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**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

NEW TERRORISM IN FRANCE

by

Michael T. Meyer

March 2018

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Erik Dahl
Zachary Shore

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NEW TERRORISM IN FRANCE

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
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ABSTRACT

Today's global community needs a better answer to the problem of jihadist violence. The threat continues to change, which often leaves states unprepared for the next violent event. This thesis illuminates one part of the discussion by addressing the following question: Why did France face an increased terror threat in 2012, when 10 years prior to this, it was widely praised for its effective counterterrorism efforts? This work recognizes a new version of global Salafist jihad, which manifests in a decentralized, transnational movement and uses social media to perpetuate a narrative of civilizational conflict. Then, an analysis of the dynamics of state-societal interaction in France prior to 2012 is used to identify three undercurrents that new terrorism could leverage. First, a review of the history of French Muslim political activism reveals that their success in winning concessions from the state is limited. Second, an increasing number of second-generation Muslim youth are unable to identify with either Eastern or Western culture. Third, France's record of exceptionally Westernized Muslim sentiment likely antagonizes jihadist ideologues. By this framework, jihadists are motivated to recruit wayward youth with a narrative of renewed identity and purpose in jihad.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CORIF	Conseil de Réflexion sur l’Islam en France
CSPPA	Comité de soutien avec les prisonniers politiques et arabes et du Moyen-Orient (Committee for Solidarity with Near Eastern Political Prisoners)
GIA	Groupe Islamique Armé (Armed Islamic Group of Algeria)
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria; also sometimes referred to as IS

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I. INTRODUCTION

On September 11, 2001, the world watched as the United States reeled from terrorist attacks previously unimaginable to the average observer. The perpetrators and motivations behind the violence were not new developments, but the scope and scale of the attacks was a shocking revolution. France watched with sympathy and horror, yet it continued to experience relative security within “the Hexagon” of French sovereign territory.¹ By March of 2004, Spain experienced similar throes of terrorism after its public train system suffered an attack with comparable coordinated and calculated violence. Again, France peered across the border in surprise and solidarity with its European neighbor, but the francophone nation continued experience public safety. In July 2005, little more than a year following the attacks in Madrid, London fell victim to its own horrifying public transportation massacre at the hands of al-Qaeda backed militants. While France experienced social rioting in the summer of 2005, it still remained free from the kind of transnational terrorism that, by that time, was a reality among many Western states. It was not until January 2012, more than 10 years after global jihad had gone public, that France experienced its first taste of things to come—a bitter pill of repeated jihadi-inspired violence, which rocked French society to its core.

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis addresses the question why is it that France, which 10 years ago was widely praised for the effectiveness of its counterterrorism efforts, is today facing a greatly increased terror threat? While France’s approach to counterterrorism differs from that of its European neighbors, it had nonetheless been successful in ensuring public safety against terrorism through the first decade of the 21st century. Beginning in 2012, however, France began experiencing a recurrence of Islamist terrorism with little pattern or warning; this peaked in the spectacular Paris attacks in November 2015. The goal of this thesis is to gain an understanding of how France, an advanced democracy, could rather suddenly find itself

¹ “The Hexagon” (l’Hexagone) is a colloquial term for the physically bounded territory of France itself as its international borders create roughly the shape of a hexagon.

the target of multiple discrete jihadist attacks. Are French counterterror agencies or elements in French government or society at fault or has there been a change in the nature of the threat itself? More broadly, what does the contemporary French experience with jihadism tell us about the terrorist threat today? Can any conclusions have relevance outside of France? Understanding the threat is of utmost importance to undertaking any comparative analysis within French society, yet debate surrounds the concept coined “new terrorism” in contemporary scholarship. This thesis provides a standpoint in the debate as a reference for its application to France’s perplexing resurgence of religiously inspired terrorism.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Although the leading contemporary terrorist groups, al Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), continue to lose influence, leadership, and operating space, their call for global jihad continues. As events in France have indicted, jihadists are answering the call, yet they carry out their work in a way that seems shockingly indiscriminate to observers worldwide. The targeted state governments have urgently taken to diagnosing the complexity and pervasiveness of the problem in order to provide the public security, which is of paramount importance in advanced democracies. In light of environmental developments, many terrorism professionals and scholars have offered fresh analysis and corrective actions that might stem future movement toward radicalization within at-risk populations.

However, a quandary has developed with regard to the application of today’s counterterrorist policy. If we claim to understand the problem and have applied concerted solutions as proposed by academics and pundits, why do we continue to see both violent Islamist terrorism and the widespread sentiment supporting such action? While citizens of predominately Muslim countries have a growing concern about organized Islamic extremist groups, polls show that a significant minority—and in some cases a majority—

believe that suicide bombing can be justified as a defense of Islam.² Even more perplexing to the question is the precedent throughout history whereby socioeconomic drivers of radicalization foment class struggle and internal revolutions but do not result in such widespread transnational upheaval and violence.

The global threat of “leaderless jihad” has developed faster than its Western targets have been able to counter it. This is not surprising given the now traditionally slow pace of the West in matching regional cultural wisdom with foreign and domestic policy. For almost a decade, a lack of cultural understanding and ignorance of the local rules at play on the ground in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom have cost the United States and its allies dearly in terms of human, material, and strategic losses. A similar program may be replaying in France as law enforcement and the intelligence community take a long-established and aggressive approach to this new threat. Even in the many instances where authorities have discovered and thwarted terrorist plots, local governments and communities had already missed opportunities to prevent radical sentiment from fomenting in the hearts and minds of the terrorists. This begs the question of where extremism begins, and more pragmatically, at what point can a state and society—such as France—successfully intercept that trend?

Analysis of the primary research question can contribute to our understanding of terrorism and counterterrorism in three areas. The initial contribution of this thesis is in consolidating the discussion on what makes new terrorism new. We must thoroughly understand the threat in its historical context as well as its contemporary nuance to evaluate its role in the French experience. With regard to France-specifically, the second contribution is in understanding the intricate relationship between state institutions, the domestic community, and security organizations. Given France’s now inconsistent record in counterterrorism, this thesis seeks to provide a holistic viewpoint of how successful French policies and programs are in understanding and addressing the contemporary threats. Finally, armed with information on how France has either facilitated or suppressed

² “Concerns about Islamic Extremism on the Rise in Middle East,” *Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project* (blog), July 1, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/01/concerns-about-islamic-extremism-on-the-rise-in-middle-east/>.

terror, the conclusions of this thesis regarding the best way forward may help policy makers more effectively tailor calls for change and adaptation within France and potentially worldwide.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

The prevailing sentiment in new terrorism theory centers on the Western characterization of leaderless jihad and the broad influence of globalization on how Islamist extremists carry it out. There is disagreement among scholars as to whether they should consider the phenomenon of low-tech, discrete attacks a major evolutionary step or simply a variation on past practices. In either case, there are environmental factors that are new to the 21st century—particularly the increased flow of information via social media—that could easily redefine the nature of the threat. Categorizing generational differences in terrorism is not a fresh endeavor. For example, in 2002, David Rapoport classified four “waves” over the span of approximately 150 years from anarchists to anti-colonialists, again to left-wing terrorists, then finally to religiously inspired attackers.³

Subsequently, Glenn Robinson has subdivided the latest, religious wave into four separate waves of global jihad.⁴ The first wave emerged after the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 as a call to Muslims worldwide to protect Muslim lands from infidel occupiers. The second wave coalesced under Osama Bin Laden and sought to attack “far enemy” Western targets that buoyed supposed apostate regimes in the Muslim world. The third wave began after the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq and was led by several ideologues that sought the formation of a caliphate in the Levant.

Robinson describes the fourth and current wave of global jihad as one of “personal jihad,” intended to “Keep hope alive!” in the midst of declining groups, cells, and a caliphate.⁵ Like other scholars, Robinson expects this wave to persistently manifest as a “networked, decentralized, small-scale [threat, with its] violence attached to media

3 David C. Rapoport, “The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11,” *Anthropoetics: The Journal of Generative Anthropology* VIII, no. 1 (2002), <http://anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0801/terror/>.

4 Glenn E. Robinson, “The Four Waves of Global Jihad, 1979–2017,” *Middle East Policy* 24, no. 3 (September 2017): 72, <https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12287>.

5 Robinson, “The Four Waves of Global Jihad,” 72.

campaigns.”⁶ The threats that manifested within France may be an example of a muddled transition from the third to fourth waves of global jihad.

1. Two Sides in the Hexagon

The debate in France surrounding the questions of what caused religiously inspired terrorism to return so pervasively has been underway for several years. Gilles Kepel and Oliver Roy are at the forefront of a heated discussion regarding Islamist violence in the Hexagon, and provide opposing perspectives on radical motivation and the goals of violent extremists. To put it simply, Kepel espouses the concept of *radicalized Islam* while Roy instead sees the phenomenon as an *Islamization of radicalism*. The differences between their scholarly theories not only delineate an academic disagreement but also inadvertently codify camps of public sentiment over the issue.⁷ The accompanying political division among the populace remains a sticking point in the ability of government and social groups to advance understanding and resolution of potential contributing factors to terrorism in France.

Roy makes the argument that French terrorists do not first radicalize through religion before becoming violent.⁸ On the contrary, he argues, they choose to be radicals only because it appeals to them and not because of any manipulation or familial cultural influence.⁹ He builds a description of *who* the new radicals are in France, *why* and *how* they use Islam for violent revolt, and *when* and *where* these jihadists embrace religion. Roy’s core belief is that the new French terrorists are a nihilistic bunch that hate all of society and that have a penchant for death that includes even themselves.¹⁰ This movement emerges largely from the French youth, potentially second or third generation immigrants

6 Robinson, “The Four Waves of Global Jihad,” 72.

7 Adam Nossiter, “‘That Ignoramus’: 2 French Scholars of Radical Islam Turn Bitter Rivals,” *New York Times*, July 12, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/world/europe/france-radical-islam.html>, 1.

8 Olivier Roy, “The Long Read: Who Are the New Jihadis,” *The Guardian*, April 13, 2017, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/apr/13/who-are-the-new-jihadis>, 3, 6.

9 Roy, “The Long Read,” 1, 8, 9.

10 Roy, “The Long Read,” 9.

from Muslim lands, and their motivations lie in what Roy terms “pure revolt.”¹¹ He further posits that the radical youth advertise jihad as their banner in an attempt to avenge “their people,” referring to a global community of Muslims; yet he argues that there is no real link to be found that might connect the terrorists and their imagined constituents.¹² In fact, from Roy’s empirical classification of roughly 100 people over the last 20 years, most French terrorists emerge after a sudden renewal of religious observance, taking action shortly following a “religious ‘reconversion’ or ‘conversion’” that took place outside any normal Islamic community structures¹³

In addition to an individual profile of French jihadists, Roy’s support for an “Islamization of radicalism” theory identifies what he believes to be ideological inconsistencies within the violent Islamist movement. He first cites a difference between the Islam of branded jihadist groups, like ISIS and al-Qaeda, and the French jihadist’s Islam.¹⁴ In his view, the former is based in a “methodological tradition of exegesis,” while the young French jihadists only care about violence and a heroic self-image.¹⁵ Roy describes the caliphate as a fantastical idea with no chance for strategic success, explicating that it only provides the “myth of an ideological entity” to angry nihilists looking to validate their behavior behind perceived theological legitimacy.¹⁶ All of Roy’s points derive from the idea that religious radicalization is not the first step toward political radicalization in France, even though he acknowledges the common understanding that jihadism stems from Salafism.¹⁷

Gilles Kepel approaches the problem of French terrorism from nearly the opposite perspective from that of Roy. They argue that renewed terrorism in France is a rise of violent Islamism, which had been brewing for decades in French society, then manifested

11 Roy, “The Long Read,” 2.

12 Roy, “The Long Read,” 3.

13 Roy, “The Long Read,” 5, 6.

14 Roy, “The Long Read,” 8.

15 Roy, “The Long Read,” 8.

16 Roy, “The Long Read,” 2.

17 Roy, “The Long Read,” 7.

itself in the confluence of third generation jihadism and a “third generation of French Islam.”¹⁸ Evolutionary differences between generations of Muslims in France are essential to his argument.¹⁹ Kepel understands the first generation of French Muslims as the original post-colonial immigrants, having little desire or ability to influence the French political scene. The second generation emerged via a moderate level of activism that gave birth to a “new political self-consciousness among French Muslims” in the early 1980s.²⁰ However, Kepel argues that in 2005, riots in the Parisian suburbs following a set of perceived injustices against Muslims by French police triggered another major shift. The resultant widening of “ethno-religious fissures in the social fabric” supported the rise of a youth led, ground-up Muslim movement meant to redefine group solidarity.²¹ The international jihadist movement had pervasively been in the background for second and third generation Muslims, and as previously noted, it was making its own generation shifts. The third generation French Muslims split with their predecessors of the late 20th century by disengaging from domestic politics. Instead, they identified with the hardships of a worldwide Muslim community as described by fundamentalist Islamists through a persistent internet presence.

Unlike Roy, who seems to favor a fundamental framework of class struggle, Kepel advocates a problem framing methodology based on identity struggle. He sees polarization occurring not only in the Muslim community but among Gallic French people as well—each group protecting its own version of a moral worldview. Within French society, the nationalist camp of the “true French” pits against the “globalized empire,” while “righteous Muslims” contest the “hell-bound Kuffar.”²² Kepel considers right-wing nationalism and Islamism as “parallel conduits for expressing grievances,” and that each vies to emplace

18 Gilles Kepel, *Terror in France: The Rise of Jihad in the West* (Princeton ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), 8.

19 Mark Lilla, “How the French Face Terror,” *New York Review of Books*, March 24, 2016, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/03/24/how-the-french-face-terror/>, 5.

20 Lilla, “How the French Face Terror,” 5.

21 Kepel, *Terror in France*, xviii.

22 Kepel, *Terror in France*, 4.

its own specific values-based reality on French society.²³ Again, in Kepel's view, a wholesale breakthrough to terrorism occurred after the internet provided a wealth of extremist ideology to mobilizing Muslims.²⁴

Roy and Kepel also pursue contrasting viewpoints over the age-old debate of push versus pull factors in the motivation for movements. Roy supports a "push" explanation, which draws on discrimination and social exclusion as internal inspiration for seeking violence.²⁵ Conversely, Kepel counters with an emphasis on "pull" factors from terrorist ideologues and Salafi preachers that provide external stimulus for religious-based terrorism.²⁶ Interestingly, Kepel does not disregard socioeconomic conditions as contributory matters, and likewise includes a range of technological, religious, and broad-based political developments in his theory.²⁷ Additionally, Kepel's views find support in this thesis, which bases its argument in evolutionary trends in jihadist activity and a widespread identity struggle within French society.

2. French Experiences in Counterterrorism

Terrorism brings an extraordinary dynamic to the everyday lives of citizens that shapes both the public expectations and the organizational goals of counterterrorist agencies. While the chances of becoming a victim of terrorism are incredibly small when compared to more endemic modes of fatality, like vehicle accidents or medical ailments, the psychological impact of terrorism transcends these more common social threats.²⁸ The general public extrapolates anxiety and dread from terrorist attacks because "it appears utterly impossible to know when and where such an event might take place."²⁹ The next attack might occur in a location that one considered ordinarily safe—just the way it

23 Kepel, *Terror in France*, 4.

24 Jytte Klausen, "Terror in the Terroir," *Foreign Affairs*, October 4, 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/2017-08-15/terror-terroir>, 1.

25 Klausen, "Terror in the Terroir," 3.

26 Klausen, "Terror in the Terroir," 3.

27 Lilla, "How the French Face Terror," 5.

28 Jason Burke, *The New Threat: The Past, Present, and Future of Islamic Militancy* (New York: New Press, 2015), 216.

29 Burke, *The New Threat*, 216.

happened in previous attacks—rendering almost any place a potential target. For this reason, citizens expect the goal of counterterrorism activities to transcend simple investigation and prosecution and instead perform preventive actions that give the public a sense that the state can provide safety in its ordinary places.³⁰

Adaptation to France’s counterterrorist policies span several decades and involve changes at both the institutional and organizational levels. Evaluation of these two independent levels helps distinguish France from the rest of the world in terms of its approach to fighting terrorism. Frank Foley lays the groundwork for this distinction through his exploration of “interinstitutional conventions” and “organizational routines.”³¹ They appropriately distinguish influences that come from the top down and from the bottom up, respectively.³² He argues that the relationship between security agencies and the judiciary are adapted at the institutional level, while refinements to the interaction between the police and intelligence agencies occur at the organizational level.

a. Interinstitutional Conventions

The way major institutional branches of French government interact with each other enables a counterterrorist framework that is uniquely French when compared to those of the international community. Foley describes these interinstitutional conventions as “formal rules, standard operating procedures, and norms which regulate...the relationships between individuals across the various institutions of state.”³³ The historically hypercentralized nature of the French government allows it to consolidate some responsibilities of its branches without consideration for constitutional checks and balances present in many other Western countries.³⁴ Foley refers specifically to the inquisitorial system of the French judiciary that permits it active involvement in investigations.³⁵ This

30 Frank Foley, “Reforming Counterterrorism: Institutions and Organizational Routines in Britain and France,” *Security Studies* 18, no. 3 (September 2009): 441, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410903132920>.

