



The Jihadist Threat to Europe: From Al Qaeda to the Islamic State

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Abstract: The post 9/11 jihadist movement's radicalization threatens Europe. The essay compares the Islamic State's (IS) and Al Qaeda's (AQ) far enemy strategy to attack the West. It proceeds in three parts. First, it examines the rise and decline of Al Qaeda's far enemy strategy highlighting the organization's use of Europe first as a logistical base of operations and then as a target of its terror strategy. Second, it analyses the Islamic State's terrorist war against Europe and how its far enemy strategy unlike Al-Qaeda prioritizes attacking Europe. Third, the essay concludes by discussing future jihadist threats to European security. Given the jihadi movement's hostility toward Christian institutions IS' war against the West could well shift to Southern European Catholic countries.

Keywords: Terrorism, Jihad, Extremism and Europe.

1. INTRODUCTION AND ORGANIZATION

The jihadist movement's post 9/11 radicalization threatens Europe. This essay compares and contrasts the Islamic State's (IS) and Al Qaeda's (AQ) *far enemy* strategy to attack Europe. Its central conclusion is that the Islamic State has reinvigorated Al Qaeda's anti-Western *far enemy* strategy and that despite the destruction of IS's *caliphate* and its declining online capabilities the movement continues to endanger European security. Jihadi mobilization of radicalized sub-populations within Europe's Muslim Diaspora communities remains strong. Analysts speak of a network of jihadi *sleepers* capable of striking the Europe.¹

With its still robust operational capabilities and ideological appeal the Islamic State continues to attract jihadists eager to attack the continent. The movement's Salafist, sectarian and apocalyptic values communicated in its *hip hop* style video violence could explain the movements enduring attraction.² The Islamic State's message resonates among Western extremists. This is especially true for second and third generation European Muslims that migrated to the caliphate and at IS's urging attacked their native homelands. The 2015 Paris and 2016 Brussels attacks that killed almost two hundred people were executed by French and Belgian jihadists whose training in IS' killing fields in Iraq and Syria facilitated their lethal European operations.

This essay has a tri-partite structure. First, it examines the rise and decline of Al Qaeda's *far enemy* strategy in which Europe was a secondary battleground. Second, the essay analyses the Islamic State's terrorist war against the European continent and how its *far enemy* strategy prioritizes attacks on European Union (EU) countries. Third, it concludes by speculating on future jihadist threats to European security which could put churches and Christian celebrations especially at risk.

¹Duggan, J. "Warning ISIS Terrorists have sent Suicide Bombers to Sneak into Europe to Unleash Carnage" February 6, 2019 *The Express* <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1083616/isis-news-latest-suicide-bombers-sneak-europe-carnage-terror>; Speckhard, A., A. Shajkovi and H. Sebal, "ISIS Smuggler: Sleeper Cells and "Undead" Suicide Bombers have Infiltrated Europe" *International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism* ISIS Defector project February 2019 accessed at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330887970_ISIS_Smuggler_Sleeper_Cells_and_'Undead'_Suicide_Bombers_Have_Infiltrated_Europe/citations
²Celso, A., *The Islamic State: A Comparative History of Jihadist Warfare* (Latham: Lexington Books, 2018)

2. AL QAEDA'S FAR ENEMY DOCTRINE

Al Qaeda's (AQ) targeting of non-Muslim powers is consistent with past Islamic warfare strategy.³ After 9/11 Mary Habeck put the World Trade Center attacks in historical context.⁴ Her essay argues that jihadists have historically targeted three enemies: the *near enemy* of Sunni Muslim apostate rulers, the *far enemy* of non-Muslim civilizations and *sectarian adversaries* composed of *heterodox* Muslim groups like the Druze, Sufis, Alawites and Shi'ites.

Early Islamic warfare targeted all three enemies. Some notable examples were the Kharajite rebellions against Mohammad's immediate successors whom they considered illegitimate, the 11th century Islamic conquest of southern Christian Spain, and Ali and his son Hussein's struggle with other Arab rulers whose violent resolution in the seventh century gave birth to the Sunni-Shia split.

Shi'ites considered *partisans of Ali* for their reverence of his familial line.⁵ The assassination of the Prophet's son in law Ali and his son Hussein's beheading after the battle of Karbala in Medieval Iraq created a Shia culture of *martyrdom* and *collective remembrance*. Shi'ite veneration for Ali family is considered *polytheistic* by Sunni extremists like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State.⁶

Shi'ite clerical tradition some of which is not tied to the Qur'an is seen by Sunni fundamentalists as reinforcing Shi'ism's *sheretical* character.⁷ Since 1979 theocratic rule in Iran and the revolutionary government's patronage of Shia causes across the Mideast has inflamed sectarian antagonisms across the region. These religious conflicts are driving forces in political conflict raging in Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Tehran's military and economic presence in Iraq, Syria and Yemen is viewed by Sunni's extremists as threatening Islam's future direction.⁸ Such beliefs contribute to conspiracy theories that tie Shia Iran to a greater *Zionist-Crusader* world order to destroy the Sunni Muslim world.⁹ This perspective is represented by the Islamic State's world view that ties all three enemies (*near, far* and *sectarian*) to a nefarious plot to destroy its caliphate. Though historically it rejected vilifying the Shia Al Qaeda is increasingly adopting a sectarian perspective not radically different than its Islamic State rival.¹⁰

Past jihadists have navigated between these three adversaries. Wars with the *far enemy* receded after European colonialism ended only to have the jihadist struggle revert to overthrowing the Sunni *near enemy*.¹¹ The post-colonial Mideast state system was dominated by conservative monarchies and secular Pan Arab socialist regimes. Both political systems were repressive. The Muslim Brotherhood's (MB) growth across the Mideast during the Cold War provided an alternative political identity to the regional state order. Throughout the Mideast the Brotherhood's leaders and militants were systematically killed and imprisoned.

Failed Pan-Arabist wars against Israel discredited the regional state system and legitimized political Islamism.¹² The Muslim Brotherhood's repression across the Mideast propelled jihadist revolts in

³Habeck M., "Jihadist Strategies in the War on Terrorism" November 8, 2004 *The Heritage Foundation* accessed at: <http://www.heritage.org/defense/report/jihadist-strategies-the-war-terrorism>

⁴Ibid

⁵Nasr, V., *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam will Shape the Future* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006)

⁶Dabiq 13: The Rafidah: From Ibn Saba to the Dajaal accessed at: <http://clarionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Issue-13-the-rafidah.pdf> 33; Ghabadzeh N. and Kbarzadea S.A., "Sectarianism and the Prevalence of 'othering' in Islamic Thought" *Third World Journal* 36:4 691-704

⁷Helfont S., "The Geopolitics of the Sunni-Shia Divide" *FPRI Footnote* December 2013 access at http://www.fpri.org/doc/Helfont_-Hi_-_Sectarianism.pdf; Hydemann S., "The Syrian Uprising: Sectarianism, Regionalization and State Order in the Levant" *Fride and Havos Working Paper* No. 119 (May 2013) 1-19 access at http://www.firda.org/descarga/WP_119_Syria_Uprising.pdf;

⁸Zelin A. and P Smyth., (2014), "The Vocabulary of Sectarianism" January 29, 2014 *The Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy* accessed at <http://washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-vocabulary-of-sectarianism>

⁹Dabiq 13, ibid

¹⁰Celso, A, "Sectarianism, State Failure and the Radicalization of Sunni Jihadist Groups" *International Journal of Political Science* 4:3 22-35

¹¹Moghadan A., "Salafi Jihad as a Religious Ideology" *CTC Sentinel*, (February 2008) Vol. 1, Issue 3;

¹²Karsh, E., *Islamic Imperialism: a History* (New York: Yale University Press, 2007)

