

# **THE ISLAMIC STATE THREAT TO EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN SECURITY**

*Anthony Celso, Angelo State University*

## **Abstract**

This essay examines Islamic State (IS) terror activity in Europe and North America. It does so in four parts. First, it analyses the pioneering role of Abu Muhammad al-Adnani who from 2012-2016 served as IS' chief propagandist and terror orchestrator. Second, it looks at IS' terror campaign to weaken Western homeland security. Third, it discusses the Islamic State attacks in Europe and North America. Finally, it assesses future IS's terrorism in the West.

**Key Words:** Islamic extremism, jihad, terrorism

## **Purpose**

Degraded by U.S. counterterror operations at the end of the American occupation of Iraq, IS' predecessor was declared defeated (Fishman, 2009). Once American forces left Iraq, however, sectarian tensions between Sunni and Shi'ites and the Arab Spring's political disturbances co-joined to revitalize the Islamic State of Iraq's (ISI) across the Levant (Pollack, 2013). The jihadist network 2012-2014 insurgent-terror campaign weakened Iraqi and Syrian security forces hold over territory in Sunni dominated areas. This allowed ISI to form a jihadi state in areas it controlled.

By declaring a caliphate (proclaimed as the Islamic State in June 2014) the movement endangered regional and international security. Initially terror analysts were divided on the Islamic State's interest in attacking the West. Some (Lister, 2016) concluded that the caliphate had a Mideast focus far removed from attacking Europe or North America. He viewed IS' multi-lingual messaging expressed across social media forums of an apocalyptic war with the West as largely propaganda.

This argument underestimated the global appeal of IS' extremist vision. The caliphate's propaganda attracted thousands of extremists. The flow of forty thousand foreign fighters to Syria and the civil war's savagery is testimony to the passions generated by IS' propagandistic appeal. Islamist ideology as a driver of jihadi fanaticism is now being recognized by terror experts (McCants, 2015; Bunzel, 2015).

IS' success in executing its anti-Western strategy was made clear by a U.S. House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee Majority Staff Report (2016) that documented some 101 Islamic State (IS) linked plots launched against the Western countries. Islamic State attacks have killed close to 300 Europeans (Nesser, Stenerson & Oftedal, 2016). The terrorist danger is listed as severe in France, Belgium, United States, Britain, and Germany.

The Islamic State's call for violence against the West has radicalized many young Muslims. A 2017 study (Simcox) reports thirty-four plots across seven Western countries involving teenagers who executed or contemplated attacks. Some 50% of these young people had cyber or virtual 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 (Flade, 2016). Had it not been for a poorly designed bomb, many casualties would have resulted. The scale of the terror danger underscores the existence of vast network that plans, executes, finances, inspires and virtually directs terror attacks.

Though 1,600 terror suspects have been arrested across Europe Islamic State's sympathizers continue their attacks (Hegghammer, 2016). Analysts (Gurski, 2017) worry that IS' terror campaign could intensify with the destruction of its jihadist state. Undaunted by the caliphate's military reversals Islamic State supporters between 2017-2018 attacked in Stockholm, London, New York, Manchester, Toronto, Edmonton, Barcelona and Paris.

This essay examines IS' terror activity in Europe and North America. It does so in four parts. First, it analyses the pioneering role of Abu Muhammad al-Adnani who from 2012-2016 served as IS chief propagandist and terror orchestrator. Second, it looks at IS' manifold terror campaign to weaken Western security. Third, it discusses the Islamic State attacks in Europe and North America. Finally, it assesses future IS terrorism in its post-caliphate stage in the West noting divergence between Europe and North America.

### **The Role of Abu Muhammad al-Adnani**

No discussion of IS' 2014-2018 attacks in the West can proceed without mentioning Abu Muhammad al-Adnani's role (Alkalff and Bin Jani, 2016; Celso, 2016). Prior to his August 2016 killing in an American airstrike he was in the forefront of *directing* IS terrorism against the West. He was a brilliant polemicist, rallying supporters to kill Westerners. Starting in September 2014 his calls for attacks have been heeded by sympathizers in America, France, Belgium,

Australia, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Canada, and Denmark. Not simply confined to a propaganda role Adnani helped develop IS's external operations. He authorized the assault team that carried out the November 13, 2015, attacks in Paris. Adnani's legacy is deadly.

