

II. Special Correspondence to *Perspectives on Terrorism*

Why Has The Islamic State Changed its Strategy and Mounted the Paris-Brussels Attacks?

by David C. Rapoport

Abstract

Initially, the main efforts of the Islamic State in the Syrian civil war aimed to gain territories in Syria and Iraq for the establishment of the Caliphate, but after very striking early successes which attracted enormous numbers of foreign fighters, it lost a significant portion of the conquered territory. Instead of focusing on efforts to keep and regain the lands lost, it launched a series of attacks abroad in Paris and Brussels which intensified Western involvement in the Syrian Civil War. This change at first seems unreasonable. However, if one considers the nature of the Islamic State's apocalyptic commitment the decision makes more sense. A difference between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State on the timing of the apocalypse helped break up their relationship and has produced several violent battles between them, resulting in many casualties.

Keywords: *Islamic State; Al-Qaeda; Al-Nusra Front; Syrian Civil War; Caliphate; Paris; Brussels; Apocalypse*

When the Paris attacks happened on November 13, 2015 few observers asked why they occurred and/or why they happened when they did.[1] The assumption was that since the Islamic State (also known as ISIS, ISIL and Daesh) was originally an al-Qaeda affiliate, it believed that the West had to be eliminated and would therefore strike the devil whenever it was able to do so. But ironically, one reason the attacks occurred was that hostility between the Islamic State and al-Qaeda weakened the Islamic State during the Syrian Civil War.

Before discussing that relationship, we should examine the explanation the Islamic State provided for the Paris outrage. *Dabiq*, the Islamic State's English magazine, justified the strikes as retaliation for French air strikes made nearly a year earlier:

France haughtily began executing airstrikes against the Caliphate. It was blinded by hubris, thinking that its geographical distance from the Caliphate's lands would protect it from the justice of the jihadists. It also did not grasp that its mockery of the Prophet would be avenged. Thus, the Islamic State dispatched its brave knights to wage war in the homelands of the wicked crusaders, leaving Paris and its residents shocked and awed. The eight knights brought Paris down on its knees, after years of French conceit in the face of Islam.[2]

But *Dabiq's* reason for striking France does not help us understand the timing of the attack or what the Islamic State thinks the response will be. To understand these matters, one must consider the organization's recent history. When the Islamic State came to Syria in January 2012, some thought that its principal concern was to help Syrian Sunni rebels overthrow their Alawite dictator Bashar al-Assad. However, it had specified another more important purpose in a plan devised three years earlier to capture the territories of northern Syria and northern Iraq, territories one Islamic religious tradition had identified as necessary for creating the Caliphate.

Obviously, Assad's regime had to be weakened and the Islamic State's forces needed more training, equipment and recruits; both concerns were fulfilled by 2014, and then the Islamic State's true purpose became increasingly clear when it turned its attention toward gaining the territory necessary for the Caliphate. Most

of the land still needed was in Iraq, the country in which the Islamic State was born but left to join the Syrian rebels. The Assad regime then avoided targeting the organization to focus on other groups.

A week after the campaign against Iraq began in June 2014, Mosul—Iraq's 2nd largest city—was captured by the Islamic State and the Caliphate was immediately established. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced that he would now be known as “Caliph Ibrahim.” In the battle for Mosul, over 30,000 Iraqi soldiers were quickly defeated by a tiny force of 1,500 Islamic State fighters. The Iraqis fled without fighting, abandoning large supplies of sophisticated equipment the U.S. had given Iraq. As the Islamic State advanced it hung soldiers, set them on fire and crucified some, practices that made many Iraqi soldiers abandon their uniforms before fleeing in the hope they could survive as civilians.[3]

