The Audience of International Terrorism

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

On September 11th of 2001, the world was shocked as hijacked airplanes hit the world trade center In New York, causing 2,996 deaths and 6,000 injuries (Washington Post, 2001). These attacks caused uproar and turmoil in the western world, especially in the US, resulting in the start of a new era, the war on terror. Another defining moment was the Madrid train attack in March of 2004, resulting in 193 deaths and 1,700 injuries (Eplais, 2019). The event of these attacks raised global public awareness towards international terrorism. Seemingly distant and irrelevant threats soon risked to jeopardise the social fabric of European and North American societies. The mentioned attacks, among other international terrorist attacks, proved that the reach and capabilities of terrorist organizations are virtually limitless, and that their attacks could be deadly if successful.

International terrorism, as we know it today, took on its form in the 1960s following the changing political circumstances that prevailed in the Middle East and in Latin America. Contemporary international terrorism reflects recent technological advances which improved its tactics, such as air travel that provided mobility worldwide, internet and social media providing terrorists with a platform to easily communicate and recruit, the easy access to weapons and explosives. Therefore, with its increasing devastation, incredible reach, and intelligent usage, it becomes crucial to carefully study international terrorism, and the purpose of perpetrating such attacks.

In recent years, the world witnessed a considerable increase in international terrorism, even though the worsening political situation in the Middle East is no new phenomenon. We must delve into the reasons why terrorism increased substantially in recent years, after decades of political oppression and interventions by Western countries in the Middle East. With the rise of the Islamic State (IS), more people have died as a result of terrorist attacks in Western Europe in the two years between 2014 and 2016 than in all previous years combined (Nesser et al, 2016). It is clearly the case that IS and Al-Qaeda,

arguably the two most powerful terrorist organizations worldwide, took international terrorism to a whole new level.

Previously, international terrorism has been looked at and analyzed as an act of violence targeted towards Western audiences in Western countries. However, the recent rise in terrorism, especially in countries that are inactive in the anti-IS campaign, proves that there is more at stake than just pressuring Western communities to seek a change in foreign policy. Nowadays, manifold scholars have addressed the question of international terrorism. Yet, that is an ever-changing and diverse topic that surely gives space for further advancing research.

There is no general consensus as to the specific political and social goals of international terrorist attacks. Some scholars claim that the terrorist organizations are irrational, while others claim that they are solely religious, but factual evidence demonstrates that there is a clear rationale behind the perpetration of such attacks. We must look at who terrorist attacks are aimed at, and what the perpetrators try to achieve by conducting such attacks. Regardless of the arguments, most scholars agree that the goal of terrorist attacks are to instill fear in a population in the hopes of achieving a certain outcome (Rosendorff and Sandler, 2008). Hence, terrorism needs an audience, from which it can retrieve a desired reaction.

Terrorism is the intentional use or threat to use indiscriminate violence as a means to achieve a political objective by intimidating the general public (Gaibulloev and Sandler, 2019). Jenkins claims that the objective of terrorist attacks is not in the attack itself, but in the response of the attacks aimed to coerce political change or concessions from the targeted country (Jenkins, 1974). Several scholars (Gartzke and Gleditsch, 2004; Savun, Burcu, and Brian J. Phillips, 2009) thus argue that terrorist attacks target Western countries, because in the West people hold the most power and are able to exert tremendous pressure on politicians to seek a change in foreign policies. In that sense, international terrorism aims at targeting an audience, for whom the perpetrator expects a certain reaction from. However, the audience targeted in the terrorist attacks may not be the acclaimed Western audience only, but also the minority Muslim population residing in the targeted Western countries. Subsequently, identifying the audiences of terrorism becomes

pivotal, in order to devise the endgame of organizations such as the Islamic State. In this dissertation, we will focus on the audience of international terrorism, the ones terrorists want to coerce by using violence. This leads to our research question:

"Who is the audience of international terrorism in Western countries?"

The answer to this question goes to the core of our understanding of International terrorism, as it explains under which conditions terrorist attacks occur. In doing so, this work seeks to provide us with an understanding of the strategic motives of international terrorism. Specifically, it aims to explain the political motivations that drive terrorist leaders to plan or associate themselves with such attacks. The sociopolitical benefits that a terrorist organization achieves by conducting a well-organized terrorist attack can tremendously advance the organization's interests, therefore it is important to identify these benefits and motivations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Terrorism is the planned use of violence by individuals or groups with the aim of achieving a political or social goal (Rosendorff and Sandler, 2008).[1] Terrorism can be categorized into two types, domestic and international. Domestic terrorism is when the attack is homegrown and home directed, with the goal of impacting politics or society at a local level (Gaibulloev and Sandler, 2019). Hence, domestic terrorist attacks include preparators and victims of the local country. In contrast, international terrorism is when the nationalities of victims, perpetrators, supporters, and targets involve two or more countries (Ibid). The latter aim at achieving certain political objectives either at home or in the targeted country.

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[1] There are many definitions of terrorism in the literature, and various international lawyers and organizations define terrorism in different ways, but for the sake of this paper, this definition best represents our cases studies. Other forms of terrorism such as state terrorism is also present in the literature. However, in this dissertation we will not include state-led terrorism, as we will be studying terrorist attacks employed by organizations and individuals.

For the purpose of this research, we are only interested in international terrorism. I decided to focus on the latter because of its potential to terrorize a wide range of populations across the globe. When a terrorist attack occurs in the West, everyone in the world feels threatened and terrorized. International terrorist attacks thus gain wide media exposure and global awareness, which is what terrorists aim for by perpetrating such an attack.

There is an extensive and ongoing debate on whether international terrorist attacks are perpetrated by organizations or individuals, however it is not our focus to examine whether an attack is issued from the organization's leader or is the work of a lone wolf operating as part of a local network (Pedahzur and Perliger, 2006; Atran, 2006; McAllister, 2004). We are only interested in why leaders and organizations such as the Islamic State want to be associated with such attacks, regardless if their claim whether it is true or not. Understanding this aspect of terrorists' motivations becomes crucial, both in academic terms but also to derive meaningful insights in order to improve current counterterrorism policies.

Additionally, there is an ongoing debate on whether terrorist attacks are associated with extremist Islamism or are part of a socio-political goal. Contrary to popular belief, terrorism is no new phenomenon, and did not originate with extremist Islamism. Around 50AC, historian Josephus recorded terrorists acts employed by the Sicarii, a Jewish political organization, in an attempt to overthrow the romans in the Middle East. Another key pre-modern religious terrorist attack is the attempt by Guy fawkes to reinstate a Catholic monarch in England by plotting the failed gunpowder plot to assassinate king James I (Rosendorff and Sandler, 2008) .

Some scholars claim that most Islamic terrorist organizations today are driven, partly or fully, by radical Islamism and spread of Jihadi Salafism (Kramer,1987; Merari,2004; Moghaddam, 2009; Henne, 2012; Tosini, 2009; and Farnham and Liem, 2017). However, within these organizations, there are many variations in terms of social and political goals. While the majority of them are partly or fully religiously motivated, some maintain a local network of operations, while others expand their networks to an international level. Given

that we are analyzing the latter, we will focus thus on the sociopolitical objectives of organizations who are active at the international level, such as the Islamic State.

The leaders of terrorist organizations are rational actors who have amassed power through ideology, manipulation of people, and a strong political will. Therefore, their behaviors and decisions are strategic and calculated. From their point of view, terrorism is a rational strategy to achieve a certain outcome, and is not an outcome in itself. The ultimate goal of terrorism is not just to instill fear upon a populace, but to derive from that fear a certain reaction that suits their sociopolitical goal (Neumayer and Plümper, 2010). While the sociopolitical goals differ from organization to another, or from an attack to another, most terrorist attacks aim to achieve a goal within the sociopolitical context.

In order to instill fear upon a populace, terrorist organizations need an audience towards which they aim to retrieve a certain reaction from. In this dissertation, we identify two potential audiences for international terrorism in the West: the non-Muslim community; and the Muslim one. Specifically, they may not be targeted directly, but terrorist acts by transnational jihadists try to trigger specific reactions in them.

Audience 1: Western community in Western countries

Terrorist leaders aim to achieve a change in a government's policy by intimidating its population through terrorist attacks. In order to coerce the targeted government, terrorist attacks aim to target the nationals of the government itself, namely the Western community in these countries. The initial start of modern international terrorism, specifically in Latin America and the Middle East, came as a result of heavy foreign presence in these regions, in addition to the changing political circumstances that circumvented these regions. The Western interventions in Latin America and in the Middle East gave rise to anti-colonial groups that vied for national independence from foreign occupation (Midlarsky et al, 1980). According to Jenkins (1975), most of the targets in Uruguay, Argentina, Columbia were American and European employees or American-affiliated firms.

Scholars such as Pape (2003), Bloom (2005), Tosini (2009), and Farnham and Liem (2017) claim that modern terrorism is strategic and aims to drive foreign occupiers out of one's homeland. Pape (2003) saw that between 1980 to 2001, suicide attacks have risen largely due to terrorists' conviction that this strategy is efficient in accomplishing certain political objectives. First records for the use of terrorist suicide bombing was Hezbollah in the 1980s, in an attempt to pressure the United States, France, and Israel to withdraw their troops from Southern Lebanon (Pape, 2003). Other organizations such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam of Sri Lanka, and the PKK in Turkey soon followed by applying these terrorist tactics in the hopes of establishing their objectives of gaining independence or autonomy from the government.