31 Foley, “Reforming Counterterrorism.”

32 Foley, “Reforming Counterterrorism,” 452.

33 Foley, “Reforming Counterterrorism,” 450.

34 Foley, “Reforming Counterterrorism,” 451.

35 Foley, “Reforming Counterterrorism,” 451.

is in contrast to the adversarial system of many democracies that relegates the judiciary to a position of arbitration between a prosecution and defense. Through the French precedent, the judicial branch has leveraged access to security agencies that are otherwise the responsibility of the executive branch.³⁶ The overarching governmental context here provided the framework for major reforms beginning in 1986 that gave authority for counterterrorist operations to the judicial branch, under the purview of *investigative magistrates*.

b. Organizational Routines

Ironically, the penchant for centralized authority remained at the institutional level of government, as lower level agency interaction took on a familiar, personality-based nature. Foley defines organizational routines as “recurrent interaction patterns,” which describe the behavior of any number of agencies with each other.³⁷ By that definition, he concludes that French agencies have an informal approach to reforms, an environment of extensive cooperation, and a relatively unbalanced distribution of that cooperation among one another.³⁸

While the next section details the rise of investigative magistrates in the counterterror system, a brief definition of these particular judges will assist in expanding the nature of French organizational routines. Investigative magistrates control the activities of intelligence gatherers and law enforcement for the purpose of developing cases against prospective terrorists and uncovering terror plots. While this adds a highly preventative dimension to law enforcement, it also creates and sustains a very ad hoc system of cooperation between the intelligence and judicial branches that relies on trust built through personal relationships.³⁹ Adaptations to magistrates’ routines are made “on the ground” and “unregulated by a central authority.”⁴⁰

36 Foley, “Reforming Counterterrorism,” 451.

37 Foley, “Reforming Counterterrorism,” 443.

38 Foley, “Reforming Counterterrorism,” 471–473.

39 Foley, “Reforming Counterterrorism,” 446.

40 Foley, “Reforming Counterterrorism,” 471, 472.

Informal cooperation is efficient and adaptable but also has the negative side effect of disenfranchising agencies not in the cooperative.⁴¹ As magistrates favor particular agencies, as they favored the Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire after 1998, competing agencies in either intelligence or law enforcement potentially lose their influence within the security community.⁴² During this time, issues of information management and ambiguity on the overall responsibility of individual agencies created unhappy feelings among the collective security community.⁴³ Foley makes a very astute observation regarding the disconnection between institutional and organizational level oversight, when he notes

Relying on this informal judicial-intelligence cooperation, the French government did not undertake any top-down structural reorganization of its counterterrorist agencies, neither after its own bombings of 1995–1996 nor after the 9/11 attacks on America and subsequent Islamist terror attacks on Spain, Britain, and Algeria.⁴⁴

From this passage, Foley enumerates five opportunities for adaptation that were lost by the French system of counterterrorism. Considering the simultaneous evolution of the jihadist threat toward leaderless, decentralized attacks, this may have been a critical failure in an otherwise exemplary French system. Organizational routines in counterterrorism rooted potential changes to its methodology in the individual personalities of the investigative magistrates. In hindsight, it is wholly unreasonable to expect that those lower level operatives performing daily work in the intelligence-law enforcement-prosecution cycle would be capable of also managing the state level analysis and international diplomacy necessary for a whole-of-government response to a threat as dynamic as global jihad. Paradoxically, France's statist legacy has helped foment the consolidation of law enforcement and intelligence activities under the judiciary while simultaneously preventing the state from taking any interest in oversight to those centralized activities.⁴⁵

41 Foley, "Reforming Counterterrorism," 472–473.

42 Jeremy Shapiro and Bénédicte Suzan, "The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism," *Survival* 45, no. 1 (March 2003): 82, <https://doi.org/10.1093/survival/45.1.67>.

43 Foley, "Reforming Counterterrorism," 472.

44 Foley, "Reforming Counterterrorism," 460–461.

45 Foley, "Reforming Counterterrorism," 451.

A degree of centralized control at the organizational level may have served the French counterterror structure well in two ways. Primarily, it alleviates the counterproductive infighting between various intelligence and law enforcement agencies competing for relevance in the anarchy of the magistrate-led system. Second, a supra-agency coordinating body could spend time and effort analyzing threats and trends outside the immediate interest of France to understand the next turn in the road of jihadist behavior.

c. Four Modern Periods of French Counterterrorism

The primacy of investigative magistrates did not occur spontaneously with jihadist threats on French soil but evolved throughout the 1980s and 1990s to reflect a desire for increased security by the French public. France has an extensive history adapting to terrorism of all kinds over the centuries, and the latest wave of religious-inspired violence proves its continued resilience and adaptability. However, the magistrate system has faced criticism for its borderline illiberal methods and extensive authority in prosecuting potential threats.⁴⁶ Jeremy Shapiro and Bénédicte Suzan provide some context for how this system arose by categorizing France's experience with jihadism into four eras. Sanctuary, accommodation, suppression, and prevention chronologically classify the shifting French approach and provide a roadmap to the expectations and routines of French counterterrorist agencies⁴⁷

(1) Sanctuary

Prior to 1986, France maintained a compartmented viewpoint of how it should address threats from international terrorism. France considered it a foreign policy problem, vice a domestic issue that should involve law enforcement—even while France felt its effects on the homefront.⁴⁸ By this logic, the French political establishment decided to allow terrorist groups to live and operate in France with impunity as long as the state received no ill treatment from its malevolent visitors. This was a clear sign of weakness

⁴⁶ Marc Perelman, "How the French Fight Terror," January 19, 2006, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2006/01/19/how-the-french-fight-terror/>, 2.

⁴⁷ Shapiro and Suzan, "The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism," 69–84.

⁴⁸ Shapiro and Suzan, "The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism," 70.

from the French state, which ostensibly maintained secret relations with terror groups to manage the détente and proved an eventual lesson to the international community of the ineffectiveness of declaring neutrality with terrorists.⁴⁹ The policy was simultaneously an irritant to France’s Western brethren, who remained potential targets of the terrorists harbored in France.⁵⁰

(2) Accommodation

A series of terrorist attacks rocked Paris in 1986 and motivated a definitive pivot in France’s counterterrorist policy. Over the course of three waves of attacks from February to September of that year, the French public experienced hundreds of injuries and the death of 11 citizens at the hands of the Committee for Solidarity with Near Eastern Political Prisoners (CSPPA).⁵¹ This was a direct result of French foreign policy conflicting with state sponsors of terrorism in the Middle East in the early 1980s. Attacks by the CSPPA sought to drive France toward favorable policy changes with states such as Libya, Syria, and Iran.⁵² Since the French populace had tired of the “weak state” sanctuary practices in the homeland and would not support further negotiations within the sovereignty, government leaders pursued accommodation in their foreign policy approach to gain domestic peace.⁵³ The spree of violence in 1986 was sated by multiple adjustments to French affairs in Middle Eastern countries, and, as Michel Wieviorka reveals, when “faced with international terrorism, France, we might say, followed a policy of diplomatic activities that was guided by the will of terrorist states.”⁵⁴

49 Shapiro and Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism,” 70.

50 Shapiro and Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism,” 70.

51 Shapiro and Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism,” 71.

52 Shapiro and Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism,” 74.

53 Shapiro and Suzan, 73.

54 Michel Wieviorka, “France Faced with Terrorism,” *Terrorism* 14, no. 3 (January 1991): 165, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576109108435873>.

(3) Suppression

Fortunately, the French government did not rely solely on an offshore version of terrorist cooperation but also responded to CSPPA violence with the legislation of September 9, 1986. While foreign accommodation was the “quick fix” to violence in 1986, the September law firmly established long-term counterterrorism planning in the context of domestic security reforms. Among several changes to the security infrastructure, the law created new bodies within the interior and justice ministries specifically tailored to foster cooperation among domestic agencies.⁵⁵

However, most important was the creation of positions for seven investigating magistrates.⁵⁶ As previously mentioned, these positions facilitate the confluence of intelligence, law enforcement, and prosecutorial activities under localized direction. Their powers range across investigation, detainment, wiretapping, directing searches, and issuing subpoenas.⁵⁷ The investigative magistrates’ role and power derives from their authority to handle cases that fit the propriety definition of terrorism laid out in the law of 1986, “acts committed by individuals or groups that have as a goal to gravely trouble public order by intimidation or terror.”⁵⁸ Ideally, these new positions would take responsibility for “assembling a complete picture from the various different institutional sources, for assuring information flows between the various agencies [and] for providing coordinated direction to the intelligence and police services.”⁵⁹

The law of 1986 also filled the judicial void left by the abolition of the State Security Court system in 1981.⁶⁰ A leftover of the Algerian war for independence, the State Security Court was a system separate from the official French judiciary and prosecuted specifically Algerian offenses by a significantly more illiberal standard than that of public

55 Shapiro and Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism,” 76.

56 Dorle Hellmuth, “Countering Jihadi Terrorists and Radicals the French Way,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 12 (December 2015): 980, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2015.1076277>.

57 Hellmuth, “Countering Jihadi Terrorists,” 980.

58 Shapiro and Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism,” 77.

59 Shapiro and Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism,” 77.

60 Shapiro and Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism,” 77.

courts.⁶¹ While the removal of the State Security Court was a step in right direction in terms of equal rights, after 1981 there was simply no system in place to address the specifics of terrorist attackers. Despite the perception that investigative magistrates wield too much power in terrorist cases, they do operate in the same court system as the rest of the French judiciary and ultimately serve to present mature cases to other impartial judges in the French court.

(4) Prevention

Jihadist violence would not return to France until the mid-1990s with the rise of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) during the Algerian civil war. When the Algerian military blocked the Islamic Salvation Front, an Islamist political group, from taking power in 1992, Algeria descended into an atmosphere of violent militancy. The jihadi-inspired GIA posed a significant security threat to France because of its deadly tactics and expansionist rhetoric.⁶² As a result, during major operations in 1994 and 1995 France put into full practice the magisterial system of counterterrorism, which included the dismantling of the Chalabi network, a support group for anti-government forces in Algeria.⁶³ Although France suffered several devastating attacks in 1995 at the hands of the GIA, investigating magistrates were able to quickly piece together cases against terrorists using their in-depth “almost cultural understanding of the Islamist movement” to reduce the investigating time of potential cases and affect arrests quickly—key milestones in effective prevention.⁶⁴

Experience gained from the fight against GIA terrorism in 1995 led to the creation of even more preventative measures and additional breadth of influence for investigative magistrates. Identifying the importance of logistical support to the proverbial “bomb thrower,” French amendments passed in 1996 defined material support to terrorism itself a

61 Shapiro and Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism,” 77.

62 Shapiro and Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism,” 79.

63 Shapiro and Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism,” 80.

64 Shapiro and Suzan, “The French Experience of Counter-Terrorism,” 82.

terrorist act.⁶⁵ This gave the magistrates and their intelligence/law enforcement arms additional reach into French society.

French counterterrorist agencies made modest changes over the proceeding 15 years, as burgeoning technologies required the state to consider new information and cyber realms in its counterterrorist strategy.⁶⁶ However, despite the perception that everything was under control in France while the rest of the world reeled from attacks, a global undercurrent of extremism would soon reach French shores.

3. Game Changer—The First French Lone Wolf

In 2012, Mohamed Merah broke the record of a decades long security success story in France, ushering the arrival of an individualized version of jihad that eventually plunged the nation into a new era of identity politics and counterterrorist policy. The endgame mechanics of how Merah perpetrated the murders of seven people within a week resembled the violent tactics of many generations of terrorism, but the long pathway of his radicalization—answering why he engaged in such incomprehensible savagery—supports a definite pivot of jihadist terrorism toward decentralized Salafist-inspired violence.

There is consensus in terrorism scholarship that the vast majority of jihadists are not clinically unstable, as multiple studies have shown that mental illness is not a significant causation for violent extremist behavior.⁶⁷ To the contrary, they make calculated, and in their minds, logical conclusions that point to the use of violence. Merah was no exception. Although steeped in a culture of hate, intolerance, poverty, and crime, by all accounts Merah was a rational actor, described early on by social services as, “an intelligent child who had capacities to succeed.”⁶⁸

65 “Penal Code—Article 421-2-1,” Legifrance, accessed March 12, 2018, https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCodeArticle.do?sessionId=DE7D11F0F6211F1F76DB82D45421F83E.tplgfr38s_3?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006070719&idArticle=LEGIARTI000006418432&dateTexte=20180312&categorieLien=cid#LEGIARTI000006418432.

66 Hellmuth, “Countering Jihadi Terrorists,” 981–985.

67 Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2–3.

68 Virginie Andre and Shandon Harris-Hogan, “Mohamed Merah: From Petty Criminal to Neojihadist,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 14, no. 2 (June 2013): 309, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2013.792655>.

Merah was a troubled youth that found support for radicalization at every turn. He was essentially a child of the streets, growing up in a gypsy suburb of Toulouse, France.⁶⁹ His parents cast the mold, defaulting to abuse and neglect of Merah and his siblings within a household rife with anti-Semitic, anti-French, and violent rhetoric.⁷⁰ His parents divorced at an early age; his mother eventually remarried to an Islamist, while his father partook in drug dealing.⁷¹ Notably, his siblings played key roles in fostering and developing his radicalized mindset. His older brother, Abdelkader, and sister, Souad, were staunch Salafist supporters. In particular, Souad provided financial support to Merah's endeavors and celebrated her brother's eventual death with admiration.⁷²

At 19 years old, Merah began a 20 month prison sentence for petty crime and his transition from young thug life to jihadism began.⁷³ By the time of his release in 2009, Merah had communicated with family members about his duty to God and the Prophet Mohammed, and he showed open fascination with the idea of holy war.⁷⁴ Almost immediately upon his release, Merah began aggressive attempts to join militant groups or to put himself in a position to conduct jihad. He tried to find militants in Algeria, he searched for groups across the Middle East and finally smuggled himself into Afghanistan through Tajikistan in an effort to be captured by and join the Taliban.⁷⁵ Circumstances thwarted each attempt until Merah finally made a trip to Lahore, Pakistan where he found what might have been low-level associates to al-Qaeda.⁷⁶ With merely a few days instruction by a local radical in weapons handling, Merah returned to France with his own personalized agenda in mind.⁷⁷

69 Andre and Harris-Hogan, "Mohamed Merah," 308–309.

70 Burke, *The New Threat*, 186.

71 Andre and Harris-Hogan, "Mohamed Merah," 308, 311.

72 Burke, *The New Threat*, 193.

73 Andre and Harris-Hogan, "Mohamed Merah," 309.

74 Burke, *The New Threat*, 187.

75 Burke, *The New Threat*, 187.

76 Burke, *The New Threat*, 190.

77 Burke, *The New Threat*, 190.

France initially labeled Merah a “lone wolf” attacker. In part, French security services may have preferred this classification in defense of their failure to prevent the deaths caused by Merah—particularly the executions of a Jewish rabbi and his children a week after the initial murders—citing the elusiveness of such a threat.⁷⁸ However, as the next chapter explores in detail, there is debate over the idea of terrorists who are completely isolated from outside influence or support. Depending on one’s definition of a lone wolf, this is a legitimate debate. Given the circumstances regarding Merah’s pathway to violence, he certainly had a host of influence and support; however, as Merah told negotiators during his terminal showdown with police, “everything I did, I did of my own free will, without any influence by anyone who said to me one day ‘do this, do that.’ I did it all alone. I organized it all alone. No one was with me.”⁷⁹

Merah was his own advocate in every way, including terrorism’s necessary media campaign. He filmed each of his attacks from a first-person viewpoint and then edited the content to include narration and musical accompaniment before submitting the tapes to *Al-Jazeera*.⁸⁰ Merah hedged a reliance on mass media with extensive YouTube and twitter postings as well.⁸¹ His combination of violence and fledgling media mastery were a snapshot to what the ISIS would later codify in official organizational strategy as a way to mobilize transnational support and radical sentiment.⁸² Merah provided France with its first bitter taste of new terrorism.