These spectacular achievements shocked the world, inducing many Muslims to think that only divine intervention could have produced such an astonishing victory, and that meant “paradise” was in the offing, a belief that attracted Sunni recruits from over 100 countries.[4] Indeed, the Caliphate insisted that all Muslims were obliged to immigrate to its territory and all other oaths of allegiance were no longer binding. When the Caliphate came into existence, the Islamic State had around 6,300 fighters. During the next six months over 15,000 foreigners arrived, and a year later, around 10,000 more arrived (according to UN and CIA estimates) which meant the Islamic State had over 31,600 members.[5] Most men came to be fighters, and most women accompanied husbands to live in “paradise” or marry “heroes” and have children. Foreigners also came to fight for the Assad regime but the numbers were smaller and they came from only a few states.[6] By 2015, the Islamic State governed around 8 million people in a territory larger than the United Kingdom. Seizing gas and oil resources enabled it to meet its charitable obligation *zakat*, the third pillar of Islam, by providing food and various social services. Each member of its armed forces received at least \$1,000 a month, an income higher than the average in the Caliphate's territories.

In August 2014, the Islamic State captured Dabiq, a Syrian village near the Turkish border—a very crucial conquest because the *Hadith*, a collection of sayings from Prophet Mohammed, designated it as the place where the beginning of the final world battle would be fought and the apocalypse would begin.[7] After that capture the Islamic State began publishing a monthly English digital magazine named *Dabiq*; articles in each issue highlight the looming doomsday battle. Amaq, a nearby village, also slated to play a role in the apocalypse was captured and *Amaq* became the name of the Islamic State's semi-official news agency. Dabiq's importance was emphasized by various videos taken there after its capture. In October 2014, one was released showing some *jihadists* from Europe sitting on a hilltop in Dabiq daring the West to intervene. “We are waiting for you to come and will kill every single soldier.” A month later, another video taken in Dabiq showed “*Jihadi* John” speaking with an English accent standing over the very bloody severed head of the American aid worker Peter Kassig announcing, “Here we are, burying the *first* American Crusader eagerly waiting for the remainder of your armies to arrive. Ultimately the armies of Rome will mass to meet the armies of Islam in northern Syria. After that battle, eternal life in paradise will begin.” (Emphasis added) The video also displays acts designed to demonstrate how the Islamic State imagined the sequence of events in the offing. *Jihadi* John orders his men to behead 21 Syrian pilots and as they are cutting the heads off, he addresses President Obama, “To Obama, the dog of Rome, today we are slaughtering the soldiers of Bashar al Assad and tomorrow, we will be slaughtering your soldiers and soon we will be slaughtering your people on your streets.”[8] Obviously the claim here is that their ultimate goal is defeating the U.S., which will happen after Americans send troops there.

The apocalypse, one should remember, is a theme in all three Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—and is frequently associated with terrorism.[9] The Islamic State refers to Westerners as Crusaders, a description al-Qaeda used first. Ironically, the Crusades (which lasted two centuries) were driven by an apocalyptic dimension, and Crusaders committed many atrocities including cannibalism, when a starving army ate Muslims. Philippe Buc describes how this cannibalism had two effects: it struck “divine

fear in the Muslims... and purged the Christian army of lukewarm elements... cowardly men useless for war.”[10]

To make sure that only pious Muslims lived in the Caliphate, the Islamic State committed many gruesome atrocities. After Mosul was taken, major massacres took place in Iraqi villages occupied by the Shabak population (a Shiite offshoot). Hundreds were killed and more than 3,000 fled. Over 125,000 Christians were forced to flee the land that had been their home for nearly 2,000 years. Christian children were beheaded for refusing to convert. The most conspicuous victims were the Yazidis, a Kurdish Islamic offshoot some Muslims regard as devil worshippers. Between 2,000 and 5,000 males who refused to convert were killed. Women and children were abducted and sold as “sex slaves”. Around 50,000 Yazidis were trapped in the Sinjar Mountains, and the U.S. began an air strike campaign in September 2014 that was later joined by eight Arab and Western states in order to prevent a potential genocide. Three months later, Kurdish forces entered the fray against the Islamic State enabling most Yazidis to escape.

Atrocities were committed against many Muslims too. Because Shiites and Alawites “pervert” the Koran, those living in the Caliphate must be killed. The Islamic State emphasizes that common Shiite practices—e.g., worshipping at the graves of imams, and public self-flagellation—have no basis in the Koran. Heads of state in every Muslim country who elevate man-made law above sharia (Islamic law) will meet the same fate. The Islamic State killed Sunni Muslims who committed certain offenses, including those who sold alcohol or drugs, wore Western clothes, shaved their beards, voted in an election, or were lax about denouncing people who were apostates. A UN report estimated that nearly 15,000 civilians were killed in Iraq in 16 months starting in January 2014, and the Islamic State was deemed responsible for the overwhelming majority.

