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DUPED BY DAESH: THE RISKS OF FRANCE'S DOMESTIC COUNTERTERROR RESPONSE

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Exercise Solo Flight

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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DUPED BY DAESH:

The Risks of France's Domestic Counterterror Response

INTRODUCTION

Daesh successfully targeted Paris with two devastating terror attacks in 2015. The terrorist group prefers to be referred to as the Islamic State (IS), inferring that it is a State and not an organization. It has a government, infrastructure, generates revenues, collects taxes, and provides services to its population.¹ Its main strategic objective is to control and expand its Caliphate, for which it requires fighters... many fighters². Daesh has a very effective information strategy that promotes a very compelling narrative of Muslim oppression that has attracted nearly 30,000 mujahideen.³ The strategic importance of foreign fighters can't be understated as Daesh needs to replace approximately one thousand fighters per month to maintain an adequate force against the coalition being led by the United States.⁴

The group is consequently spending significant resources in developing, evolving and implementing its information operation: it produces English and French magazines of top quality, it manages online chatrooms, and it actively uses social media to advertise its successes and undermine its enemies' effectiveness. This paper proposes that the attacks in Paris were a marketing event, designed to show to potential recruit fighters the power, skills, and organizational prowess of Daesh. The group is most likely expecting an international response to its aggression, and would welcome a response that would support its narrative of Muslim

¹ Audrey Kurth Cronin, "ISIS is Not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won't Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat." *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 2 (Mar, 2015): 90, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1658669066?accountid=9867>.

² James Fromson and Steven Simon, "ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now," *Survival* 57, no. 3 (2015): 40, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2015.1046222>.

³ Helene Cooper, Anne Barnard and Eric Schmitt, "Battered but Unbowed, ISIS is Still on Offensive: Foreign Desk," *New York Times*, 14 March 2015. "Mujahideen" is an Arabic derived term used to refer to foreign fighters.

⁴ Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, 15.

oppression by Western States. This paper argues that France's domestic response, which is based on its concept of *laïcité*, risks of being used by Daesh to enhance recruitment and propagate its cause against an enemy that is aggressively targeting Muslims.

The attacks conducted in Paris will first be reviewed to set the stage and establish that their scale and planning are indicative of acts of strategic importance to Daesh. The historical background, the ideological beliefs, and why France is using the term Daesh when referring to the organization will then be examined. These elements are important to understand why France was specifically targeted. It will then be argued that the specific actions being taken by France in response to the terror attacks via religious oppression run the risk of being counter-productive at preventing the Islamic radicalization of French Muslims. The paper will conclude by offering considerations for future research that could measure the effectiveness of France's counterterrorism strategy in order to verify if it is achieving its intent.

FRANCE TERRORIZED

In the past four decades, the world has seen many acts of terror that have resulted in many human fatalities and billions of dollars in "property damage and economic costs."⁵ The more devastating ones include the murder of eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games by the "Black September Organisation", the "Aum Shinrikyo group" chemical attack in the Tokyo subway system in 1995, and obviously the 9/11 attacks by al-Qaeda on the "World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Washington DC and United Flight 93."⁶ Those maintaining such infamous lists will now need to revise them in order to include the two terror attacks conducted in France in 2015.

⁵ Yonah Alexander, *Counterterrorism Strategies: Successes and Failures of Six Nations* (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2006), 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

Charlie Hebdo Attack

France was victim of its deadliest terrorist attack since the end of the Second World War when the offices of the Charlie Hebdo “satirical newspapers” were stormed on Wednesday 7 January 2015 by two terrorists who killed 12 people⁷.