4. The New French Experience

France experienced a major transition in its domestic security environment after 2015, and this resulted in equally radical changes to its homeland security ideology and counterterrorism strategy. Prior to the November 2015 attacks in Paris and the surrounding area, the French government seemed a model for Western homeland security structures.

78 Burke, *The New Threat*, 190.

79 Burke, *The New Threat*, 190.

80 Andre and Harris-Hogan, “Mohamed Merah,” 316.

81 Andre and Harris-Hogan, “Mohamed Merah,” 316.

82 Charlie Winter, *Media Jihad: The Islamic State’s Doctrine for Information Warfare* (London: King’s College London, 2017).

The French government regarded terrorist actions as an “expression of extremism,” vice an act of war.⁸³ France’s ideological response was contrary to the U.S. model—America was simultaneously waging a “Global War on Terror”—instead placing a primacy on human interaction, particularly human intelligence gathering.⁸⁴ The French system decried paramilitary operations, opting instead for infiltration tactics and a close relationship with local communities to keep pace with local sentiments.⁸⁵ Lower level operatives were highly trained in recognizing behavioral and cultural nuance within their assigned demographics, and international cooperation at the higher levels was routine.⁸⁶

After the “French 9/11” on November 13, 2015, both President Hollande and Interior Secretary Cazeneuve declared France “at war with terrorists.”⁸⁷ What was once regarded as a finesse-based counterterrorist strategy quickly turned into a heavy-handed operation. Racial profiling and unbounded home searches are now commonplace in France.⁸⁸ Military style pre-emption tactics are pervasive on the French homefront.⁸⁹ In experts’ views, the effect has been completely counterproductive. Lower class Muslim immigrants, who are the target of most police actions, have become embittered, and this has made integration of law enforcement or intelligence officers within those communities almost impossible.⁹⁰

In conjunction with a militarized homeland security strategy, French security agencies reevaluated their ability to “connect the dots” within a host of state-run intelligence organizations. Robin Simcox considers the multifaceted intelligence complex

83 Charles Rault, “The French Approach to Counterterrorism: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point,” *CTC Sentinel* 3, no. 1 (January 2010): 24.

84 Steven Erlanger, “The French Way of Fighting Homegrown Terrorism,” *New York Times*, March 30, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/01/sunday-review/the-french-way-of-fighting-homegrown-terrorism.html>.

85 Rault, “The French Approach,” 24.

86 Rault, “The French Approach,” 25.

87 Jeff Stein, “Why French Counterterrorism Efforts Are Too Much, Too Late,” *Newsweek*, July 15, 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/france-isis-terrorism-attacks-nice-bastille-day-truck-mohamed-lahouaiej-480963>.

88 Stein, “Why French Counterterrorism Efforts.”

89 Erlanger, “The French Way.”

90 Stein, “Why French Counterterrorism Efforts.”

part of the problem. Six different agencies report to different bosses across the scope of civilian, military, and executive branch leadership.⁹¹ As of 2016, a parliamentary commission called for consolidating efforts under one agency with widespread intelligence sharing the ultimate goal.⁹² Bureaucracy is not the only shortcoming with regard to French counterterrorism, however. Each of the intelligence services tends to specialize in exploiting human sources rather than more automated forms of information gathering and surveillance.⁹³ Without robust systematic methods of monitoring threat trends, France misses the opportunity to connect the dots once again.

The French judiciary continues to effectively centralize the French security structure under investigative magistrates. The magistrates enable much faster development of threat conditions and expedite the ruling over suspected terrorists, but their methods also increase the level of invasive state presence among the citizenry.⁹⁴ This system may realize the connection of “more dots,” but that benefit comes at the cost of incrementally reduced liberal democracy—the sort of checks and balances that are so far immutable in American society.⁹⁵

Unsurprisingly, France’s transition to a paramilitary counterterrorist strategy has not yielded positive results, as the spectacular attacks that have continued since 2015 illustrate. However, the unanticipated reemergence of violent Islamist extremism during an era of relative public-private cooperation remains unexplained. As Simcox states, “The liberal values of the republic and that of the reactionary Islamists living in France remain irreconcilable.”⁹⁶ What is the nature of the impasse? What forced the transition into a devolved relationship between immigrant Muslims and the French state? The answer to

91 Robin Simcox, “French Intelligence Reform,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 17, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/france/2016-07-17/french-intelligence-reform>.

92 Robin Simcox, “French Intelligence Reform,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 17, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/france/2016-07-17/french-intelligence-reform>.

93 Erlanger, “The French Way.”

94 Rault, “The French Approach,” 25.

95 Frank Foley, *Countering Terrorism in Britain and France: Institutions, Norms, and the Shadow of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 6.

96 Simcox, “French Intelligence Reform.”

these questions may provide valuable insights for French security institutions and Western democracies worldwide.

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

This thesis examines three general hypotheses. They are not specific explanations; rather, they help to frame new sets of questions that progressively guide the research design. First, the resurgence of violent Islamist activity in France may be the result of reaching a tipping point of socioeconomic grievance, cultural tensions, or both. Particularly due to France's colonial heritage in North Africa, any injustice easily reminds Muslims of subjugation and humiliation under those imperial activities. Such stratification still exists and is manifest in large, low-income settlements, or *banlieues*, of French Muslims of poor socioeconomic status. Cultural conflicts between the norms of French society and those from traditional Muslim origin may be the crux of the problem, particularly with respect to the unpredictable, resurgent nature of the threat. Culture is a social aspect that has very personal interpretations even within a relatively small, homogeneous community. Therefore, culturally motivated behavior can vary widely at an individual level, making recognition and response to changes in the threat environment a difficult proposition for state level agencies. Homegrown sentiment can subsequently find both agreement and support quickly and easily in the ether of social media, leading to a rapid radicalization in thought and compartmented indications of violent intentions.

Second, resistance of the greater Muslim community to communicate and integrate with French society on established Western terms may also contribute to the emergence of violent outbreaks. While many other immigrant populations have experienced some difficulty assimilating to a new part of the world, French Muslims seem to be struggling in particular. That struggle is exacerbated by increasingly skeptical Western communities that see the specter of violent jihad as an attack by Muslims on the Western way of life. Meanwhile, enclaves of marginalized Muslims act as echo chambers of radical sentiment against a culturally distinct Gallic population. Reducing "grievances, afflictions, and injustices" would aid in bringing legitimacy to the liberal paradigm of Western governments, thereby reducing some of the socioeconomic division and identity crises that

stem from “relative marginalization.”⁹⁷ However, continued resistance to embracing Western values helps maintain an ideological wall between cultures.

Third, not only does the lack of hierarchical structure to the new terrorism change the way counterterrorist agencies approach the problem, but it also eliminates the ability for the French state to engage politically or economically with known terrorist actors. The leaderless movement dictates that there is no opportunity for negotiation over grievances or indication of soured relations that might suggest a heightened threat level. Unlike the “disciplined” deals cut by French officials with Hezbollah in the 1980s to maintain peace, there is no bargaining table with regard to the new threat.⁹⁸

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

France is the subject of analysis, chosen from among other European countries, because of its large Muslim population, mature counterterror infrastructure, historically liberal democracy, and its puzzling phenomenon of a strong recurrent terrorist threat following a period of relative peace. In 1997, a string of violent attacks from the Armed Islamic Group during the mid-1990s ended, thus beginning a period of relative peace on the French homefront. While France still experienced periodic separatist violence, low-scale property damage was the leading result, and authorities recorded very few injuries.⁹⁹ Bloody attacks in Toulouse and Montauban in the spring of 2012 gave warning of the resurgence to come, as a dense crop of jihadi-inspired attacks killed and injured hundreds of people from late 2014 through 2017.

To test the veracity of my three hypotheses, the puzzle requires consideration of several items that potentially contributed to unbalancing the relative safety of the early 2000s. First, this project needed a definition of new terrorism for comparison with the threat in France that sprang up in 2012. Is France the target of such newly styled attacks and are democracies like France equipped to handle it? The evolution of France’s

⁹⁷ Paul Rogers, *Irregular War: ISIS and the New Threat from the Margins* (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2016).

⁹⁸ Stein, “Why French Counterterrorism Efforts,” 3.

⁹⁹ “France,” Global Terrorism Database, accessed February 27, 2018, <http://apps.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?search=france&sa.x=0&sa.y=0&sa=Search>.

counterterrorism policies and organizational routines was matched up against the nature of the newest wave of violence. This helped to determine if potentially underdeveloped counterterrorism activities permitted the problem to arise, and as a corollary, if any adaptations to the system could provide an effective solution to the phenomenon.

Second, the thesis needed to determine if there is resistance to integration for Muslims in France. Socioeconomic conditions and the specific grievances of the Muslim population during the peaceful interim period requires understanding. Cultural friction could very well be a two-way street, with Gallic French resisting the arrival of Muslims into communities and from Muslims themselves, who resist accepting Western ways and French social institutions. Is there an ideological wall separating the two camps, and if so, is there room for compatibility? This research broaches the literature regarding a clash of civilizations, historically met with political disapproval in much of Western scholarship. Therefore, a distinction between Islam and Islamism when making any qualitative determinations on assimilability is essential. Polling data and other empirical evidence from terror databases established local French sentiments. Background evidence includes details about how Muslims have fared in French society since the decolonization of Algeria when significant Muslim immigration first began. As Muslims have integrated into French society, it is critical to understand how they identify on both the communal and personal levels. How important is Islam in this identity as compared to other factors, such as ethnicity or nationality?

F. ROADMAP

The body of this research project breaks down into two substantive chapters. The first, Chapter II, focuses specifically on the characterization of a new terrorism and how democracies, such as France, might respond on an ideological level. Chapter II begins with a practical look at the debate over new terrorism. This chapter details a typographical analysis of the current theories, establishing the existing camps and supporting evidence for each theory. This analysis will attempt to give a collective reckoning of the motivations and behavior of the new threat. Three subsections of the chapter elaborate key academic opinions that best support a new terrorism theory, codified by leaderless jihad, a clash of

civilizations, and social media. When considered together, these component parts show an attempt by extreme Islamists to polarize the global population into equally antagonizing positions. Chapter II also includes a review of how democracies interact with terrorism, to include how they might unwittingly incite violence from Salafi Islamist hardliners.

As the second substantive chapter, Chapter III closely examines societal and institutional influences on France's Muslim population and their potential contribution to resurgent violence. Chapter III also examines the role of identity conflict in shaping the environment for jihadism. Additionally, it begins by focusing on state-society interaction in France. It describes church-state patterns that set the conditions for Muslim assimilation, highlighting the strong role of *laïcité*¹⁰⁰ in the French political debate. The research emphasizes how these structures interact with and affect the majority Muslim community in general and radicalized Islamists separately. Chapter III also supports the concept of an identity crisis occurring for Muslims in the French state. It uses an anthropological model to help frame the identity conflict between global jihadists and the rest of the world and then applies it to the existing context of France in the 21st century.

Finally, Chapter IV concludes the thesis. By juxtaposing this project's three major themes—the routines of French counterterrorism activities, the nature of the new threat in France, and the social context for Muslims in the French state—I draw recommendations for adjustment at both the state and agency levels, which require a greater understanding of perceptions among France's contesting interest groups. The chapter also includes my recommendations for further research focus on events in France after the 2012 and subsequent attacks, as well as continued evaluation of popular sentiment among European Muslim populations.

100 *Laïcité* translates from French as literally “secularism,” and it is used in France to describe its theory of separation between church and state.

II. NEW TERRORISM

On January 24, 1878, Vera Zasulich strode into the office of General Fyodor Tropov, Governor of St. Petersburg, and amid a room of petitioners fired a pistol point blank at the local executive.¹⁰¹ During her trial for the attempted assassination, Zasulich proclaimed herself to be “a terrorist, not a killer.”¹⁰² On a spring morning 135 years later, Michael Adebolajo ran down Lee Rigby in the streets of London with his car. Then after hacking at his limp body with a meat cleaver, he delivered a prepared speech in which he remarked, “The only reason we have killed this man today is because Muslims are dying daily by British soldiers.”¹⁰³ The Rigby killing occurred in the year following deadly attacks in Toulouse, France and only three days before the nonfatal stabbing of a French soldier in Paris.¹⁰⁴ These violent events were the prelude to a deluge of claimed religiously inspired violence that swept the French homeland after December 2014.¹⁰⁵ Counterterrorist agencies, once highly touted for their specialized ability to identify and prevent violent extremism, struggled to stay ahead of the next terrorist event. Even though there is more than a century separating the politically motivated violent acts of Zasulich and assailants such as Adebolajo, one can draw both parallels and differences about the events; however, should we consider present day attacks by violent Islamist extremists as occurring in a new age of terrorist activity?

Today’s scholars participate in a theoretical debate on the characterization of new terrorism. If there is a new terrorist threat, what are its defining features? This chapter argues that a new phenomenon is underway that combines factors from historical precedent with environmental adaptations in thought and method in an age of advancing technology

101 Barbara Alpern Engel and Clifford N. Rosenthal, eds., *Five Sisters: Women against the Tsar*, reprint (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013), 61, 82.

102 Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 34.

103 Burke, *The New Threat*, 158.

104 “Man Charged over Soldier Stabbing,” *BBC News*, May 31, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-22735883>.

105 “Timeline: Attacks in France,” *BBC News*, July 26, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33288542>, sec. Europe.

and globalization. The first section elaborates on three factors that distinguish the new terrorism phenomenon: leaderless jihad, conflict between civilizations, and social media. Religious ideology also plays a major role in affecting the portion of Muslim populations that are undecided about the use of political violence—a grouping the ISIS terms “the gray zone.”¹⁰⁶ The second section addresses the relationship of advanced democracies with a global jihadist threat to provide the theoretical background for how well France was postured in 2012 and beyond. Democracies like France have a stake in understanding and maintaining the gray zone; therefore, this chapter examines the interaction of democratic states with new terrorism based on their propensity to either foment or fight radical Islamist activity.

A. NEWER TERRORISM?

To capture all viewpoints of the conversation on “new terrorism” in a brief analytical review is an insurmountable task, as the expression produces a wide range of support from within the terrorism academy. Consensus is not complete on whether terrorism experts should use such a term as new terrorism, or if the phenomenon that it describes even exists. Scholars who discredit the notion of a new terrorist threat draw on multiple examples of past history wherein previous terrorist movements have exhibited much of the current day behavior, and they maintain that the violence of today is simply repackaged into different groups and different locations. For example, Martha Crenshaw posits, “The differences are of degree rather than kind,” yet she concedes that “differences among groups and differences in patterns of terrorism over time do exist... [and] are due to a changing environment”¹⁰⁷ While Crenshaw brings many descriptors of terrorism to light for analysis—from terrorist goals and methods to their organizational structure and reasons for radicalization—her conclusions seem steeped in a bias that the new terrorism theory

¹⁰⁶ Burke, *The New Threat*, 232.

¹⁰⁷ Martha Crenshaw, “The Debate over ‘New’ vs. ‘Old’ Terrorism” (presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, 2007), www.start.umd.edu/start/publications/New_vs_Old_Terrorism.pdf, 5, 31.

only serves political ends and that world leaders desire the term as a justification for radical and costly campaigns against what they consider a holistically different threat.¹⁰⁸

Brigitte Nacos echoes Crenshaw's sentiment, stating, "terrorism itself has not fundamentally changed with respect to objectives, methods, targets, propaganda."¹⁰⁹ Nacos also supports the notion that any new development in terrorism results from "a different environment than their predecessors."¹¹⁰ Overall, critics seem to maintain an inconsistent standpoint when invalidating new terrorism, as exemplified by Nacos's offhand use of "contemporary terrorism" to describe changes in terrorist activities in the post-Cold War era.¹¹¹

Proponents of the new terrorism theory seem to advocate across three major school of thought. Each grouping addresses a different factor in the rise of global jihadists. The first and rather universal group emphasizes a decentralized and transnational pool of terrorist actors who do not rely on a hierarchical structure for command and control. This concept has taken the form of more familiar terms like "lone wolves," "wolf packs," or simply "leaderless jihad." A second school of thought is the idea of the East and West in a clash of civilizations. This theme embodies the role of ideology and—in the specific case of jihadists—religion in dictating the ways, means and ends of terror attacks. Finally, the third prevailing thought, the use of information technology, specifically the Internet and social media, presents a resourceful new mode of support to the current global Islamist groups. A review of jihadist leaders' dramatic desire for territory as an indicator of what may be in the future for religiously inspired terrorism is also included in support of the idea that terrorism is continually evolving.