Anjem Choudary, an Islamic leader in Great Britain, described these atrocities as policies of mercy rather than of brutality. The Islamic State is obliged to terrorize its enemies with beheadings, crucifixions and enslavement of women and children, because doing so hastens victory and avoids prolonged conflict.[11] But Muslim leaders everywhere condemned the Islamic State’s obsession with eliminating all “impious” Muslims and insisted that Islam provided no justification for its definitions and actions.

The apocalypse was also crucial to al-Qaeda’s vision, but al-Qaeda insisted that the Caliphate could only emerge after the U.S. withdrew from the Muslim world and that trying to institute sharia immediately when one controlled appropriate territories would alienate people everywhere.[12] A gradual approach preparing Muslims to accept the Caliphate was necessary before the more provocative aspects of sharia could be implemented (like throwing gays off buildings, chopping limbs off and public stoning practices).[13] Indeed, the campaign of the Al-Nusra Front (al-Qaeda’s franchise in Syria) contrasts vividly with that of its rival’s even though the ultimate objective is the same, a difference that a *New York Times* journalist contended may give al-Nusra a significant long-term advantage in its battle against the Islamic State.[14]

In early 2015 when al-Nusra had a strength of 15-20,000,[15] al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri instructed the group to pursue five goals: integrate the movement in the Syrian revolution and its people, coordinate more closely with all Islamic groups, help establish a sharia court system, use strategic areas of the country to build a sustainable al-Qaeda power base and cease any activity linked to attacking the West.[16] The last restraint was a real surprise, since al-Qaeda had always designated the West as its principal enemy. But clearly al-Qaeda became revitalized by the Syrian conflict after years of dissipation, and became committed to gaining territory for a home base, a goal that could not be achieved if Western troops became involved.

Although the sudden, dramatic and amazing scope of the Islamic State victories against the Iraqi army made many Muslims think that Allah was involved, the Iraqi army had never developed real battlefield capacities because it was always an instrument of domestic politics. The U.S. tried to create an appropriate military force, but when it left the Iraqi tradition was revived—only this time, a Shia rather than a Sunni government was involved, and it made Shia loyalty more important than military competence. Sunnis were confined to

the lower ranks, which intensified their reluctance to fight other Sunnis for a Shia government; indeed, many deserted to join the Islamic State.

After its initial dramatic victories, the Islamic State quickly encountered enormous difficulties. It got within 60 miles of Baghdad before Iraqi Shia militias—responding to Iraqi Shiite Grand Ayatollah's call—stopped them. Then thousands of Iranian Shia trained by Iran's Revolutionary Guard joined the Iraqi Shia. Kurdish forces played a significant role as well, when they took the city of Kirkuk (after the Islamic State compelled Iraqi forces to abandon their posts), expanding the Kurdish zone of control in Northern Iraq, an area outside of the control of both the Islamic State and the Iraqi government.

Enormous difficulties emerged by 2015 after it became clear that the Islamic State no longer could expand its territory. Turkey tightened border controls; previously, 60% of the foreign fighters had come through Turkey.[17] Many foreigners left the Islamic State, and over a 100 foreign fighters attempting to desert were beheaded.[18] Many foreign women returned home, upset by how the Caliphate regulated marriages. The United States bombed the Caliphate's oil sites, reducing revenue for services and also resulting in a reduction in the pay of its fighters by one half. Kurdish forces cut principal supply lines and regained some territory lost, including the important city of Kobani in January. Iraqi military forces then recaptured Tikrit in March.