Syria, Egypt, Libya and Algeria during the final decades of the Cold War. These insurgencies were savagely repressed; a brutality legacy that culminated in Syria with President Hafez al Assad's 1982 destruction of the Brotherhood's Hama powerbase. Thomas Friedman argues that the Assad regime's killing of tens of thousands of Muslim Brotherhood supporters sent a potent signal to future opponents of what fate awaits them.¹³

Islamist defeats invited debate among Sunni extremists who looked to the West as a target for their hatred.¹⁴ Past jihadi setbacks catalysed the movement's extremism contributing to Al Qaeda's formation.¹⁵ Al Qaeda's *far enemy doctrine* developed in response to internal forces within the Muslim world and to American military intervention in the region.¹⁶

Jihadist theoreticians blamed Pan Arab state resilience and Israel's endurance on American military and economic support.¹⁷ Sunni extremists moreover saw the American led 1991 Gulf War as consolidating *Zionist-Crusader* control over Mideast oil. Al Qaeda theoreticians view America's military, cultural and economic presence in the region as threatening to Islamic civilization.¹⁸

Al Qaeda's leader Osama bin Laden (OBL) justified his network's 1996 and 1998 declarations of war against the US by referencing American foreign policy.¹⁹ OBL was enraged by the basing of American troops in Saudi Arabia before the 1991 Gulf War. For Al Qaeda the nexus between American power and the survival of the Saudi royal family was made inexorably clear. The US military presence in the *Kingdom* for OBL furthermore *defiled* Islam's holiest shrines which in his view was an American declaration of war against the Muslim faith.

Bin Laden and his deputy Egyptian Ayman al Zawahirisaw the US as a *paper tiger* whose military incapable of incurring hardship.²⁰ Paralyzed by the Vietnam War, Al Qaeda's leaders believed American commanders and troops were unwilling to endure heavy casualties. By hitting American interests at home and abroad Al Qaeda believed the US could be forced to abandon the region leaving local governments vulnerable to Islamist insurrections.

OBL's view of American weakness was reinforced by the US troop withdraws in Lebanon in the 1980's and Somalia in 1993 that bin Laden viewed as a *cowardly* response to determined Islamist resistance.²¹ Emboldened by the success of Arab fighters assisting Afghan rebels against Soviet forces, Osama saw the USSR's subsequent collapse as evidence of Allah's *divine guidance* of mujahidin forces and the Soviet experience a precursor to his organization's defeat of America.

Because of his criticism of the Saudi Royal family, Osama was forced into exile. Blessed with a considerable inheritance, OBL patronized Islamist states in the Sudan and Afghanistan during the 1990's that provided him with a refuge against extradition. This allowed him to develop a global network capable of striking American interests.

When the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in the early 1990's Al Qaeda forged a strategic partnership with its leader Mullah Omar who provided a sanctuary permitting OBL to train thousands of fighters who were intent upon waging jihad against America and regional governments.²² Having

¹³Friedman, T., *From Beirut to Jerusalem*(London: Harper-Collins, 1998) 76-105

¹⁴Lia B, *Architect of Jihad: The Life of Al Qaeda Strategist Abu Musab al-Suri* (London: Oxford University Press, 2008) 314

¹⁵Lister, C., "Profiling the Islamic State" *Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper* November 2014 accessed at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/en_web_lister.pdf

¹⁶Celso, A., *Al Qaeda's Post 9-11 Devolution: the Failed Jihadist War against the Near and Far Enemy*(New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2014)

¹⁷"Letter to Nasir al-Wuhayshi" *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point Harmony Program* document accessed at: <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Letter-to-Nasir-al-Wuhayshi-Translation.pdf>

¹⁸Naji AB., *Management of Savagery* available at <http://www.vcfia.harvard.edu/olin/images/management%20of%20savagery%20%2005-23-2006.pdf>

¹⁹Holbrook, D.,*The Al Qaeda Doctrine: the Framing and Evolution of the Leadership's Public Discourse* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) 124-136

²⁰Bergen P., *The Longest War: The Enduring Struggle between the United States and Al Qaeda* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010)

²¹Gleis J., *Withdrawing Under Fire: Lessons Learned from Islamist Insurgencies* Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2011)

²²Celso, A.,*Al Qaeda's Post 9-11 Devolution*,*ibid*

developed an Afghani terror infrastructure AQ's network repeatedly attacked American interests. Among the most notable assaults were the 1998 US Embassy attacks in Nairobi and Dar al Salam, the foiled Canadian based 1999 millennium plot and the damaging of the USS Cole off Yemen's coastline one year later.

The Canadian operation represented Al Qaeda's first attempt to strike the American homeland. It featured an Al Qaeda trained terrorist Ahmed Ressem who sought to bomb Las Angeles (LAX) airport.²³ Detained by a U.S. border agent at a Washington State ferry crossing point Ressem failed to transport the car bomb to California. Though averted the plan's development represented a profound intelligence failure for American and Canadian security agencies. It further underscored Al Qaeda's efforts to develop in Canada a network to compromise American security.

Al Qaeda's cells in the West facilitated its catastrophic 9/11 attacks ushering in America's *longest war*. Hoping that its *Holy Tuesday* operations would force an American military disengagement from the Mideast, Al Qaeda instead faced a determined enemy intent upon liquidating its Taliban protected terror network. OBL and Zawahiri's miscalculation of American resolve resulted in the overthrow of Mullah Omar's government and the deaths of thousands of Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters.²⁴

Forced into hiding in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran, Al Qaeda's leaders experienced severe duress. The loss of training facilities and the erosion of its operational capability crippled its capacity to direct terror attacks. Al Qaeda's network was able, however, to engineer alliances with regional jihadi networks that allowed it to remain a viable terrorist force.²⁵

This organizational rebranding referred to as *Al Qaeda 2.0* created a dispersed network of affiliates in Yemen, Somalia, the Maghreb, Iraq and the Indian subcontinent.²⁶ By forging new allies Al Qaeda hoped to reignite its fading *far enemy* strategy to assault Western interests.

For Al Qaeda radicalized Muslim sub-populations in Europe became an indispensable conduit to recruit foreign fighters and weaken European allies of the US directed *war on terror*. Past recruitment of Muslim immigrants in Europe proved efficacious for the terror organization. Al Qaeda trained European educated Muslim immigrants in Hamburg Germany, for example, formed the leadership cadre of its *Holy Tuesday* operation. The 9/11 Hamburg cell was an example of Al Qaeda's pre 9/11 penetration in Europe and its utilization of the region as a base for financing, indoctrination and recruitment. This European jihadi infrastructure is well documented.²⁷

Lorenzo Vidino, for example, argues that Al Qaeda in the 1980's and 1990's developed logistical, indoctrination and recruitment hubs across Europe.²⁸ Masquerading as Muslim religious, education and charitable institutions, Al Qaeda supported clerics and scholars actively promoted extremist causes. Radical preachers and jihadi entrepreneurs regularly spoke at the Milan's Islamic Cultural Center, Hamburg's Al Quds Mosque and London's Finsbury Park. AQ ideologues Abu Qatada and Abu Hamza in London pioneered the development of jihadi religious-cultural networks across the region.²⁹

Fernando Reinares similarly argues that Madrid's M-30 Mosque was a center of jihadi recruitment and that Al Qaeda's Spanish cadres were involved in planning the organization 9-11 attacks.³⁰ The Spanish coastal town of Taragona featured a meeting between *Holy Tuesday* planner Ramzi bin al-

²³Kennedy N., "The Maple Leaf Mujahideen: The Rise of the Canadian Jihadist Movement" September 1, 2017 Intern Corner Foreign Policy Research Institute of Philadelphia accessed at:<https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/09/maple-leaf-mujahideen-rise-canadian-jihadi-movement/>

²⁴Lia, *ibid*

²⁵ Mendelsohn B, *The Al Qaeda Franchise: the Expansion of Al Qaeda and its Consequences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016)

²⁶Hoffman, B. *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2006)

²⁷Nesser, P., *Islamist Terrorism in Europe: A History* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2018)

²⁸Vidino L. *Al Qaeda in Europe: The New Battleground of International Jihad* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2006)103-135

²⁹Radu, M., *Europe's Ghost: Tolerance, Jihadism and the Crisis of the West* (Encounter Books, 2012); Vidino, *ibid*, 215-233

³⁰Reinares, F., *Al Qaeda's Revenge: 2004 Madrid Train Bombings* (New York: Colombia University, 2017)

Shibh and 9/11 bomber Mohammad Atta to finalize the blueprint for the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks.³¹

Al Qaeda valued Europe to raise money, recruit foreign fighters and assist its network in its war against the Muslim apostate *near enemy* and the United States. During the 1980's London emerged as Al Qaeda's European headquarters with jihadi ideologues Abu Musab al Suri and Abu Qatada managing its media operations.³² Though Al Qaeda's despised Europe's Christian heritage and loathed its *immoral* secularism the continent's instrumental value outweighed its ideological antipathy.