108 Martha Crenshaw, "The Debate Over 'Old' vs 'New' Terrorism," in *Jihadist Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge: European and American Experiences*, ed. Rik Coolsaet (New York: Routledge, 2011), 66.

109 Brigitte L. Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 16.

110 Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism*, 16.

111 Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism*, 16.

1. Leaderless Jihad

In recent years, the Western world has been regularly shocked by the terror of what seem like wanton strikes by individuals or small groups with little connection to anything outside of their own self-professed mission of killing for the honor of Allah. The train bombing in Madrid in 2004, followed by the 7/7 attacks in London the following year, began a string of “major Islamic extremist strikes in Western Europe.”¹¹² The brutal murders by Mohamed Merah, the attacks on Charlie Hebdo that claimed the lives of 13 Frenchmen, and more recently, numerous vehicle-borne slaughters of hapless civilians seem initially to have no positive connection to a higher order with a clear political end state.¹¹³

The scholarship on leaderless jihad covers a broad range of changes pursuant to the threat, but a global “movement of Islamic militancy,” which has no precedent “anything like the present scale,” underpins the differences.¹¹⁴ Jason Burke details the rise and role of al Qaeda and the ISIS in shaping the current terror landscape, but he considers “the most important developments in Islamic militancy over the last three decades...[the] emergence, consolidation, and expansion of what can be called the *movement* of Islamic militancy emphasis added].”¹¹⁵ According to Burke, this movement is buried in a large segment of the Muslim population that “speaks the language,” even if they do not immediately take part in violence.¹¹⁶ Having interviewed extremists from across the world, Burke found that despite the wide variation in location and ethnic culture, they “all use the same vocabulary” in describing their “complaints, justifications and invocations.”¹¹⁷ This forms what he calls the “lingua franca of Islamic extremism.”¹¹⁸ Burke further states that a common language is foundational to describing a community, thereby supporting the notion that there is a

112 Burke, *The New Threat*, 164.

113 Burke, *The New Threat*, 240.

114 Burke, *The New Threat*, 208.

115 Burke, *The New Threat*, 208.

116 Burke, *The New Threat*, 208.

117 Burke, *The New Threat*, 208.

118 Burke, *The New Threat*, 206.

global community for Islamist extremism.¹¹⁹ This is a fundamental concept for leaderless jihad. As more scholars assert, the new nature of Islamist terrorism is its ability to operate with vast decentralization and with transnational influence. However, there must be some connective tissue to give a global movement cohesiveness; otherwise, it would profoundly and continually morph in the hands of its disparate agents. The common language of Islamist extremism provides terrorists a connection to something greater than themselves and anchors the movement despite its global reach.

The large segment of the population to which Burke alludes is more specifically described by Paul Rogers as the “majority margins.”¹²⁰ Rogers eliminates the top and bottom fifths of the socioeconomic spectrum from consideration, as these are respectively considered elites with no desire for political upheaval and the poorest of the poor who are concerned merely with survival. This leaves 60 percent of the Muslim population writ large that can fall victim to what enables the “common language” as Burke describes. Rogers terms the phenomenon “relative marginalization,” dissatisfaction with conditions when compared to expectations.¹²¹ He believes that revolts from these margins will become the new norm and that terror groups like ISIS are only a manifestation of this larger problem and not a phenomenon unto itself.¹²² By this line of thinking, Rogers disregards Islam as a fundamental issue and believes we are moving toward an age of insurgencies, vice a clash of civilizations between East and West.¹²³ While ideology and cultural identity may play a part in codifying violent resistance, “movements will develop that are essentially anti-elite in nature and [thus] draw their support from people on the margins.”¹²⁴ In this way, Rogers does not completely dismiss the role of ideology, but he asserts that over emphasizing a religious basis “ignores political, social and economic trends.”¹²⁵

119 Burke, *The New Threat*, 205.

120 Rogers, *Irregular War*, 21.

121 Rogers, *The New Threat*, 5.

122 Rogers, *The New Threat*, 5.

123 Rogers, *The New Threat*, 4–5, 9.

124 Rogers, *The New Threat*, 9.

125 Rogers, *The New Threat*, 10.

Rogers's emphasis on socioeconomic marginalization as a source for Islamic militancy is not mutually exclusive with an ideologically based motivation. In fact, these two issues can be very mutually supportive of each other in the hands of skilled ideologues. Both al Qaeda and ISIS have used messages that combine social repression and religious duty to gain support from the margins. The careful combination of such symbiotic messaging produces a widely based propaganda with potential appeal to a large global audience at much deeper levels than if recruiting on any one issue alone.

Keystone ideologues have messaged "leaderless jihad" for decades, so it should come as no surprise to astute terrorism scholars that a global jihadist threat should emerge. Osama Bin Laden understood the multifaceted aspect of messaging, and he used this knowledge to his advantage in garnering support for a fight against the "far enemy."¹²⁶ Although a pioneer in the use of fledgling mobile video technology, Bin Laden quickly learned the nuance and importance of his outward imaging. The operational adaptation toward a leaderless movement is apparent in his short, colloquial so-called "fatwa" released in 1998. Bin Laden called for the "killing [of] Americans and their families—civilians and military—[as] an individual duty for every Muslim who can carry it out in any country where it proves possible."¹²⁷ At that time, a global leaderless movement had not yet manifested, but Bin Laden set an expectation that progressed during subsequent waves of jihadism and that the movement would use the information revolution to its advantage. Bin Laden's second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, joined him in a call for decentralized violence. In 2001, al-Zawahiri made the following proclamation in "Knights under the Prophet's Banner":

It is always possible to track an American or a Jew, to kill him with a bullet or a knife, a simple explosive device, or a blow with an iron rod. Setting fire to their property is not difficult. With the means available, small groups can spread terror among Americans and Jews.

126 Omar Saghi, "Osama Bin Laden, The Iconic Orator," in *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, ed. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, trans. Pascale Ghazaleh (Cambridge, London: Belknap Press, 2010), 29.

127 Osama Bin Laden, "World Islamic Front Statement Urging Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders," in *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, ed. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, trans. Pascale Ghazaleh (London: Belknap Press, 2010), 55.

The Islamic movement in general and the jihad movement in particular must lead the battle to raise the community's awareness.¹²⁸

It is apparent that by the early 2000s, leading jihadist ideologues set the precedent that they not only authorized but also expected violence in the name of the Islamic community.

A focus on subordinate leadership and autonomy has sustained the recurrent wave of violence in France. With the exception of the November 2015 Paris spectacular, individuals using low-tech violence, such as stabbing or vehicle ramming, have conducted most jihadist attacks. It is apparent there has been an adaptation since the days of well-structured GIA or Hezbollah attacks.

Scholars cite changes beyond the European region that emphasize the adaptive nature of the threat. In describing the “New Jihad” in Saudi Arabia, Sherifa Zuhur makes the claim that there are strategic differences involved.¹²⁹ Unlike their precursors, current terror groups can respond quickly to antiterror measures and can sustain significant loss of leadership while remaining viable—even deadly. Bruce Hoffman and Fernando Reinares support this claim in their own description of contemporary al Qaeda networks. They assert that by empowering subgroups and maintaining consistent ideology in its public narrative, al-Qaeda ensures its adaptability in unpredictable forms.¹³⁰ These new tactics and structures help define the decentralized and transnational nature of the new threat.

Decentralization of operations does not necessarily mean that new terrorism lacks personal interaction or a framework of guiding principles. At first glance, networks and social relations may seem contradictory to a decentralizing definition of leaderless jihad; however, leading terrorism expert Boaz Ganor advocates there is a continuum for

128 Ayman al-Zawahiri, “Knights under the Prophet’s Banner (Excerpts),” in *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, ed. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, trans. Pascale Ghazaleh (London: Belknap Press, 2010), 198.

129 Thomas M. Pick, Anne Speckhard, and Beatrice Jacuch, eds., *Home-Grown Terrorism: Understanding and Addressing the Root Causes of Radicalisation among Groups with an Immigrant Heritage in Europe*, vol. 60, series E (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2009), 81.

130 Bruce Hoffman and Fernando Reinares, eds., “Conclusion,” in *The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat: From 9/11 to Osama Bin Laden’s Death*, reprint (New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2016), 635.

organized network involvement and lone wolf attacks, which he describes at three levels.¹³¹ At the lowest level, individuals take their own initiative and have no operational ties to terror groups but still receive inspiration from outside sources. In the middle are small, intensely loyal social groups that often gradually increase and reinforce the internal level of radicalization to their cause and have sporadic ties to more organized terrorist hierarchies. At the highest level, hierarchal terror organizations are involved in all stages of planning, funding, and execution. By this description, social groups and networks are actually a strong and integral part of the leaderless jihad movement.

2. Clash of Civilizations

The topic of East versus West is prevalent in discussions of jihadists, and it has significant bearing on defining new terrorism. As previously mentioned, Paul Rogers sees a major cultural or religious contest as a subordinate factor in defining the problem, but he does not speak for all major scholars on this topic. As one of the preeminent experts in the field of terrorism, Marc Sageman places heavy emphasis on what he terms the “moral outrage” of the Islamic community.¹³² This sentiment is the result of encroachment on Islamic lands and Muslim beliefs by both foreign “far” enemies and domestic “near” enemies. He also describes collateral damage from Western attacks in Muslim lands as a driving factor to this outrage. Sageman places specific emphasis on how the Muslim community rationalizes the reasons for that outrage and views the problem as nothing short of a “war on Islam” by the outside world.¹³³ Aggrieved Muslims then find mobility in networks with extreme loyalty to each other and to their cause.

Some scholars consider the restricted upward mobility and social integration of *second-generation* Muslim immigrants to Europe as driving factors behind the origins of new terrorism. For instance, Robert Leiken cites this demographic as experiencing an

131 Boaz Ganor et al., “Lone Wolf: Passing Fad or Terror Threat of the Future?” (Policy Watch 2842) (presented at the Washington, Institute for Near East Policy, Washington, DC, August 7, 2017), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/lone-wolf-passing-fad-or-terror-threat-of-the-future>.

132 Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 72.

133 Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 75.

identity crisis resulting from an inability to resolve their modern surroundings with the traditional nature of their Muslim faith.¹³⁴ Both perceived and actual deprivation of the Muslim diaspora community helps reinforce the idea of a clash of civilizations. Extremist groups, like ISIS and al Qaeda, exploit the “loss of meaning and life purpose” experienced by second-generation Muslim immigrants in Western society as an in-road to radicalize potential recruits into their organizations.¹³⁵ Second-generation Muslim youth look for belonging in the traditions of their parents and the culture of Western society, yet they fit into neither.¹³⁶ The loss of identity that these individuals experience is essentially an internal clash of civilizations. Without the existence of a palpable conflict between Eastern and Western ways of life and of differing social norms and values, it is unlikely that such internal conflict would exist and correspondingly manifest in radicalization toward extremist tendencies. Describing a Western perspective, Jason Burke maintains that jihadist terrorist attacks’ most damaging effects are in the deterioration of relations between East and West on at both the global and local levels.¹³⁷ Such distrust between cultures continues to drive the perception of a clash of civilizations.

3. Social Media

Many terrorism scholars find agreement in the significant role social media has played in transforming terrorist activities. In describing the impact of the Internet on human relations, Sageman finds that “the interactivity is revolutionary.”¹³⁸ Web users are able to “collapse time and eliminate space” in the search for communities that share their viewpoints.¹³⁹ This provides an important observation about potentially radicalizing Islamists: they come to the realm of social media with pre-existing notions of grievance or

134 Robert Leiken, *Europe’s Angry Muslims: The Revolt of The Second Generation*, 1st ed. (Oxford England ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

135 Sarah Lyons-Padilla et al., “Belonging Nowhere: Marginalization and Radicalization Risk among Muslim Immigrants,” *Behavioral Science and Policy* 1, no. 2 (December 2015): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bsp.2015.0019>.

136 Lyons-Padilla et al., “Belonging Nowhere,” 5.

137 Burke, *The New Threat*, 231.

138 Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 114.

139 Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 115.

ideology. Because “the intensity of feelings developed online rival those developed offline,” bonds form very quickly.¹⁴⁰ As Matthew Levitt remarked, from “flash to bang” can be days or even hours now.¹⁴¹

The impact of social media is not limited to the methods of radicalization and recruitment, but it is also essential to an adaptation of new terrorist strategy. According to Leiken, the projection of extreme violence via a strong media message overcomes the need for complicated spectacles, as al Qaeda purposed in the 9/11 attacks.¹⁴² Similarly, Hoffman agrees that the “innovative use of social media has transformed the threat.”¹⁴³ In particular, he points to Ganor’s organizational continuum of lone wolf terrorists as receiving intelligence and targets from organized groups via these methods, which the terrorists leverage to conduct attacks at their discretion in a decentralized, leaderless manner.¹⁴⁴

The ISIS has relied extensively on social media to advertise its message, quickly becoming an expert in adaptive methods of using the Internet toward its cause. ISIS deemed this new tool was deemed so powerful, they released *Media Operative, You are a Mujahid, Too* in 2015, which essentially directed the efforts of Muslims everywhere to engage in what Charlie Winter characterized as “media jihad.”¹⁴⁵ The manual describes ideological, theological, and emotional bases for connecting with other jihadists and the best ways to elicit a supportive response on those grounds.¹⁴⁶ Notably, this was the first time a major globally recognized jihadist terror group advertised full inclusion and status to individuals conducting media operations from the comfort of their own homes—recognition rivaling even the work of ISIS front line members. The ISIS bestowed upon at-home jihadists the honor and privilege that in previous generations only hardened mujahedeen received. Such

140 Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 114–115.

141 Ganor et al., “Lone Wolf.”

142 Leiken, *Europe’s Angry Muslims*, 2011.

143 Ganor et al., “Lone Wolf.”

144 Ganor et al., “Lone Wolf.”

145 Winter, “Media Jihad,” 8.

146 Winter, “Media Jihad,” 10–12.

status and participation provides strong motivation for socially disaffected sideliners to enter the arena of media jihad and increase the volume in radical social media echo chambers.

4. The Gray Zone

In any polarizing debate, there is middle ground occupied by those that have sympathies with both sides. In the case of violent Islamist extremists, the debate is about the influence of one culture over another, specifically the subjugation of true Muslim believers by apostate governments and crusading Western militaries. On one side are the secular governments aligned with the United States and its allies, attempting to promote democratic institutions and liberal Western values. On the other side are the fundamental Islamist members of the Muslim population who believe living by the revealed law of Allah is the only permissible method of governance and way of life. As represented by Rogers's majority margins, the middle ground represents a sizable population that may be undecided on which side to choose.

In many ways, the goal of new terrorism is to motivate those in the gray zone into action. For example, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was explicit in his desire to force the hand of the "slumbering Sunnis."¹⁴⁷ Al-Zarqawi designed extremely violent attacks against Shia Muslims to elicit an equally extreme reaction from the Shia population—most specifically the Iraqi police and defense forces.¹⁴⁸ He expected Sunni Muslims on the proverbial sidelines would spring into action in response to a repressive and violent Shia crackdown, thereby filling the ranks of his al-Qaeda affiliate and fulfilling their duty to conduct jihad.

ISIS continued in this modus operandi, but it sent the violently divisive message on an international scale via disciplined and targeted media operations. Jason Burke identifies "the new threat" as an attack on the gray zone, primarily by ISIS, but also subsequently by a geographically disassociated global community grown via the ISIS Internet messaging

147 Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, "Letter to Bin Laden and Zawahiri (Excerpts)," in *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, ed. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, trans. Pascale Ghazaleh (London: Belknap Press, 2010), 262.