He joined Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) after the 2003 US invasion. His service to AQI led to senior positions in its Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) successor. Adnani swore loyalty to AQI's Post- Zarqawi emirs including Abu Bakr al Baghdadi who in 2010 assumed leadership of the network. ISI's revitalized network capitalized on the power vacuum left by the US 2011 departure and the Syrian civil war's sectarian antagonisms.

Adnani's 2014-2016 audio addresses pillory IS' opponents that include Western powers, Israel, the Kurds, the Shia, Alawites and Al Qaeda. Adnani presented a didactic universe where IS aligned Sunnis confront a despotic world in which their struggle is divinely ordained to triumph. He depicted a Muslim world in discord [fitna] and ignorance [jahiliyyah] that he argued can only be overcome by fortifying medieval Islamic values. Islam's atrophy he asserts is exacerbated by a Zionist-Crusader alliance with Iran that aims to annihilate righteous Sunnis. He depicts Sunnis as facing a diabolical conspiracy. In "That They Live by Proof" (Al-Adnani, 2014) he declares:

The whole world has not come together to wage war against us except because we command the worship of Allah, alone without partner, and we incur others to do so. We make wala based upon it and we declare the disbelief of those who abandon it. We warn of shirk [polytheism] in the worship of Allah, and we are severe against it. We make enemies based upon it and we declare the disbelief of those engage in it. This is our call. This is our religion. For this alone, we fight the world and they fight us.

His cry for action attracted many foreign fighters. Within this grouping, Europeans dominated IS' external operations to attack the West. French and Belgian born fighters, for example, spearheaded IS's assault in Europe. IS' hatred of the West is impelled by several factors. First, the caliphate's apocalyptic ideology mandates confrontation with a *demonic* West. Second, IS needs to retaliate against the West's for its military campaign against the caliphate. Third, it directly appeals to European and North American 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 against

its movement. Fifth, the Islamic State's ideology ties the West's military campaign to Iranian Shia interests effectively fusing Europe and North America with IS chief sectarian enemies. Finally, IS argues that Western Muslims live in a *grey zone* where secular influences corrupt Islamic practices on the continent.

IS' anti-Western strategy is part of its war doctrine designed to ensure that the caliphate endures. Adnani's call for terrorism against the West is expressed in speeches and in IS' publications. Between September 2014 and May 2016 Adnani made four appeals across *Al Hayat Media* Enterprises for Muslims to kill Westerners. Complementing his oratorical skills was his position within the Islamic State's media and terror operations. Adnani supervised production content of IS' execution videos. The theatrical punishments (burials, drowning, immolations, beheadings, fire squad, casting people off of tall buildings) graphically shown were designed to inspire fear and generate support from young jihadists attracted to IS' video game violence.

Described as *plebian jihadism* (Hemmingsen, 2016) the Islamic State's ideology synthesizes apocalyptic and Salafi-jihadist influences. This ideological configuration has attracted tens of thousands of extremists. Many live in the West and have little knowledge of mainstream Islamic practices. The caliphate's social media network relayed its world view simply and venerates its brutality with *hip hop* videos. Alienated by Western culture and anxiously seeking an *alternative communal identity* some European and North American Muslims identify with IS's cause.

Many of these young people were committed extremists before they travelled to fight against the Assad regime. The civil war's carnage intensified their religious fanaticism that swelled the Islamic State's military ranks. 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. The caliphate declaration and IS end times ruminations of a final prophetic battle against Western evil has galvanized many young jihadists. In Adnani's (2014) words:

We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women, by permission of Allah, the Exalted. This is His promise to us. He is glorified and he does not fail in His promise. If we do not reach it that time, then our children and grandchildren will reach it, and they will sell your sons and slaves at the slave market.

Though it is impossible to gauge Adnani exact influence (terrorists have complex motives and multiple allegiances) it is reasonable to assume that his exhortations had some impact. The frequency of IS attacks greatly eclipses Al Qaeda's post 9-11 assaults against the West suggesting that in Europe and North America the caliphate has many more supporters than AQ's network. Al Qaeda's signature far enemy strategy of attacking the Western homeland has been appropriated and strengthened by the Islamic State.