The organization's religious scholars justified its European operations by referencing past *covenants of security* with European states.³³ Provided that Europe remained a safe harbour for Al Qaeda's network OBL refrained from mounting terrorist operations against the continent. After all any AQ directed attacks would violate Islamic convention that precludes violence against societies that provide safety for Muslims.

The United Kingdom's pre 9/11 generous asylum and amnesty laws provided safe harbour for thousands of Islamic extremists escaping *political persecution*. Many of these militants made a livelihood off the largesse of the British taxpayer. Al Qaeda ideologue Abu Qatada notoriously preached jihad on welfare.³⁴ European Union Courts furthermore shielded many radical Islamists from deportation to their home countries. Al Qaeda's *covenant of security* with its European patron ended after 9/11.

3. PUNISHING EUROPE FOR ITS SUPPORT FOR THE US DIRECTED WAR ON TERROR

European repression of Al Qaeda's regional network after 9/11 effectively weakened OBL's organization. The seizure of its financial assets, the closure of its media operations and the arrest of hundreds of its operatives by European governments ended Al Qaeda's European logistical base. The dismantling of its support network put Al Qaeda under significant duress. Having seen its regional and global operations eroded, Al Qaeda searched for new partners to strike back against European interests. Fortunately for OBL other jihadi cells in Europe connected to North African terrorist networks provided Al Qaeda an opportunity to strike back.

These organizations responded favourably to Al Qaeda's offers of cooperation for association with OBL's network accorded them enhanced status. They like Al Qaeda blamed European support for Mideast governments for their inability to establish Sharia governance in the region. Such networks had attacked Europe in the past. The Algerian (Armed Islamic Group) GIA for example bombed the Paris Metro in 1995 in retaliation for Paris support for Algiers repression of the Islamist insurgency.

Al Qaeda's post 9/11 cooperation with regional terror groups blurred jihadi distinctions between *far* and *near enemy*. Thomas Hegghammer argues that this jihadi *ideological hybridization* furthered the organizational and tactical goals of local and international terror networks.³⁵ Al Qaeda's use of North African networks was orchestrated by its director of external terror operations Egyptian Hamza Rabi'a and his Moroccan lieutenant Amer Azizi..

Having served Al Qaeda's network in Spain and Morocco Azizi facilitated the creation of a North African terror network committed to attack European interests. Fernando Reinares argues that Azizimet with representatives for Algerian and Moroccan terror organizations in Istanbul in 2002 to plan operations against Spanish and British interests for supporting the US led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.³⁶

Al Qaeda hoped to weaken European support for Washington's *war on terror* and revive a post 9/11 version of its *covenant of security*. To realize its goal the network had to make its threats credible by inflicting mass casualty attacks. Prior to its terrorist assault OBL offered to make Europe secure from

³¹Ibid. 20

³²Lia, ibid 160-170

³³Nesser, ibid, 33

³⁴Radu M., "Preaching Jihad While on Welfare: The Story of Abu Qatada" FPRI E-Note (June 2008) accessed at: <https://theromangate.wordpress.com/2008/07/>

³⁵ Thomas Hegghammer, "Ideological Hybridization of Jihadi Groups" *Hudson Institute* November 2009 accessed at: <https://www.hudson.org/research/9866-the-ideological-hybridization-of-jihadi-groups>

³⁶Ibid

attacks in return for ending European participation in the *war on terror*. Al Qaeda's May 2003 assault against Spanish interests in Casablanca killing dozens and its follow up attack in November 2003 in Istanbul against the British Consulate and a HSBC bank branch that killed over 30 people hoped to remind Europe that its network remained capable. Having failed to convince the UK and Spain to militarily disengage from Afghanistan and Iraq, Al Qaeda escalated its terror campaign. The Istanbul and Casablanca assaults were precursors to AQ's 2004 Madrid and 2005 London attacks.

Though weakened by post 9/11 British security operations, AQ's UK network was robust enough to plan terrorist actions. Most of these conspiracies, however, were foiled by Anglo-American intelligence agency cooperation.³⁷ Others were not. Land transport systems, for example, proved vulnerable to Al Qaeda inspired attacks. Though the 2004 Madrid rail and 2005 London subway and bus attacks were initially blamed on *home-grown* extremists, subsequent analysis proved a more direct Al Qaeda role.³⁸

The Madrid attack proved a phenomenal success. It stands as the network's *greatest* post 9/11 triumph and as perhaps as the most successful terror attack in history for it altered the course of a democratic nation's elections and the trajectory of its public policy. Timed during the Spanish elections on March 11, 2004 and aimed as retribution for the governing party's support for the Iraq war the death of 191 Spaniards in four remote controlled explosions on commuter trains profoundly affected the country's political direction.

Most public opinion polls predicted the governing party *Partido Popular* (PP) victory yet the conservative government's eagerness to blame the Basque National Liberation Movement (ETA) for the attack was viewed by the electorate as a ploy to conceal the attacks real motivation. The PP's Socialist Party opponents exploited the train assaults to secure their election victory and redirect policy in Al Qaeda's desired direction. Prior to their election the Socialists had argued that Madrid's entry into the controversial Iraq war made the country ripe for the terror organization's reprisal. Such fears proved prescient.

The Socialist administration followed through with its pre-election pledge to withdraw its troops from Iraq. Hastily organized and done without consulting coalitional allies, Socialist President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero brought Spanish troops back home leaving vast amount of weaponry and vehicles behind. Al Qaeda hoped to use the Madrid attacks as a springboard to fracture European resolve. It followed up its 3-11 attacks with more threats against *Crusader Europe* and renewed offers for a negotiated truce.

Despite the Madrid attack's severity and the network's alteration of Spanish policy on Iraq, no European government withdrew its support for the *war on terror*. Persecution of AQ's network persisted and in some cases intensified. Even when Al Qaeda agents successfully struck the European homeland as in the July 2005 London tube and bus bombings (killing over 50 people), the British government continued its support for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Al Qaeda's efforts to attack trans-Atlantic air traffic between the US and Britain, moreover, met with little success.³⁹ These plots were foiled by British and American security agency cooperation. Faced with operational failures Al Qaeda hoped to exploit the cultural divide between radicalized Muslim Diaspora subpopulations and European secular society through internet radicalization. Donald Holbrook for example argues that Al Qaeda's hostility toward European secular and Christian values should not be underestimated.

Bin Laden's media operations during the post 9/11 era railed against Europe's discriminatory treatment of Muslims by emphasizing its burka bans and moratoriums on minaret construction. It heralded the 2005 beheading of filmmaker Theo Van Gough by a Moroccan immigrant enraged by his film dramatizing Islam's repression of women and berated the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo for its cartoonish depiction of the Prophet Mohammad. It later hailed French terrorist Mohammad Merah's 2012 killing of three Jewish school children and their rabbinical teacher in Toulouse.