148 al-Zarqawi, "Letter to Bin Laden," 263.

agenda.¹⁴⁹ Burke mentions righteousness of the jihadist cause, legitimate organizational strategy, and the abilities of leadership as three areas for deliberation within the gray zone that, if assuaged, may sway undecided Muslims to support the cause of Islamist jihad further.¹⁵⁰ These points will likely be the focus of effort in future jihadist information campaigns and should factor into the counterterrorist programs of target states.

5. 21st Century Terrorism

The argument of whether new terrorism exists eventually comes down to semantics. Presumably, there will be no major transformation in human nature affecting millennia-old social predispositions; therefore, any argument for a new terrorist threat must predicate on differences in the ways, means, and ends of violent extremism. If substantial changes to the human mindset arise from significant changes to the human environment, then a new paradigm forms that stirs new motivations, new methods, and new sustaining factors.

a. Territory

A focus on the importance of territory by the ISIS may become a new environmental change of interest to terrorism scholars. The quest for territory has ancient roots in the Islamic culture, but the basal movements that started in the 1980s under Abdallah Azzam to “liberate territory” from imperialist crusaders began a progression of jihadist motives. While not an advocate of leaderless resistance, Azzam was the first to shift the purview of jihad from regional to global.¹⁵¹ He released the *Defense of Muslim Territories* and called on all Muslims to participate in the fight for Afghanistan as a matter of *fard ‘ayn*, or individual obligation.¹⁵² However, his fatwa does not direct jihadists to advance the fight into surrounding states, declaring the conflict a “defensive jihad” and meant only to eliminate unbelievers from Muslim lands.

149 Burke, *The New Threat*, 233, 240–243.

150 Burke, *The New Threat*, 232.

151 Thomas Hegghammer, “Abdallah Azam, The Imam of Jihad,” in *Al Qaeda in Its Own Words*, ed. Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, trans. Pascale Ghazaleh (London: Belknap Press, 2010), 97. 81–101.

152 Hegghammer, “Abdallah Azam,” 92.

In the early 2000s, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi began work not only to eliminate the U.S. coalition from Iraq but also to begin modest state building as well. Al-Zarqawi's focus was on lands that would most easily concede to his ultraviolent brand of jihad, but subsequent leaders of his loosely affiliated al Qaeda hierarchy in Iraq had more ambitious goals in mind. Clearly, dominating territory is not a new desire of Islamist extremists, but the destruction of internationally recognized borders—as witnessed between Iraq and Syria under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi—is dramatically new.¹⁵³ Al-Baghdadi ordered the bulldozing of border signposts in a choreographed video production that followed his promise to destroy all countries' borders.¹⁵⁴ Controlling land lends an air of legitimacy to any ruling regime and—fundamental Islamist theology aside—was likely a major strategic center of gravity for the growing ISIS movement.

Ironically, the value of sovereign territory extends to the leaderless movement as well. If a call for dispersed, decentralized action comes simply from another angry Muslim in front of his or her computer, the value of the message grows exponentially weaker. However, if that message comes from a declared caliph in a land ruled by pure sharia and won via violent seizure from perceived apostates, it sends the message that the campaign is alive and successful and that others who are faithful can do it too.

b. In the Line of Revolutions

The terrorism academy should reform the context in which it considers terrorism to allow a perspective that today's terrorism might be new. The idea of changes in terrorism is not unlike considering changes that have occurred during civilizational revolutions throughout history as new. The multiple industrial revolutions in the United States during the 19th century served to increase productivity and efficiency within certain market sectors, which gave rise to drastic, periodic changes in industry.¹⁵⁵ For example, revolutionary transportation systems still moved things from A to B as industry developed;

¹⁵³ Burke, *The New Threat*, 91.

¹⁵⁴ Burke, *The New Threat*, 91.

¹⁵⁵ Thomas K. McCraw, *Creating Modern Capitalism: How Entrepreneurs, Companies, and Countries Triumphed in Three Industrial Revolutions*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 322.

they just did so faster and farther because of innovations like rail and air travel. Such is the case with Islamist militancy in the 21st century. The technology and information revolutions have connected people—namely Muslims in this case—on a much broader scope and scale. Grievances and ideologies also find connections throughout a global community that is significantly more susceptible to information bias and the echo chambers of social media.

The effect is a decentralized, marginalized, low-tech movement mobilized by religious ideology that can induce rapid and intensely negative effects on the relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim communities worldwide. In this regard, all scholars interested in developing an understanding of terrorism should continually maintain the mindset that it is new, lest they be found addressing yesterday's threat, vice tomorrow's.

B. WHAT SHOULD A DEMOCRACY TO DO?

The gray zone is of vital interest to democracies because swaying support from this sector of the population can often make the difference in successful antiterrorist campaigns. How do democratic states interact with a gray zone population, specifically Muslims, to gain this sort of support? This section addresses the potential shortcomings of democracies in the counterterror environment and shows that their institutions can be strong adversaries to extremism, given a moderated approach.

1. Lessons from al Qaeda

In studying the relationship between democracies and terrorist groups, Michael Freeman scrutinizes Western counterterrorist policy and identifies key areas for democratic states to consider when developing policy with Muslim populations. Freeman finds four influential factors that generate support for al Qaeda—a “global Salafi jihadist” group—to determine the impact that the spread of democracy might have on diminishing such support.¹⁵⁶ Freeman cites military and cultural identity threats from the West as immediate grievances of the Muslim community, while economic and political failures within their

¹⁵⁶ Michael Freeman, “Democracy, Al Qaeda, and the Causes of Terrorism: A Strategic Analysis of U.S. Policy,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 1 (January 2008): 42–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100701759996>.

domestic societies represent enabling grievances.¹⁵⁷ France has profound experiences in two of these areas that shape the environment for a global jihadist movement (Chapter III specifically analyzes identity threats and political failures in the French state).

The result of Freeman's investigation reveals that promoting democracy, in the context of Washington Consensus¹⁵⁸ reforms, is a poor agent of change and likely to be counterproductive.¹⁵⁹ Freeman recommends that Western states consider addressing immediate grievances directly, reducing or withdrawing military presence in contested regions or working to legitimize local political regimes through increased justice and reduced corruption, for example.¹⁶⁰ The idea that liberalizing fundamentals find resistance in Muslim countries should make a profound translation to existing democracies currently experiencing problems with new terrorism. Muslim apprehensions about the suitability of Western systems must prompt countries like France to examine their social program and gain a better understand how the Muslim community perceives its place in Westernized society.

Freeman concludes with the unfortunate hypothesis that a greater number of democracies may actually lead to an increase in terrorist activity. Freeman suspects that democracies might more easily experience coercion by terrorists, might provide more permissive operating environments, and might be less effective at counterterrorism because of a willingness to maintain liberal norms and values.¹⁶¹ Overall, Freeman's analysis does well to associate immediate and enabling Muslim grievances with a greater appeal for

157 Freeman, "Democracy," 43.

158 The Washington Consensus refers to a set of broad free market economic ideas, supported by prominent economists and international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Union, and the United States. As set of 10 liberalizing fundamentals, it was designed in 1989 to assist developing countries; however, it has come under criticism for failing to meet development and reform goals—particularly in the former Soviet Union.

Tejvan Pettinger, "Washington Consensus—Definition and Criticism—Economics Help," *Economics Help* (blog), April 25, 2017, <https://www.economicshelp.org/blog/7387/economics/washington-consensus-definition-and-criticism/>.

159 Freeman, "Democracy," 53.

160 Freeman, "Democracy," 53.

161 Freeman, "Democracy," 53.

global Salafi jihadist ideology, thus driving an increased interest in al-Qaeda; however, Freeman's suggestion that democracies may invite terrorism has a sound counter argument.

2. Target Democracy: Hard or Soft

Max Abrahms finds many scholars of counterterror strategy advocating a theory that brutality pays in campaigns against terrorists.¹⁶² Such a mindset would seem to ensure success for authoritarian regimes unlikely to experience any blowback from heavy-handed counterterrorist tactics and leave democracies wanting a viable way to address their threats. Robert Pape and Walter Laqueur agree that democracies are too easily the subjects of coercion and make concessions when pressured by terrorists.¹⁶³ Abrahms takes issue with these assertions, and through empirical analysis, he finds that "liberal countries are comparatively resistant to coercion—and hence make for inferior targets—because they are superior counterterrorists."¹⁶⁴ He makes this claim by revealing that suspected liabilities are actually assets in the counterterrorist battle.¹⁶⁵

Through a commitment to civil liberties during its counterterrorist response, explains Abrahms, the liberal state avoids making drastic repressive overreactions that characterize the reactions of more illiberal countries.¹⁶⁶ In so doing, the liberal state preserves support from three key demographics: domestic publics, the international community, and moderates.¹⁶⁷ Abrahms asserts that continuity in public and international support allows liberal regimes to execute long-term integrated plans motivated by minimizing cost in money, effort, and / or lives.¹⁶⁸ However, the preservation of support from the moderate factions of aggressor populations is most crucial. Moderates represent the gray zone of opposing sides following a terrorist attack. Overreaction to terrorist attacks

162 Max Abrahms, "Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists," *Security Studies* 16, no. 2 (June 2007): 228, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410701399424>.

163 Abrahms, "Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists," 228.

164 Abrahms, "Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists," 226.

165 Abrahms, "Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists," 242.

166 Abrahms, "Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists," 242.

167 Abrahms, "Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists," 242.

168 Abrahms, "Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists," 223, 249.

using repressive measures serves to drive the moderates into the arms of welcoming extremists.¹⁶⁹ When liberal states use a metered approach to counterterror tactics, they preserve the gray zone and likewise preserve a key asset in eliminating extremist ideology.¹⁷⁰

C. CONCLUSION

The characterization of new terrorism can be debated, most effectively over the topics of its decentralized, transnational nature, its increasingly complex and effective use of social media, and its religious-based ideological motivations of a clash between civilizations. Pragmatically, a concerted debate over the label new or old is largely irrelevant, so long as the account of presently occurring terrorist trends is accurate. A more important conflict to recognize is the battle over margin populations fitting into the category of so called gray zone demographics and focus counterterrorism efforts on winning that ideological contest. Winning the sentiment of the gray zone should be a principal goal of liberal democratic states; however, democratic values may prove to be an impediment to progress in the short term. Muslim populations have grievances that must be addressed using local rules, or else the state risks alienating the people by imposing incompatible cultural changes. Also of primary importance is the role of liberal states in maintaining measured counterterrorist policies, so that key demographics supporting the counterterrorist effort remain willingly aligned with target states in the long term.

Vera Zasulich's attack in 1878 was a reaction to a social situation that had become intolerable. The mechanics of her violent behavior were not unlike attacks seen in France and across the West in the last six years, yet much is also different. Her attack was borne out of years of observing resident class struggle and was ignited by the insufferable actions of the local governor. The Russian grievances were transparent, and Zasulich's eventual targeting was straightforward. Today, grievances, opposing groups, and terror targets are not so clear. The terrorism sweeping through France and the rest of the world has evolved

169 David A. Lake, "Rational Extremism: Understanding Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century," *Dialogue IO* 1, no. 1 (2002): 16, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S777777770200002X>.

170 Abrahms, "Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists," 243.

to its present and most dangerous form as global Islamist jihad. It is a leaderless, low-tech movement from the margins seeking to eliminate the gray zone—a significant group of undecided and impressionable observers—found in the global Muslim community. This characterization of the new threat rightly remains general in nature. The degree of leadership involved, the type and complexity of terror methods terrorists use, and even the defining limits of the gray zone and target populations are open to individual interpretation, yet also under an umbrella of religious ideology. The number of violent permutations possible within such an array of variables is endless and therefore presents a wholly different and wicked problem.

Terrorist attacks erupting in France after 2012 are part of a new age of terrorism. As the theoretical context describes in this chapter, religiously inspired global jihadists are operating in a new environment and using new tactics and techniques. More troubling, they are operating under a unique premise for what constitutes achievement of their political goals. In the Western sense of the term, political goals are no longer the desired end state. The next chapter explores the premise of their quasipolitical goals as a part in the broader discussion of Muslims' place in the society-state construct of France.

III. A TALE OF THREE CITIZENS

France is the playing field in a three-sided contest between groups vying for survival of their identity. Many immigrant Muslims wish to retain the religious heritage and lifestyle of their home countries, while the broader French population, backed by its government, desires to keep its own historical cultural traditions, characterized by secularization. These two groups have faced pressure to encourage greater assimilation of the Muslim population in French communities, but there are significant barriers to making this a reality. Most significant of these factors is the unique church-state relationship codified under France's secularization law, *laïcité*. The ensuing social tension creates opportunity for a third group, violent Islamists, to insert an extreme brand of religious ideology into an otherwise civil, albeit protracted, political debate between the French political establishment and immigrant French Muslims. These extremists carry the message of violent Salafism and mandate a completely different set of goals than their moderate coreligionists.

Ingroup-outgroup affiliation has strong implications among these three actors by defining the actual and perceived narratives used by each group to vilify those with contesting viewpoints and defend their own positions. Conflating Salafi and moderate French Muslim political goals in the minds of nationalistic observers hardens non-Muslim sentiment against any concessions to Muslim assimilation. The resulting widespread rejection of Muslim political demands then becomes fertilizer for radical Salafi ideology to preach a problem-solution narrative pitting terrorism against the Western world.

This chapter develops three megathemes supporting a rise of new terrorism in France. It shows that France's Westernized, yet hypersecularized state structure, the difficulty of French Muslims in achieving political goals, and an exceptional level of assimilationist behavior by French Muslims have both fomented an identity crisis and made France a likely target for global jihadis. Since these three themes militate against Islamist goals, Islamist narratives readily use them as justification for violence.

Five sections trace the origins and manifestation of the weakened social conditions in France. The first section begins by exploring the nature of the Muslim identity in France and its likelihood to achieve communal solidarity. The second section details three entities that historically vie to define and harness that identity. The third section presents the institutional church-state patterns within France, beginning with a description of the challenging framework that the Muslim community must leverage for political engagement and continues by tracing a historical review of the road to laïcité. The fourth section enumerates three main French Muslim political goals that are at the center of heated political debate, and then it contrasts the goals and ideology of radical Islamists. The fifth and final section develops the interlocking narratives between identity groups and how France might present an exceptional environment for increased jihadist terrorism.

A. FOUNDATIONS OF IDENTITY CONFLICT

How Muslims view themselves and their association within a community of coreligionists is an important keystone in the present study of resurgent jihadist attacks, as it helps reveal how members of the Muslim community think and make decisions on a fundamental level. While the everyday Muslim citizen in France and radicalized jihadists shall not be considered interchangeable terms in this thesis, the groups are connected—even amid differing theology—by religion. Therefore, well-crafted narratives develop fast in-roads that can draw individuals from one group identity to the other. It should not be surprising that religion is a fundamental factor in creating personal or communal identity. Not limited to Islam, religion “galvanizes and inspires” because it contains a “coherent set of rituals, behaviors and beliefs,” key ingredients to a ready-made identity.¹⁷¹ These observations are worthy of consideration not only regarding intrafaith relationships but also in relation to how successfully the Muslim community has engaged with the French government.

The majority of Muslims in France hail from the Maghreb, the northwest African countries of Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria and a smaller percentage claiming Arab

¹⁷¹ Anna Simons, “Making Enemies, Part Two,” *The American Interest* II, no. 1 (September 2006): 40.

origins in Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Jordan.¹⁷² The preponderance of Africans is not surprising given the close geographic proximity to France and its history of Algerian and Tunisian colonialism. More revealing, however, is the lack of subscription to the idea of the Islamic *umma*, a concept that makes no provision for divides under the title of Muslim once in the Islamic community.¹⁷³

Oliver Roy studied distinctions in French Muslim groups in the early 1990s, a period following extensive political maneuvering by Muslim interest groups and rising tensions that preceded GIA terrorist attacks. He states that Islam did not transcend “ethnic, linguistic, [or] national divisions” in French society.¹⁷⁴ In France, an ethnic Arab or African considers Islam as only part of his or her identity, placing ethnic origin—and in some cases, French nationalism—over religion.¹⁷⁵ According to Roy, this breakdown in loyalties along ethnic divides results in “no overall authority” to run a community of Muslims.¹⁷⁶

Polls from 2006 support the idea that French Muslims maintain a much higher percentage of nonreligious self-identification than do their immigrant counterparts in other European countries. According to the Pew Research Center, “When asked whether they consider themselves as a national citizen first or as a Muslim first, French Muslims split relatively evenly (42% vs. 46%)”¹⁷⁷ This is significant for two reasons. First, the survey asked for feelings on French national identity—vice a more common connection to some ethnic cultural heritage—essentially probing the connection with a fully European livelihood. That Muslims adopt this standpoint reveals a step beyond ethnic loyalties and a distinct desire to integrate along European lines. Second, the percentage of respondents identifying as French national citizens eclipsed the sentiment of its European neighbors.

