *Jihadism in 2014: The Grassroots Threat* *Strafor Security Weekly* January 22, 2015. <http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/jihadism-2014-grassroots-threat#axzz3Q7Cblbcx> Downloaded: January 2015.

Moreover, if they do launch a successful attack, security forces are inevitably criticized for failing to monitor the specific person(s) in the sea of potential attackers.

Furthermore, security agencies can only monitor the suspects they know about. Other people can fly beneath the radar until they strike. It is impossible to identify them all before they attack, and it is impossible to protect every potential target. Despite the best efforts of the security forces, some attacks will eventually slip through and succeed.

As long as jihadists urge radicalized followers to adopt their ideology and conduct attacks using the principles of the leaderless resistance model, grassroots jihadists will continue to pose a broad threat that is difficult to counter. As a result, these kinds of attacks will remain a part of modern life. However, this threat will also continue to be less severe than the one posed by highly trained professional terrorist operatives, meaning that while it is chronic, it is not acute.

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