³⁷Vidino, *Al Qaeda in Europe*, *ibid*

³⁸Celso, A., *Al Qaeda's Post 9-11 Devolution*, *ibid*, 81-104

³⁹*Ibid*, 99

Al Qaeda sympathizers (Said and Cherif Kouachi) following Al Qaeda's entreaties stormed *Charlie Hebdo's* Parisian headquarter in January 2015 killing eleven of its editorial staff. Though one of the brothers had been trained by Al Qaeda's Yemeni branch, the network had little operational role in the terrorist's action.⁴⁰ Significantly the brothers had to borrow funds from a friend to mount the *Charlie Hebdo* attack belying Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's claim of having directed the assault.⁴¹

Europe is however not featured in AQ's ideology that concentrates on striking the United States and Muslim *apostate* regimes. Having spawned a new generation of jihadi entrepreneurs across the old continent AQ has curiously ceded ground to more radical splinter movements like the Islamic State.

Since the London attacks Al Qaeda's operational capabilities have eroded. American unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) assassinations have killed hundreds of AQ's senior and midlevel commanders responsible for overseas terror operations.⁴² Faced with degraded capacity Al Qaeda Central was forced to rely on regional branches whose priorities lay in attacking local adversaries. The 2011 Arab Spring protests and civil wars in Syria, Yemen and Libya moreover re-diverted Al Qaeda attention back to fighting a weakened *near enemy*.

The priorities of AQ's regional branches and the weakening of the organization's capacity to strike America forced Zawahiri into a reinvigorated war against the *near enemy*. Al Qaeda's *direction* over its network was, moreover, seriously compromised by the 2014 expulsion of its Iraqi branch.⁴³ The organizational break was the culmination of a decade long dispute between Al Qaeda and its recalcitrant Iraqi branch.

This conflict began with Ayman al-Zawahiri correspondence to then Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) emir Abu Musab al-Zarqawi criticizing his attacks against the Shia population.⁴⁴ Zarqawi rejected Al Qaeda's criticism. Zarqawi's successors have similarly repudiated Al Qaeda guidance much to bin Laden consternation.⁴⁵ The conflict became untenable when its Iraqi branch without Al Qaeda Central's permission absorbed AQ aligned networks in Syria. Unable to reconcile differences with Iraqi affiliate Zawahiri in February 2014 expelled it from his network. Since then the Islamic State emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has challenged Zawahiri's leadership over the global jihadist movement.⁴⁶ Unlike Al Qaeda the Islamic State comprehended Europe's importance as a key front for its movement.

Zawahiri's reliance on geriatric ideologues advising *moderation* and *consensus* moreover failed to attract young Western jihadists. This is especially true in Europe that during the Syrian civil war saw an unprecedented flight of European fighters to that embattled country. Foreign fighters joining the Islamic State in Syria vastly exceed those that travelled to Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya under AQ's auspices. IS furthermore realized Zawahiri's ambition to form a Mideast jihadi *emirate*. Since its June 2014 creation the Islamic State has unleashed a global war targeting Western, Sunni *apostate* and sectarian (Shia/Alawite) enemies.

Accordingly Europe emerged as a important battleground in the Islamic State's *total war* strategy that sees *near*, *far* and *sectarian* enemies aligned in their desire to destroy the Sunni Muslim world. Driven by its hatred for the Western *far enemy* the Islamic State has executed its Eurocentric terrorist strategy with devastating consequences.

⁴⁰Celso, A., *The Islamic State A Comparative History of Islamic Warfare* (Latham: Rowan and Littlefield, 2018)

⁴¹ Ibid. 183

⁴²Roggio B., "Senior al-Qaeda, Taliban, and allied jihadist leaders killed in US airstrikes in Pakistan, 2004-2016" *The Long War Journal* accessed at: <http://www.longwarjournal.org/pakistan-strikes>

⁴³Zelin A., "The War Between ISIS and Al Qaeda for Supremacy of the Global Jihadist Movement" Research Note 20 *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (June 2014): http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/documents/pubs/researchnote_20_Zelin.pdf

⁴⁴Barr S. and Y. Minzili, "The Zawahiri Letter and Strategy of Al Qaeda" available at <http://www.currenttrends/op...thezawahirikms/.isn>.

⁴⁵McCants W, *The ISIS Apocalypse: History, Strategy and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015)

⁴⁶Lister, C., "Jihadi Rivalry: The Islamic State Challenges Al Qaeda" *Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper 16* January 2016 accessed at: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/jihadi-rivalry-the-islamic-state-challenges-al-qaida/>

4. THE ISLAMIC STATE'S FAR ENEMY DOCTRINE

Terror analysts were initially divided on the Islamic State's interest in attacking the West. Some concluded that the caliphate had a *near enemy*- sectarian agenda far removed from attacking Europe or North America.⁴⁷ They viewed IS' multi-lingual messaging expressed across social media forums of an apocalyptic war with the West as mere propaganda.

This argument misunderstood the inspirational appeal of IS' extremist views. The caliphate's synthesis of apocalyptic, sectarian and Salafist ideas attracted thousands of alienated Western extremists.⁴⁸ The movement of forty thousand foreign fighters to Syria and the civil war's savagery were testimony to the passions generated by IS' millenarian messages. Islamist ideology as a driver of jihadi fanaticism is increasingly recognized by terror experts.⁴⁹

The movement's success in executing its *far enemy* strategy is made clear by a 2016 U.S. congressional report that documents some 101 IS directed or inspired plots against the Western countries.⁵⁰ Since 2014 Islamic State attacks have killed more than 300 Europeans.⁵¹ The terrorist danger remains severe in France, Belgium, United States, Britain and Germany.

The Islamic State's call for violence against the West has radicalized young Muslims. A 2017 study reports 34 plots across 7 Western countries involving teenagers. Some 50% of these young people had contact with IS operatives across social media forums. One plot involved a twelve year old boy who failed to ignite an explosive device at a Christmas market in Germany. Had it not been for a poorly designed bomb, many casualties would have resulted.

Though 1,600 terror suspects have been arrested across Europe Islamic State's sympathizers continue their attacks.⁵² Some analysts worry that IS' terror campaign could intensify with the destruction of its proto-jihadist state.⁵³ Undaunted by the caliphate's military reversals IS' supporters during 2017-2018 attacked in Stockholm, London, Manchester, Barcelona, Strasbourg and Paris.

IS' hatred of Europe is multi-pronged. First, the caliphate's apocalyptic ideology mandates confrontation with a *demonic* West. Second, the Islamic State needs to retaliate against the West's military campaign against the caliphate to rally its supporters. Third, it directly appeals to European Muslims that religious imperatives demand they side with the caliphate by killing Westerners in their own lands. Fourth, its targeting of European populations is designed to drive fissures in the international coalition to weaken Western military resolve. Fifth, the Islamic State's ideology ties the West's military campaign to Iranian Shia interests effectively fusing the *far* and *sectarian* enemies.

Unlike Al Qaeda the Islamic State sees its conflict with Europe as prophetically willed setting the stage where its forces will overcome the *people of the cross*. Described as *plebian jihadism*, the Islamic State's apocalyptic ruminations have attracted thousands of extremists.⁵⁴ Many live in the West and have little knowledge of mainstream Islamic practices. The caliphate's social media network relays its world view simply and venerates its brutality with *hip hop* videos. Alienated by Western culture and anxiously seeking an alternative communal identity thousands of European Muslims have identified with IS's cause.