Al-Qaeda, which had included the precursor elements of the Islamic State since its birth in 2004, became deeply offended by its indiscriminate anti-Muslim tactics, for reasons al-Qaeda's history demonstrates. Its important campaign in the 1990s against the "Near Enemy", Arab governments in the Middle East and Africa, failed largely because government tenacity everywhere made the rebels act too indiscriminate, turning Arab populations everywhere against them.[19] Al-Zawahiri had been particularly devastated by his own indiscriminate practices when he led Egyptian Islamic Jihad before he joined al-Qaeda, and he was determined not to repeat it.[20] He denounced the Islamic state as "seditious" and pushed it out of al-Qaeda. Then the leader of al-Qaeda's Syrian franchise said, "They assault Muslims, and their ideology completely drifted from the Sunni ideology that we follow, so we have to fight them." [21]

In 2014 the al-Nusra Front initiated many violent attacks near Aleppo, forcing the Islamic State to withdraw from Syria's eastern province. It successfully cast itself as a moderate alternative to the Islamic State, and after crushing the Western-backed Syrian rebel group Harakat Hazm it forged a coalition of Islamist groups to conquer the Syrian city Idlib in March 2015 but did not impose sharia. Estimates suggest that the battles between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State produced over 3,000 casualties. Ironically, these battles led some Western analysts—including former CIA head David Petraeus—to suggest that the United States and "moderate" al-Qaeda groups could sometimes cooperate.[22]

The Islamic State ignored the West while incorporating sacred territory for the Caliphate. But in September 2014, after the U.S. organized its airstrikes, the Islamic State's chief spokesman "called on Muslims in Western countries ... to find an infidel and 'smash his head with a rock', poison him, run him over with a car or 'destroy his crops.'" [23] Two months later a video released in French contained virtually the same message, and a series of strange "lone wolf" attacks followed on three consecutive days, the perpetrators declaring "God is Great" in Arabic. Three policemen were stabbed in Joué-lès-Tours, and vehicles were used to run over eleven pedestrians in Dijon and ten in Nantes.[24] But the only person killed in these attacks was a perpetrator and the other two were imprisoned.

Fourteen months later, after the Islamic State lost about 40% of its territories, it changed its strategy towards the West and launched the Paris attacks, the worst France experienced since World War II. On November 13, 2015, nine coordinated strikes with bombs and assault rifles were carried out against sites (a football stadium, concert hall and several restaurants) where many congregated to enjoy themselves, sites that enabled the Islamic State to kill as many as possible and also to attack a style of life they considered reprehensible. These indiscriminate Islamic State attacks—which killed 130 and wounded 367—contrasted dramatically with an

earlier one in January of that year by al-Qaeda members who killed 12 persons and injured 11, all of whom were associated with the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. A spokesman for al-Qaeda later claimed the attack was retribution for the magazine's offensive descriptions of the Prophet Mohammed. Comparing the two events, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said the January 2015 attack had a "particularized focus and... rationale that you could attach yourself to somehow and say, 'Okay, they're really angry'"[25] One could understand why satirizing Prophet Mohammed infuriates virtually all Muslims and why many non-Muslims also find such ridicule inappropriate.

Normally one would expect that when situations at home grow more difficult, one would not want to involve hostile powers more deeply. Four possible explanations can be offered for this apparently counter-intuitive 'decision'. First, the Islamic State may have believed that these attacks were not going to inspire the West to intensify its efforts, and therefore the special benefits the attacks create would not be lost. It is even conceivable that the Islamic State thought that the attacks would induce the West to withdraw completely. It is hard to believe that either explanation makes sense, although it should be noted that four months after the attacks President Obama said the Islamic State's growing weakness made its leaders think the attacks "would weaken our collective resolve." [26] The belief that a deeper Western commitment would happen is more probable, and there was good reason to think that would devastate the invaders. The 2003 Iraq invasion aroused the Muslim world and produced the Islamic State's predecessor. Now since Islamic State had much more capacity to resist, it would be victorious. The fourth explanation is that since apocalyptic visions are so prominent in the Islamic State's announcements, publications and brutal videos challenging the West to intervene, this seems to have been the real driving force. The change in strategy may stem from both the third and fourth beliefs. In any case, one should be aware of the rationale for the Islamic State's decision before responding.[27]

Dreadful over-reactions to terrorism occur often. World War I, Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 were all catastrophic reactions to terrorist activity that we should learn from. Fortunately, because the senseless invasion of Iraq occurred so recently, we are less likely to repeat that mistake now. Still, the 2016 Republican presidential primary debates suggest that many politicians either fail to understand the dangers of over-reaction or that the present policy towards the Islamic State is in fact working. The U.S. should continue its air bombing support, supplying equipment and advisors to Sunni rebel forces and make much more effort to cope with the refugee problem too.