172 “Ethnic Groups in France,” Study, accessed January 5, 2018, <http://study.com/academy/lesson/ethnic-groups-in-france.html>.

173 Oliver Roy, “Islam in France: Religion, Ethnic Community, or Social Ghetto?” in *Muslims in Europe*, ed. Bernard Lewis and Dominique Schnapper (London: Pinter, 1994), 57.

174 Roy, “Islam in France,” 57.

175 Roy, “Islam in France,” 57.

176 Roy, “Islam in France,” 57.

177 Jodie T. Allen, “The French-Muslim Connection: Is France Doing a Better Job of Integration than Its Critics?,” *Pew Research Center* (blog), August 17, 2006, <http://www.pewresearch.org/2006/08/17/the-frenchmuslim-connection/>, 6.

Only 13 percent of German Muslims felt such inclination, while single digit percentages of British and Spanish Muslims responded as such.¹⁷⁸

The daily practice of Islam in French society is no more consistent than the ethnic make-up of the Muslim community, lending greater credence to a notion of fragile Muslim solidarity. Roy describes a split in the degree of religious piety exhibited by a strict “five cardinal precepts” version espoused by clerics and traditionalists on the one hand and the “minimal observance” model, which emphasizes cultural differences, on the other.¹⁷⁹ Most young Muslims fall into the second category and have a “more ethnic than religious” identity.¹⁸⁰ Roy also specifically cites oft-violent “young urban-zone *beurs*” as expressing their own subculture by combining popular culture norms with a superficial observance of Islam.¹⁸¹ He posits that by maintaining a loose association to the religion, they make a “gesture of refusal” to French secularists in support of Muslim political demands, vice any real attempt to make Islam a pronounced item of communal identity.¹⁸²

Muslim identity is such a complex deconstruction and reconstruction of ethnic, cultural, and religious identities (religion having the least influence) that a purposeful community was not possible, or desired, by the Muslim people. There was simply no demand signal in French society for such a distinction. The concept of fomenting a specific community identity is a demand signal from elsewhere with more strategic goals in mind.

B. DIGGING FOR IDENTITY

By the 1990s, three sociopolitical actors sought control of Muslim political mobility, yet each found difficulty reaching any desired end state.¹⁸³ First are the elites of the Muslim community who sought the establishment of special interest groups able to leverage French politics. However, Roy found that there was little popular interest on the

178 Allen, “The French-Muslim Connection,” 6.

179 Roy, “Islam in France?” 59.

180 Roy, “Islam in France,” 60.

181 Roy, “Islam in France,” 65.

182 Roy, “Islam in France,” 60.

183 Roy, “Islam in France,” 56.

part of Muslims in forming either ethnic or religious lobbies.¹⁸⁴ Rather, he discovered, “the greater the degree of integration, the less assertiveness there [was] about ethnic origin.”¹⁸⁵ Additionally, these political elites generally appeared complicit with government interlocutors and represented themselves more than any other contrived political lobby.¹⁸⁶

The second group to vie for community influence was composed of fundamentalist Islamists wishing to sever the Muslim community from French society.¹⁸⁷ These nonconformist stalwarts were not interested in political maneuvering, instead they advocated a front against any integration.¹⁸⁸ Additionally, they envisioned enclaves within France where constitutional secularism did not apply and where space was available for Muslim communities to teach, learn, and live according to Koranic chapter and verse. This apolitical program found constituents mainly in the unsuccessful poor working class, the ones who had attempted participation in French society and failed, and who harbored feelings of guilt, hopelessness, and anti-Western sentiment as a result of their rejection.¹⁸⁹

The French government was the third group, and it had a vested interest in nurturing a defined Muslim political entity with which it could interact. Motivated by a desire to avoid the kind of social protest of the 1980s and terrorism that would plague France in the mid-1990s, the French state sought interaction with Muslim community leaders. Interestingly, France does not recognize ethnic groups; instead, it aspires to the melting pot model that “[boils] away the residues of cultural identity.”¹⁹⁰ Religious communities, on the other hand, *are* recognized—as the Catholic Church has been for centuries with varying degrees of authority.¹⁹¹

184 Roy, “Islam in France,” 62.

185 Roy, “Islam in France,” 62.

186 Roy, “Islam in France,” 62.

187 Roy, “Islam in France,” 61.

188 Roy, “Islam in France,” 63.

189 Roy, “Islam in France,” 63.

190 Leiken, *Europe’s Angry Muslims*, 7.

191 Roy, “Islam in France” 64.

The French Interior Ministry attempted engagement with Muslims through the establishment of the Conseil de Réflexion sur l’Islam en France (CORIF) in 1990.¹⁹² Due to a lack of homegrown leadership, it was “estimated [that] 95 percent of all Imams in France...come from abroad.”¹⁹³ This organization’s explicit goal was to counter the fundamental Islamist message often asserted by “overseas sponsors” and “contribute to a formulation of doctrine appropriate to Islam in France.”¹⁹⁴ The CORIF soon floundered, however, as its appointed representatives provided mostly “artificial” support to the Muslim community, members of which had been coopted into their positions.¹⁹⁵

Roy identifies a paradox in the approach of French government incorporation. CORIF program officials risked rebuilding ties along ethnic lines, since the group’s Muslim leaders, considered by the government to be religiously affiliated, instead identified on cultural, ethnic grounds. The French government also ran the risk of finding “itself in the untenable situation of having to express opinions on what was good Islam and what was bad.”¹⁹⁶ The United Kingdom realized this quandary in 2005 following the 7/7 transport bombings when it recruited theologians and imams to preach anti-jihadist messages to Muslim youth; however, the British government inadvertently sponsored some messages, surpassing its desired level of moderation.¹⁹⁷

C. THE CHURCH-STATE PATTERN

The framework for political engagement available to French Muslims helps define the ability of the interest group to form representation and win political goals. Joel Fetzer and Christopher Soper undertook a comparative analysis of European state approaches to Muslim integration that gives us insight into the most influential political engagement

192 Roy, “Islam in France,” 64.

193 Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 9.

194 Roy, “Islam in France,” 64.

195 Mounia Daoudi, “Islam in France—Muslims in France Struggle to Organize,” Radio France Internationale, May 20, 2002, http://www1.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/029/article_18775.asp.

196 Klausen, “Terror in the Terroir,” 4.

197 Klausen, “Terror in the Terroir,” 4.

theories for framing the issue. They cite four focus areas: resource mobilization, political opportunity structure, political ideology, and historic church-state institutional patterns.¹⁹⁸ While the authors expand on the claim that church-state patterns are the most decisive when comparing the experiences between sovereign states, each of the four areas have implications affecting the discussion on solely France as well.

1. Political Challenges

Resource mobilization describes the relative power between opposing political parties and how much political influence they can muster in support of their causes. Resources entail “labor, materials, money... [as well as] communal unity, coherent organizational resources, and strategic placement of communal personnel in elite positions.”¹⁹⁹ In concurrence with Roy, Fetzer and Soper cite several other analysts who believe the “existence of ethnic, religious, national, and linguistic divisions within the Muslim community acts as a barrier to their political mobilization in Western European nations.”²⁰⁰

The uniquely centralized polity of France under a unitary system of government creates a challenging political opportunity structure for French Muslims. Unlike in federalized systems, a Muslim lobby must interact with the central government to have any comprehensive affect toward its political goals.²⁰¹ With a demonstrated weakness in resource mobilization, French Muslims have been unable to reach the threshold of support required for competitive political engagement at a national level.

French Muslims face the additional challenge of overcoming the political ideology “of integration rather than accommodation [in France].”²⁰² A philosophy of absorbing immigrant groups into the French culture prevails over any desires for multiculturalism,

198 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 7.

199 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 8.

200 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 8,9.

201 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 11–12.

202 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 14.

and these sentiments “prove resistant to change.”²⁰³ Much to the dismay of motivated Muslim activists, the role that religion should play in public life does not receive as much attention as ideas about citizenship, political incorporation, and liberal political values.²⁰⁴

At the forefront of the debate over Muslim political demands is the role of laïcité in defining a place for religion in French society. Laïcité embodies the church-state institutional framework and therefore provides the most French-specific context for investigating problems of Muslim assimilation. The next section provides this context and paves the way for a detailed look at how the French Muslim political demands have fared within.

2. The Road to Laïcité

To examine the socio-political environment that French Muslims have experienced for the last 20 years, one must understand the long history of laïcité in becoming the dominant church-state framework in France. Within this framework, Islam is theoretically not an outlying target of disproportionate rejection by the French state. Indeed, religion has been under suspicion and sometimes violent attack by French secularists for over 200 years, with Catholicism and other Christian sects as the primary targets.²⁰⁵

a. De-Legitimizing Religion

Until the end of the 18th century, the Catholic Church played puppeteer to the French system of government within the Holy Monarchy. However, following the French Revolution, the Church struggled to retain even a place, let alone influence, in French society. Revolutionaries seized Church property and systematically killed or deported Catholic priests.²⁰⁶ It was not until Napoleon Bonaparte signed the Concordat of 1801 with Pope Pius VII that religion recouped a margin of legitimacy to practice unencumbered,

203 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 14.

204 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 15.

205 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 72.

206 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 69.

even regaining mild subsidies from the state via salaried clergy.²⁰⁷ Later that century, as anti-clerical partisans gained influence in the French parliament, France passed the Ferry laws of 1882, which “effectively *laïcized* public education.”²⁰⁸ After this, clergy could no longer influence the content or administration of the school system, although schools were only open six days per week to allow students one day to attend separate religious studies, if desired.²⁰⁹

b. The Separation Law

Laïcité in its current context officially passed as the Separation Law on December 9, 1905. While upholding previous markers of church-state division, it also eliminated the Napoleonic vestige of state sponsorship, either through salaries or by supplementing any other expense.²¹⁰ Laïcité quickly became a polemical term, with strong anti-Christian and atheist tones, and it came to represent a symbol of triumph by the Republicans over historically Catholic dominance.²¹¹

More recently, a debate proceeds over the proper reading of the Separation Law.²¹² The debate establishes a political discourse segregating its proponents into camps of so-called “strict” and “soft” interpreters of laïcité.²¹³ Strict proponents call for the elimination of any religious activity from public space and mandating penalties for violators. Soft advocates take less issue with public expression of religion and generally support Muslim political goals, citing human rights and religious freedom. Professor of French history Robert Zaretsky considers laïcité to have “acquired so much mystique as to be practically an ideology.”²¹⁴ He feels that a more straightforward reading of the law, devoid of political

207 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 69.

208 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 70.

209 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 70.

210 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 70.

211 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 71.

212 Robert Zaretsky, “How French Secularism Became Fundamentalist,” *Foreign Policy* (blog), 2, accessed November 7, 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/07/the-battle-for-the-french-secular-soul-laicite-charlie-hebdo/>.

213 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 78.

214 Zaretsky, “How French Secularism Became Fundamentalist,” 2.

maneuvering intent on defining French values, gives it a meaning more in line with its original purposes.²¹⁵ Zaretsky cites excerpts from the law itself guaranteeing “freedom of conscience” and “the free exercise of worship” to emphasize its worthy liberal ideals; however, these quotes are more purposefully cherry picked from the full narrative, which tells a slightly different story.²¹⁶

Upon investigating the Separation Law further, one finds “Title V: Police of the Cults” replete with the kind of verbiage lending credence to strict laïcité supporters. Among the harsher dictates is “meetings for worship...remain placed under the surveillance of the authorities in the interest of public order” and “it is forbidden, in the future, to raise or affix any religious symbols or emblems on public monuments or in any public place whatsoever.”²¹⁷ Article 35 of the Separation Law prohibits direct provocation of public authority by ministers through either speech or writing and prescribes penalties for such behavior.²¹⁸ It is apparent that laïcité has antagonistic undertones toward religion of all kinds; yet, the time transpiring since the bloody 1789 Revolution has permitted Catholicism some operating space that Islam has not yet achieved.

c. Effects of Secularization

France stands out among other European countries in its lack of religious observance. The 1990 European Values Survey found that many French citizens proclaimed to not attend religious services or believe in God.²¹⁹ The survey found 34 percent of French respondents advocated “no religion,” 59 percent never went to church, and “only 57 percent claimed a belief in God.”²²⁰ These numbers and the national culture they represent worry many in the Muslim community. Pew Research polls from 2006

215 Zaretsky, “How French Secularism Became Fundamentalist,” 3.

216 Zaretsky, “How French Secularism Became Fundamentalist,” 3.

217 “Law of December 9, 1905 Concerning the Separation of Churches and State,” Legifrance, accessed February 13, 2018, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006070169&dateTexte=20180103>, Article 25, 28.

218 “Law of December 9, 1905,” Article 35.

219 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 77.

220 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 77.

indicate that 72 percent of Muslims in France are at least somewhat concerned that Islam is experiencing a decline of influence among its faithful.²²¹ Additionally, they feel that with no public venue supporting religious education, they must act at the family level to pass on Islamic values and traditions or risk that their progeny will cease to identify as Muslims.²²²

As one might expect of any sovereign state, France has handled the question of religious rights on its own terms and according to its own history and heritage. Unlike the church-state separations in America, *laïcité* is the result of centuries-long distrust and conflict between the Catholic Church and the French Republican government.²²³ In its case, France spilled blood to separate church from state and spent centuries democratically working toward *laïcité*—that long-established framework and the mindset supporting it will not easily change.²²⁴ From this perspective, opposition to Muslim political demands is not a case of “Islamophobia” but simply the political culture of French government concerning any religion. In the next section, we see if this definition of *laïcité* applies uniformly across social groups and just how impartially Muslims have fared in pursuit of their political goals.

D. MUSLIM POLITICAL GOALS

Desire for Muslim political mobility in France stems from three uniformly accepted aims. They are goals free of radical thought or deed, and represent an appeal for the expression of a discreet public identity, which in some cases, is inconsistent with the Gallic political standard. Specifically, Muslims want moderate religious observance in state schools, the creation of Islamic schools, and the construction of more mosques. Two of the three objectives involve primary schooling, a fact warranting additional consideration when studying the underlying motives of Muslim demands. Emphasis on schooling not only indicates that the Islamic community values education, but also it specifically indicates the nature of the instruction. Discernment over the content of foundational

221 Allen, “The French-Muslim Connection,” 2.

222 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 78.

223 Zaretsky, “How French Secularism Became Fundamentalist,” 2.

224 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 96.

messages is a strong indicator that a community is concerned about the values, beliefs, and practices that transfer to the student generation. In short, it is evidence of strong desires of the Muslim community to provide a well-vetted, established identity to future generations.

Radical Islamists comprise another Muslim group competing for influence in France; however, their political goals share no commonality with the majority of civic-minded French Muslims. Their goals espouse violence to attain moral and legal superiority while subjugating Western values. However, the ostensible supremacy of Islamist ideology is rooted in extremely traditional, Salafist interpretations of Islam, making religion a common ground and potential gateway for mobilizing support from the common French Muslim populace.

1. Immigrants to France

The first major political goal is to proliferate religious activities in state schools.²²⁵ This desire for overt religious practice came to a head in 1989 during the “Scarf Affair,” and this desire persists to the present day.²²⁶ Muslim girls wishing to wear the hijab as a symbol of traditional female Islamic custom faced expulsion if they wore the headdress while at school. While the Conseil d’État²²⁷ eventually ruled in favor of allowing practices like the wearing of the hijab, it also warned against “ostentatious symbols” that could be seen as discriminating or proselytizing.²²⁸ Many considered the guidance vague and individual school administrators generally decided the fate of their student bodies without further imposition from the French government.²²⁹

225 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 78.

226 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 78.

227 According to its website, “The Conseil d’État advises the Government on the preparation of bills, ordinances and certain decrees. It also answers the Government’s queries on legal affairs and conducts studies upon the request of the Government or through its own initiative regarding administrative or public policy issues. It is also the highest administrative jurisdiction—it is the final arbiter of cases relating to executive power, local authorities, independent public authorities, public administration agencies or any other agency invested with public authority.” Conseil d’État, “Home,” accessed March 17, 2018, <http://english.conseil-etat.fr/>.