Richard Barrett (2015) documents that most foreign fighters attracted to extremist causes are young males. Among the five thousand European fighters French, Belgian and British nationals are prominently displayed in IS' videos including the late British executioner Mohammad Emwazi nicknamed *Jihadi John* killed in a UK drone strike and Abdelhamid Abaaoud the organizer of the November 2015 Paris attacks who would later die in a police raid (Levitt, 2016).

Adnani, moreover, oversaw IS external terror operations across the world. Based on testimony by a German IS defector Adnani screened European candidates trained in the caliphate's camps (Flade, 2016; Alkaff and Bin Jani, 2016) with French and Belgian fighters enthusiastic about committing attacks against their home countries. Some of these militants come from the immigrant dominated Brussels suburb of Molenbeek that has been a den for IS recruitment and terror planning.

Beyond directing teams to kill Westerners, Adnani hoped to inspire lone wolf and homegrown terrorists. Adani's incendiary style can be seen in his September 2014 *Indeed Your Lord is Ever Watchful* address (Al-Adnani) that eerily foreshadows IS' attacks in the West:

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.

Heeding his entreaty Europeans and North Americans have been stabbed, bombed, axed, shot, beheaded, and in the most lethal *lone wolf* attack an IS sympathizer in Nice ran over 86 Bastille Day spectators in July 2016 with a tanker truck. Significantly the vast majority of those killed or wounded in IS

terror campaigns have been civilians. Trains, parade grounds, concerts, restaurants, shops, night clubs have all been attacked. Many of the attackers swore fidelity to IS before they committed their atrocities.

### **The Islamic State's Attack Strategy**

While Adnani oversaw external terror operations the financing and planning of IS terror campaign was performed by its *Amniyat* security branch. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Nathaniel Barr (2016) argue that Amn al-Kharaj organized the caliphate's external operations. Overall regional operations, however, were overseen by militants born or familiar with the counties that are planning to attack.

The caliphate's European operation was dominated by French born or speaking militants selecting, training, and dispatching attack teams. IS's terror campaign involves many French and Belgium operatives eager to attack their native homelands.

Seven of the nine terrorists that assaulted Paris on November 13, 2015, were French (Brisard, 2015). Islamic State planners worked with French ideologue Fabien Clain and Belgian team organizer Abdelhamid Abaaoud in selecting fighters. The weapons and explosives training these teams received increased the lethality of the network's attacks. The 2015 Paris and 2016 Brussels attacks featured teams of trained assassins using weapons and explosives that combined killed 160 people. By targeting a sports stadium, a concert hall and restaurants in Paris and the Molenbeek metro station and Zentrom airport in Brussels IS sought to maximize the number of civilians killed.

French and Belgian direction of these operations is unsurprising for jihadi activism is deeply rooted in these countries. Some observers (Filiu, 2016) argue that the current wave of jihadi terrorism in France is attributable to Paris' *Nineteenth District Network*. The group's organizer sent dozens of fighters to Iraq to wage jihad against the Americans after their overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime. These foreign fighters have been implicated in IS terror activity in Francophone countries.

Belgium has the highest per capita number of foreign fighters traveling to Syria of any Western European country. Of the 451 estimated fighters a majority are second and third generation immigrants who were raised in isolated impoverished neighborhoods (Brisard and Jackson, 2016). Many are in their

twenties with criminal backgrounds. Alienated by Western culture and embittered by their criminal past these young people were looking for an alternative communal identity in their quest for spiritual redemption. Subsections of Belgium's immigrant population have proven particularly vulnerable to jihadist radicalization.

The clustering of Europe's Muslim Diaspora population in dense urban areas has facilitated jihadist recruitment and indoctrination. Extremist organizations have been especially active in Belgium. Researchers attribute the foreign fighter flow to Syria to three networks. *Shariah4Belgium*, *Resto Tawid* and the *Zerkani Network*, for example, recruited over 170 Belgian fighters (Ostaeyen, 2016). They include Abdelhamid Abaaoud who oversaw the Paris November 13, 2015, attacks. The *Zerkani Network* has been the focus of repeated anti-terror operations and prosecutions (Vierden, 2016). Moroccan preacher Khalid Zerkani's Molenbeek based network has promoted Islamist and jihadi causes for over a decade. 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 has been connected to Paris and Brussels attackers. The *Zerkani Network* is part of Europe's deep 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 *Shariah4Belgium* is an offshoot of his organizational blueprint to spread jihadi activism across Europe.