Despite its enormous loss of territory, and the reality that its forces are "at its lowest level in two years,"[28] the Islamic State is still strong and continues to launch strikes in Syria and Iraq. In January 2016, the group abducted around 400 Sunni civilians (including women and children) from the Syrian city of Deir-ez-Zor in an assault which left around 135 dead.[29] It made and used chemical weapons in February, 2016.[30] In April it abducted over 170 workers in a cement factory near Damascus.[31]

However, it seems unable to recapture lost territory and continues to lose more. Dissent within the group persists. In early March 2016, nearly 100 men left the Islamic State to join another rebel group in northern Aleppo, claiming they had been mistreated, repeatedly accused of treason and threatened with execution. Residents of Raqqa—the Islamic State's capital—rebelled on March 7, 2016, and about 200 Islamic State members sided with them.[32] Other similar incidents have diverted elements of Islamic State's forces needed desperately in the areas where they are facing armies.

The cease-fire which began February 27, 2016 enabled various government and rebel forces for the first time to concentrate and even cooperate in efforts to destroy both the Islamic State and the al-Nusra Front. In northern Syria, Assad's army, supported by Russia and Iran, launched two significant offensives against the Islamic State, and the Syrian Kurds are pursuing an additional one close to Raqqa. On March 27, 2016 the Syrian army retook the ancient famous Roman city of Palmyra. Iraqi security forces have created a 2nd front in the east by expanding operations in Anbar province, seizing Ramadi, and preparing to retake Mosul, a

crucially difficult undertaking requiring an army of tens of thousands. While the Iraqi army has improved since its disgraceful early flight from Mosul, it still has very serious problems as a military force. A third front is opening up in the south as the New Syrian Army (a rebel coalition, backed by the United States and the Gulf Cooperation Council) is launching operations from bases in Jordan to drive the Islamic State from southern Syria. So far, al-Qaeda's franchise seems to have coped better with the cease-fire problem.[33]

One obvious question this discussion leads to is the following: if the Islamic State intends to compel the West to send troops to Syria, why hasn't the U.S. been attacked, given that it has been the West's leader in launching the airstrikes that France later joined? It seems clear that France was chosen because European fighters—especially from Belgium and France—joined the Islamic State in far greater numbers than those from America, making it easier for the Islamic State to use them to organize an attack on France.

If the Islamic State is interested in provoking serious reactions why did it take four months for the second major attack to occur on March 22, 2016? It takes time to organize strikes of this sort from a distance. The Brussels attacks, like the Paris ones, aimed to kill a large number of people indiscriminately by striking places where they congregate (i.e. public transportation sites). But they were a smaller effort than the Paris ones, killing 32 and injuring over 300. The Islamic State said it made its "blessed" bombings in Brussels because Belgium was a partner in the Western coalition.[34] But in fact, Belgium had stopped its few air attacks nine months earlier.[35] Further, after two weeks of interrogation, the terrorists involved in the Brussels plot revealed that their original intention was to attack Paris again, but after the French apprehended one member of the group the others became afraid that he might reveal the plot, so Brussels was chosen at the last minute. [36]

So far, the two attacks have not yet provoked European states to demand a ground invasion. But they have invested more in the air campaign and expanded the targets to be attacked. Belgium resumed the air attack role it had abandoned nine months before the Brussels attack. The UK, which was initially reluctant to join the air coalition, did so immediately after the Paris strikes. France intensified its campaign.

Will the U.S. experience similar attacks? No one knows, but I think they are unlikely to happen and if adherents of the Islamic State attempt to do so, they will not be successful. There are three primary reasons for this optimism. First, very few Americans have joined the Islamic State. Over 200 tried and most were stopped before getting to Syria.[37] Second, the American Muslim population, unlike the European, is fairly well integrated into mainstream society. And finally, U.S. police forces and intelligence services are extremely alert to the issue *because* of the Paris and Brussels attacks.