⁴⁷ Lister C, *The Syrian Jihad: Al Qaeda, The Islamic State and the Evolution of an Insurgency* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 2015) 274-278

⁴⁸ Celso, *The Islamic State*, *ibid*, 56

⁴⁹ McCants, *ibid*; Bunzel C "From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State" *The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Muslim World Analysis Paper*/ No. 19, March 2015: <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-ideology-of-the-Islamic-State.pdf>

⁵⁰ "Terror Gone Viral Overview of the 100+ ISIS-Linked Plots Against the West" *House Homeland Security Committee Majority Staff Report 2014-2016* July 2016 accessed at: https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Report_Terror-Gone-Viral.pdf

⁵¹ Nesser P, A. Stenersen and Emilie, "Jihadi Terrorism in Europe: The IS-Effect", *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10:6 3-21

⁵² Hegghammer T, "The Future of Jihadism in Europe: A Pessimistic View" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10:6 156-170, 3

⁵³ *Ibid*

⁵⁴ Hemmingsen, A.S., "Plebian Jihadism in Denmark: An Individualization and Popularization Predating the Growth of the Islamic State" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10:6 PP 102-108

Many of these jihadists were extremists before they travelled to fight the Assad regime. The civil war's carnage intensified their religious fanaticism that swelled the Islamic State's ranks shortly after the Arab Spring. Without the estimated forty thousand foreign fighters who went to the Mideast it is unlikely that the Islamic State could have seized terrain in western Iraq and eastern Syria to declare its caliphate.

5. COMPARING THE ISLAMIC STATE AND AL QAEDA'S FAR ENEMY STRATEGY

The Islamic State sees Europe as a primary war zone to achieve its objectives. Though Al Qaeda's ideologues reviled much of the continent's culture it never had the visceral hatred of European civilization than Baghdadi's network has evinced. The caliphate sees Europe's large and growing Muslim Diaspora population as ripe for manipulation.

Europe's Muslim population comprises more than forty million and demographic tables suggest strong future growth.⁵⁵ The connection between anti-immigrant sentiment, the growth of far right anti-Muslim parties and Islamic Diaspora radicalization represents for IS ideologues a fertile breeding ground for deeper jihadi mobilization of increasingly alienated sub- populations.

The Islamic State's *far enemy* strategy views European Muslims as an indispensable vehicle to achieve its main strategic ends. It has made their recruitment and radicalization a central priority. For a host of ideological, cultural and logistical reasons the Islamic State's war against Europe is far more comprehensive than anything envisioned by bin Laden or Zawahiri. Table A below summarizes the differences between Islamic State and Al Qaeda policies vis-à-vis Europe.

TableA. *Islamic State and Al Qaeda's Far Enemy Approach*

Terror Network	Ideological and Cultural Reaction to Europe	Logistical Role of Europe for Financing, Recruitment and Terrorist Planning	Primacy of Europe as a Chief War Zone
Islamic State	Visceral Hatred of Europe because it : (1) corrupts Muslims forcing them to live in <i>agrey zone</i> preventing them to practice an authentic version of Islam; (2) is the embodiment of a secular sexually degenerate culture divorced from moral principle and; (3) is a symbol of a decaying Christianity inimically hostile to Islam	Critical hub for financing, recruitment, indoctrination and orchestration of terrorist attacks. Central venue to recruit fighters for the caliphate's military operations in the Mideast and to commit attacks on European soil.	Key target of IS terror strategy designed to weaken European military operations against the caliphate and to expand the caliphate's territorial expanse to recover Allah's <i>rightful domain</i> . War against Europe part of an apocalyptic final war against all non- Muslim civilizations. IS publications <i>Dabiq</i> and <i>Rumiyah</i> suggest the inevitability of Islamic Conquest of Rome
Al Qaeda	Culturally hostile and resentful over the continent's <i>persecution</i> of Muslim minorities and Europe's occupation of former Muslim territories in the Balkans and southern Spain	Europe serves as a financing, recruitment and indoctrination area where terrorists that can be dispatched against <i>apostate</i> Arab governments and American interests	Secondary theatre of operations. Terror attacks against European interests designed to force European states into abandoning the US directed war on terror and restoring a <i>covenant of security</i> where AQ refrains from attacking European interests in return for a sanctuary for its network
Key Differences	Islamic State seeks the annihilation of European civilization where Al Qaeda does not	Europe is more of a primary hub for Islamic State recruitment, indoctrination and financing than for Al Qaeda	Europe is a critical battle ground for the Islamic State but is of secondary importance for Al Qaeda

The Islamic State created a terror infrastructure on the continent well before European involvement in the war against its caliphate. The movement launched its first attack on May 2014 at the Brussels Jewish Museum when a IS trained Belgium fighter killed four people. Islamic State propagandaspeaks

⁵⁵ "Europe's Growing Muslim Population" *Pew Research Center* November 2017 accessed at: <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/>

to an inevitable confrontation between Europe and the caliphate. The caliphate's ideologues argue that this conflict is driven by Europe's occupation of Muslim land (Spain and the Balkans) and its incubation of an amoral *grey zone* that denies Islamic Diaspora populations the ability to live under Sharia law.

Europe was featured in IS publications that spoke directly to its Muslim Diaspora supporters. Its English language *Dabiq* and French language *Dar al Islam* highlighted the caliphate's recruitment of European jihadists. Its multi-lingual messaging reinforces the movement's international credentials. Starting in 2014 IS's network launched a comprehensive effort to recruit, train, ideological exhort, and mobilize its European supporters. IS propaganda venerated their exploits.

The caliphate's formation the Islamic State argues forces Muslims to choose sides in a prophetic war between the forces of Allah and a satanic West. Religious fidelity to Islam IS argues mandates that European Muslims make hijrah [emigrate] to the caliphate or attack Westerners in their native lands. The Islamic State's hatred of Europe reflects the continent's Judeo-Christian and secular heritage both antithetical to what it views as *genuine* Islamic values. Killing Western *infidels* offers European Muslims redemption as the world devolves into two diametrically opposed camps. Such anti-European sentiment was expressed by IS late spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani who in September 2014 stated:

"If you kill a disbelieving American or European-especially the spiteful and filthy French-or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbelievers from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries they entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely on Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run over him with your car."

6. THE ISLAMIC STATE IMPLEMENTS ITS EUROCENTRIC FAR ENEMY STRATEGY

Among the more than five thousand European fighters that emigrated to the caliphate French, Belgian and British nationals represent over a third of them. They are featured in IS' many videos and publications. Abdelhamid Abaaoud the organizer of the November 2015 Paris attacks is lionized by *Dabiq's Just Terror* edition.⁵⁶ The caliphate's European theatre of operations was dominated by French and Belgian militants who were eager to attack their native homelands. Seven of the nine terrorists that hit Paris on November 13, 2015 were French. French convert Fabien Clain and Abdelhamid Abaaoud in Syria selected most of these fighters.⁵⁷ Though prior to the November 2015 attacks some plots were disrupted they sufficiently diverted police attention facilitating the success of the Paris assault that killed over 130 people. Not surprisingly Islamic State fighters struck Brussels in 2016 later killing over 30 people.

Belgium has the highest per capita number of foreign fighters traveling to Syria of any Western European country making it vulnerable to such attacks. Of the 451 estimated fighters a majority are second and third generation immigrants who were raised in isolated impoverished neighborhoods.⁵⁸ Most are in their twenties with criminal backgrounds. Alienated by Western culture and embittered by their criminal past young people ought redemption through embracing extremist Islam. Jihad entrepreneurs were eager to shape their innate violent proclivities.

The *Zerkani Network* in the Brussels suburb of Molenbeek recruited over 170 Belgian fighters some of whom served IS' external operations branch.⁵⁹ They include Abdelhamid Abaaoud who oversaw the Paris November 13, 2015 attacks. Unemployment and criminal activity in this immigrant dominated suburb has been a conduit for extremist indoctrination of religiously illiterate young men. Often financed by clandestine activity the network generated funds to send fighters to Syria. Zerkani's network recruited Paris attackers Abdelhamid Abaaoud and Chakib Akrouh and Brussels terrorist Najim Laachraoui.