228 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 79.

229 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 79.

Powerful teachers' unions like the Syndicat National des Enseignements de Second degré advocate strict laïcité in regards to the hijab, under the premise that any concession could act as a "Trojan horse for other things," according to its former National Secretary, Francis Berguin.²³⁰ Strict advocates anticipate additional slippery slope conflicts, such as holding religious education as a formal subject; no testing during Ramadan; abstention from music, art, biology and sex education classes; requesting halal meat; and declining co-ed swimming or overnight field trips.²³¹

The French government revisited its position on headscarves in 2004 and finally passed a full-fledged ban.²³² French Muslim students felt targeted, which only reinforced their desire for religious autonomy. One defiant young girl remarked, "When I come out [of school,] I can't wait to put my veil back on. It was always important, but now even more so."²³³ The government ban created potentially counterproductive effects given the remonstrative response in some school age girls. This behavior may fit well into Roy's description of "gestures of refusal" by French Muslim youth. A law intended to secure secularization might have only deepened young Muslims' fondness for religious identification.²³⁴

The second desire of French Muslims writ large is to obtain state funding for the creation of Islamic schools. While the state does not subsidize private clerical salaries and other costs based in faith only, it does contribute to church based educational organizations that meet a set of predetermined criteria. The French state stipulates that organizations must have at least a five year term of successful service, well-qualified teachers, large number of students, and clean facilities; that the course of instruction closely follows that of public curricula; and that religious studies are optional to all students regardless of religious

230 Fetzer and Soper, *7 Muslims and the State*, 3, 81–82.

231 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 84–85.

232 "Q&A: Muslim Headscarves," *BBC News*, August 31, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3328277.stm>.

233 "Muslim Girls Unveil Their Fears," *BBC News*, March 28, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/this_world/4352171.stm.

234 Roy, "Islam in France" 60.

background.²³⁵ Christian and Jewish schools have operated for decades under this construct.²³⁶ The lack of a representative body from the Muslim community to negotiate over these stipulations has left some or all of the preconditions unmet during the admittedly few attempts at founding Islamic schools.²³⁷ As a result, there is the impression of a double standard with regard to enabling non-Muslim schools while denying the proposals of Muslims.

The third ubiquitous political goal for the Muslim community in France is to build more mosques. The French state supported Muslim worship as far back as 1926, when it presented the massive Paris Grand Mosque, a splendorous campus capable of hosting up to 5000 devotees, as a gift for the service of French colonial troops that fought for France in World War I.²³⁸ Since post-colonial immigration, however, French Muslims have found difficulty raising domestic resources to construct Islamic houses of worship. The Gran Mosquée de Lyon is a rare example of successful incorporation. Despite protests from the Nationalist Front, a coalition of French Muslim leadership, with support from Lyon mayor Michel Noir, built the Mosque in 1994 with significant foreign financial support and political maneuvering.²³⁹ It was widely accepted by the surrounding community once in operation. However, greater issues arise in smaller localities where Muslim mobilization in support of Mosques meets local government personalities. In one extreme case, the Mayor of Charivieu, Gerard Dezempte, blatantly ignored or declined building permits, and rumors persist concerning his involvement in the bulldozing of a makeshift prayer house in 1989.²⁴⁰ Such actions incite outrage and perpetuate a feeling of distrust within the Muslim community toward domestic officials, yet Muslims' lack of a coherent and powerful lobby

235 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 85.

236 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 85.

237 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 85.

238 Shafik Mandhai, "French Muslims Despondent after Champs Elysees Attack," *Al Jazeera*, April 21, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/04/french-muslims-paris-champs-elysees-attack-170421191712277.html>.

239 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 87–88.

240 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 88–89.

limits their ability to seek recourse—a necessity for achieving results in the hypercentralized French government system.

Montpellier Mayor Georges Freche took a positive approach to fulfilling Muslim desires and helped fund a “multipurpose auditorium,” which could be leased to prospective congregations.²⁴¹ The project received a lukewarm reception by Muslim citizens, however, as it created the same issues as CORIF doctrinal formulations and the post-transit bombing message campaign of the United Kingdom in 2005. When the French state takes anything resembling a normative stance on the practice of Islam, the Muslim community is likely to reject it.

Both French Muslims and the French government face challenges with respect to meeting the other’s political demands. On one hand, the Muslim community seeks to retain elements of its heritage that the historical French church-state framework cannot readily accept. On the other hand, many within the French government perceive the Muslim community as a minority group with little representation trying to usurp fundamental principles of French society. However, even in the face of GIA terrorism through the mid-1990s, the French Muslim population has worked in a relatively steadfast and civic manner against a governmental and societal establishment with deep-seated animosity for its political goals. The political motivations and behavior of the average French Muslim contrasts starkly with those of radical Islamists, manifested in the movement of global Salafi jihadists. The next section describes the difference in Muslim groups and how the extremist mindset brings a fresh narrative of civilizational and identity conflict to the forefront.

2. Radical Islamists

It is necessary to distinguish between Islamists and the majority of French Muslims to describe the forces sustaining the current wave of radicalization and terrorism. Islamists are those Muslims who desire full politicization of the Islamic religion. They are opposed to the idea of secular government and desire to establish a state that receives direction from

²⁴¹ Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 90.

the Koran and the Hadiths—teachings of the Islamic prophet Mohammed. Contrary to the conventional Western paradigm, government in such an Islamic state is concerned more with the “fate of souls” than the social reforms, economic growth, or liberalization, which are primal political goals in Western culture.²⁴² This has alarmed nationalist minded French. National Front politician, Serge Laroze remarked, “The problem with Islam is that it isn’t just a religion, but a civil code, a political constitution, a moral law.”²⁴³ Like his right-wing compatriots, Laroze suspects that for those reasons, France and Europe were on a “collision course with Islam.”²⁴⁴

Professor of anthropology, Anna Simons believes that at the core of Islamism there “is a religious and divinely mandated template as old as the Koran itself.”²⁴⁵ Supporting the veracity of civilizational differences between the Muslim world and the West, she presents two distinctions that evoke a contest over moral superiority.²⁴⁶ First, Islam traditionally espouses “communal solidarities...that take precedence over the primacy of individuals.”²⁴⁷ Traditionalist Muslim lifestyle emphasizes community and collective responsibilities and obligations, based on divine instruction, which seems domineering and even invasive from a Western perspective.²⁴⁸ These values fall in direct opposition to Western liberal values and even more so of capitalism. France part of the West, wherein the individual is the primary unit of political accountability and, to an increasing extent, moral accountability.²⁴⁹

Second, Western society cannot accept “domination by a single denomination.”²⁵⁰ This follows closely with the views of liberalism, whereby individuals can decide for themselves what to believe and practice from a theological standpoint. Western political

242 Anna Simons, “Making Enemies,” *The American Interest* I, no. 4 (June 2006): 7.

243 Kepel, *Terror in France*, 47.

244 Kepel, *Terror in France*, 47.

245 Simons, “Making Enemies,” 36.

246 Simons, “Making Enemies,” 38.

247 Simons, “Making Enemies,” 44.

248 Simons, “Making Enemies,” 17.

249 Simons, “Making Enemies,” 14.

250 Simons, “Making Enemies, Part Two,” 44.

systems do not discriminate with respect to religion by placing the tenets and laws of one faith above another. In France, the rule of law is historically rooted in people's ability to deliberate what is best for society as adaptations and additions to the law are required. The final clearinghouse for constructing that moral standard is with humankind, specifically a political elite elected from the populace. All of this runs counter to fundamental interpretations of Islam. Islamists doctrinally connect the primacy of Islam—as directed by Allah and Mohammed alone—to state governance and the rules of communal life. In Islam's doctrinal form, Muslims have no role in deciding the standards by which they live as their religion dictates these fundamentals. Islamists have fixed their narrative toward maintaining this dominate politico-religious identity.

The result of these irreconcilable differences is the perception on both sides of a contest for moral superiority. It is the most basal issue and in Simons's evaluation, one that defines the struggle as a religious war.²⁵¹ Arguments against civilizational differences fall short by considering the idea of "religious war" in a very narrow context, which eliminates it from consideration as a contributory, much less causal, factor of global Islamist jihad. The jihadist religious battle wages not solely to destroy populations or take territory, but more importantly, to establish preeminence in the construct of a moral worldview—the *religion* of Islamic law in governing the East over the *religion* of secular lawgiving on the side of Western civilization.

E. THE HUMAN NARRATIVE

Simons's anthropological model is very useful in categorizing the three groups vying for identity in France because it allows quick identification of their respective core narratives. In its most generic form, the model consists of outsiders, nativists, and accommodationists. Outsiders are any group that imposes change on a preexisting group maintaining its own culture and beliefs within set boundaries. Accommodationists welcome the change, or at the very least, do not resist it, while nativists comprise the group that reacts to accommodationist behavior because of its perceived threat to the integrity of

²⁵¹ Simons, "Making Enemies," 38.

the group.²⁵² The nativist group loathes the resulting split, or factionalization, between previously homogeneous groups of nativists and accommodationists as a turning point toward existential peril. This anthropological framework sets up two distinct fields of actors in France relative to assimilating Muslims: one from the perspective of the French political debate and one from the perspective of the radical jihadists.

1. Twin Triads

From the French perspective, Muslims are the outsiders. It is important to understand that a Gallic viewpoint can easily conflate radical and moderate Muslims in this category. This “outsider” Muslim group has encountered a “nativist” adversary in the form of xenophobic, nationalist political parties, and to a large degree, the public education establishment.²⁵³ Accommodation to French Muslim political demands generally comes from multiculturalist circles, as particularly evident during the headscarf debate. Nativist French thinking is based on the idea that France may be experiencing an attack on the nature of the republic itself, an identity they feel has been long established by native Europeans of a largely Christian, often atheist, yet squarely secular persuasion. The French government’s narrative to Muslims is that they must assimilate to the French culture if they want to live in France. The Muslim community’s resistance to secularization has spurred the notion in political circles of whether Muslims are capable of assimilating into French society at all. The French nationalist hardline approach permits a narrative whereby radical Islamists can preach an “us-versus-them” message to struggling Muslims and paints the Gallic French opposition as a problem only Islamist terrorism can solve.

From the terrorist perspective, all Western civilizations are outsiders. Director of the Center on the United States and Europe’s Turkey Project at Brookings Institute, Kemal Kirisci believes that “Salafism is at war with the whole of the world” and that everyone but Salafi loyalists are either trying to destroy Islam or simply allowing its destruction to

252 Simons, “Making Enemies,” 14.

253 Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State*, 75.

occur.²⁵⁴ From this viewpoint, Islamists are the nativist group, and moderate Muslims—as found in France—are the accommodationists. Salafist devotees espouse the need to protect what they consider the “true” Islam from the bastardization of Western influence—an attempt at cultural change evident in the French political discourse with Muslim groups. In the eyes of Salafists, apostate Muslims are worse than their Western influencers, since they actively factionalize the Muslim umma, destroying the paramount goal of maintaining the moral superiority and coherence of the “true” Muslim identity.²⁵⁵

2. French Exceptionalism

During the mid-2000s, French Muslims exhibited a wide breadth of Westernized sentiment that Islamist groups could easily interpret as accommodationist behavior and that supports an extremist viewpoint of communal factionalization. Data collected by the Pew Research Center in 2006 provides a clear picture of how differently Muslims in France think about themselves and their associations in French society when compared to their contemporaries in other parts of the world. The data is promising for hopes of greater Muslim integration in France, but it also serves to emphasize how most French Muslims dissociate with Islamist ideology. This chapter has touched on French Muslims’ relatively high rate of perceiving themselves as national citizens first, a clear outlier among other European states and a strong irritant to Islamists; yet, there are three additional telltales within the polling data that show exceptional sentiments among French Muslims.

French Muslims hold a very favorable view of Christians and Jews. A full 91 percent of respondents in the 2006 Pew survey viewed Christians favorably, even besting the sentiments of both the United States and French public.²⁵⁶ Most surprising may be the response from 71 percent of French Muslims, who held favorable views of Jews. Not only does this nearly equal the sentiment of indigenous Europeans and Americans, but also it is on average 40 percent higher than Muslims of surrounding European countries. In

²⁵⁴ Jeremy Shapiro et al., *France and Europe after the Terrorist Attacks* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 2015), <https://www.brookings.edu/events/france-and-europe-after-the-terrorist-attacks/>.

²⁵⁵ al-Zarqawi, “Letter to Bin Laden,” 253–258.

²⁵⁶ Allen, “The French-Muslim Connection,” 4.

comparison, the positive feeling for Jews in predominately Muslim lands generally falls to single digit percentages.

The number of Muslims actively practicing Islam in France at the time of the Pew survey was very low, hinting at disassociation with their Islamic heritage. According to Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, an immigration specialist and researcher at the Center for International Studies and Research in Paris, only 10 percent of Muslims in France are actively practicing their faith.²⁵⁷ She notes that this is nearly identical to the number of self-proclaimed practicing Catholics.

Finally, another divergence in the data occurred when French Muslims responded to whether they would rather be distinct from mainstream French society or adopt French customs. Four out of five Muslims polled chose assimilation over separation.²⁵⁸ In comparison, Muslims in Germany, Spain, and Britain divided somewhat evenly on the issue or leaned toward remaining distinct from their adopted nationalities.

Interpretation of the Pew Research data shows potentially accommodationist behavior in the French Muslim community. In four key areas—favorable views of other religions, low turnout of Islamic devotees, self-perception as a French citizen, and a high preference for assimilation—French Muslim sentiments are not only anomalous when compared to Muslims of other European countries, but they also fit the description of an accommodationist response to Westernization in the eyes of a nativist Islamist movement. In the form of closer ties with Western politics and culture, apostate behavior builds strong motivation for jihadists to “rescue” the French arm of the Islamic umma from disintegrating influences in France.

F. CONCLUSION

Examining the sociopolitical relations of Muslims in France reveals that a three-sided identity conflict is underway between integrating Muslim citizens, the Gallic French population, and radical-minded Islamists. This conflict arises because each group perceives

257 Allen, “The French-Muslim Connection,” 5.

258 Allen, “The French-Muslim Connection,” 7.

the others as an existential threat. Well before the rapid increase in terrorist attacks beginning in 2012, there was social tension between immigrant Muslims and the native French. This social discord maintained a gateway for Islamist narratives to resound within the discourse of French Muslim sociopolitical maneuvering. It also likely has provided the foundation for the latest wave of decentralized jihadist terrorists to find both support and targets for their cause.

French Muslims have notable difficulty forming an effective political body able to pursue their communal goals. Overall, the record of Muslim political mobilization since the 1990s shows a trend of weak solidarity as an Islamic group, one that prefers ethnic associations before identifying together under Islam. Despite the inability of a coherent Muslim lobby to form, pockets of potential leadership have tried to shape the French Muslim community—sometimes toward and other times away from more thorough French integration. In either case, it is clear that Muslims will not entertain any normative influence by non-Muslims in their practice of Islam. These issues of political stalemate create an environment wherein French Muslims have lasting controversy with their government and compatriots.

Laïcité is the church-state framework that emboldens the Gallic French standpoint behind strict secularism, and in the eyes of French nationalists, it is a tenet of liberal democracy under attack by Muslim political demands. The nature of the state disadvantages French Muslims at nearly every turn in their efforts for political engagement. In addition to their weak potential for mobilization, French Muslims are also hampered by the uniquely centralized French system and its ideology against multiculturalism. However, the Secularization Law of 1905 is the strongest hurdle to overcome, both legally and ideologically. Laïcité represents a centuries-long struggle to form a republic free from overzealous religious influence. After more than two centuries spent curbing the role of religion in French society, France stands out among its European neighbors by its minimal participation in religious activity or beliefs. The imposition of this secular worldview is highly unpalatable to immigrant Muslims and provides fuel to morally based Islamist narratives.

The communal self-image and political goals of majority French Muslims are vastly different from those of Islamists, yet they have a fundamental likeness in religion. While

the greater Muslim community seeks increased concession toward religion in schools and expansion of mosques into French communities, Islamists desire a complete political takeover of apostate and infidel governments with a sharia based Islamic society. Individual claims for moral superiority substantiate anthropological analysis that indicates that there may be incompatible differences between Islam and Western society. That is not to say that the differences are irreconcilable; however, one side or the other will need to make concessions for settlement to occur. In the face of making concessions to non-Muslim state actors over the practice of Islam, some Muslims could encounter a tough choice between Western democracy and radical Islamism as the most palatable and effective way to achieve their essential goals.