Remember too that after the much more devastating 9/11 attacks, al-Qaeda did not conduct any more major attacks on American soil. The 9/11 attacks were successful largely because hijacking had diminished so much after the 1980s that security precautions for planes were greatly reduced. But after 9/11, no big attack occurred because the U.S. mobilized its resources. According to the Congressional Research Service, 38 "lone-wolf" attacks were attempted in the U.S., but 31 did not produce casualties; the most violent was Major Nidal Hasan's gruesome massacre of 13 fellow soldiers at Ft. Hood, Texas in 2009.[38] Another reason no more devastating attacks were experienced was that there was no terrorist network in the country. Obviously there was no network in the country before 9/11 either, but the attackers all came from abroad at a time when such matters were not seriously investigated. The situation became very different after 9/11.[39]

The U.S. homeland so far has experienced only one strike that the Islamic State claimed to have had some role, in San Bernardino, CA on December 2, 2015, where a father and mother killed 14 people at a holiday party, the most deadly terrorist attack the U.S. experienced since 9/11.[40] But as with other "lone-wolf" operations, the terrorists were not part of a network and organized this attack themselves.[41]

The Islamic State has reportedly trained and sent back home at least some 400 jihadists, a majority of whom are European citizens or legal residents.[42] The Islamic population there is much larger and less integrated

than its American counterpart, so more attacks will probably occur and the pressure to send many troops to Syria may grow immensely.[43] Europe's difficulties with Islam, including the enormous recent refugee problem, has also stimulated important right-wing movements which may create a very difficult situation. That political change could break up the European Union and/or provoke a new wave of modern terror.

Finally, let's conclude with a brief note on our second theme—the relationship between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. Despite the fact that al-Qaeda has always considered the West its primary enemy, its franchise in Syria was told to concentrate on winning Sunni support and not hit targets in the West because that could provoke Western states to send troops and demolish the territorial base al-Qaeda had been establishing. It is not surprising, therefore, that al-Zawahiri needed three weeks to comment on the Paris strikes. Ultimately, he had to endorse them but he repeated his warning that Muslims should not be major victims, making it clear that differences between the two groups remained.

If the cease-fire holds and permits the Assad regime and the rebel coalition to keep attacking both groups, it is possible (though unlikely) the targeted groups might work together again. If both are forced to leave the Syrian scene, their differences are likely to remain conspicuous. The Syrian struggle induced al-Qaeda to produce the “General Guidelines for Jihad” for its franchises. While it emphasizes that the U.S. must withdraw to “its own shell like the former Soviet Union,” it focuses on how to restrain the struggle in the Muslim world. Wherever possible, al-Qaeda adherents must:

... pacify conflicts with local rulers so we can incite believers, recruitment, and fund raising. . . Avoid fighting deviant Islamic sects like the Shia. If they attack us, our response must be restricted to those . . . directly engaged in the fight. They should not be targeted in their homes, places of worship, their religious festivals and religious gatherings. . . Avoid meddling with Christian and Hindu communities living in Muslim lands. . . Refrain from killing and fighting against non-combatant women and children, even if they are families of those who are fighting against us. . . We shall provide support to the victims of oppression, whether Muslims or non-Muslims.”[44]

If al-Qaeda follows its guidelines, will the Islamic State's indiscriminate attacks give the Islamic State an advantage? It is hard to tell because the available evidence is conflicting. Islamic State franchises are usually composed of deserters from al-Qaeda franchises, but the al-Qaeda franchises are still powerful. It is more likely that the two groups will still employ violence against each other. But if the Islamic State's territories are recaptured, its apocalyptic appeal will evaporate and it will lose its ability to maintain and recruit members. Also, if al-Qaeda has to leave Syria, the growing weakness it had been displaying for years before will continue. But we should remember that the Arab Spring unexpectedly produced sectarian violence throughout the Muslim world, which gave al-Qaeda a chance to rejuvenate itself. Sectarian violence may continue and provide it with more opportunities.