⁵⁶ Levitt M, "The Islamic State's Lone Wolf Era is Over" March 24, 2016 accessed at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-islamic-staates-lone-wolf-era-is-over>

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Brisard, JC and K Jackson, "The Islamic State's External Operations and the French-Belgian Networks" *CTC Sentinel* 9:11 8-15

⁵⁹ Ostaeyen PV, "The Belgian Radical Networks and the Road to the Brussels Attacks" *CTC Sentinel* 9:6 7-12

The *Zerkani Network* is part of Europe's infrastructure of jihadi *entrepreneurs* involved in the religious training of impressionable young men with violent criminal pasts. Led by charismatic preachers like Britain's Ahmed Choudary, France's Fabien Clain and Germany's Abu Wala these organizations have groomed hundreds of European jihadists Choudary's significance is especially profound for *Sharia4Belgium* is an offshoot of his organizational blueprint to spread jihadi activism across Europe.⁶⁰

The Paris and Brussels attackers were trained in Syria and were dispatched to sow chaos in Europe transiting through Balkan refugee migrant routes with forged passports. Abaaoud travelled to Syria in 2014 joining a IS' contingent of Belgian and French fighters. He was selected by *Amniyat's* core trainer "Abu Ahmad" to be IS point man for its European operation.⁶¹

By January 2015 France was rocked by jihadi attacks. One IS militant Amedy Coulibaly killed four people at the *Hyper Cacher* kosher grocery store timing it with AQAP sympathizers Said and Cherif Kouachi's attack on the Charlie Hebdo editorial offices. The day before Coulibaly shot and killed a French policewoman. Coulibaly swore fidelity to IS organization whose publication *Dabiq* celebrates his *martyrdom* and interviews his spouse who had travelled to Syria before the attack.⁶² Significantly the magazine's issue also features an interview with Abaaoud perhaps presaging the November Paris attacks.⁶³

Planning for the November 13th 2015 attacks was done in Belgium from multiple locations.⁶⁴ Salah Abdelsalen played a crucial role. It was Abdelsalem that picked up members of the assault teams who arrived to Europe as Syrian *refugees*. Most entered Europe via Greece and Turkey with Abdelsalem meeting assault team members in Hungary and Austria transporting them to Belgium. He also rented flats for the team in Paris and Belgium and the cars that ferreted most of the terrorists from Brussels to Paris.

By early November team members had moved to Paris flats and the decision to mount a devastating attack was a certainty.⁶⁵ While Abaaoud oversaw the teams he was acting under the authority of Belgian "Abu Ahmad" who supervised the operation from Syria. Three teams of operators were formed; each with a specific target. Abaaoud witnessed the carnage outside of the Bataclan Concert Hall and can be seen at the Paris Metro on CCTV footage during and after the attack.

The most lethal attack was at the Bataclan where the American band *The Eagles* was playing. Having killed a security guard three terrorists entered the hall and began firing their automatic weapons at the crowd. When the police arrived they took hostages whom they killed before igniting their suicide vests. Some eighty concert goers were killed and hundreds more were wounded. The *Stade de France* attack could have been the most mortifying and politically significant. The stadium was packed with thousands of spectators with President Francois Holland watching a soccer match. Fortunately security was vigilant and their body search requirement dissuaded the three IS militants from entering the stadium. A third team of two assassins moved across central Paris attacking bars and restaurants killing some fifty people before immolating themselves.

Abaaoud wanted to follow up the November 13th attacks with an assault on the Parisian commercial district *La Defense*. He would die along two others including his cousin in a police shootout when their *Saint-Denis* hideout was discovered. Abaaoud's female cousin had spoken to a friend about the attacks who informed police. Following Abaaoud's cousin there were able to discover Abaaoud's whereabouts. Resisting a commando raid the three suspects were killed over a four hour shootout.

Like the Paris attackers those who assaulted the Zeventum airport and Molenbeek metro on March 22, 2016 were trained IS fighters. The role Ibrahim and Khalid Barkaoui played in the Brussels attacks was celebrated in IS publications.⁶⁶ The Barkaoui brothers, Najim Laachaouri and Mohammad Abrini carried out near simultaneous attacks.

⁶⁰Osyaeyen, *ibid*

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 13-14

⁶² "Dabiq 7 The Extinction of the Grey Zone" accessed at: <https://clarionproject.org/docs/islamic-state-dabiq-magazine-issue-7-from-hypocrisy-to-apostasy.pdf> 68-74

⁶³ *Ibid*, 75-76

⁶⁴ Brisard and Jackson, *ibid*, 10-11

⁶⁵ *Ibid*

⁶⁶ "Dabiq 14: The Murdat Brotherhood" accessed at: <http://clarionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Dabiq-Issue-14.pdf>, 6-7

Transporting suitcase bombs and automatic weapons by taxi to the airport Ibrahim Barkaoui, NajimLaachroui and Mohammad Abrini hoped for a catastrophic attack. Had not one of the bombs not malfunctioned they may have realized their goal. When two of the bombs exploded over a dozen people were killed and hundreds were wounded. Having failed to ignite the bomb Abrini fled the attack site and was later arrested.

The attack on the subway was even more lethal. Khalid Barkaoui exploded his suicide vest on board a metro car killing some 18 people. By the end of the day 32 people were killed in Belgium's worst terrorist attack. The Paris and Brussels attacks may be the crest of IS's directed attacks utilizing trained fighters.

IS uses encrypted social media channels to mobilize its European supporters into attacking their native lands. *Virtual direction* employs social media channels to *recruit, radicalize* and *guide* supporters to kill Westerners. Often months of communications are needed to bolster a potential assassin's determination. *Virtual planners* and their attackers discuss potential targets and methods of execution. Sympathizers can reference IS manuals on how to construct explosive devices or what weapons to use in an attack. One issue of IS' *Rumiyah* gives tactical advice on knife attacks.⁶⁷

IS *virtual planning* operations in Europe was dominated by Frenchman Rachid Kassim.⁶⁸ From his Syrian redoubt Kassim has been linked to plots and attacks across France and Germany involving alienated young people and psychologically troubled immigrants. He was connected to two July 2016 attacks in Germany one by an Afghan immigrant who using a hatchet wounded four South Korean tourists on a passenger train and the other by a Syrian refugee who wounded 15 people when he ignited a suicide explosive vest outside of an Ansbach music concert. Prior to their assaults the perpetrators posted loyalty pledges to Baghdadi across the Islamic State's *Amaq News Agency*.

Prior to his death in a US airstrike, Kassim was *virtually directing* attacks by French militants. France's large extremist community is a receptive canvass for violent agitation. Kassim communicated with one sympathizer that beheaded a police captain and his companion in their Parisian apartment in June 2016 and in the following month convinced two militants to behead an elderly French priest in a small rural Church. He was also linked to an aborted plot in September 2016 by three female jihadists who under his direction aspired to attack a train station. The scheme was disrupted when police found an illegally parked car close to *Notre Dame* square containing the gas canisters to be used in the operation.

IS has a media empire to promote its ideology in the West and encourage Muslim emigration to its caliphate. Barring this IS' *Al Hayat's* English language *Dabiq*, its successor *Rumiyah* and its French publication *Dar al Islam* prioritize Western Muslims killing *apostates* in their native lands. Its *Amaq News Agency* publicized the pledges of support for Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi by Western Muslims who are about to commit terrorism in Europe.

The Islamic State argues that Western Muslims live in a *grey zone* in countries at war with their faith. This creates an identity crisis that must be overcome by emigrating to the caliphate or killing Westerners in their native lands. Muslims who fail to defend their caliphate renounce their faith. The Islamic State's call for Muslim minorities in the West to kill *apostates* by any means has intensified with IS' military reversals. Europe and North America extremists have heeded the caliphate's calling and have used trucks to kill large numbers of people.