Nevertheless, the 9/11 attacks marked a turning point in the history of international terrorism. Al-Qaeda's leader Bin Laden justified the reasons for the attack on the 7th of October 2001. According to Crenshaw (2001), the attack was a reaction to the humiliation of Islam, the dissolution of the Ottoman empire, the establishment of Britain's Palestinian mandate that gave Jewish people a homeland in Palestine, and the US retaliation against Afghanistan in 1998. Thus, Americans have been targets of international terrorism because of their constant meddling in world affairs. The US's military presence in other countries attracted many terrorists who hoped to achieve a political change at home (Crenshaw, 2001). However, it is clear that the September 11th attacks did not trigger the reaction that best suits Al-Qaeda's interests, as it marked the start of the " war on terror", considerably increasing Western intervention in the Middle East.

Similarly, in September of 2014, two months after the Islamic caliphate was established, and seven days after the French announced a French Led coalition against IS, the group announced its intention to target Europe. IS retaliated against French aggression by calling upon followers in Europe to strike Europe (Nesser et al, 2016). There is no doubt that IS is leading a terrorist campaign of retribution and deterrence motivated by European countries' participation in the war against IS in Iraq and Syria. However, following the Nice and the Paris attacks perpetrated by IS, the French responded by increasing and strengthening its bombing campaign on IS (TheGuardian, 2015). France has been a long-time nemesis of Jihadis, namely because of its interference in Muslim countries in North Africa in the 19th and 20th century, and in the Middle East more recently. Despite the heavy

retaliations by Western countries following the September 11 and Paris attacks, terrorist organizations have not refrained from perpetrating terrorist attacks in the west.

As per the two previous scenarios, we would expect international organizations to refrain from seeking change through violent terrorism, as they have proved to produce the opposite and undesired outcome. Additionally, following the logic of preventing intervention, we would expect terrorist attacks to occur mostly in countries that are actively taking part in anti-ISIS and anti-Al-Qaeda coalitions, such as the United States, France and the UK. However, international organizations keep committing violent terrorist acts, and many of those happen in countries across Europe that are not involved in anti-IS coalitions such as Belgium and Germany. Against this backdrop, this dissertation will claim that jihadist organizations are not only targeting Western societies, but their specific Muslim constituents, in order to increase their power and recruitment capabilities.

Audience 2: Minority Muslim communities in Western countries

To understand the reasoning behind international terrorism, we must find the potential objectives organizations try to achieve by perpetrating such attacks. The presence of Muslim minorities in the West provides an explanation for the jihadists' targeting of countries not directly involved in the anti-IS coalition.

Terrorist organizations, as any other organizations, require resources such as recruits, finances, or logistics to achieve their goals. IS and Al-Qaeda have different perspectives, beliefs, views, and goals. While Al-Qaeda is more of a low-key organization, trying to promote terror in a stealthier manner, IS on the contrary have made it its mission to establish a caliphate and a state to all those it deemed suitable. IS and Al-Qaeda operate roughly on the same territory, which is Iraq and Syria mainly. Subsequently, these two groups are in constant competition over scare resources that are available in a very limited matter. Pedahzur and Perligier (2006) claim that when terrorist groups occupy the same territory, they compete for scarce resources.

Europe, with its recent influx of refugees and migrants, has a big pool of potential candidates from whom both IS and Al-Qaeda want to recruit ~~from~~. In order to attract the potential recruits, the organizations must show that they are superior and more worthy than the other. In an attempt to coerce a big audience, terrorist organizations find it advantageous to emphasize their group's strength (Wright, 2016). However, the strength and resources at a terrorist organization's disposal is often kept hidden from the public and from states. Governments and the public therefore lack information regarding terrorist groups' resources, such as number of fighters, armament, finances, trainings, etc. Thus, the only way for the public to assess the strength of an organization is by observing how capable and influential the organization is on the ground.

Consequently, terrorist organizations claim or perpetuate powerful terrorist attacks in Europe or in the US, to showcase to the public, and specifically the potential recruits they aim to attract, how powerful and capable the organization is (Ibid). Jihadist organizations vie to claim the strongest attacks as soon as they are committed, so that other groups or organizations would not claim that same attack, thereby showcasing the strength of the group relative to other groups. This portrayal of strength brands the organization as the most powerful in the region, and thus the most attractive for potential recruits.

Additionally, Hoffman (1999) claims that terrorists are attracted to inflicting or claiming large proportions attack, as people have become used to the continuing spiral of terrorist violence, therefore they are forced to undertake more dramatic and extreme measures, to achieve publicity and media attention (Hoffman, 1999). However, in many cases, the organizations do not have the resources and capabilities to perpetrate such powerful attacks, whereby they proceed to rely on claiming attacks in which the perpetrator has no connection to the organization.

With an increase in security measures throughout Europe and the US, feasibility becomes a major issue for terrorists. When terrorist organizations such as IS and Al-Qaeda are incapable of conducting international terrorist attacks, they accommodate this weakness by claiming responsibility for any attack that suits their interest. In these cases, the false claim is also an attempt by the organization to display strength, that the organization is capable of conducting terrorist attacks even in highly securitized countries

such as the United States (Kearns, 2019). Additionally, Kearns (2019) asserts that claiming an attack generates attention to one's cause. However, claiming some attacks can have backlashes and result in an outcome that does not suit the best interest of the terror leader. Subsequently, groups will less likely claim an attack when it hurts their public image (Kearns, 2019). Namely, claiming an attack is beneficial when it generates support and publicity without risking repercussions from the population or the target state. In that sense, the organization benefits from good advertising to gather recruits. These recruits usually stem from refugees who failed to integrate into a Western community, or from polarized Muslims seeking a purpose in life.

The refugee crisis has created larger recruiting pool for jihadist networks across Europe, as the region is facing serious difficulties integrating migrants into society and job markets. Additionally, segregation in the suburbs created a fertile environment for radicalisation. According to Nesser et al. (2016), terrorism is Europe is indeed driven by socioeconomic factors rather than just foreign policy grievances. The distribution of terrorist plots has witnessed a sharp increase in France, followed by UK and Germany. These countries are amongst the biggest host of refugees in Europe (IOM, 2017). A 2016 study by European Security officials claimed that more than three dozen of terrorist plotters were refugees (Nesser et al, 2016).

However, a high number of refugees in a state is not a sole indicator of higher threat of terrorism, as other countries with a high number of refugees such as Sweden do not face terrorism threats as high as Germany or Belgium. In different countries and areas across Europe and the US, Muslims are treated differently. While in some areas Muslims enjoy peaceful cohabitation with the Western community, in other areas Muslims are extensively marginalized. Those who are most disenfranchised have the most potential to accept terrorism, or to become terrorists themselves (Benmelech and Kloor, 2018). Those heavily sidelined look for an opportunity, or a spark that will allow them to materialize the growing hatred and discrimination they feel. Terrorist organizations thus seek to further polarize and disenfranchise the Muslim communities in the West, including migrants and refugees, by perpetrating terrorist attacks in the name of Islam and the caliphate. This marginalization strengthens divisions between the Western and the Muslim community in the West, preventing a peaceful and smooth co-habituation between the two. The purpose and

objective and of this marginalization is ultimately to recruit foreign fighters from within the disenfranchised Muslim communities in the West.

Through foreign fighters, the communication and spread of ideology between local European extremists and terrorist organizations in war zones is made easier. Belgian and French foreign fighters such as Rachid Kassim and Fabien Clain have provided instruction and directions to many terrorist plotters inside Europe (Nesser et al, 2016). Moreover, there are records that French foreign fighters have taken on high-up positions within the IS's international operations. A Frenchman have become director of IS's European operations, and Frenchmen and Belgians act as entrepreneurs down to terrorist cell networks across Europe (Jackson and Brisard, 2016). Sweden experienced its first suicide terrorist attacks after Swedish foreign fighters attained prominent positions in Al-Qaeda of Iraq (Nesser et al, 2016). In that sense, foreign fighters play a crucial role in extending the organization's reach and capabilities. Specifically, foreign fighters strengthen the organization's international operations base, and overcomes any logistical and transnational restrictions that terrorist organizations suffer from. Additionally, many of these foreign fighters become terrorist "entrepreneurs ".

The link between terrorists and the organizations' leadership is facilitated by a number of entrepreneurs, who are resourceful and ideologically motivated individuals in European countries. Entrepreneurs play the role of cell-builders who recruit individuals, and plan organized and strategic terror acts more efficiently and effectively. These entrepreneurs are usually " veterans" in the European communities, who earlier in life, were engaged in terrorism with al-Qaeda, or other terrorist organizations. The presence of these veterans in Francophone countries such as Belgium and France allow international terrorist threats to be materialized more feasibly in these countries (Nesser et al, 2016). In order to recruit people and build terrorist cells, entrepreneurs tap on individual motivations of Muslims in the West to recruit potential terrorists.

Organizations rely on individual motivation for recruitment, thus in our research we will look at what motivates individuals to join terrorist organizations. Additionally, we will explore how individual motivation and terrorist attacks connect to each other. According to Neumayer and Plümper (2010) , there are three main factors that contribute to recruitment

of individuals into terrorist organizations. Firstly, ideological appeal is a crucial element in recruiting terrorists. The more relatable and appealing the ideology is, the more the leader is successful in recruiting followers.

Secondly, peer acknowledgment, which is when a small inner circle, or even when a very small percentage of the wider population regard the terrorist as a hero. The more the acknowledgment, the more terrorists are likely to join the organization and fight for a cause. The media plays a major role in providing acknowledgment to the perpetrator as it spreads the propaganda and the message that the terrorists are promoting (Rohner and Frey, 2007). Also, previous suicide terrorism conducted by individuals assures potential recruits that their legacy will be protected and that the group will acknowledge their motivations and share them to the world.