The Paris attackers stored weapons and explosives at multiple locations across France and Belgium. Contributing to the success of IS Paris assault was Belgium's poorly financed, understaffed and fragmented police and intelligence agencies. Strewn across federal, provincial and local levels often speaking different languages police and intelligence units guarded their autonomy impairing the flow and coordination of information on terror suspects.

Poor relations between Belgian police and immigrant communities, moreover, impeded the development of informants. The sheer size of Belgium's extremist community and the scale of its foreign fighter problem have overwhelmed security services. Poorly integrated into European wider intelligence network Belgian communication with French intelligence agencies was poor. IS directed operations in Europe are but a part of its attack strategy. It has supplemented its

efforts with cyber or virtual direction of extremists and by inspiring its Western supporters across social media channels.

### Conceptualizing IS Operations

The Islamic State's attack strategy is complex and difficult to counter. The caliphate's operations have directly trained and financed assault teams as seen in the Paris and Brussels attacks and its cyber planners have virtually guided and inspired attacks by its supporters and lone wolf jihadists.

Often attacks in Europe overlap with IS operations straddling the line between virtual, directed and inspired. Such operations defy precise classification and can be described variously as directed, virtual or inspired. Incomplete information about IS efforts which can be shielded by encrypted technology exacerbates classification difficulties.

The Islamic State recognition of Salman Ramadan Abedi's 2017 Manchester *martyrdom* operation killing 22 people attending a music concert exemplifies this contentious problem. His detonation of a suicide vest in the foyer of the concert building as people exited could be described as inspired, virtual and directed. Abedi, moreover, has been linked with IS network in Libya who may have equipped him with bomb making skills (Callmachi and Schmitt, 2017). Western governments are worried that Libya could be IS rear guard operational base for future *directed* and *virtual* operations.

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, an IS knifeman assassinating one person in Paris in May and a Belgian extremist exterminating three people shortly afterwards. Though most attacks have featured guns and knives the caliphates sympathizers have also sought to use mass casualty chemical warfare.

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 (Flade, 2018). 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. With its experimentation of chemical warfare techniques at Mosul university some of which was applied on the battlefield against the Kurds, IS is well positioned to train its Western sympathizers. Police have averted IS inspired



chemical weapons plots in Australia and France. These efforts provide an ominous portent of future terrorism in Europe. Though the scale of the terror problem is not as great, North American communities are at risk.

### **The Distinctiveness of IS' North American Jihad**

The Islamic State in the United States and Canada has less of a support base. There are no *Sharia4Belgium*, *Abu Wala* and *Zerkani* networks. North American Muslims rarely live in unassimilated neighbourhoods and most do not espouse radical causes. The Muslim populations in the U.S. and Canada are considerably smaller, wealthier, better educated and more dispersed than their European co-religionists (Vidino and Hughes, 2015). These conditions militate against radicalization.

Though the caliphate has published kill lists of American military personnel, few Muslims heed the Islamic State's call. This does not mean that the caliphate cannot spur sympathizers with broad jihadi allegiances into terroristic actions. It has done this successfully. The problem is particularly acute among some North American converts and lone wolf terrorists.

### **Lone Wolves with Multiple Jihadi Sympathies**

Since 2014 over a hundred people have been charged with IS related terrorism offenses in the United States (Vidino and Hughes, 2015). Most of the criminal cases deal with recruitment, financial support and travel of foreign fighters to Syria. Some, however, involved plots to kill Americans. Analysts point to the failed Garland, Texas *Curtis Cutwell* Center attack as the organization's opening salvo to kill Americans.

One of the Islamic State's *virtual* planners British born Junaid Hussein communicated with Elton Simpson to attack the Center for its exhibiting of Prophet Muhammad cartoons (Hughes and Meleagrou Hitchens, 2017). Equipped with automatic weapons Simpson and his partner were gunned down by a police guard before they could enter the complex.

Sam Mullins (2017) reports that 70% of IS linked terrorist acts in the West are conducted by lone actors. Often the attacker's abrupt radicalization prompts spontaneous fit of violence making the attack unpreventable. At times the perpetrator has a history of mental illness. Though widely maligned the lone wolf concept applies to many North American IS sympathizers. Though inspired by

the caliphate's propaganda, lone wolves plan and execute their own attacks. Attacks committed in San Bernardino, Orlando and New York fit this mould.