The attack began at 11:30am when the Kouachi brothers (Chérif and Saïd), armed with Kalashnikovs weapons, forced themselves in Charlie Hebdo’s office and killed one person at the reception desk prior to proceeding to the conference room where the monthly coordination meeting was being held. Once inside the conference room, they killed 11 illustrators and journalist, including the editor Stephane (Charb) Charbonnier.⁸ The attackers claimed to be members of al-Qaeda Yemen and to be avenging prophet Mohammed.⁹ The extremely well planned attack was also praised by Daesh.¹⁰ It was executed on the exact day of the monthly meeting, they sought Charb specifically and killed him first, they showed excellent marksmanship with their weapon, and they were calm and deliberate through the execution of their plan, which all indicate some level of military training.¹¹ There is some evidence that at least one of the brothers (Cherif Kouachi - who had been sentenced to prison on terrorism charges in 2008 for facilitating Frenchmen joining al-Qaeda in Iraq) had received some training

⁷ Editorial, "Paris Shooting: Manhunt After Gunmen Attack Office of Charlie Hebdo, French Satirical Magazine," *CBS News*, 7 January 2015.

⁸ Editorial, "Charlie Hebdo Visé Par Une Attaque Terroriste, Deuil National Décrété," *Le Monde*, 23 March 2016.

⁹ *Ibid.* The Charlie Hedbo magazine had long been the target of death threats and acts of vandalism as a result of it publishing various caricatures satirizing the Prophet Mohamed.

¹⁰ "Paris Shooting: Manhunt After Gunmen Attack Office of Charlie Hebdo, French Satirical Magazine," *CBS News*, 7 January 2015.

¹¹ "Charlie Hebdo Visé Par Une Attaque Terroriste, Deuil National Décrété," *Le Monde*, 23 March 2016.

in Syria in 2005.¹² The attack also legitimized popular fears that “jihadis returning from conflicts in Syria and Iraq will stage attacks at home.”¹³

The Charlie Hebdo attack was, as qualified by President François Hollande, an “act of exceptional barbarism” that successfully terrorized Paris and resulted in “the government [raising] its terror alert to the highest level and [reinforcing] security at houses of worship, stores, media offices and transportation.”¹⁴ Yet, this attack was nothing in comparison to the terror attack Paris would experience ten months later.

11/13 Paris Attacks

Paris and the rest of the world were horrified on the evening of Friday 13 November 2015 when teams of Daesh fighters conducted three simultaneous attacks through Paris.¹⁵ The coordinated assaults killed 129 people and critically injured 352 others.¹⁶ They were the deadliest attacks “in Western Europe since the Madrid train bombings in 2004.”¹⁷

The attacks began shortly after 9pm, when two suicide bombers and an additional explosive device detonated outside the gates of the Stade de France, where President Hollande was in attendance to an international soccer match between the French National Team and Germany.¹⁸ The blast killed a few people outside the stadium and sent shockwaves of terror

¹² Editorial, “Youngest Suspect in Charlie Hebdo Attack Turns Himself in, 2 Others Sought,” *ABC News*, 7 January 2015.

¹³ “Paris Shooting: Manhunt After Gunmen Attack Office of Charlie Hebdo, French Satirical Magazine,” *CBS News*, 7 January 2015.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Adam Nossiter, Aurien Breeden and Katrin Bennhold, “Three Teams of Coordinated Attackers Carried Out Assault on Paris, Officials Say; Hollande Blames ISIS,” *The New York Times*, Last modified 14 Nov 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/15/world/europe/paris-terrorist-attacks.html?_r=0.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Helen Fenwick, “Responding to the ISIS Threat: Extending Coercive Non-Trial-Based Measures in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015,” *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology* (29 February 2016):1. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13600869.2016.1145870>.

¹⁸ Nossiter, Breeden and Bennhold, “Three Teams of Coordinated Attackers Carried Out Assault on Paris, Officials Say; Hollande Blames ISIS.”

within as the crowd heard the three blasts.¹⁹ Concurrently to the stadium attack, gunmen opened fire and killed several people at five popular nightlife locations (restaurants and cafes) through the downtown core of Paris.²⁰ The orchestrated carnage concluded with the deadliest attack at the Bataclan concert hall. Three gunmen, all wearing suicide vests, entered the Bataclan at approximately 9:40pm and immediately opened fire on the packed crowd listening and dancing to the rock group Eagles of Death Metal.²¹ After an hour of indiscriminate shooting of concertgoers, the attack turned into a hostage situation until the police stormed and killed the gunmen to end the ordeal shortly after midnight.²²

The attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015, which were claimed by Daesh, were conducted by nine attackers and two masterminds.²³ All of the individuals associated with the attacks have had some level of problems with the law prior to the attacks, such as petty crime and possession of small amounts of drugs.²⁴ The majority were known to the authorities for their involvement in terrorist organizations and had travelled, or at least attempted to travel, to Syria in order to join, train and fight with Daesh.²⁵

¹⁹ Rohan Banerjee and Adam Shergold, "Suicide Attacks Near Stade De France Leave Three People Dead as Explosions are Heard during Friendly Victory Over Germany and Paris is Rocked by Coordinated Terrorist Strikes on Six Targets," *MailOnline*, last modified 14 November 2015. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/sportsnews/article-3317836/France-Germany-supporters-brought-pitch-Stade-France-evacuated-following-terror-attack-Paris.html>.

²⁰ Editorial, "Paris Attacks: What Happened on the Night," *BBC News*, last modified on 9 December 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994>.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Daesh, "A Selection of Military Operations by [Daesh]," *Dabiq*, no. 12 (November 2015): 28, <http://media.clarionproject.org>.

²⁴ Editorial, "Paris Attacks: Who were the Attackers?" *BBC News*, last modified 18 March 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34832512>.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

The extreme terror and large death toll resulting from these attacks have some calling the “11/13 Paris Attacks: France’s 9/11.”²⁶ The group demonstrated exceptional levels of planning, execution and willingness to assume risks by conducting these attacks outside of the Caliphate.²⁷ As such and according to William McCants, Brookings Institution scholar of militant Islamism and acclaimed author on the history of Daesh, these attacks were operations designed in support of the group’s strategic objectives.²⁸ What is Daesh and why is France part of its strategic objectives?

DAESH

The origins of Daesh date back to 1999 when “a hotheaded Jordanian street-tough-turned jihadist, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, arrived in Qandahar, Afghanistan, seeking an audience with al-Qaeda's leaders.”²⁹ Zarqawi articulated his vision for a Muslim revolution in the “Fertile Crescent” and expressed views of what constitute “good Muslims” that were considered extreme even for jihadist.³⁰ In his opinion, al-Qaeda ought to not only focus on expelling the Americans from the Middle East, but also to eliminate the Shi’a as they are the “servants of the Antichrist, who will appear at the end of time to fight against the Muslims. The Americans served the same master.”³¹ Al-Qaeda was leery of Zarqawi’s views and desires, and as such that did not accept him within the organization but agreed to work with him and his organization towards common

²⁶ Khaled A. Beydoun, "Beyond the Paris Attacks: Unveiling the War within French Counterterrorism Policy," *Social Science Research Network* (February 7, 2016): 2, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2728832.

²⁷ Editorial, "Paris Attacks: A Change of ISIL Strategy, Or a Rare Success?" *The National*, last modified 17 November 2015, <http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/paris-attacks-a-change-of-isil-strategy-or-a-rare-success>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ William Faizi McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015), 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

objectives.³² Zarqawi never wavered from his extreme ambitions and he subsequently began, in 2001, developing Daesh's strategic plan.³³

The Apocalyptic Prophecy

Both al-Qaeda and Daesh fervently believe in the Muslim apocalyptic prophecy. The prophecy is that Mahdi (the Muslim savior) will appear and join the army of the righteous in Dabiq and lead them to battle against the Romans.³⁴ The battle will see a third of them flee (never to be forgiven by Alla), a third will die in the fight, and the final third will conquer. Madhi and his Muslim army will then be joined by Jesus, "Islam's second most powerful prophet whom they call Isa Ibn Maryam" to win the final fight against the infidels to create an earth-wide caliphate.³⁵ This will be the end of the world, and God will call the "faithful" for the final judgement.³⁶

Daesh's strategy is built around the belief that the apocalypse is upon us imminently and that "the Mahdi will appear in less than a year".³⁷ Here lies the major difference between al-Qaeda and Daesh. Al-Qaeda believes in the inevitability of the apocalypse but not in its looming arrival.³⁸ Al-Qaeda's strategy in preparing for the apocalypse aims at creating a common Muslim resentment against the Americans in order to push them out of the Middle East.³⁹ Their objective of establishing the caliphate is predicated on building popular support amongst the Muslim world for their cause.⁴⁰

³² *Ibid.*, 9.