Thirdly, political grievance is a crucial tool that influences individuals to join terrorist organization. The perpetrators aim to seek revenge at those who denied them their freedom and rights, usually Western governments (Neumayer and Plümper, 2010). Terrorist leaders thus capitalize on these three elements to recruit young people in order to gain a stronger "army". A terrorist attack in a European country or in the US would serve these three elements perfectly. The perpetration of the attack gives the ideology tangibility and a realistic sense, the media coverage of the attack provides acknowledgment to the perpetrators and to their causes, and the statement by the organization that follows the attack serves the political grievances that young people suffer from. Subsequently, international terrorist attacks aim to recruit Muslim supporters from the target country, who can be used either as Foreign Fighters or to promote the organization's ideology globally.

This study will add to the literature by explaining that organizations target different audiences, and that the objectives vary per audience. Relevant literature tries to identify political, social and religious reasons behind international terrorist attacks, or what are motivations that push individuals to perpetrate such attacks, however they do not differentiate between social groups that terrorists target in their attacks.

Chapter 3: Research Design

The main research question of our paper is: "who is the audience of international terrorism in Western countries?" To answer this question, we will select two specific audiences, the Western community as a whole, and its Muslim minority. By doing so, I will make use of case studies, about the terrorist attacks, to derive critical considerations on the selection of audiences by jihadist organizations targeting the West. I will conduct an exploratory research, in which I will explain why jihadist organizations have decided to carry out attacks on the West. In other words, this research aims to establish a relationship between the organizations' attacks and their sociopolitical effect on society such as competition, strength, recruitment, and political goals.

In this research, I will use terrorist attacks by the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda as main reference, by proposing case studies from the attacks they carried out in recent years across Western countries. I chose these organizations, since they are most prominently associated with international terrorism worldwide. They are two of the most powerful terrorist organizations who terrorized not just the host country, or region in which they are active, but the whole world. Other organizations, such as Hezbollah or Boko Haram, are very powerful regionally, but are not within my caseload since they maintain their network of operations at a regional level. For the most part, the majority of international terrorism is attributed to, associated with, or claimed by ISIS and Al-Qaeda, hence it is understandable to conduct our research on these two organizations. As a result, making sense of such terrorists' desired audience becomes a primary concern in order to advance our understanding of terrorists' goals and

Audience 1: Western community in Western countries

For terrorist attacks directed towards Western audiences, we observe that jihadist organizations target countries who are active players in the anti-IS campaign, or have contributed to the campaign in some way. Subsequently, organizations would target these

countries in the hopes of intimidating their citizens. The latter, terrorized and terrified, would in turn put pressure on their government to change their foreign policies and to stop intervening in foreign states' affairs. It is apparent that terrorist attacks in Europe and in the US rose following the announcement of the anti-IS campaign by France in 2014. The terrorist wave in Europe that occurred following the interventions by France in the Middle East is a concrete proof of targeting Western communities to curb the government's stances. The logic is that by perpetrating brutal and violent terrorist attacks in France, the organization puts pressure on the government to stop intervening.

By analyzing primary sources, such as IS's official magazine's issues, we find calls for action by IS urging its militants abroad to attack countries who launched military campaigns against IS, most notably the US, UK, and France. This, in combination with the data on where attacks mostly happened in Europe, would allow us to observe that the Western audience in France, UK and the US were indeed primary targets of the Islamic State. E

Audience 2: Muslim community in Western countries

For terrorist attacks targeting minority Muslim communities in the West, we observe that organizations target countries with a big number of refugees and migrants, countries whose Muslim population is extensively marginalized and polarized, and countries with a high minority Muslim population. Ultimately, terrorist organizations want to polarize Muslim communities in the West in the hopes of encouraging them to join the caliphate. Additionally, organizations want to show Muslim constituents in the West that the they are powerful and have an attractive ideological appeal, in order to obtain more recruits. Hence, this would explain why countries such as Belgium and Germany, who are not active in the anti-IS campaign, still face high-profile terrorism plots.

Firstly, we must emphasize that the rivalry between IS and Al-Qaeda reached its peak in 2014, when IS proclaimed itself as the worldwide caliphate, becoming the "Islamic State". Both organizations needed to establish themselves as the dominant one the region,

in order to attract the hearts and minds of supporters, thereby gaining more resources and recruits. Subsequently, the period between 2014 and 2016, which engulfed the peak of the competition between the two organizations, witnessed the most international terrorist attacks claimed by ISIS, and the highest number of terrorist plots per year. Since it is difficult to find data on ISIS's manpower and armory, it is not ideal to try to compare ISIS's resources before and after the terrorist attacks campaign of 2014 to 2016. Therefore, terrorist attacks perpetrated in the West serve as a proxy for IS's strength showcasing to the world that it has the capabilities of conducting large scale attacks in highly securitized and distant lands. This show of strength serves to attract global and media attention, in order to generate more recruits, an advertisement of sort.

The extensive media coverage IS attracted in the years 2014-2016, during which the group was most active in perpetrating terrorist attacks in the West, proves that IS managed to sell itself as the most powerful terrorist organization. The amount of people that searched for IS on the Internet, highlights the group's popularity.[2] Consequently, the media coverage shows that that IS managed to attract tremendous attention through terrorist attacks, especially during a time of heightened competition with other terrorist organizations. The media coverage also demonstrates that the organization's show of strength through terrorist attacks have worked, and that it attracted people's attention worldwide. This show of strength is crucial in IS's attempts to recruit individuals.

The show of strength serves to recruit young people by demonstrating to them that IS would be a powerful organization, capable of giving people a purpose, and making the dreams of many young disenfranchised and marginalized Muslims in Europe and in the US, a reality. A closer look at primary sources, such as IS' English propaganda video, intended for Western audiences, glorifies IS as the organization trying to liberate the world from its corrupt leaders. The video makes considerable effort presenting a new utopian world, with the hopes of gaining the hearts and minds of Westerners. By looking at data from the ICCT (2016), we notice that a very high percentage of foreign fighters and recruits has been convicted of a crime sometime in their lives. My hypothesis is that IS targets these individuals, and provides these potential recruits with a sense of purpose. By looking at

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[2] Further expansion in the Analysis section

quotes by European IS members we see that IS has indeed provided polarized individuals with a sense of purpose and belonging.

Terrorist organizations use terrorist attacks to further polarize Muslim minorities in the European society. This disallows migrants from cohabitating with their European counterparts in the West. My hypothesis is that IS targets countries with the highest percentage of minority Muslim populations in order to best benefit from its strategy of polarization. By looking at data on hate crimes towards Muslims following terrorist attacks, and by comparing these data from the year before IS was established to after its terrorist campaign, it becomes apparent that IS's strategy of polarization has been successful. Also, the choice of countries in which IS conducts terrorism, such as Belgium, who have a high percentage of minority Muslims, proves the theory that IS targets countries with a high number of minority Muslim communities in order to affect the most Muslims possible in its strategy of polarization.

Terrorist organizations also target countries with a high number of refugees and migrants, to ensure that migrants would find it challenging to integrate and cohabitate with Westerners. We suggest that attacks committed by a "terrorist in migrant disguise" would cause the host country and the West to fear refugees and asylum seekers, and thus prevent them from entering their lands. By looking at the data of terrorist attacks committed by refugees and asylum seekers, we see that Germany, the country who took in the most refugees, faces the highest number of attacks committed by refugees. While some could argue that this a natural phenomenon, and that the cause of the high terrorist attacks is just due to high number of refugees. At that time, a time of migrant crisis, migrants enjoyed free transnational and transborder movement, and therefore it was easy for terrorists to commit attacks anywhere, however, the attacks were still targeted at Germany specifically. The attacks also aim to polarize and distance refugees and migrants from the host community.

The attacks committed by IS raise fears of both refugees and Muslims. This empowers right-wing political parties, and forces traditional political parties to change their stances and outlook on migration. These changes and increasing limitations towards migrants would further marginalize Muslims communities, convincing them that co-existence is not an option in a racist and xenophobic continent. By showing the rise of right-

wing political parties across Europe and the US, and some policies adopted by traditional parties, we prove the latter theory.

Terrorist organizations use terrorist attacks to capitalize on individual motivations, in order to increase their manpower. IS's propaganda and show of strength touches upon the three motivations that pushes individuals to join terrorist organizations, as mentioned in the literature review. Looking at instances where terrorist organizations served the ideological appeal component, where it acknowledged terrorists, and where it touched on political grievances, would prove to us how terrorist organizations use terrorist attacks to touch on these issues.

All these aspects mentioned ultimately show how IS targets Muslim minority populations in Muslims communities in the West. The organization's show of strength, seen through its limitless reach, gives hope to Islamist youngsters that there is a home that welcomes them, that will accept them, and which will guide them into finding purpose in in their lives. This work claims that the countries that ISIS chose to target, contain a big pool of potential recruits, whom ISIS needs in its quest to establish an Islamic Caliphate. Data on terrorism shows that targeted countries contained high number of refugees, a high percentage of minority Muslim communities, and a high number of Muslims with a criminal background. This, in combination with the strategy of polarization that ISIS pursues through its terrorist attacks, show that the organization uses the latter as tools to recruit potential individuals. This would explain why countries that are not active politically against IS, still face a high number of terrorist attacks.

A paradox is raised when trying to answer our research question, in the sense of whether the Islamic State relies on randomness or on strategy. It can be argued that, through its propaganda and masterful use of social media, the Islamic State calls its followers and loyalists to defend the Caliphate and to commit terrorist attacks in the West, and attacks happen where they do because of specific variables. These factors can include more sympathizers among the community of a certain country, or a random cell in Europe that managed to perpetrate the attack in a certain country because of lack of security, and so on. In contrast, it can be argued, on the other hand, that the Islamic State directs and instructs its followers to target specific countries, and that it is strategic for the sociopolitical

reasons mentioned in this essay. Looking at the data of IS's terrorist attacks such as countries targeted , and the timing of the attacks, it is difficult to believe that IS relies on randomness in its attacks in the West. Notably, the period in which IS claimed the most attacks, the timing of large-scale attacks, and the selection of countries further provides evidence of IS's terrorist strategy, deeply rooted in socio-political conditions.