American extremists have jihadist allegiances that navigate between organizations (Gilks, 2016). Often ignorant of the ideological divisions between Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, American extremists have cross hybridized jihadi sympathies. Affiliation with the Islamic State may be opportunistic and can revert back to Al Qaeda. Given the absence of an Islamist infrastructure on-line radicalization is a stimulant for IS linked violence in America.

On December 2, 2015, American born Syed Rizwan Farook and his immigrant wife Tashfeen Malik killed 14 people and injured 22 others at an employee training event hosted by the *Inland Regional Center* in San Bernardino. Farook was an inspector for the Country Department of Public Health and was attending the event. He left the meeting abruptly and returned with his wife some 40 minutes later. Armed with assault rifles they opened fire on people in the banquet hall shooting over a hundred rounds. During the attack Malik expressed her support for IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi on her Facebook page. Having killed over a dozen people Farook and Malik left the center. They drove their sports utility vehicle (SUV) for over four hours around the San Bernardino until spotted by police. After being chased by law enforcement personnel on a roadway the couple stood their ground and were killed in a fire fight.

Malik's participation in the attack is unusual. Rarely do spouses accompany their husbands on martyrdom missions. Her presence prompted speculation that she was a catalyst for Farook's radicalization. Though of Pakistani origin she lived in Saudi Arabia and met Farook via an online religious dating network. FBI Investigators highlight that the couple were radicalized over a number of years and their computer contained on-line extremist literature. Farook was infatuated with Anwar al Awlaki writings and was familiar with AQAP bomb making instructions.

The late Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) ideologue Anwar al Awlaki writings, moreover, influenced Farouk and Malik. The caliphate's adoption of Awlaki call for attacks by Western Muslims may have triggered the couple's transference of allegiance to the Islamic State (Shane). American jihadists have diffused ideological convictions navigating across Al Qaeda, the Taliban and the Islamic State. American born Omar Mateen who in June 2016 killed 49 people at the Pulse Nightclub also expressed multiple organizational loyalties.

Mateen's motivation for attacking a gay nightclub prompted allegations that he was a homophobic gay incapable of reconciling his homosexuality with his jihadi sympathies. The Department of Justice investigation after the massacre found no evidence of Mateen's homosexuality. His second wife Noor Salmon accompanied him as he scouted out the nightclub as a potential target. She also went with him to the gun shop where he legally purchased the weapons. The Justice Department found enough evidence of complicity that it charged her with aiding and abetting Mateen's terrorist act though it failed to convict her of the charge.

Storming into the club firing an automatic rifle, Mateen took hostages into the ladies' restroom. In his phone conversations with police, he expressed solidarity with IS and Al Qaeda's Nusra Front calling the attack retaliation for the US bombing campaign against the caliphate. Like San Bernardino's Malik Mateen swore *bay'ah* to IS emir Baghdadi during his *martyrdom mission*.

After a four-hour standoff with police an assault team blew a hole through a bathroom's wall and a police marksman killed Mateen. The FBI believes he was radicalized on-line for he expressed support for a number of jihadi networks. It could not, however, find any direct link to any foreign terrorist organization. In his rambling phone conversations with police, he mentions the death of an IS commander in a US airstrike, the American war against the Taliban in Afghanistan and the death of a friend who fought on behalf of Al Qaeda's Nusra Front as justifications for his violence.

Shortly after the attack IS *Amaq News Agency* declared Mateen a soldier praising the massacre. IS's enthusiasm for Mateen's slaughter of homosexuals is consistent with its homophobic orientation. The caliphate's denunciation of Western sexual immorality references homosexuality and the organization killed gays by casting them off tall buildings. IS' discussion of the grey zone Western Muslims inhabit speaks to the corruption of faith caused by exposure to Western sexual freedoms. This may have spurred Mateen to target the Pulse Nightclub.

This was the case of the attack in New York on October 31, 2017, committed by 29-year-old Uzbek immigrant Sayfullo Saipov who rammed a pickup truck into a crowded bicycle lane near the World Trade Centre killing eight people (Summez, 2018). Many of the dead were Argentine tourists celebrating a reunion. Exiting the band Saipov was shot and wounded by police. Based on criminal investigations he was inspired by Islamic State propaganda.