³³ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁴ Daesh, "Until it burns the crusader army in Dabiq," *Dabiq*, no. 01 (05 July 2014): 3, <http://media.clarionproject.org>.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, 29.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁹ McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, 11.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

Zarqawi's vision of fast approaching doomsday did not die when he was killed on June 7, 2006. The Daesh proclaimed the Islamic State on 15 October 2006 and asked for Muslims in Iraq to pledge "allegiance to Abu Umar al-Baghdadi and acknowledge him as the commander of the faithful."⁴¹ Daesh has further, in 2014, declared itself the only legitimate "government for Muslims worldwide" as well as ruler of the Caliphate.⁴² The aggressive strategies of the Daesh and its ambitions of assuming authority over al-Qaeda and have created great divides.⁴³ Al-Qaeda has officially severed all links with Daesh in February 2014.⁴⁴

What's in a Name?

The group seeks to rule over an Islamic State and control all Muslims.⁴⁵ They call themselves, and want to be referred to, as the Islamic State (IS) "in recognition of the caliphate they have declared."⁴⁶ This is exactly why leading Muslims and many heads of State do not want to use this title, as explained by the Islamic Society of Britain and the Association of Muslim Lawyers: "it is neither Islamic, nor is it a State. The group has no standing with faithful Muslims, nor among the international community of nations."⁴⁷ This is exactly why France is only referring to the organization as Daesh, as expressed by Laurent Fabius, the French Foreign Minister: "This is a terrorist group and not a state ... I do not recommend using the term Islamic

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴² Matthew Weaver, "ISIS Declares a Caliphate in Iraq and Syria," *The Guardian*, last modified 30 June 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/middle-east-live/2014/jun/30/isis-declares-caliphate-in-iraq-and-syria-live-updates>.

⁴³ Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, 34.

⁴⁴ Liz Sly, "Al-Qaeda Disavows any Ties with Radical Islamist ISIS Group in Syria, Iraq," *The Washington Post*, last modified 3 February 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/al-qaeda-disavows-any-ties-with-radical-islamist-isis-group-in-syria-iraq/2014/02/03/2c9afc3a-8cef-11e3-98ab-fe5228217bd1_story.html.

⁴⁵ Diego Muro, "Why did ISIS Target France?" *OpenDemocracy*, last modified 20 November 2015, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/diego-muro/why-did-isis-target-france>.

⁴⁶ Lizzie Dearden, "Isis Vs Islamic State Vs Isil Vs Daesh: What do the Different Names Mean – and Why does it Matter?" *The Independent*, last modified 23 September 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-vs-islamic-state-vs-isil-vs-daesh-what-do-the-different-names-mean-9750629.html>.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

State because it blurs the lines between Islam, Muslims and Islamists. The Arabs call it ‘Daesh’ and I will be calling them the ‘Daesh cutthroat.’⁴⁸ The terms serves two purposes: it delegitimizes the group and its caliphate, and is an insult as it resembles “the Arabic word daes, which refers to something that stomps, or crushes.”⁴⁹ In keeping with the French terminology and the logic explained, this paper uses Daesh to refer to the group that terrorized France in 2015.