Chapter 4: Analysis

Audience 1: Western community in Western countries

Seven days after France announced the launching of the anti-IS coalition, in September of 2014, Muhammad Al-Adnani, the spokesperson and head of the Islamic State's international operations, issued for the first time a public announcement showcasing IS's intention to target and attack Europe. The statement strongly condemned the anti-IS coalition, and urged those loyal to IS to retaliate and strike in Europe and in the US. Looking at IS's official statements and their timing, it is apparent that IS is leading a terrorist campaign in retribution against countries that are actively involved in the anti-IS coalition. The retribution and deterrence against the West is primarily motivated by European and US's participation in the war against IS in the middle East.

According to Savun and Philipps (2009), states that are involved in domestic affairs of foreign countries, are prone to generate anger and resentment from the individuals of such countries. Those states adopting such an active role in foreign policy become the primary targets of aggrieved groups affected by these foreign policies and interventions of these states. The statements by Al-Qaeda following the September 11th attacks showed that the primary goals and incentives for the terrorist attack came as a result of the United States' interventions in the Middle East, among many other political reasons. The 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq also created further resentment among people across the globe, and

especially the Middle East. Analysts show that the image of the United States "plummeted" in the years following the 2003 invasion (Savun and Phlipps, 2009).

Looking at the propaganda video of the Islamic State, "No Respite", IS encourages its followers and those loyal to it to target the United States, which has spent over six trillion dollars on its fight against Islam, and who have done considerable damage in Iraq and Afghanistan. The organizations also lists other countries as targets, such as France and the UK, who have been playing an active role in the global coalition against IS (Liveleak, 2015). IS's announcement to target Europe, which came seven days after the announcement of the anti-IS coalition by France, is proof of the latter theory. Also, looking at the September 11 attacks, and the following statement by Bin Ladin, it is apparent that one of the reasons that Al-Qaeda committed the terrorist attack, was against US intervention in the Middle East.

Considering data on terrorist attacks, it is apparent that European countries are targeted more than the United States, even though the United States is the primary target of IS according to its statements and propaganda. This is due to many factors, such as the social aspects mentioned above like recruitment and polarization. But as Savun and Philipps (2009) put it, is not easy to target the United States as it is geographically separated from the rest of the world (Savun and Philipps, 2009). Technically and logistically, distant countries are harder to target, especially by terrorist organizations who lack the resources and capabilities such as logistics and manpower. Distance also makes it more difficult for terrorist organizations situated far abroad to organize, plan and carry out a terrorist attack. Also, the United States specifically is a tougher target than other countries because of its anti-terrorism and security spending. The US has the largest economy in the world, and spends a very high percentage of its income on military and security.

Consequently, terrorist organizations find it more practical to target US interests abroad than perpetrating terrorist attacks on US soil, and one way to do this is to target states that are closely tied with the United States, but are practically easier to target. The latter countries have lower capabilities and less spending on counter-terrorism and security than the US. The US consulate attack in Turkey on July 9,2008 and the Madrid train bombing in March 11, 2004 are examples that countries in which the US has strong interests is more prone to be victim of terrorist attacks (Savun and Philipps, 2009). Ultimately, countries such

as France and the UK, that are involved in international crises, and are closely allied with the US, are more vulnerable to international terrorism, as they are more convenient to target. Looking at data on terrorist attacks, it is apparent that France and the UK are the two most countries targeted by international terrorism, even though he US had deployed more than 4,000 troops in its anti-IS coalition, while other countries such as France has deployed around 1,000 troops. The interference by the West is very much condemned by IS as it prevents it from achieving its ultimate goals.

Terrorist organizations ultimately strive for political power and control in a specific country, or in a transnational context, involving many countries of a certain religion or civilization (Kydd and Walter, 2006). The Islamic State specifically fits this profile, as its ultimate goal is to acquire territory and establish itself in the transnational and regional context of the Middle East. Terrorism became a key strategy for jihadist organizations trying to replace moderate governments with more radical in predominantly Muslim countries. Some of these countries, however, rely on their foreign allies' military prowess and interventions to withstand and crush these terror groups. The allies of the country can go to various lengths to protect the home country, such as stationing troops there, or providing military aid and training, logistical support, arms and equipment, political and economic support, etc. Subsequently, the foreign country becomes a suspect for terrorists, who hope that by perpetrating a terrorist attack on the ally country's soil, the latter would retreat and withdraw from intervening or protecting the home country's government. By doing so, the organization would have a higher chance of achieving its political goals at home (Neumayer and Plümper ,2010). Pape (2003) notes that about half of the terrorist attacks targeted at democratic allies of the home country resulted in political concessions by these states.

Against this backdrop, the large-scale attacks that took place in on November 13, 2015, in Paris, are demonstrative of the IS's strategy to compel Western countries, such as France, to reduce their foreign interventionism in the Middle Eastern conflicts. In such regard, IS has sought to deliver a strategic message to the governmental bodies in Paris, by showing the willingness to target unarmed civilians and generate war-like conditions that would represent the Syrian or Iraqi conflict settings.

The political goal of terrorism is not in the act itself, but in the public and media reaction that the perpetrators try to achieve. A terror attack on a democratic country, and especially on the nationals of that country, puts tremendous pressure by the public on its government to reconsider its political and foreign policies. Neumayer and Plümper (2010) argue that the more democratic a country is, the more pressure it will experience by the public. The argument is that the nationals of the intervening country should not suffer to protect another government. Gartzke and Gleditsch (2004) argue that "democracies are less reliable allies than autocracies to fickle public opinion and transient coalitions." Consequently, the Islamic States believes that targeting the nationals of countries such as the US, France and the UK will trigger a powerful response by the nationals of the these countries, resulting in change in foreign affairs policies of these states.

Yet, the Islamic State's strategical attacks on Western soil, most notably Brussels, Paris, and San Bernardino backfired, and resulted in the Obama administration hardening its counterterrorism policies. Obama went from an "Iraq first" campaign to start a campaign targeting Islamic states targets and individuals more directly and accelerating its anti-IS operations and campaigns (McInnis, 2016). Yet, the Islamic State keeps perpetrating such attacks, and that is due to the social benefits it gains from targeting the Muslim audience in the West, which ostensibly outweigh the costs of increased Western intervention.

Audience 2: Muslim community in Western Countries

a. Competition and Strength

Half a year after the invasion of Iraq in 2003, Zarqawi, founder of "Jamaat Al-Tawhid Wal-Jihad"[3], became a significant figure following his brutal campaigns against Shiite religious targets and Sunni civilians. The success of these campaigns attracted many foreign fighters who believed in Zarqawi's cause, at a time when the group was in need of resources to expand its operations. The fundamental difference between the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda, lies in the socioeconomic backgrounds of the founders (Zelin, 2014) .While Bin

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[3] First name of current Islamic State.

Laden, founder of Al-Qaeda, comes from an upper middle class family and has a university degree, Zarqawi has a criminal background and comes from the poorer and less educated part of society. Also, Zarqawi's leadership beliefs, that the leader's authority is derived from the battlefield and not from behind the scenes, increased tensions between the two groups. In 2014, after months of negotiations, Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Bin Laden, which immediately gave him access to considerable benefits such as private donors, recruitment, facilitation networks, and logistics.

In Iraq, Zarqawi controlled resources and the flow of foreign fighters, which helped him gain loyalty and recognition among fighters at a more personal level. This allowed Zarqawi to control the younger and future generations of the Jihadi movements of Iraq. Further divide between the two organizations grew when ideological differences also emerged on the battlefield. The more extreme nature of Zarqawi was to purge the global Islamic community in order to save it, while Al-Qaeda leaders believed that Muslims were not the problem, but apostates such as Christians and Jews were (Zelin, 2014). Under al-Baghdadi, IS's new leader after the death of Zarqawi, IS pushed further into establishing an institutional model with an independent agenda. This move hurt Al-Qaeda in the long run, and allowed IS to increase its follower base. When the war in Syria erupted in 2011, IS exploited the instability in the region to regain a foothold there, and established new cells and operatives in Syria. In April of 2013, hostilities between IS and Al-Qaeda reached their peak as Abu bakr Al-Baghdadi, leader of IS, announced that the organization will expand its operations into Syria. Al-Qaeda urged IS to go back to Iraq, and leave the Syrian front in the hands of Jabhat Al-Nusra, another regional terrorist organization, however IS refused to do so.

In February 2014, Al-Qaeda issued a statement disaffiliating themselves with IS, claiming that they do not agree on beliefs and methods of operations. The ultimate decision for the separation came specially after uprisings against IS by Syrians over the group's excesses. The disaffiliation between the two organizations was described as fitnah, or state of discord, which led to open warfare in Syria between the two organizations. In order to amass power and support for their cause, both groups understood the power of media, and tried to use media as a weapon to attract fence-sitters and Jihadist across the global community (Zelin, 2014). For the Islamic State, which is trying to establish itself as a state, all

land it occupies has to fall under the its sovereignty, thus no resources or power sharing would be tolerated by the group. IS's extreme approach and methods is unpopular among locals, but is extremely popular and attractive among its foreign fighters contingent, which make about 50 percent of its force, and which enables it to gain more media attention and thus more power (Ibid). Twenty days after the Islamic State announced the establishment of the caliphate, the group issued a statement that it will target its attacks towards Europe. The organization knew that it has to prove itself if it wishes to gain superiority over its rival Al-Qaeda.