Among the indicators of ideological inspiration were: (1) Saipov's confession to police that he was one of the caliphate's soldiers; (2) a note of support for IS's movement found close to the truck used in the assault; (3) the presence of Islamic State videos and other forms of propaganda on his cell phone; and (4) his use of a vehicle as an agents of mass death. Significantly Saipov attacked on Halloween considered by IS partisans as a pagan holiday. Like other Islamic State sympathizers living in the West his radicalization was spurred by cultural aversion, economic resentment and societal alienation. This radicalization dynamic is also seen in Canada.

### **Jihadist Attacks in Canada**

Mullins (2017) examines how jihadist terrorism has evolved in Canada over two decades. He notes that pre-9-11 Canada was used as a logistical support base for North African jihadi networks. Algerian and Moroccan Diaspora extremists used Canadian operations to support the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (MICG). Some of these radicals were recruited by Al Qaeda's fledgling pre-9-11 network.

Hundreds of Canadian-Somalis like their American brethren joined the ranks of Al Shabaab a decade ago to fight for its jihadi cause (Anzalone, 2012) Security agencies worry that the return of some of these fighters could presage a terror wave. Despite the dangers foreign terrorist entities present for Canadian security Mullins (2017) argues that the main jihadi threat comes from homegrown extremists, converts and lone wolves.

Many of these militants have been radicalized on-line by Al Qaeda and its affiliates. Mullins highlights the 2006 Toronto 18 case as exemplifying the homegrown threat. A case which involved homegrown jihadists who planned to retaliate against Canada's participation in the War on Terror by attacking the nation's parliament, its national intelligence headquarters and the home of then Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Gurksi, 2016). Foiled by police the *Toronto 18* plot remains the most serious jihadi effort to attack the Canadian homeland. Canada, moreover, has been the targeted by external networks for its long border with America.

The 1999 Millennium Plot bin Laden aspired to use Canada's porous border with America to plan an attack. Canadian police in 2013 disrupted an Al Qaeda linked plot to blow up a *Maple Leaf* line train traveling between Toronto and New York City (Kennedy, 2017). One of the two immigrant suspects charged was tied to Al

Qaeda's Iranian network and prosecutors had enough evidence of terrorist conspiracy to convict the suspects.

Though the American Muslim population is three times larger, Canada has a disproportionately higher number of fighters in Syria. At least 130 Canadians have travelled to the Levant to serve under the Islamic State or Al Qaeda linked organizations (Kennedy, 2017). With a rapidly growing Muslim population that is expected to triple in a decade homegrown radicalization could worsen.

Though criticized as lax in the Pre-9-11 period, Canadian policymakers are taking the homegrown extremist problem more seriously. The passage of the 2012 *Combating Terrorism* and 2015 *Anti-Terrorism Act* underscore Ottawa's recognition of the gravity of the jihadi threat with each law meting out severe prison sentences for terroristic acts.

Some of the 130 Canadians who joined the ranks of extremist organizations could face severe penalties given the current Liberal governments restitution of their passport travel rights. Some deceased Canadian fighters were prominently displayed in the Islamic State's propaganda videos.

Converts Andre Poulin and John Maguire for example appeared in the network's videos expressing admiration for the caliphate's Sharia governance project. Known as the *Calgary Six* a different group of Canadians who worshiped at the same mosque joined the caliphates ranks. Of the half dozen three were converts illustrating the uniqueness of Canada's jihadi problem. Converts, moreover are disproportionately represented in IS inspired attacks.

In July 2014, Canada experienced two assaults: one by Martin Couture Rouleau who used his car to kill one soldier and wound another at Saint-Jean-sur and one committed by Michael Zihaf-Bibeau who fatally shot a soldier protecting a national war memorial before storming Ottawa's parliament building. Both terrorists were killed by Canadian police. IS' *Amaq News Agency* claimed credit for both attacks. Significantly these two converts were prevented by the government from traveling to Syria which could explain their actions.

Canada's disengagement from combat operations against the caliphate has offered it little respite from jihadi inspired attacks. Emulating IS operations in Europe a Canadian jihadi sympathizer in Edmonton used a van to *attack* police and pedestrians in 2017 and an IS inspired immigrant killed two and wounded

over a dozen people in a July 2018 shooting in Toronto's Greektown district before taking his own life (Quiggan, 2018).