Strategic Plan

There are insufficient studies on Daesh’s “long-term political trajectory” to provide a dominant view of the group’s strategic objective.⁵⁰ They may be fervently believing and therefore preparing for the apocalypse, or simply using their interpretation of the prophecy for propaganda and recruiting purposes.⁵¹ Whether a strategy or propaganda, the group’s actions are consistent with the prophecy in seeking to “control territory and create a pure Sunni Islamist state governed by a brutal interpretation of sharia.”⁵² Fromson and Simon, counterterrorism academics and authors of *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, have noted that the group’s “apocalyptic inclinations – as well as its success in applying its ideology – are what gives the group its unique appeal to jihadists” who believe in the prophecy.⁵³ This is supported by a 2012 research by the Pew Research Center that found that more than half of Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa “believe they will live to see the return of the Mahdi” as well as in

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁹ Alexander Panetta, "ISIL Vs. Daesh: Why the U.S. Ambassador Changed how He Refers to Militant Group," *The Canadian Press*, last modified 18 November 2015, <http://www.torontosun.com/2015/11/18/isil-vs-daesh-why-the-us-ambassador-changed-how-he-refers-to-militant-group>.

⁵⁰ Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, 7.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 27-29.

⁵² Cronin, *ISIS is Not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won'T Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat*, 2.

⁵³ Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, 28.

Jesus' imminent return.⁵⁴ The 2014 declaration of the caliphate and the imminence of the apocalypse are the reasons for most of the fighters joining Daesh. Abu Omar, a Sunni Muslim jihadi, explained: "If you think all these mujahideen came from across the world to fight Assad, you're mistaken ... They are all here as promised by the Prophet. This is the war he promised – it is the Grand Battle."⁵⁵

Daesh's ability to attract foreign fighters remains vital to its ability to fight as they bring combat experience and supplement the group of suicide bombers.⁵⁶ The group is experiencing significant losses against the coalition forces and various opposing groups, but it is able to "replace its cadres of foreign fighters at approximately 1,000 per month, a rate sufficient to maintain a sizeable force."⁵⁷ The group's message is meant at attracting fighters, but also at encouraging those who can't join them to fight at home in order to, arguably, create publicity.⁵⁸

Why France?

The significance of the 13/11 attack is that it was planned by Daesh (not a lone wolf) and "showed [a high level of] sophistication in planning and professionalism in execution ... [the attack was] meant to be spectacular and extraordinary."⁵⁹ The attack was portrayed by world leaders as one aiming at destroying Western values of freedom and democracy.⁶⁰ François Hollande called it an attack against "the values that [France] defend everywhere, Vladimir Putin

⁵⁴ James Bell, "Chapter 3: Articles of Faith," in *The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity* (Pew Research Center, 9 August 2012), 65.

⁵⁵ Mariam Karouny, "Apocalyptic Prophecies Drive both Sides to Syrian Battle for End of Time," *Routers* (1 April 2014): 1, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1511687674?accountid=9867>.

⁵⁶ Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, 10.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁸ Julian Robinson, "ISIS Extremists Issue Chilling Update to Al-Qaeda Terror Manual Explaining how to Carry Out 'Lone Wolf' Attacks," *MailOnline*, last modified 11 January 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3393864/ISIS-extremists-issue-chilling-update-al-Qaeda-terror-manual-explaining-carry-lone-wolf-attacks.html>.

⁵⁹ "Paris Attacks: A Change of ISIL Strategy, Or a Rare Success?"

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

called it a challenge against “human civilization”, while Barack Obama called it and “an attack on all of humanity and the universal values we share.”⁶¹ But was it really?

Daesh promotes violence and shamelessly shows gruesome acts in their videos and magazines.⁶² The group’s main message of “raw power and revenge” has been successful at recruiting fighters and this attack could very simply be a new method of demonstrating its power.⁶³ As stated by Mr Charlie Winter, a security analyst focusing on Daesh: “The focus of [Daesh] is still on building a caliphate in the territories where it has a measure of security and social, economic and political control”, and not on destroying France or the Western culture.⁶⁴ France has been extremely active in the fight against Daesh in Syria.⁶⁵ It also has, in contrast, been a generous contributor of foreign fighters: France is the largest European exporter of mujahideen – 32%.⁶⁶ Consequently, the attack was more realistically aimed at supporting its recruiting efforts in France as well as, perhaps, at affecting France’s resolve in Syria. It is however, doubtful that Daesh would have genuinely expected France to stop or even reduce its efforts against the group in Syria as a result of the 13/11 Paris Attacks. It would be reasonable to propose that Daesh expected retaliation from France and the international community.