The competition between IS and al-Qaeda to win the hearts and minds is apparent in their rivalry in conducting attacks in West. A week after the January 7, 2015, Charlie Hebdo's attacks in Paris, Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the massacre that happened. At the same time, Coulibaly, a terrorist who between 7 and 9 January of 2015, killed a policewoman and four other people in a Jewish grocery story, pledged allegiance to the Islamic state in a video published a few days after his death. In the video, the perpetrator claimed that he had connections with the terrorists of the Paris attacks, and that the terrorists from both attacks synchronized their movements. However, since the video was edited and posted after Coulibaly's death, Karmon (2015) claims that it is not clear whether Coulibaly really had ties with IS or if it was his decision to be tied with IS. The idea is to affiliate himself with IS in order to attract more publicity, seeing as to how IS had more media attention and was seen as more powerful.

Coulibaly's wife claimed that her husband was "burning to join his brothers and fight with them against the enemies of Islam in the caliphate", however during investigation, there was no connection that linked her husband with any IS cell. Karmon (2015) therefore claims that the behavior of Coulibaly epitomizes the rivalry between the two groups, reflecting the willingness of the perpetrator to claim affiliation with the more powerful and famous entity.

-According to a Yemeni official, there is a "real competition" between IS and Al-Qaeda in Yemen and throughout the Middle East (Karmon, 2015). Al-Qaeda quickly claimed responsibility for the Charlie Hebdo's attack, while IS only referred to Coulibaly's attack a month later in one of its magazine issues. Coulibaly is portrayed as a brave Mujahid, who

awaited instruction from IS's leadership, who provided the Kouachi brothers with weapons and money, and who conducted the attack in the name of the caliphate. During that time, many attacks were falsely attributed to, or claimed by IS, for the reasons mentioned in the following paragraph.

Hoffman argues that a terrorist organisation is more likely to claim an attack when facing competition (Hoffman,1999). In a mounting rivalry between IS and other local and regional jihadist organizations, IS needed to establish itself as the dominant power in the region, in order to attract new recruits. Seeing as to how its extreme methods have been attracting foreigners, IS considered display of brute strength a successful strategy to showcase its strength to the world, to make a name out of itself abroad, and to stand out from other organizations. In 2014, following its establishment as a caliphate, IS needed to market itself as the most powerful organization, and the go-to organization for young disenfranchised and marginalized Muslims in the West who are looking for a purpose in life.

However, the Islamic State is not a state, and it is impossible for states and individuals to measure its resources, such as its weaponry,manpower, and funding. The Islamic State is aware of this, and realizes that the display of its strength has to be shown through its violent attacks, and not through statistics and numbers. Through its terrorist attack in Europe, and by showing that IS has unlimited reach and the capabilities to conduct terrorist attacks, even in the farthest and most secure areas, the group displays the image of supreme strength. The magnitude and number of terrorist attacks claimed and perpetrated by IS thus served as proxy of their strength.

Consequently, IS sought to achieve popularity through the media attention it gains from perpetrating the attacks in the West. In 2014, an official from the state department claimed in an interview with Newyorker (2014) that: "IS is using terrorist attacks to try to drive its message and ideology. The organization is trying to increase its influence and its ability to drive its ideology across the globe. It's committing these attacks to show people that it can still do these operations and is still a relevant force" (NewYorker, 2014). This portrayal of strength resonates with recruits and supporters at a global level, and therefore portrays to the world that the Islamic State is indeed very powerful. In this context, the

chart below illustrates the mediatic exposure of IS, in relation to key operational developments that took place between the years 2014 and 2015.
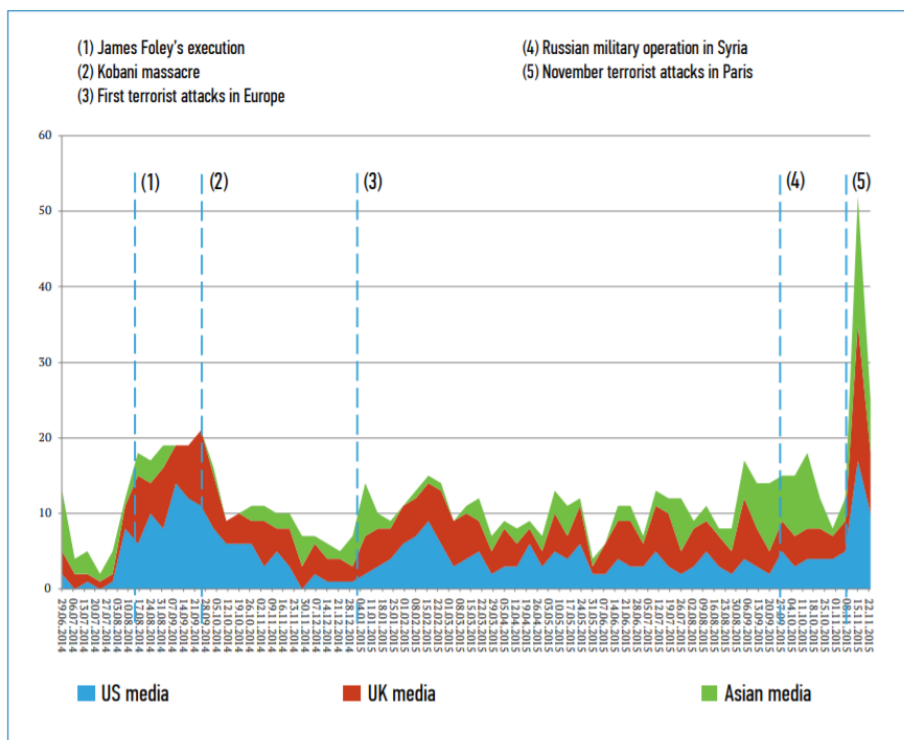
Source: Valdai Club report

This figure shows that following the announcement and establishment of IS, the media and the world was least interested in IS. The official establishment of IS happened in June of 2014, and before that, according to the mentioned table, the media's attention for IS was relatively low, as the world viewed it as just another terrorist organization. However, it is apparent according to the above graph, that following major violent incidents, specially the Paris attack, the mention of IS in publications saw a sharp increase of around 150 % from the Kobani massacres that were conducted on Kurdish civilians. Massive scale attacks on the West, as opposed to ones perpetrated in the Middle East, obviously brought IS more media attention, and thus more worldwide recognition (Davydov et al, 2017).

The high number of publications and the frequent mentions of IS in the news shows how much of a threat the organization has become to the world, and especially to the West. The latter also proves to people around the world that the organization has global reach and tremendous capabilities, and that it is far superior than other terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda. Following the execution of the journalist James Foley, the Islamic State became

the most searched terror group across the internet, far surpassing Taliban or Al-Qaeda. Also, keywords referring to the organization such as Islamic State or ISIS were tweeted ten times more than tweets on Al-Qaeda and Taliban (Channel4, 2014). This data shows how IS managed to establish itself as the more powerful and threatening terrorist organization in the world, and subsequently the most ideal for potential recruits to join.

Observing this pattern, and the successful media coverage IS got from terrorist attacks in the West, the organization aimed to capitalize on the above mentioned strategy to further increase its popularity. The organization thus proceeded to a strategy of conveniently claiming violent and terrorist attacks as a way to display strength. According to Kearns (2019), the phenomenon of claiming, whether falsely or truly, is most notably linked with IS, which has claimed attacks where no links between the individual and the organization could be established by investigators.

IS has acknowledged several attacks that have not been committed by its direct affiliates, mostly due to logistical shortcomings. A few examples of such examples are the 2016 Bastille Day attack in Nice, the 2017 Las Vegas shooting, and more dubiously the Filipino casino incident, that funnily turned out to be a local robbery attempt that turned out to be violent. The benefits of falsely claiming an attack, as stated previously, are to demonstrate to the world that the organization is powerful enough to carry out such attacks (Kearns, 2019). Looking at how the Islamic State goes to extreme measures of calming attacks, regardless of how dubious they seem, furthers our hypothesis that terrorist attacks benefit the group by showcasing its strength, thereby attracting global recognition and recruits. However, to stay on the radar and on the media headlines, IS knows that attacks will eventually become normalized, and more abnormal attacks are required.

The Islamic State realizes that after a certain time, small and medium scale attacks become normalized by society, and do not gain them the media attention or display of strength that it seeks, but large-scale attacks would be needed to do so. With the rise of the Islamic State, more people have died as a result of terrorist attacks in Western Europe in the two years between 2014 and 2016 than in all previous years combined (Nesser et al, 2016). According to the graph shown above, perpetrating large-scale attacks in the Middle East such as the Kobani massacre, or small-scale attacks in the West is not enough to gain

massive media recognition, but large-scale attacks with high numbers of casualties directed towards the West, such as the Paris attack, gave IS the media attention and global recognition that it craves. In phase two of the graph, after the start of attacks in Europe, the media coverage IS gained is not exceptional, but following the Paris attack that took the lives of 130 individuals and injured around 350 individuals, the mentioning of IS in the news skyrocketed.