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Notes

[1] The initial version of this piece can be found at <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/islamic-state-wants-west-over-react-and-hasten-apocalypse>. A subsequent version was delivered at the UCLA Center for Middle East Development March 2, 2016, “Why did the Islamic State Strike the Western World?”

[2] <http://heavy.com/news/2015/11/official-isis-announcement-state-on-paris-attacks-shootings-attack-paris-france-petit-cambodge-restaurant-stade-de-france>. Accessed Jan 12, 2016

- [3] "Iraq army capitulates to Isis militants in four cities," *The Guardian*. June 11 2014. Accessed August 15, 2014.
- [4] A.P. Schmid and J. Tinnes, "Foreign Terrorist Fighters with ISIS: A European Perspective." *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*. The Hague 6, no. 8 (2015). <http://www.icct.nl> (p.3). The Schmid and Tinnes study is extremely comprehensive and interesting.
- [5] United Nations. Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED). Background Note to Special meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee with Member States and relevant international and regional organizations on "Stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters." Madrid: Club de Madrid, 27-28 July 2015, p. 1.
- [6] Fighters came from four states to support Assad, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq and Russia. Most were sent by governments and were members of military forces. The number were probably around 24,000. See Schmid (Foreign) note 2, p. 14.
- [7] For a very interesting study of the apocalyptic vision in the Islamic State, see William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: 2015, St. Martin's Press).
- [8] <http://sisstudygroup.com/?p=2799>
- [9] The Crusades are the most conspicuous Christian example which lasted two centuries and produced over six million casualties. See Philippe Buc, *Holy War, Martyrdom and Terror: Christianity, Violence and the West, ca 70 C.E. to the Iraq War* (Philadelphia: 2015 Univ. Pennsylvania Press). The Jewish Zealot and Sicarii movement is discussed in my "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions," *American Political Science Review*, 78, 3 (September 1984) 658-77. Norman Cohn's *Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York: 1957, Oxford Univ. Press) analyzes other Christian apocalyptic movements in the late medieval period. Muslim experiences with the doctrine are analyzed in Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam* (Berkeley: 2012, Univ. of California Press).
- [10] Buc, *Ibid.*, p. 283 Schmid (Foreign) note 4, p44 briefly compares the Crusaders and Islamic State practices.
- [11] Graeme Wood interviews Choudary and describes his views this way but does not cite them as quotations. See his fascinating "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic* March 2015, p.23
- [12] Frances L. Flannery examines the differences between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State's apocalyptic views, *Understanding Apocalyptic Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2016) Chapters 4 and 5
- [13] Thomas Joscelyn, "Al-Qaeda appears 'moderate' compared to Islamic State, veteran jihadist says," *Long War Journal*. October 25, 2015
- [14] Ben Hubbard, "Al-Qaeda Tries a New Tactic to Keep Power: Sharing It." *New York Times*. June 9, 2015.
- [15] <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/02/jund-al-aqsa-leaders-join-al-nusra-front.php> Accessed January 10, 2015
- [16] Charles Lister, "An Internal Struggle: Al-Qaeda's Syrian Affiliate Is Grappling With Its Identity." *Huffington Post*, May 31 2015. Accessed September 2 2015
- [17] Schmid (Foreign) note 2, p 45.
- [18] Anne Speckhard and Ahmed S. Yayla, "Eyewitness Accounts from Recent Islamic State Defectors: Why They Joined, What They Saw, Why They Quit" *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. IX, No. 6 (2015).
- [19] The belief that American support made the Arab governments so tenacious was the basic reason for al-Qaeda's decision for the 9/11 attack. The belief was that the U.S. would pull out of the Arab world.
- [20] Zawahiri implemented a number of indiscriminate attacks. The one that apparently bothered him most occurred in 1993 when the *Islamic Jihad in Egypt* attacked the Prime Minister from a girl's school in Cairo. 23 people were hurt and one very young schoolgirl killed. An outraged population took to the streets carrying the child's coffin and crying, "Terrorism is enemy of God". Zawahiri was so upset he offered to pay the girl's family "blood money".