“France is at War!” proclaimed French President François Hollande as a result of the attack.⁶⁷ There is a risk that this is exactly the reaction that the group intended to generate.

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⁶¹ Muro, *Why did ISIS Target France?*

⁶² Daesh, "Introduction: Au Nom D'Allah Le Tout Miséricordieux, Le Très Miséricordieux," *Dar Al Islam*, no. 7 (November 2015), <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com>.

⁶³ "Paris Attacks: A Change of ISIL Strategy, Or a Rare Success?"

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Muro, *Why did ISIS Target France?*

⁶⁶ "Foreign Fighters in Iraq & Syria. Where do they Come from?" 14 April 2016.

⁶⁷ Francois Hollande, speech, Joint Session of Parliament, Paris, France, 16 November 2015.

Daesh is waging an ideological asymmetric war that is largely founded on its ability to recruit individuals based on the promise of achieving a better world by uniting against a common global enemy.⁶⁸ Yet, France's response to terror attacks via religious oppression attacks the core components of individual freedoms, and it risks enabling its enemy's key objectives. Daesh could easily use France's oppression of religious freedom to enhance its recruitment and propagate its cause against an enemy that has now aggressively targeted not only them (ie. Daesh) but the French society at large. The job of recruitment may have become easier as the breadth and scope of French society that could easily become disenfranchised or dissatisfied has potentially expanded to unmanageable, albeit unknown, numbers.

Targeting Islam

Laïcité, as it pertains to France, refers to the fact that the government "neither recognizes nor subsidizes a particular religion."⁶⁹ The objective of this secularity principle is to ensure that the State doesn't impose any particular religious belief on its citizen, and to ensure that religious beliefs are not justifying or influencing public policies.⁷⁰ The concept was developed during the French Revolution and preserved in the 1905 law on the Separation of the Churches and the State in order to remove the Catholic Church, as well as the monarchy, from its governance structure.⁷¹ Laïcité is also enshrined in the 1958 French Constitution: "France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion. It shall respect all beliefs."⁷² The concept can be interpreted

⁶⁸ Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, 15.

⁶⁹ Mohammad Mazher Idriss, "Laïcité and the Banning of the 'hijab' in France," *Legal Studies* 25, no. 2 (2005): 261, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1748-121X.2005.tb00615.x/full>.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Elizabeth Winkler, "Is it Time for France to Abandon Laïcité?" *New Republic*, last modified 7 January 2016, <https://newrepublic.com/article/127179/time-france-abandon-laicite>.

⁷² Constitution of 4 October 1958, 4 October 1958, last accessed on 03 May 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b594b.html>.

to mean a principle of non-intervention and non-discrimination between state and church. It can however, also be interpreted to mean that the “values of the state [can be used] to justify interference ... with some religious organisations.”⁷³ France is using the latter interpretation in the development and implementation of its counterterror strategy: the Headscarf Ban in 2004 and the Face Concealment Ban in 2010 for example. France has clearly favored the interest of the State over those of religion, and as such “the state takes absolute priority over religion.”⁷⁴ In defending Charlie Hebdo’s “Anti-Muslim hate literature” and equating veils with terrorism, France could be accused of supporting Islamophobia in the name of freedom of speech and its constitution.⁷⁵

Western governments, France included, take pride in their inclusiveness and respect of all individuals and beliefs. In his speech following the attacks, Hollande remarked: “France .. makes no distinction as to colour, origin, background, religion.”⁷⁶ It is quite remarkable however, that he didn’t use his speech to make a distinction between Islam and terrorism. He didn’t blame religion for the attacks, but he also did not dispel such belief from the French population.⁷⁷

This could be the exact type of behavior that Daesh is seeking from Western states. France’s bombings against Daesh in Iraq and Syria, the implementation of restrictions on religious expression (Face and Head concealment) at home, and the support of Anti-Islam discourse all support Daesh’s narrative of Muslim oppression and the urgency for them to join

⁷³ Idriss, *Laïcité and the Banning of the ‘hijab’ in France*, 261.