The world felt terrorized and threatened by a terrorist organization able to commit such large-scale attacks in the West. Jihadists have been able to trigger a securitized response in Western government, in a fashion driven by rational policy considerations rather than mere religious-based justifications. The massive media attention, global recognition, and thus display of strength that IS achieved served its objective and ambition to attract more recruits within Muslim communities, which we will explore in the following section.

b. *Recruitment*
   i. Ideology

In many European union member states, Muslims are the marginalized and disenfranchised populace of society. They live in relatively bad conditions in the suburbs and in the poorer areas of the country. Many of these Muslims tend to informal means and illicit activities to produce an income, subsequently many of them strive to find meaning and purpose in their lives. A young convert in the suburb of Paris claims "I was a mess, with nothing to me, until the idea of following the mujahid's way gave me rules to live by" (Atran and Hamid, 2015). The Islamic State, with its very effective propaganda campaign, provided a thrilling cause and purpose to those struggling to find meaning in their lives. IS's call to action brings with it promises of glory, high esteem, and purpose. However, the call is not just to be a "devout Muslim", but to become a mujahid, or holy warrior, and fight for the caliphate.

The change from identity struggle to radical mujahid is fast, satisfying and life-changing, as it gives meaning through self-sacrifice (Atran and Hamid, 2015). A 2014 poll by ICM research shows that more than one quarter of French Muslim youths have a favorable

opinion of the Islamic State, especially among those who consider themselves rebels with a cause. Data from the International Centre for Counter-terrorism in 2016 shows that around 50% of foreign fighters from Denmark were involved in crime before departing to Syria and Iraq (ICCT, 2016). The previously mentioned strength that IS have aimed to portray to the world through its terrorist attacks, makes the organization the ideal go-to for those seeking to direct their hate for a cause. The show of strength provides the image that the Islamic State is not just a mere terrorist organization, but a powerful entity, with the potential of establishing a caliphate. This strategy of recruitment proves more successful the more the Muslim community feels marginalized and disenfranchised, leading us to the following section.

ii. Polarization

The extensive social polarization observed in Europe and in the US between Muslims and other societies plays a prominent role in jihadist terrorism and recruitment. The social polarization exists when groups are socially and behavioral distant, and unequal in terms of wealth, status, and power (Goodwin, 2006). The enduring grievances and struggle for identity that marginalized Muslims suffer from, provide them with motivation and incentive to organize terrorist attacks or to join terrorist organizations and become Jihadis (Ibid). Terrorist organizations such as IS aim to further polarize the Muslim society in the West by perpetrating terrorist attacks. The Islamic State is seeking to polarize Western societies, in order to foster. Its strategic interests. Most notably witnessed in the years 2014 to 2016, where IS was most actively perpetrating terrorist attacks in Europe and in the United States. According to OSCE, stereotypes against Muslims have gained significant momentum following major terrorist-related incidents such as the September 11 attack, and the "war on terror" (FRA, 2019). Even more problematic is the growing normalization of anti-Muslim narratives driven by far-right movements and parties throughout Western countries.

The increasing anti-Muslims rhetoric links Muslims with terrorism and extremism, it depicting the presence of Muslim communities as a growing threat to social and national security. Muslims are therefore often showed as a "monolithic" group, whose traditions, norms, and culture make them incompatible with Western human rights and democracy (FRA, 2019). ODIHR's reports conclude that hate crimes against Muslims increase

significantly following a terrorist attack, and on the anniversaries of the attacks (Ibid). Some common hate incidents reported include leaving the remains of pigs outside of a mosque or outside homes of Muslims, attacking mosques, and attacks against Muslims wearing headscarves. The Fundamental Rights Agency's 2017 report on Muslims societies in the EU provides us with a snapshot of everyday Muslims experience in the European society. The report shows that 1 in 4 Muslims respondents have been harassed, often repeatedly, because of their religious beliefs. Also, Muslim women who wore headscarves or Niqab faced more harassment than those who do not wear them, and 1 of 3 Muslims faced discrimination because of their Muslims name (FRA, 2019). Looking at the data from FRA, we see that there has been a skyrocket in the cases of violence and threats against Muslim individuals and properties (Ibid).

In 2013, prior to the rise of the Islamic State, the numbers of such incidents was reported to be 313, however in 2017, following the years that IS was most active in the Middle East, and following the 2014-2016 series of terrorist attacks in Europe, that number more than doubled reaching 717 reported incidents of crime towards Muslims (FRA, 2019). This increase in violence towards Muslims in European countries is evidence that IS's strategy of polarization has proved effective, further marginalizing Muslim minorities from the broader social body of Western societies. It is no surprise that Muslims facing such discrimination and polarization will be more prone to joining a jihadist organization, more prone to support terrorist attacks, or even more willing to conduct terrorism in the form of revenge.

The polarization strategy addressing the perception of Muslim communities is effective because it advances the terrorists' goals. Research shows that when Muslims feel like they do not belong in a society, they are more easily recruited by Jihadists (Cherney, 2017). After the September 11th , 2001 attack, Muslim communities were branded as "suspect community," and as a result, they have been subject to increasing surveillance and security procedures by counter terrorism policing. Consequently, Muslims communities in the West felt more repressed, leading them to be less trusting of the authorities and of the community. This further marginalized Muslims in the West, as the Western society's outlook towards Muslims communities also worsened. The low level of trust, and the increasing grievances and repressions Muslim communities suffered from, created a backlash effect.

The negative sentiments increase motivation within marginalized individuals to commit terrorist acts (Cherney, 2017).

Counterterrorism legislation targeting minority groups, such as Muslims in the West, thus provides them with incentives for radicalisation, to accept it, and to some extent even perpetrate violence such as terrorist attacks. Flawed counterterrorism policies, increasingly pervasive public discourse, and socioeconomic inequalities lead to growing mistrust and lack of mutual dialogue, thus setting the ground for further terrorist recruitment for jihadist organizations active in the West.

The Islamic State carefully evaluates what countries to target before planning terrorist attacks. The strategy of polarization that IS adapts works best in environments and countries where there is a high percentage of minority Muslim communities, so that the attack results in the desired reaction. The higher the number of Muslims affected by the repercussions of the attack, the more likely the organization is able to amass recruits from that target country (Benmelech and Kloor, 2018). Belgium, France, the UK, and Germany have among the highest minority Muslims populations in Europe (IOM, 2017). Therefore, conducting terrorist attacks in these countries has the highest success rate in attempting to recruit young Muslims as the targeted population is the highest. Subsequently, the biggest population of foreign fighters comes from France, followed by Germany and the United Kingdom. Also, Belgium contributes the highest number of foreign fighter per capita (ICCT, 2016). In France, even though the Muslim population is around 8 %, the Muslim population in prisons makes up around 70%. This makes a large number of disenfranchised young Muslims vulnerable to radical ideas in prison. Within this context, the Islamic State finds success. The influx of migrants and refugees increases the percentage of minority Muslim population in Western countries, making the latter also targets for polarization.

iii.   Refugees and Migrants

Atran and Hamid (2015) claim that the Islamic State is taking advantage of the Refugee Crisis to transport and to mobilize terrorists in Europe as seen in the investigation of the Parris attacks. Consequently, jihadists have exploited the conditions generated by the refugee crisis, by infiltrating fellow radicals among genuine migrants seeking refuge in

Western countries. Targeting a Muslim audience means also speaking to the same religion's refugees, by promoting violent actions in order to give space to self-styled jihadist narratives of help and support for the plight of Muslim refugees. Terrorist attacks in the West make Westerners more fearful of migrants, making it more difficult for migrants and refugees to adapt and to co-habituate with Westerners. By strengthening social divisions, IS hopes to strengthen grievances and negative feelings that migrants suffer from. This will incentivize Migrants, mostly Muslims, to be more accepting of IS, join the Islamic State, or to conduct terrorist attacks on its behalf. Also, the aggressions and hostilities by Westerners towards migrants, whom the Islamic State considers "traitors", prevent Muslim migrants from enjoying the ideal life they had envisioned in the West.

Terrorist attacks committed by groups claiming to defend Islam foster resentment and fear towards the migrant and refugee population, who are mostly Muslims, especially in the European context. Research that is focused on psychological reactions to terrorist attacks by the public, shows that terrorist attacks committed by people belonging to the Muslims minority communities in the West cause an increase in negative sentiments towards Muslims, as well as migrants and refugees, who are labeledd as an "outgroup"(Mancosu et al, 2018). Therefore, research across the European continent finds negative attitudes towards migrants and refugees, because of their association with Islam (Legewie, 2013). The research subsequently shows that migrants are viewed to be a threat to economic success, to national identity, to national security, and to social order. Legewie (2013) proceeds to draw upon the group-threat theory to show that incidents such as terrorist attacks " foster the perception of an outgroup as threatening and direct attention toward potential sources of inter-group conflict" (Legewie, 2013). Islamic terrorism therefore intensified the general debate about migration across the West.