Using cargo trucks as death machines is another innovation. They have been employed in battles waged against enemies and as terrorist instruments to maximize civilian casualties. Two IS linked terror attacks in Europe have been especially destructive.

The Nice and Berlin attacks have striking similarities beyond the use of trucks as assault weapons. Both attackers were Tunisian nationals living an alienated life in the West. Nice attacker thirty-one year old Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhjel worked for a trucking company. His troubled life included alcoholism, drug abuse, spousal abuse and promiscuity. Twenty six year old Amis Amri who carried out the Berlin attack had spent five years in an Italian prison for assault and theft. Neither Lahouaiej-Bouhjel nor Amri were religious. They were radicalized later in life and may have viewed IS affiliation as an act of spiritual redemption.

⁶⁷ "Rumiyah 2" accessed at: <https://clarionproject.org/factsheets-files/Rumiyah-ISIS-Magazine-2nd-issue.pdf>

⁶⁸ Simcox R, "The Islamic State's Western Teenage Plotters" *CTC Sentinel* 10:2 21-26

Both were exposed to IS propaganda and were linked to pro IS jihadist preachers. Though Amri was radicalized in Italian prisons German Iraqi preacher Abu Wala intensified his extremism. Based in the North-Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony regions Wala disseminated pro-IS literature and preyed upon young psychologically troubled men. French officials have linked Lahouaiej-Bouhiel to IS literature and sympathizers. He reportedly was fascinated by IS execution videos.⁶⁹ Prior to the attack he exhibited signs of religious devotion and had grown a beard.

Lahouaiej-Bouhiel targeted a large Bastille Day crowd watching fireworks. Lightly guarded by French police checkpoints and with no concrete barriers denying entry to a vehicle the locale was attractive attack site. The Tunisian jihadist had scouted the area before the attack and planned the operation. With its nationalistic secular character an attack on Bastille Day was rife with symbolism

Breaking through a police checkpoint and traveling at high speed Lahouaiej-Bouhiel smashed his 19 ton cargo truck through hundreds of people celebrating on the *Promenade des Anglais*. He in a zigzag pattern mowed down escaping Bastille Day participants. He killed 86 people and wounded hundreds of others before police killed him. Inside the cabin investigators found automatic weapons and a pistol speculating that Lahouaiej-Bouhiel sought to continue his rampage once he vacated his vehicle. His *martyrdom* inspired imitators.

Berlin attacker Anis Amri's case exemplifies the deficiencies of how the European judicial system deals with Islamist extremists. He came to Germany after Italian authorities had released him hoping for political asylum. With a criminal history and jihadi sympathies Amri's petition was rejected and he was awaiting deportation at the time he committed mass murder. Though German officials had detained Amri, he was released by a court order. Deportation was delayed until German authorities received verification of his Tunisian citizenship for German law forbids deportation without sufficient identity documentation. Amri's denial of asylum rights may have contributed to his decision to commit mass murder.

At a rest stop for truckers Amri shot and killed a Polish truck driver. Commandeering his cargo truck Amri drove uneasily around Berlin searching for a target. He chose a Christmas market where hundreds of people congregated smashing through a small barricade into the crowd. Had it not been for the truck's automatic breaking system the carnage would be worse. After his rampage fourteen people died and dozens were wounded.

Amri posted a pledge of *bay'ah* to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi aired on *Telegram* by the caliphate's *AmaqNews Agency* after his Christmas market attack.⁷⁰ Islamic State propagandists hail Amri and Lahouaiej-Bouhiel as their *soldiers*. The caliphate was so impressed by the Nice Attack that it generated an animated simulation of Lahouaiej-Bouhiel driving through a crowd of *apostates* justifying his *martyrdom operation* as retaliation for *Crusader France's* aggression against the caliphate. Despite being shielded by its island status the United Kingdom has been a target of IS terrorism.

With over 500 British jihadists having travelled to Syria, the UK has long been a hotbed of extremist mobilization, British security forces, for example, were able to foil over a dozen IS plots since 2014 until Khalid Masood's March 2017 vehicular and knife attacks in Westminster that killed five people. Shortly after Masood's attack IS media channels venerated his assault declaring him a "soldier". The Islamic State followed up its assault against the United Kingdom when one of its "soldiers" Salman Ramadan Abedi in May 22, 2017 ignited an explosive device in his backpack killing 22 people (many of them children) attending a concert in Manchester.

Abedi, moreover, was linked to IS network in Libya that may have equipped him with bomb making skills.⁷¹ IS continued its assault on the United Kingdom the following month when three supporters driving a van ran over pedestrians and exited the vehicle knifing people in nearby Borough Market. After eight minutes of carnage they killed seven people and wounded forty-eight others before being

⁶⁹Heil, *ibid*

⁷⁰*Ibid*

⁷¹Callmachi R and E Schmitt, "Manchester Bomber Met With ISIS Unit in Libya, Officials Say" June 3, 2017 *New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/03/world/middleeast/manchester-bombing-salman-abedi-islamic-state-libya.html>

gunned down by the police. Shortly thereafter IS's *Amaq News Agency* claimed responsibility for the attack.⁷²

Given Spain's past Islamic heritage IS media operations have called for the *re-conquest* of Al Andaluz. The country, moreover, features many jihadi networks concentrated around Barcelona, Madrid and its North African possessions Ceuta and Melilla. Spain's foreign fighters in Syria mostly come from its Maghreb territories.⁷³ Many have entered the ranks of the Islamic State

Catalonia is a hub for jihadist networks to recruit North African Diaspora extremists. Given the depth of the jihadi presence in the region another attack in Spain was inevitable. Its fertile Islamist micro culture contributed to August 2017 terror attacks in Barcelona and the seaside resort of Cambrils that killed sixteen people. The Barcelona assault could have been more lethal had the attackers followed through with their design involved bombing key tourist sites in Barcelona.

An unintended explosion at a safe house in Alcanar killed two members of the group (including its ring leader imam Abdelbaki Es-Satti) and wounded another. The explosion changed the terror cell's plans. Fearing that police would question wounded cell member, the jihadists acted quickly. They mounted van and knife attacks in Barcelona and in Cambrils over two days. Driving a van into Barcelona's crowded *Las Ramblas* boulevard Younes Abouyaaquob killed 13 pedestrians. Ditching the van and escaping through a crowded market near the square, he hijacked a car killing its driver. He would remain at large for two days. His fellow conspirators launched a van and knife attack in Cambrils that killed one person and wounded a few others before one policeman shot all five terrorists dead.

The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attacks through social media channels. The Barcelona plot involved a sophistication not seen since the Paris and Brussels attacks. Its 10 man cell amassed materials large enough to manufacture over a dozen bombs. Based on testimony by one captured suspect, the team was targeting the city's *La Sagrada Familia* cathedral. Such a confession is consistent with the anti-Christian hostility of the IS network as seen in the Berlin Christmas market attack and its beheading of an elderly French Priest in Normandy.

The *Las Ramblas* attack doesn't end the jihadist assault against the Iberian Peninsula. In 2017-2018 Spanish police disrupted over a dozen jihadi terrorist plots.⁷⁴ Research done by Fernando Reinares and Carola Garcia-Calvo indicates that Spain's second generation of Muslim immigrants is growing as are the number of converts to Islam.⁷⁵ Both subpopulations have proven vulnerable to radicalization.

Complicating the European response is an effort to attribute such attacks to mental health issues. Knife attacks by individuals screaming *Allahu Akbar* in Paris and Barcelona in 2018 were dismissed by police as being motivated by mental insanity.⁷⁶ Under severe pressure security services are incentivized to find alternative explanations for jihadist inspired violence. Political correctness, moreover, shields politicians and policymaker from acknowledging the depth of Islamist recruitment of Muslim Diaspora populations.

