

Nehad Ismail reviews "We will conquer your Rome : a Study of Islamic State Terror Plots in the West" by Robin Simcox, Research Fellow at the Henry Jackson Society, published 30th September 2015.

The Study reveals that 32 Daesh/ISIS-inspired terror plots have been uncovered in 10 countries since the group declared its so-called Caliphate in July 2014 which have involved 58 individuals of 13 different nationalities, but that only 16 per cent of those people were directly encouraged to take action by Daesh fighters.

Although the self styled Islamic State (IS) presently controls significant amounts of land throughout Iraq and Syria, its ambitions are not restricted to this territory. Within days of announcing its 'Caliphate', the self-appointed 'Caliph' Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi vowed that IS would eventually "conquer Rome". On 21st September 2014 Daesh spokesman Abu Mohammed al Adnani urged the group's supporters to "kill a disbelieving American or European especially the spiteful and filthy French ...any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State..in any manner or way, however it may be

The Study of the 32 plots documented between July 2014 and August 2015 involved 10 countries mainly UK, USA, France, Australia, Spain, Denmark and Belgium. Some 58 individuals of 14 different nationalities. 13 attacks were actually carried out. The US was the most important target for ISIS with 12 plots recorded.

The comprehensively detailed Study explores the weapons used, the targets selected, the travel arrangements, and the training the individuals received. It even delves into minute details like passport problems which prevented three individuals from travelling. Targeting members of the public featured 16 times.

Role of the Internet

The use of the internet was significant and relevant to 27 of 32 plots involving mainly propaganda and brain-washing of individuals which the study refers to as inspiration and radicalisation. The Internet also remains a source of instructions on how to carry out attacks. Amongst fears that its activities may increasingly take place in the "dark web", it seems certain that IS will continue to act as an inspiration to a small, but significant, number of people in the West.

Beheadings

Brutal beheadings of UK and US hostages shocked and continue to shock the world. As well as the beheading of dozens of Syrians, Iraqis and Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya, IS's murder of 38 civilians in the Tunisian beach resort of Sousse, in June 2015 (30 of those killed were British citizens) has highlighted the extreme depravity of ISIS.

Statistics

There is an impressive 8 page summary of statistics and graphs covering such diverse categories as background, gender and age of terrorists, nationality, religious converts, targets , type of weapons used etc.

It is interesting to note that the perpetrator is usually a young Muslim male with a record of past criminal behaviour and more than 25% of the males involved were converts. The so-called jihadists in the West were self-starters with no terrorist expertise. In various news reports we read they are referred to as lone-wolves. Profiles of individuals implicated in terror plots were covered in pages 11 to 42

It is clear that IS poses a palpable threat to the West. The Study is a warning to security services in Europe and America to be vigilant. However the study doesn't delve into a number of questions about ISIS which are worth asking: Who is colluding with ISIS? Who is benefiting from its brutal practices and who is directing its operations in Syria and Iraq. Tracing the origins of Daesh/ISIS would help provide the answers.

What is beyond any doubt, is that ISIS has helped the Assad regime to survive. It has enabled Iran to get a foothold in Syria and Iraq and has opened the door for Moscow to intervene militarily in Syria ostensibly to fight ISIS. Evidence on the ground has shown that Moscow is not interested in attacking ISIS. Only 1 in 20 Russian air strikes in Syria have targeted ISIS fighters according to the UK's

Defence Secretary Michael Fallon. British intelligence services claim that five percent of the strikes had attacked the militant group, with most "killing civilians" and Free Syrian forces fighting against the regime of president Bashar al-Assad.

Having said that, I commend the Henry Jackson Society for publishing such an important study that documents the Islamic State's plots against the West and provide us with a unique insight into the mentality and methods of the individuals implicated in the plots. It's a comprehensive study that deserves to be a reference for studies on terrorism and ISIS in particular.

The full Study can be found here: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/ISIS-brochure-Web.pdf>

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