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THE FAILURE OF WESTERN INTELLIGENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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A critical question today pertains to the ability of the West to predict, or at least assess, possible threats that jeopardize its global strategic interests and its homeland security; especially, whether the Intelligence Communities in the United States and Europe are capable of effectively comprehending the new forms of Islamic radicalism that produce unpredictable, non-conventional strategic threats, which thirteen years ago were only considered as asymmetrical. The 11 September 2001 attacks against the United States became a landmark in global security history, not so much for the unexpected shock and the tragic cost on human lives it produced, but principally for the devastating failure of the luxurious, money-consuming US intelligence institutions to predict, and prevent, the *Al-Qaida* strike in the heart of American pride.

The strategic forewarning, and the potential after effects, of 9/11 were not fully acknowledged at the time, and Washington's invitation of Hollywood scriptwriters and directors to offer their imaginative creativity for the forecast of prospective asymmetrical threats, had missed the nucleus of the problem. Since US Intelligence's gravity towards the superficial prediction of a threat rather than understanding the deep reasons that create it, is only a temporary cure of the symptoms and not a treatment of the lethal virus that produces it. The question still remains unanswered. Can the principles of Western political conception and intelligence analysis – founded on reason and logic, as well as traditional ethics and values – confront today the vicious, anti-western, religious hatred of rapidly-evolving *Jihadism*; that has lately flourished in the Middle East, and other parts of the world, and probably is invisibly fomenting in the European and American heartlands? Can the Western Intelligence Community, with its thousands of collectors and analysts, and its cutting-edge technology, penetrate the state of mind of Radical Islam and its *mujahedeen*, that are willing to sacrifice their lives and those of their families for *Allah*?

The new forms of brutal and uninhibited violence exhibited by ISIS in Syria and Iraq, *Boko Haram* in Nigeria, and other extremist Islamic organizations, derive from religious customs, racial rituals and intuitive barbarism, that date back centuries to the medieval caliphates. It is uncertain whether the momentary use of western military power to destroy a local or regional military *Jihadist* threat, is also adequate to uproot the deep detestation and innate violence of contemporary Radical

Islam, that silently enjoys the invisible admiration of some forms of the Political Islam as well. *Jihadist* rationale is completely unknown to Western cultural logic and social values, and cannot be comprehended – and therefore analyzed – through traditional intelligence analysis methods. It is also fallacious to consider that the explosive situation in the Middle East – with its extremely vital energy wealth – will be indefinitely contained regionally.

With a politically weak and divergent Europe, a geopolitically indecisive United States, an aggressive Russia and a fast-expanding China, the fragile and unstable strategic environment in the Middle East will continue to be inflamed for an undefined period of time, with unpredictable global implications. US failure to decisively restrict the nuclear program of Iran, and the continuation of its ballistic missile production can soon threaten not only Israel, but also a great part of Europe, with nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. The unaccountable enlisting of British, Australian and other foreign nationals with ISIS is a prophetic signal for the presence of *Jihadist* nuclei in European and American cities. The recent disappearance of jetliners, after the occupation of Tripoli airport in Libya by Islamist militants, could turn into a new 9/11. Likewise, the ISIS prospect for the use of a medieval bubonic plague virus could spread a Black Death pandemic in Europe and America.

In an era of rapidly emerging, unorthodox asymmetrical and non-traditional strategic threats, the impact from the decisive use of traditional Western coalition military power does not necessarily safeguard the terminal settlement of the problem. The new forms of *Jihadism* are uninhibited and immoral, and *potentially unbeatable*, since the human sacrifice to *Allah* is the absolute virtue in Radical Islamic conscience. The West, unless it urgently redesigns – in radical and imaginative ways – its global security perception, hazardously increases the odds of falling itself a victim of its own incompetence to understand the difference of the new threat.