- [21] <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/04/world/middleeast/syria.html> Accessed November 15, 2015
- [22] <https://www.rt.com/usa/314034-petraeus-nusra-front-isis/> Accessed November 10, 015
- [23] Wood (What) note 8 p.5
- [24] Paul Cruickshank, "Drumbeat of terror precedes slaughter that shocks France and the world" November 16, 2015 CNN. Accessed March 11, 2016
- [25] <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/11/john-kerry-paris-attacks-charlie-hebdo-215992> Accessed January 26, 2016
- [26] "Gains Made in the Struggle Against ISIS," *New York Times*, April 14, 2016
- [27] On Oct 31, two weeks before the Paris attacks, an Islamic State franchise in Egypt brought down a Russian passenger plane killing all 224 passengers which provoked the Russians to get more directly involved in the Syrian conflict. Although the Islamic State claimed credit for the attack, the franchise apparently acted on its own. It does not seem that the Islamic State wanted to get the Russians more deeply involved unlike its attacks on France and Belgium.
- [28] This is the U.S. government estimate, see "Gains" (note 26)
- [29] "ISIS fighters abduct up to 400 civilians in major attack on Deir ez-Zor," *Guardian* January 17, 2016 Accessed March 20, 2016.
- [30] <https://www.rt.com/usa/332300-brennan-isis-chemical-weapons/> While chemical weapons induce enormous fears they really do not generate great destruction. See my "Terrorism and Weapons of the Apocalypse," *National Security Studies Quarterly* V, I (Summer 1999) 49-67 Reprinted in Henry Sokolski and James Ludes eds. *Twenty-First Century Weapons Proliferation* (London:2001, Frank Cass) pp.14-32
- [31] "ISIS Abducts Workers From Cement Factory in Syria," *New York Times*, April 7, 2016
- [32] <https://www.oximity.com/article/Reports-Anti-ISIS-revolt-in-Raqqa-terr-1>. Accessed March 25, 2016
- [33] <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/al-nusra-front-arrests-backed-fighters-syria-160314075333200.html>. Accessed March 23, 2016.
- [34] <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/chatter/dabiq-magazine-issue-14-murtadd-brotherhood>
- [35] <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/belgium-confirms-it-will-resume-f-16-airstrikes-isis-wake-brussels-attacks-1551595>. Accessed March 25, 2016.
- [36] <http://www.wsj.com/articles/terror-cell-planned-fresh-attack-in-france-say-belgian-authorities-1460278593> Accessed April 12, 2016.
- [37] These numbers were announced on July 9, 2015. See <http://www.businessinsider.com/r-over-200-americans-have-gone-or-tried-to-go-to-syria-to-fight-fbi-2015-7> Accessed November 20, 2015.
- [38] Jerome P. Bjelopera "American Jihadist Terrorism: Combating a Complex Threat" November 15, 2011 Congressional Research Service 7-5700 www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/r41416.pdf The Report lists 53 plots but 16 were efforts to go abroad and join various Jihad groups, and we have excluded them to focus on attacks in the U.S. and on those by Americans on Americans abroad. Beyond that, one plot has occurred since the Report was issued (See Goldstein "City Bomb Plot") Four of the 16 efforts to go abroad overseas occurred before May 2009 and 12 after that date.

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- [39] In several presentations at conferences and at government agencies from 2003-7, I argued we would have no more big attacks, but no one seemed to believe me.
- [40] The Sandy Hook shootings in 2012 killed 26 but this was a mass murder not a terrorist act.
- [41] The wife Malik affirmed their allegiance to the leader of the *Islamic State* in an online post immediately after the attack before she and her husband were killed. See Richard Winton, "San Bernardino shooters praised by Islamic State magazine," *Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 2016.
- [42] <http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2016-03-23/isis-sends-400-specially-trained-fighters-unleash-wave-bloodshed-europe>. Accessed March 20, 2016.
- [43] For an interesting discussion of the European network organized by the Islamic State, see "Long Before Brussels, ISIS Sent Terrorist Operatives to Europe," *New York Times*, March 29, 2016. Also see <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-adopts-a-new-approach-in-europe-a-1084489.html> Retrieved March 4, 2016.
- [44] <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/.../dr-ayman-al-e1ba93awc481hirc4ab>-by SA al Zawahiri. Accessed March 3, 2016.