⁷²Joscelyn T., "The Islamic State claims its fighters responsible for the London Attacks" June 4, 2017 *The Long War Journal* accessed at: <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/06/islamic-state-claims-its-fighters-responsible-for-london-attacks.php>

⁷³Reinares, F., C. Garcia-Calvo and Á Vicente, "Dos factores que explican la radicalización yihadista en España" *Real Instituto Elcano* August 2017 accessed: http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_es/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/terrorismo+internacional/ari62-2017-reinares-garciacalvo-vice-dos-factores-explican-radicalizacion-yihadista-espana

⁷⁴Kern, S., "Spain: Catalonia's Continuing Jihad Problem" January 22, 2019 *The Gatestone Institute* accessed at: <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/13579/spain-catalonia-jihadists>

⁷⁵Reinares, F. and C. Garcia-Calvo, "Barcelona y Cambrils: una ño después: cuál era el riesgo por atentados? ¿qué lecciones están pendientes?" *Comentario Elcano* 43/2018 accessed at: http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_es/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/comentario-reinares-garciacalvo-barcelona-cambrils-ano-despues-riesgo-atentados-lecciones-pendientes

⁷⁶Quiggan, T., "Toronto Shooting: Politically Correct Coverup?" August 14, 2018 *The Gatestone Institute* accessed at: <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/12831/toronto-shooting-cover-up>

Many people in Europe hope the demise of the Islamic State's physical caliphate will diminish the threat of jihadi terrorism. Analysts are less optimistic.⁷⁷

7. POST CALIPHATE TERRORISM IN EUROPE

IS's connection to radicalized sub-populations in Europe remains a danger.. Just a day after the Barcelona attack a Moroccan immigrant supporter of the caliphate in Finland killed two people and wounded eight others in a knife attack before being detained.

Despite the erosion of the caliphate operational and on-line capability 2018 has offered little respite from IS inspired attacks with a gunman killing four people in Southwest France in March, a IS knifeman assassinating one person in Paris in May and a Belgian extremist exterminating three people shortly afterwards. In December 2018 an IS sympathizer in Strasbourg killed five people and wounded ten others near a Christmas market.⁷⁸ Though most attacks have featured guns and knives the caliphate's supporters have planned mass casualty chemical warfare assaults.

In June 2018 German police arrested a 29 year old Tunisian immigrant Sief Allah Hammami in a Cologne based plot featuring the *weaponization* of ricin. Based on information provided by the CIA and local sources, German security officials searched the suspect's flat and found 84.3 milligrams of the poisonous substance. Hammami hoped to combine ricin with an explosive device. Given its experimentation of chemical warfare techniques at Mosul University some of which was applied on the battlefield against the Kurds in Syria, IS is well positioned to train its Western sympathizers. Police have averted IS inspired chemical weapons plots in Australia and France. These efforts are a portent of future terrorism in Europe.

As its state building project collapses in Iraq and Syria, what are the prospects for future IS linked terrorism in Europe? Analysts are divided on whether the network can sustain its terror campaign in its post caliphate era. Some experts contend that the caliphate's destruction, the depletion of its finances and the targeting of its commanders will diminish its capacity to mount operations.⁷⁹ IS *virtual network* of a planners have been hit severely by the coalition's targeted assassination campaign. Destroying IS proto-jihadist state also derails its apocalyptic narrative and delegitimizes its ideology. IS's brutal three year rule in Syria and Iraq moreover has bred enemies and may undermine its future appeal.

Others are pessimistic. The destruction of IS' state could force the return of its foreign fighters to their native lands. If some of the 5,000 Western Europeans jihadists return home the continent could experience a surge in terrorism. Richard Barrett in his October 2017 study estimates that some 30% of European fighters have returned. It is further estimated that some 800 European fighters are presently detained Kurdish forces in Syria. Governments are reluctant to have them repatriated..

Analyst Thomas Hegghammer predicts that Islamist terror in Europe will persist.⁸⁰ He connects future jihadi violence to macro trends that include the growth of marginalized Muslim youth radicalized by jihadi *entrepreneurs*, their engagement in foreign conflict zones and their use of encrypted technology. Europe's Islamist micro culture with its extremist mosques furthermore propels jihadist violence.

Thousands of young people in European cities have been indoctrinated into radical Islamism by jihadi *entrepreneurs* like Anjem Choudary, Khalid Zerkani, Fabien Cain and Abu Wala. Their incendiary rhetoric has driven them to fight in overseas wars and commit terror at home.

One also cannot dismiss that Al Qaeda may seek to emulate and perhaps build upon IS' success in developing a European terror infrastructure. Inter-jihadi competition can be the wellspring for more attacks. The demise of the IS caliphate could give AQ an opportunity to overcome IS dominance of Euro Muslim populations.

⁷⁷Hegghammer, "The Future of Jihadism in Europe", *ibid*

⁷⁸Peltier, E and A. Breedan, "France Declares Strasbourg Shooting and Act of Terrorism" December 12, 2018 Accessed at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/12/world/europe/france-strasbourg-shooting.html>

⁷⁹Jeffery J, "How to Defeat ISIS: The Case for U.S. Ground Forces" January 4, 2016 *Washington Institute* accessed at: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/how-to-defeat-isis-the-case-for-u.s.-ground-forces>; Barrett R, "Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees" October 2017 The Soufan Center accessed at: <http://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017.pdf>

⁸⁰Hegghammer, "The Future of Jihadism in Europe", *ibid*

This dynamic presages future jihadi violence in the West. Given the Islamic State's threats against the *people of the cross* one could expect the targeting of churches and Christian institutions.⁸¹ The Berlin and Strasbourg Christmas Market attacks and the beheading of an elderly French priest in Normandy could foreshadow a sustained anti-Christian campaign in the West. The network may attack church congregations. Christmas and Easter religious celebrations could be targeted by IS sympathizers for their shock value and prospect for mass casualties.

The 9th issue of *Rumiyah [Rome]* the Islamic State's English language magazine endorses the movement's targeting of Christian institutions. It justifies attacking Christendom in the following passage:

*For this reason, one should seek closeness to Allah by targeting their priests, monks, and others (those who serve as caretakers for the belligerent Christians), harming them, as they are in fact the leader of the Kufr---and in killing them is the greatest of rewards, by Allah's permission".*⁸²

Rumiyah's continues by arguing that "*There is no sanctity for Christian [institutions] in of themselves, as they are places in which shirk [polytheism] and Kufr [disbelief] are practices*".⁸³ The praxis between IS' ideological hostility toward Christians is seen in church attacks by its members in Egypt, the Philippines, Indonesia, Nigeria, and France. Hundreds have perished in such attacks.

Italy could be a key target given the network's threats against Rome and its allusions to its future conquest. The Islamic State's first English language magazine *Dabiq* ominously features the Vatican's Saint Peter's Square on the cover of its *The Failed Crusade* issue.⁸⁴ One can easily envision Easter celebrations being attacked with the Vatican being a prime target of the network's future operations. Such a strike would play an invaluable role in rejuvenating the networks mobilization of extremists and accelerate the anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe that could be the wellspring for future militant recruitment.

The Islamic State's supporters in Europe may take inspiration from the network's attacks against churches in Indonesia. One 2018 assault involved a family of Muslim extremists that launched three attacks (one of them on a motorcycle) against churches that killed over a dozen people.⁸⁵ The narrow alley ways of most Italian cities leading to heavily populated squares make it vulnerable to motorcycle attacks that would be difficult if nearly impossible to prevent.

Though Italy has not experienced one significant jihadist attack, the influx of Muslim migrant populations, its anti-immigrant government and the maturing of its second generation immigrant population makes it vulnerable to jihadist attacks. As Lorenzo Vidino notes the country has served as a hub for jihadist indoctrination and recruitment with Milan as its epicentre.⁸⁶ Some observers have argued that Italy may be prone to future attacks and it is unclear how prepared Italian security services are to deal with such an event.⁸⁷ Let us hope we never find out.

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⁸³ 9

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