Anthropology assists in building narratives between the three identity groups by categorizing the communities according to how each fundamentally sees the others. Outsider, nativist and accommodationist roles exist in France via two separate but synchronous frameworks. In addition to the more obvious outsider-nativist conflict, there is nativist-accommodationist antagonism between Islamists and moderate French Muslims that has exceptional relevance in France. Polling data shows that French Muslims have a much more liberal and Western mindset than other European Muslims. To radical Islamists, these trends prove factionalizing behavior on the part of French Muslims to a global Islamic community and are deserving of violent corrective action.

By the end of the 2000s, new terrorism found France an easy target in three ways. Primarily, France represents a fully Western democratic state espousing a highly secular public society. Additionally, French law and popular Gallic culture give Muslims a very difficult time in their efforts to maintain some Islamic heritage and communal lifestyle. Finally, many Muslim immigrants have accepted Western ways and adopted liberal mindsets at a rate well above the norm of any other European or predominately Islamic nation. These three factors are antithetical to the Islamist theology driving new terrorism, and Islamists easily concoct extremist narratives along those lines. The violent narratives do not need to move large numbers to action. A small, marginal, decentralized few, who can suffice with minimal interaction, are just the fodder for sustainment that the terrorist movement needs.

IV. CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought explanations for why France, with its exemplary system of counterterrorism and 15-year record of public safety, experienced a sharp resurgence in jihadist terror attacks beginning in 2012 and escalating violently in the ensuing years. Although the French state had unresolved social tensions with its Muslim population in the years preceding a return of jihadist terrorism, these African and Middle Eastern minorities held significantly more Westernized views than comparable nations' immigrant demographic, and many French Muslims posed limited objection to France's "citizen first, citizen only" cultural identity. It seems wholly illogical that domestic violence would arise because of grievances over assimilation, particularly when a marginal Muslim political base spent years fighting for a foothold in politics, intent to prove the Muslim community a full-fledged member of French society, vice a shadowy threat. Any pragmatic examination of a planned terrorist campaign in France would show its violence to have extremely negative effects to longstanding Muslim goals in the Hexagon—realized by the hypernationalist response of a large sector in the French population, heavy-handed counterterrorist crackdowns, and an evolution in state policy toward restrictive measures, vice liberalization. Therefore, the question remains, why was France so suddenly the target for jihadist attacks?

It was important to first understand the details of this new threat. Examining France's experience gives us the opportunity to develop the who, what, why, and how of a threat clearly claiming offshore origins. The research naturally progresses to finding vectors that made France a target for this specific threat. A review of the counterterrorist organizational culture frames a part of the context in which the attacks began; however, primarily a deeper look at the disposition of the Muslim population and its relationship to the French state reveals the seedbed for an existential identity conflict that Islamists used to motivate violence on the French homefront.

A. COUNTERTERRORIST CULTURE

France did not always have an exemplary system of counterterrorism; rather, it developed the present institutional and organizational culture through years of trial and error and periods of violent unrest. Prior to an unacceptable rise in radical Islamist activity in the 1980s and 90s, the French political leadership was content to form a baseless *détente* with terrorists inside of France. The loss of domestic security and resultant public outcry resulting from CSPPA and GIA terrorism gave rise to the judiciary centric system of legislative magistrates as France's modern counterterrorist framework. The arrangement of intelligence gathering and law enforcement activities under the purview of judges—capable of powerful influence in local prosecution—provided a major course correction to France's domestic security environment. However, the system was not perfect. Legislative magistrates entered the security scene amid a host of agencies that soon vied for relevancy under the broad authority of the terrorist courts. Communication and coordination between agencies suffered in the absence of a strong institutional command structure. Endemic inefficiency was not the only shortfall; infighting between law enforcement and intelligence branches became common as each sought to coopt the mission sets of the other by either magisterial request or approval. Finally, the French counterterrorist system was well versed and focused on leveraging specifically human elements. Operatives maintained community contacts and kept a steady pulse of activities in the known hotspots; however, the agencies as a whole did not leverage broad-scale, automated intelligence gathering, as became the norm in other Western countries.

Attacks by the GIA during the mid-1990s tempered the French magisterial counterterror system; its real-world operations provided the system a legacy of success against well-organized terrorist groups and cells. At the same time, Internet communication was in its infancy, and social media had yet to turbo charge the effects of globalization. In short, French counterterrorism efforts focused on fighting the second, dwindling wave of global jihadism, and it did not anticipate the results of jihadist ideologues combining an authoritative message of Salafism with an organized information and social media campaign. Abstention from the global war on terror, which seemed to have instigated terrorist retribution on France's participating European neighbors, gave French officials an

unfounded sense of safety from jihadists. Primarily, France lacked an understanding of how the jihadist threat was already changing. The jihadist international days of mounting organized attacks against the “far enemy” were over. Nearly coinciding with the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, sects of ultraviolent Sunni Muslims began a revolutionary plan for building their own nation intent on expansion. The success of ISIS in particular lent legitimacy and authority to a messaging campaign designed to motivate a global movement. Hierarchical cells and groups suddenly represented only a part of the jihadist problem, but it was the only part to which the French counterterrorist system had adapted well.

B. NEW TERRORISM

Today’s jihadist threat is focused on winning the sentiment of the gray zone Muslim population by advocating that it joins a decentralized, transnational movement. Skilled ideologues and Islamist stalwarts recruit this demographic with an us-versus-them civilizational conflict narrative disseminated through social media channels worldwide. The narrative aims to evoke strong theological and emotional bases among potential Islamists, but the attacks themselves have different aims. Violence against the West and any party considered to accommodate its worldview is meant to instigate an overreaction that is subsequently releveraged into the jihadist us versus them narrative. The prophesy is self-fulfilling. For a young, disenfranchised, or hopeless Muslim population, the narrative is not only believable, but more importantly, it provides a legitimate and even divine purpose.

France has been the target of a new brand of jihadist terrorism; the tragic result of adaptations made to a decades old narrative pitting East versus West. In its newest form, it is truly transnational and empowers independent action from a wide swath of unhappy, angry, disenfranchised, or disillusioned supporters. Pious adherence and knowledge of Islam is not a prerequisite for this disparaged group. In fact, prospective radicals’ limited exposure to mainstream Islam worked in the favor of Islamist calls for support. In one sense, individuals interested by the jihadist narrative had no strong reference for how Islamists had twisted the message away from moderate Islam. Individuals steeped in the

mainstream message of Islam likely provide Islamists with a harder target than those with a weaker spiritual base. Additionally, Islamist ideologues tout the ability for non-practicing Muslims, who had fallen away from the faith, to regain favor and eternal reward through jihadist terrorism. In any case, arguments that suppose the new terrorists lack motivation from religion do not hold up to the dynamics of their recruitment. To the surprise of many media outlets reporting on the habits of ISIS recruits, it may even be appropriate that new jihadists own a copy of “Islam for Dummies.”²⁵⁹

C. SOCIETY-STATE

The birth of third and fourth wave global jihad in the 2000s introduced Salafist jihadist intentions to the French homefront and set the conditions for a three-sided identity conflict in France. Disagreements between the Muslim population and the French state were not new in the early 21st century, as a two-sided conflict was already common in the political sphere. However, the entry of new terrorism into the status quo of French political discourse unsettled everyone’s expectations in the wake of its renewed violence.

French Muslims experienced historical difficulty winning their political goals for several reasons. Their lack of solidarity or motivation to mobilize on a religious basis was weak, as most communities preferred cultural, ethnic associations. The hypercentralized nature of the French political system also presented a barrier to progress for French Muslims, as the threshold for entry into national level politics was too high for the Muslim base’s weak record of mobilization. Additionally, French Muslims faced the challenging mandate of integration, vice accommodation, that the Gallic political philosophy espouses. However, French Muslims’ greatest political obstacle has certainly been *laïcité*, the overarching concept of national secularism codified into French law in 1905. *Laïcité* is an element of French society long established by a distrust of religious prominence in France and presents a barrier for *any* religion to assert its presence in the public domain, no matter how moderate the requests.

²⁵⁹ Mehdi Hasan, “This Is What Wannabe Jihadists Order on Amazon before Leaving for Syria,” *New Republic*, August 22, 2014, <https://newrepublic.com/article/119182/jihadists-buy-islam-dummies-amazon>.

The problem of satisfying French Muslim political demands became has become exponentially more complicated with the introduction of global Salafism. The jihadist narrative and its quasipolitical goal of world domination caused sufficient confusion within an otherwise complicated debate between French Muslims and their state. The intentions and public narratives of French Muslims conflate with those of Islamist stalwarts and are therefore misunderstood by the general public and categorized as overly dangerous to the preexisting French identity protected by *laïcité*. From an anthropological standpoint, each side takes up one of three natural positions as an outsider, nativist, or accommodationist. In each case, nativists and outsiders compete for the survival of their group identity, and, in France, this is exactly the nature of the struggle.

The anthropological framework laid over the situation in France reveals an exceptional quality of the French Muslim community. French Muslims show a remarkable degree of accommodation to Western thinking and the way of life in Western countries. Their adapted mindsets are a quantum change from the sentiments found in their cultural homelands and are significantly more accommodating than even their closest European Muslim neighbors. The ideological standpoint of French Muslims makes them ideal targets of global Salafi jihad. Jihadist doctrine stipulates that apostate Muslims, or *kuffar*, present the greatest threat to Islam as it disintegrates Islamic cohesion from the inside. As a result, ripe targets abound in France, whether infidel Gallic French or *kuffar* French Muslims.

Islamist ideologues also readily use the history of failed political engagement between the French Muslim community and its Western government to prove the subjugation of Islam. They easily portray this subjugation as the reason for Muslim socioeconomic suffering, loss of purpose, and loss of identity. Many second and third generation Muslim youth feel subjugated in French society and experience a loss of true belonging to either the heritage of their parents or the Western culture of contemporary French society. Islamist narratives describe French society as the reason for their loss and jihad as the way to regain true identity and purpose.

D. EXPLANATIONS TESTED

Of my three hypotheses, none proved to be an entirely accurate explanation, but each shows some applicability into the overall phenomenon of recurrent terrorist attacks in France. First, a tipping point in socioeconomic grievances did not necessarily occur. At least in the context of historical “class struggle,” there was no consolidated sentiment for popular revolution that boiled over into violence. The closest French society came to such upheaval was during the moderate Muslim uprising in the summer of 2005; but those riots were still extremely localized and subsided as quickly as they began. It may be more accurate to describe a perfect storm of three contributing factors rather than a tipping point in just one. First, the methods of jihadists evolved in this period from recruiting mujahedeen to inspiring a movement. Second, the information revolution hit its full stride in the mid-2000s, and this provided a venue for jihadist narratives on television and computer screens worldwide. Third, young Muslims of second generation heritage came into adulthood and began feeling a lack of identity within French society. While not a socioeconomic tipping point, this confluence of factors effectively accelerated the jihadist threat beyond what French counterterrorist agencies were prepared to handle.

Second, any perceived Muslim resistance to integration does not seem to have direct correlation to jihadist violence. Primarily, jihadists did not attack in an attempt to win concession by the state to political demands. Additionally, evidence shows that French Muslims actually have an overtly Western outlook on life in France, contrasting with the goals of violent Islamism. Although French Muslims still desire more acceptance of their culture, they do not take a diametrically oppositional standpoint to the French state, as do radical Islamists.

Third, the idea that the French state was unable to engage the threat politically may be slightly inaccurate, as this requires a bit of nuanced dissection. It is true that the West cannot reason with hardcore Salafi ideologues, since their quasipolitical goal is the destruction of everyone unwilling to accept their worldview. Additionally, by design, new terrorism is decentralized on a global scale, which degrades the ability for target states to locate leaders and eliminate or coerce groups. However, after slicing the problem back to an investigation of the mindset of young French “foot soldiers” recruited to conduct jihad,

we may find a more malleable party with which to negotiate. In this sense of the term, political negotiation, is achievable, but it requires a wholly different approach from state governments, who currently address the problem once already a hostage of jihadism.

E. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

These policy recommendations arise from my examination of why France experienced a return of terrorism in 2012, so the reaction of the French state after that date has not been the explicit focus of this research. However, France has put extraordinary effort into aggressive counterterrorism policy since November 2015. In October 2017, France voted previously temporary emergency powers into permanent law.²⁶⁰ As the results of these changes begin to reflect in the stability of France's current security environment, it may be wise for policy makers to consider the adaptations recommended here. I attempted to delineate recommendations for the state and for its counterterrorist agencies separately; however, the recommendations inevitably applied to both entities and are therefore consolidated in discussion.

First, I first echo a sentiment reiterated throughout the scholarship on terrorism. Like any other democratic state, France must take a metered approach to its counterterror response so as to avoid playing into the narrative of jihadist ideologues. Additionally, the state must be careful to avoid violating the rights and sensitivities of the law-abiding public, lest it appear as an aggressor to potential gray zone demographics. Losing the gray zone not only reduces the capacity of the state, but it also increases the capacity of Islamists competing for any edge in the identity contest. France may have difficulty maintaining the balance between domestic security and personal liberty considering its secular history, which sets a precedent for antagonism over religious-based issues. Concerted efforts by both intelligence and law enforcement to regain trust amid local communities is key.

While the counterterrorism establishment must regain the human dimension of its investigative toolkit, it must also add the technological advantage of automated information gathering that served other Western states well over the preceding decade. Since so much

²⁶⁰ Anne-Sylvaine Chassany, "French Emergency Terror Powers Enshrined in Law," *Financial Times*, October 3, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/6b68aa54-a850-11e7-93c5-648314d2c72c>.

of what occurs prior to a terrorist attack now transpires via the Internet and social media, French counterterrorist agencies would be remiss to leave this robust digital information capability undeveloped. Interface with other developed countries in this regard could offset the transnational advantages of new terrorism and lead investigators even further back up the trail of radicalizing Islamists.

Adaptations in the information sphere should apply to state level activities with overarching influence over the public's understanding of the security environment. Information campaigns should not simply target the Muslim population with messages of deradicalization. They must also target each group of the anthropological triad. Debunking the complex narratives between outsiders, nativists, and accommodationists would lead to common understanding and a clearer picture of reality. Placing this tool in the hands (or minds) of the average citizen leverages the power of multitudes. In this context, the state is no longer responsible for deradicalizing every potential intransigent; instead, individuals at the community level become advocates for the state and contributors to domestic security.

Finally, counterterrorist agencies must reorganize under a higher echelon of leadership. France has many talented and experienced security organizations that do not require extensive overhaul; however, the system has operated with untapped synergy because of stove-piped information gathering and an unhealthy competition for relevancy. Any additional layers of leadership should concentrate on ensuring unencumbered information sharing and the specific delegation of responsibilities among the subordinate security agencies. However, new leadership must be careful not to hamper the benefits realized through the informal methods of investigative magistrates.

F. FUTURE RESEARCH

From a specifically French standpoint, the idea that the Hexagon may be a more desirable target for jihadists because of its accommodationist tendencies with the Western world needs additional empirical evidence. If actual jihadist sentiments or specific direction from Islamist ideologues support the theoretical findings, the implications for other states would become clearer. Specific states, even communities, exhibiting similar

accommodationist tendencies could use that information to increase their vigilance for potential targeting.

Any investigation of terrorism is most effectual by digging as deeply as possible into its root causes. Unfortunately, researchers would inevitably find that additional digging only reveals that at some point the terrorist makes a personal decision to engage in aggression and violence over any other course of action. Many factors go into that very personalized decision. As Bruce Hoffman noted in his final remarks during a Washington Institute Forum on lone wolf terror, simply “look into the soul of a person, and you’ll know if he’s going to become a terrorist.”²⁶¹ He then rhetorically asks, “How do we counter the message that violence is good—that it feels good to exact revenge?” Short of the capability to read minds or souls, terrorism scholars must be able to determine what factors influence a potential terrorist to cross the threshold and decide for violence. They must also place effort toward determining what factors stop a potential terrorist from radicalizing. Emphasizing the second, positive half of this equation equips counterterrorist agencies with the knowledge to develop information campaigns with actionable core concepts expressed in the local language. Instead of simply enumerating a list of pathways to violence, a clearer road back to moderation empowers agencies and communities with something to *do* in the fight against tomorrow’s terrorists.

²⁶¹ Ganor et al., “Lone Wolf.”

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