Though the Toronto assault involved mental illness issues the assailant's assault on cafes and restaurants is reminiscent of IS' November 2015 attacks in Paris. Significantly, the shooter Faisal Hussein was described as one of the caliphate's soldiers by *Amaq News Agency* that claimed credit for the assault. Though there may be no direct evidence that Hussein had been directed by IS it is likely that his actions were inspired by the caliphate's propaganda and past actions.

### **Post Caliphate Terrorism in Europe and North America**

As its state building project collapses in Iraq and Syria, what are the prospects for IS linked terrorism in the West? Analysts are divided on whether the network can sustain its terror campaign in its post caliphate era. Some experts (Jeffrey, 2016) contend that the caliphate's destruction, the depletion of its finances and the targeting of its commanders will diminish its capacity to mount operations. 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 undermining its appeal.

Others, however, 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 (2017) estimates some 30% of European fighters have returned. Governments are struggling to cope with the problem.

Thomas Hegghammer (2016) predicts that Islamist terror in Europe will endure. He connects future jihadi violence to the growth of marginalized Muslim youth and their involvement with jihadi entrepreneurs, their engagement in foreign conflict zones and their use of encrypted technology. Europe's large Islamist micro culture with its extremist mosques furthermore sustains jihadist violence.

Thousands of young people in European suburbs have been indoctrinated into radical Islamism by jihadi entrepreneurs. Their incendiary rhetoric has driven them to fight in overseas wars and commit terror at home. Though extremist clerics and mosques exist in North America they are not well funded, and their potential recruit base is considerably smaller than in Europe. North American immigration laws and the continent's physical distance from war zones in the

Muslim world further militate against IS development of a large recruitment infrastructure and cellular network to execute attacks.

North America's foreign fighter problem, moreover, is less severe. With some 500 American and Canadian foreign fighters (half of whom have died in Syria and Iraq) the threat comes less from returning combat veterans than with internet based homegrown radicalization. Significantly all of the Post 9-11 jihadi terrorism experienced in North America is linked to native extremists radicalized across social media channels.

The scale of the North American lone wolf jihadi threat is difficult to measure. Often infused with some extremist terrorism are mental disorders. The July 2018 Toronto shooting is a good example of how extremist ideology can be a catalysing agent for mentally disturbed people. Faced with public pressure to stop terrorist attacks police and intelligence agencies all too readily reject religious extremist connections. The tendency to blame mental or personality disorder for violence is especially pronounced in left-liberal governments.

The Fort Hood, Orlando, Ottawa, San Bernardino shootings, the New York and Quebec vehicular attacks, and the Boston Marathon bombing can be connected to AQAP or Islamic State internet propaganda. Though the caliphate's social media machine has been damaged by targeted killing of its *virtual planners* and by the depletion of its financial resources its social media channels continue to endure.

This dynamic, presages future jihadi violence in the West. Given the Islamic State's threats (Rumiyah 9, 2017) against the people of the cross one could expect the targeting of churches and Christian institutions. The December 2016 Berlin Christmas Market attack where a truck killed thirteen and the beheading of an elderly French priest in Normandy in July 2016 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. Islamic State militants have used such operations to devastating effect in Nigeria, Iraq, Egypt and Indonesia.

The threat could become more serious in countries like Spain and Italy that have taken in large numbers of refugees from external conflicts in the Islamic world and have maturing second generation Muslim immigrant communities that have been in the past have been receptive to jihadist recruitment. The August 2017

Barcelona van attack that killed 16 people at the famous pedestrian boulevard Las Ramblas could be a precedent for future terrorism in Southern Europe. As seen in aborted operations in Germany and France IS supporters have planned chemical weapons assaults. Whether waged by the Islamic State or Al Qaeda that jihadist war with the West shows little sign of abating.



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### Author Biography

Anthony Celso is a Professor at the Department of Security Studies for Angelo State University, San Angelo, TX 76909. He is the author of *The Islamic State: A Comparative History of Jihadist Warfare* (Latham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2018) and *Al Qaeda's Post 9-11 Devolution: The Failed Jihadist War against the Near and Far Enemy* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014). He may be contacted at [anthony.celso@angelo.edu](mailto:anthony.celso@angelo.edu)



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