The terrorist attacks claimed by IS and Al-Qaeda over the previous years and decades have been a central issue to Muslim, migrants, and refugee communities, as they directly affected how they were perceived in the eyes of Western society (Ibid) . The persistent terrorist attacks feed the narrative that migrant and refugee populations are a threat to the values and security of the Western world. The latter narrative has caused further discrimination and hate crimes against minority Muslims populations in Western societies (Allen and Nielsen, 2002). Hopkin's (2012) study on the September 11th attack
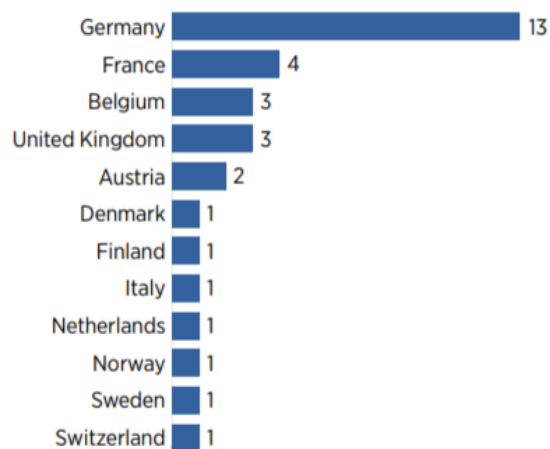
shows that the incident had a considerable impact on migrants and refugees, who are mostly perceived to be Muslims. The Islamic State's terrorist attacks in Europe, aimed at disrupting relations between migrants and Western societies feeds its narrative that Muslim traditional values and Western modern values are not compatible, and that Muslims should remain in Syria and Iraq, instead of migrating to the West.
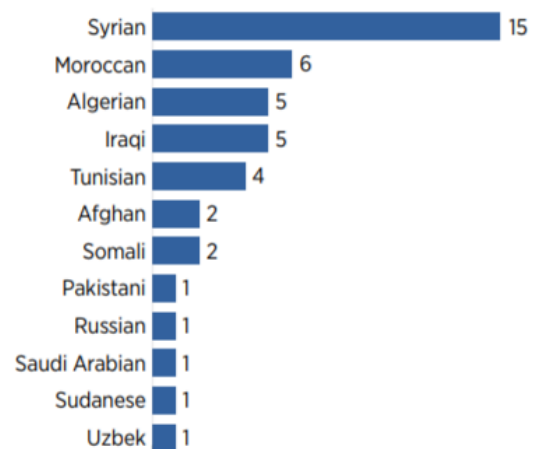
Terror Plots by Target Country and Terrorist Nationality

Germany was targeted most frequently in European terror plots conducted by refugees and asylum seekers. Most of the terror plots were conducted by Syrians.

PLOTS BY COUNTRY TARGETED, 2014–2017

Country	Value
Germany	13
France	4
Belgium	3
United Kingdom	3
Austria	2
Denmark	1
Finland	1
Italy	1
Netherlands	1
Norway	1
Sweden	1
Switzerland	1

TERRORIST NATIONALITY, 2014–2017

Nationality	Value
Syrian	15
Moroccan	6
Algerian	5
Iraqi	5
Tunisian	4
Afghan	2
Somali	2
Pakistani	1
Russian	1
Saudi Arabian	1
Sudanese	1
Uzbek	1

SOURCE: Media reports compiled by author.

BG3314 ☎ heritage.org

During the refugee crisis, Germany's Angela Merkel opened its doors to welcome migrants as a response to the crisis, the country has welcomed over 1.1 million refugees and asylum seekers so far (Euronews, 2015). As a result, Germany became the most sought-out destination for refuges coming from the Middle East, and Syria specifically. However, looking at the data in the above graph, it is apparent that Germany witnessed the most terrorist attacks perpetrated by migrants and asylum seekers, most of whom are of Syrian nationalities. In late 2015, European borders were under tremendous pressure, and it was therefore easy for IS to conceal its operatives among genuine refugee seekers. Since 2014, refugees and migrants have been involved in 32 terrorist plots in Europe resulting in the injury and death of more than 1,000 individuals. Germany has been the target of 41% of these plots, of which most have been associated with the Islamic State (Simcox, 2018). IS would have easily targeted Muslim refugees in order to target the broader Western societies, and the respective Muslim minorities, with the ultimate scope of polarizing

already tense political conditions regarding the management of migration since 2014. For instance, the March 2019 Christchurch attacks have proven clear in showcasing the kind of extremism emerging as a result of perception over violence posed by refugees themselves, despite the fact that New Zealand had not been by the 2015 European refugee crisis at all.

Germany has not been as active as France and the UK in its anti-IS campaign, however Germany became a target for IS when it opened its doors for migrants. Against this backdrop, the Islamic State has sought to polarize the German debate on migration, and radicalize migrants headed to/living in Germany themselves. The data above also showcases to Western societies how migrants and refugees can be dangerous to society, furthering the social divide between the two communities. The quest for the polarization of migrants and refugees also fits into the narrative of marginalization and discrimination, encouraging young Muslims to join the ranks of anti-Western jihadist groups. In contrast, the negative sentiments held by Europeans gave rise to anti-migration polities and increasing right wing policies in regard to migration among Western communities, as is shown in the next section.

Some might argue that the reason Germany is so exposed to terrorist attacks was just because of the ease of operation that IS benefitted from through the migrants. Although that is partially correct, research shows that the terrorist cells in Europe are not confined to a few countries, but rather enjoy free transnational movements all across Europe. The plots perpetrated by IS have occurred in more than twelve European countries that were also welcoming refugees and migrants (Simcox, 2018). Looking closely, it is apparent that there is cross-border interaction between different cells across different countries. An example of such is the visit by a prominent IS figure in the Abaaoud-network, who met with British extremists in the UK before the 2015 November Paris attacks. There were also links uncovered between the Abaaoud-network and terrorist operatives in Germany in September of 2016. The key figures in IS European cells leverage social media to instruct and recruit terrorist operatives. Additionally, they use refugee influxes and out fluxes to transfer operatives from a country to another. The fear and distrust of migrants pushes people to adopt a more conservative view and outlook on migration and policies. Such interactions favor the goals of those willing to simplify the audience of their attacks through well-structured transnational jihadist networks.

Terrorist attacks caused by IS in the West, and the fear it creates, strengthens radical right wing political parties who eagerly fight the influx of migrants, and who have ethnical and racist policies and ideologies. With growing anti-migration feelings among Europeans and Americans, the rise of right wing political parties was justified. Anti-migration stances have been mainstreamed across the European public discourse. According to a BBC news article(2018), nationalist and far-right political parties in Europe have gained significantly on the political scene across the US and Europe. While some right-wing politicians have taken office, others have become the main political opposition (BBC news, 2018). This can be seen as a reaction to the migration crisis, that many consider a vehicle for terrorists.

Anti-Muslim and anti-migration narratives have been the driving forces of these right-wing parties, and subsequently, traditional parties and left-wing parties have had to adapt and compromise their traditional migration policies because of the growing discontent among Europeans and American citizens (BBC news, 2018). The rise in anti-Muslim narratives and movements, factually highlighted by the Christchurch attacks, fully demonstrate the risks posed by the IS's polarization strategy. This looks for an increased scapegoating of Western Muslims in order to propel both its recruitment but also legitimize its violent actions against harmless civilians. the context of polarization, and the increasing sentiment among Muslims to seek revenge against the West, terrorist organizations aim to materialize that hate by capitalizing on the individual motivation of the individuals, which we will showcase in the following section.

iv.   Individual motivation

The individual motivations for people to join terrorist organizations are, as mentioned earlier, also exploited by terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State. The three factors that define personal incentives to join terrorist organizations are summarized by Neumayer and Plumper (2010). These are, ideological appeal, peer acknowledgment, and political grievances. In the Islamic State's English magazine Dabiq, and the videos published in English, the organization touches upon the ideological, peer acknowledgment, and political grievances of potential recruits in the West. The terrorist attacks in the West send the message that the organization is so convinced and attached to its ideology, that it is willing to commit violence for its "righteous" cause. By analyzing IS's propaganda videos and

magazine issues, we see that the organization appeals to this extravagant ideology of building an Islamic Caliphate, which will one day conquer the world. This new world appeals to youngsters as a utopian world, where they will be proud to embrace Islam, and where they do not have to face marginalization as Muslims, but in contrast, be glorified for it.

The propaganda goes on to talk about the how powerful and influential IS has become, and that unlike other organizations, IS has the power to achieve its vision, but requires the help from Muslims in the West. The terrorist attacks aim to widen and further the reach of IS's ideology, as the latter gives IS worldwide recognition, allowing it to reach the hearts and minds of more people.

IS's media branch acknowledge attacks following a terrorist event. The media coverage and attention a terrorist attacks receives worldwide, and the mentioning of the perpetrator all over social media provides the perpetrator the acknowledgment they seek from peers and enemies alike. For example, Amedy Coulibali, mentioned earlier as the perpetrator who attacked a Jewish store, is portrayed as a "brave Mujahid" who had sworn allegiance to the caliphate. In its English magazine Dabiq, issue #7, IS goes on to tell the story of Coulibaly, and how he persuaded Muslims in France to swear allegiance to the Caliphate, simultaneously disproving any arguments made against IS (Karmon,2015). The article states a long list of "good" deeds made by Coulibali in the name of the Caliphate, transforming him form a young Western disenfranchised and marginalized Muslim, to a hero of the Caliphate. Non-IS media also indirectly foster the acknowledgement process. For example, in the aftermath of the 2013 Boston bombing, one of the two perpetrators was featured in American magazines, eventually getting the desired attention from a global audience.

The third element of individual motivation is that terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State capitalize on socioeconomic grievances. Grievances are sentiments of discontent and disappointment held by individuals, towards Westerns, and towards policies and counter-terrorism stratagems. Generating support among Muslims by appealing to senses of grievances creates feelings of solidarity among Muslim communities, that Islam is under threat, and that all Muslims have the duty to defend it through violent Jihad (Cherney, 2017). "A 2007 and 2011 poll of American Muslims by the Pew Research Center

found that around 8% of American Muslims believe that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justifiable tactics to defend Islam" (Cherney, 2017). That number was found to be much higher when the research has been replicated in European Muslim communities.

Therefore, a considerable percentage of Muslims in Western countries express sympathy towards the Islamic State's ideology and its commitment to Islamic principles and use of violent Jihad against the West. The Islamic state thus appeals to wider public support among Muslims in the West by propagating this grievance-based narrative and ideology that legitimizes their actions as defense for Islam. The grievance-based narrative is carried by sentiments of injustice, victimization, and marginalization. The previously mentioned strategy of polarization that IS adopts through terrorist attacks feeds off such sentiments, and thus the Muslim communities' acceptance and support of violent extremism. A grievance-based standpoint treats Muslims as a unique body to defend, according to narrowly-interpreted Islamic precepts.