⁷⁴ Colin Geraghty, "The Perils of "French Islam": France’s Misguided Response to the Paris Attacks," *Brookings*, 16 December 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/12/16-frances-misguided-paris-attacks-response-geraghty>.

⁷⁵ Eric Walberg, "France's Response to Paris Attacks Encourages ISIS's Caliphate Fantasy," *Katehon Think Tank*, last modified 06 April 2016. <http://katehon.com/1316-frances-response-to-paris-attacks-encourages-isiss-caliphate-fantasy.html>.

⁷⁶ Hollande, *French President Sets Out Response to Paris Terror Attacks*.

⁷⁷ Douglas Murray, "Will Politicians Finally Admit that the Paris Attacks had Something to do with Islam," *The Spectator*, last modified 31 December 2015, <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2015/11/will-politicians-finally-admit-that-the-paris-attacks-had-something-to-do-with-islam/>.

the caliphate. The organization was quick to use a narrative of French Islamic oppression to justify its attack in Paris:

On Friday, the 1st of Safar, 8 soldiers of the Khilāfah carried out an operation in the heart of French crusader territory ... The attacks, which included other targets around Paris and succeeded in killing hundreds of crusaders... the [Daesh] will continue to stand firm in the face of their transgressions and retaliate with fire and bloodshed in revenge for the honor of the Prophet and the multitudes killed and injured in crusader airstrikes in the lands of the Muslims.⁷⁸

Allah facilitated our soldiers and provided them what they wished as they detonated their bombs and expended their ammunitions amongst the infidels.... France, and those who follow her path, must know that they'll remain our primary targets and that they'll continue to smell the odor of death for leading the crusade, for having insulted our Prophet, for fighting Islam in France, and for having killed Muslims in the Caliphate...⁷⁹

Targeting Mosques & Imams

There is a strong belief that extremist groups are using mosques as recruitment centers to attract new members to their organization.⁸⁰ A good example is that of Abu Hamza, Imam of the Finsbury Park Most in London, England, who used his mosque and position of influence and power to recruit terrorist fighters and to incite racial hatred.⁸¹ France has been so concerned with mosques preaching hate that it is actively surveilling and monitoring religious and cultural centers. In 2004, a “French police investigation discovered that 150 of the 1600 mosques and prayer halls in [France] were under the control of extremist elements.”⁸² The fear is so entrenched that the *Conseil français du culte musulman* (the French Council of Islam) stated, following the 13/11 Paris Attacks, that France would start issuing “certificates to imams who

⁷⁸ Daesh, *A Selection of Military Operations by [Daesh]*, 28.

⁷⁹ Daesh, *Introduction: Au Nom D'Allah Le Tout Miséricordieux, Le Très Miséricordieux*, 3-4. The quote was translated from French to English by this paper's author.

⁸⁰ Zahra Shah, "Countering Radicalisation by Engaging Mosques and Imams: The UK's Case" (Master's Thesis in International Relations, Leiden University, 8 January 2016), 1.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸² Oldrich Bures, *EU Counterterrorism Policy: A Paper Tiger?* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2011).

prove their non-radical credentials."⁸³ These types of statement and actions from authoritative figures may play directly in favor of Daesh.