There are a number of factors that determine sympathy by Muslims towards terrorism, and one of the most prominent factors is disapproval of Western foreign policies. The political grievance-based terrorist narrative emphasizes the fact that Muslims are victimized and oppressed politically. Radical Islamists claim that Western foreign policies are unjust, especially the US one, claiming that Muslim lives are deemed less important than Westerners. Terrorist organizations such as IS argue thus that Western governments and "Zionists" want to destroy Islam, through their limitations on Muslims practicing their religions in the West, or in the Western societies' marginalization of Muslims. Appealing to these political grievances and limitations provides a discursive justification of the group's violence, and aims to generate support among Western Muslim communities. The sense of solidarity that emerges from the grievances-based narrative is a tool used by organizations to persuade individuals, and to convince them that they have an obligation to defend Islam. This sense of collective identity helps organizations recruit individuals and mobilize them to perpetrate terrorist attacks and violence against the source of the grievance (Cherney, 2017).

In such a way, terrorist organizations use the strategy of polarization to marginalize Muslim communities and migrants in the West, making it very difficult for them to co-habituate with Western societies. The polarization creates negative sentiments amongst Muslim communities in the West, allowing individuals to be more easily radicalized and more prone to recruitment into terrorist organizations. Also, through terrorist attacks, terrorist organizations capitalize on individual motivations Muslim youths by giving them a purpose in life, and a sense of identity. Joining a terrorist organization will give those Muslims the chance to seek revenge against the West, a reason to fight for a cause, to become a martyr in the name of defending Islam, and to transcend to a level of heroism acknowledged by many people worldwide.

All the social aspects that we have mentioned so far such as the showcasing of strength, the pursuit for polarization, the abuse of the refugee crisis, and the capitalization of individual motivations, play a big part in recruiting potential jihadists.

v.   Foreign Fighters

Foreign fighters are crucial for the Islamic State, and not just as foot soldiers on the battlefield, but also to facilitate its operations in Europe, with the goal to increase the reach of IS's operations. As mentioned before, Belgian and French foreign fighters played a great role in planning and instructing terrorist plotters in Europe (Nesser et at, 2016). Many foreign fighters have occupied high ranks in the ranks of the Islamic State, becoming leaders and directors of international operations, to serving as entrepreneurs to terrorist cell networks across Europe. These foreign fighters and entrepreneurs play a significant role, not just in planning and strategizing future attacks, but also in enticing young Muslims as well as converts, and promoting the ideologies of radical Islamism and terrorist organizations in Europe and in the US.

Jihadist veterans and foreign fighters often become "entrepreneurs", who take on the role of cell-builders, making sure that operations and cells are organized, strategic, and resourceful. Thus, such people are key to terrorist organizations, as they rely on them to recruit people at a local and global level. Such an example is Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the leader of a terrorist cell that perpetrated the Paris attack of 2015. Abaaoud left to Syria,

earned experience in terrorist tactics, forged new connections, went back to Europe where he radicalized and recruited a network of accomplices to conduct the attack (Benmelech and Kloor, 2018). FBI director James Comey once stated:

> "Foreign fighters traveling to Syria or Iraq gain battlefield experience and increased exposure to violent extremist elements … they may use these skills and exposure to radical ideology to return to their countries of origin to conduct attacks on the Homeland." (House Homeland Security Committee Hearing, September 2014).

The factors that contribute to the recruitment of foreign fighters into terrorist organizations are, as Benmelech and Kloor (2018) put it, the size of a country's minority Muslim population, and its degree of homogeneity. Krueger (2006) also argues that countries with a bigger Muslim population are more likely to contribute foreign fighters. According to Gould and Klor (2016)'s analysis, the more homogenous the country is, the more difficult it is for migrants, such as Muslims from the Middle East, to integrate and assimilate with the host community. Marginalization and political polarization drives extremist radicalization (Benmelech and Kloor, 2018). The strategy of the Islamic State to polarize the Muslim community in the West, though its terrorist attacks, makes it even more challenging for Muslims to integrate in homogeneous societies, allowing them to recruit more foreign fighters from these countries.

The jihadists' pursuit of strength, polarization, recruits, and foreign fighters are all social aspects that provide us with answers to what seems to be unexplainable if looked at from a political lens. Nevertheless, the political reasoning and aspect behind terrorism is still a very prominent part of terrorist leaders' reasonings, as we will showcase in the following section.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Jihadist attacks in the West have manifold meanings and objective. After the analysis we have conducted above, and the data that we have come across, it is apparent that this is

but one side of the coin. In our analysis, we managed to show the different aspects and motivations that lead terrorist organizations to perpetrate or claim an attack. Most prominently in this research, we focused on the Islamic State, and how the organization used terrorist attacks to strengthen itself socially, resourcefully, as well as politically.

Ultimately, there are two audiences that terrorist organization aim to target, the whole Western community, and its Muslim minority. A terrorist attack therefore aims to achieve different objectives in relation to each of the two audiences. For the wider Western audience, the jihadist organization aims to terrorize and intimidate the latter in order to ~~put~~ pressure targeted governments into changing their foreign policies. For the Muslim minority, the objective of the organization is to polarize, and thus recruit potential candidates from within the Muslim communities in the West.

Firstly, by targeting Western audiences, IS hopes to minimize any foreign intervention trying to challenge it on its quest to obtain a caliphate. In 2014, anti-IS western coalitions, most notably France and the US, began their military campaigns against the expansion of the new caliphate. By targeting these specific countries, IS planned to make the cost of intervening against it very high, so that countries are reluctant in fighting its quest towards a caliphate. If the West wishes to intervene, then they must be prepared to face terrorism at home. The group's terrorist attacks are successful especially in democratic countries, as their aim is to force the public to put enough pressure on the leaders to change their foreign policies.

Secondly, the social and political aspects that we have mentioned strengthen and empower the organization in terms of recruits, resources, and logistics, allowing it to achieve its objectives more easily. The emphasis on competition between IS and Al-Qaeda, and how it has reached its peak during 2014, set the stage for what was to become the biggest terrorism campaign in the West. This explains the tremendous rise of terrorist attacks between 2014-2016. In a rising competition, IS sought to showcase itself to the world that it is the most powerful organization, and to popularize itself to the world, thereby amassing recruits from across the globe. The show of strength and the popularity that IS acquired through its terrorist attacks campaign, gave it the ability to reach a wider

audience, and thus connect its ideologies with people who are struggling to find an identity or a sense of purpose in their lives.

That growing visibility of IS's violent attacks, and its infamous show of strength polarized Muslims communities across Europe and the United States. The polarization strategy aims to marginalize and disenfranchise Muslim communities, and to prevent them from integrating and co-habituating with Western communities. IS builds fear and anxiety among host communities towards Muslims, in the hopes that the latter would want to seek revenge and join terrorist organizations or conduct terrorist attacks.

The polarization strategy of Muslims and migrants allows IS to capitalize on individual motivations that push people to join terrorist organizations. Individual motivations for people to be recruited can be summarized by three factors, ideologies, acknowledgment, and grievances. The polarization strengthens these motivations, and allow individuals to be more easily recruited for the organization, or to perpetrate an attack. Joining a terrorist organizations or perpetrating terrorist attacks would satisfy all these motivations. The foreign fighters play a major role for an organization like the Islamic State, not just as fighting force on the ground, but as operatives who recruit individuals globally, and who enjoy easy transnational movement.

To most, terrorism is just a violent and irrational act, but in the eyes of perpetrators, it is apparently a very strategic tactic in terms of political and social strategy. The research we have conducted showcased how IS committed many terrorist attacks targeting Muslim constituents of the West. They did so in the hopes of furthering their goals such as strength projection, polarization, and recruitment. By just looking at Western audiences as targets of terrorism, we would be limiting ourselves to looking at the topic from just one angle, but by incorporating the Muslim community as an audience, we are able to broaden our perspective and to better understand motivations of international terrorism.

The most recent example that strengthens this research's theory is the video appearance of IS's leader Abu Bakr el-Baghdadi's. Baghdadi appeared on the 30th of April 2019, after being absent from the public scene since he announced the establishment of the caliphate in 2014. The leader issued a statement claiming association and responsibility to

the terrorist attacks that happened in Sri Lanka on Easter of 2019, and that the attacks came as a revenge to their loss of territory. Sri Lanka has not been an active player in the anti-IS coalition, however IS saw the need and benefit to perpetrate or claim the attacks to target the Muslim audiences worldwide. If we are to look at the reasoning behind this attack as one targeted towards Western audiences, we would stumble upon a wall. However, looking at it as an attack directed towards Muslim communities, it would make sense. As the Islamic State has recently faced territorial losses, deaths and capture of most of its members, the group saw the need to showcase to the world that its strength has not diminished. At a time of material and ground defeat, IS is in critical need of support and recruits, and a "weak" organization will have trouble acquiring the latter. Therefore, from that lens, it is very logical for IS to claim the terrorist attacks, to portray to the world that IS is still powerful and capable of conducting large attacks abroad.

This research has shown the audience selection of jihadist attacks cannot be tackled from a unique lens. In order to reduce future terrorism, policy makers should focus on social aspects of communities, rather than just foreign policy. While both aspects are prominently important, the focus today is more on curbing foreign policy, than on putting more emphasis on the social side such as integration and incorporation of mixed communities. Such policies could tackle policy issues such as regulation of the media after a terrorist attack, limiting access to terrorist organizations' propaganda material, and improve policies on migration and integration of minorities. In doing so, it will be more difficult for terrorist organizations to convince their Muslim constituents of joining them. From the bottom-up level, Muslim communities in the West should report on those who try to radicalize them, and try to assist authorities in reducing terrorism, as terrorism negatively affects the daily livelihoods of all Muslims abroad.

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