The focus on mosque may alleviate fear amongst the general population, but may not be an effective solution against radicalization. It has been argued that radicalization does not occur in mosques, mostly because there is so much scrutiny that they would be exposed.⁸⁴ In fact, the attackers in Paris had either been excluded from their local mosque due to their extreme views or had never shared their views with their peers.⁸⁵ These individuals were radicalized outside of the traditional places of Muslim worship and gatherings.⁸⁶ In almost every case, the radicalized were found to have broken with their religion and parents in order to seek "some sort of *Salafism*, which is a scripturalist version of Islam that discards traditional Muslim culture."⁸⁷ If not because of incompatible extremist views, many French Muslims are seeking alternative sources of spiritual guidance because they can't understand all of the Arabic used in the Mosques: many of the Imams preaching in France are immigrants who can't speak French or English.⁸⁸ Consequently, pupils turn to the internet or small groups for information and become pray to recruitment.⁸⁹ In spite of these facts, France has adopted a hard power approach against

⁸³ Geraghty, *The Perils of "French Islam": France's Misguided Response to the Paris Attacks*, 2. It must be stated however, that there hasn't been any report of such initiative gaining political support or progressing past the idea stage.

⁸⁴ Rachel Browne, "François Hollande Wants to Reform the French Constitution to Fight 'Army of Jihadis'," *Vice News*, last modified 16 November 2015, <https://news.vice.com/article/francois-hollande-wants-to-reform-the-french-constitution-to-fight-army-of-jihadis>.

⁸⁵ Joseph Downing, "Paris Attacks: Why France must Avoid Viewing its Muslim Population as a Security Threat," *London School of Economics and Political Science*, 16 November 2016, 2.

⁸⁶ Beydoun, *Beyond the Paris Attacks: Unveiling the War within French Counterterrorism Policy*, 40.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸⁸ Marc Champion, "French Imam Supports a Purge of Radical Mosques," *National Post* (17 November 2015),

⁸⁹ Shah, *Countering Radicalisation by Engaging Mosques and Imams: The UK's Case*, 19.

mosques.⁹⁰ Since 2012, it has deported 40 foreign imams “found to be preaching hatred to members of their mosques.”⁹¹

The root of radicalization could be argued to reside outside of mosques. Studies have found that those who’ve committed terror attacks were all engaged in “deviant secular activity before radicalizing”, which implies that these activities (organized crime, drug use, imprisonment) are the root cause of radicalization, not the mosques.⁹² The disenfranchised or dissatisfied French are attracted to Daesh because they believe in the cause and the message portraying the French government as an oppressor. The government will never be able to reason with these individuals as any attempt at discrediting Daesh will be viewed as propaganda “intended to defame” Daesh.⁹³ The only credible source who could stand a chance at successfully preventing a transition from radical to extreme would be an Imam who could relate with them and share similar, albeit non-violent, views. How can trust be developed between an Imam and his troubled worshipper if the State is perceived to be controlling the Imam? It has been shown that instead of being a source of insecurity, the Islamic community organizations are consistently providing key services in areas neglected by the state.⁹⁴ France’s counterterror strategy should consider Imams and mosques as the solution instead of the cause of radicalization.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁹¹ Nick Visser, "French Interior Minister Calls for ‘Dissolution’ of some Mosques," *The World Post*, last modified 16 November 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/france-interior-minister-dissolution-mosques_us_564915a0e4b045bf3defa464.

⁹² Beydoun, *Beyond the Paris Attacks: Unveiling the War within French Counterterror Policy*, 48.

⁹³ Thomas R. McCabe, "A Strategy for the ISIS Foreign Fighter Threat," *Foreign Policy Research Institute* (Winter 2016): 149.

⁹⁴ Downing, *Paris Attacks: Why France must Avoid Viewing its Muslim Population as a Security Threat*, 4.

If the intent behind the attack was to “generate a French crackdown to encourage Muslims to follow [it’s] caliphate fantasy,” it would be fair to say that France has been duped.⁹⁵ France should acknowledge that only a small minority of Muslims will pose a security threat. Instead of trying to enforce the more subdued interpretations of the Islamic religion by controlling mosques and imams, it should focus on improving its policing and intelligence efforts.

Targeting French Muslims

France is the largest European exporter of fighters to the Daesh: approximately 1700 out of 6000 European fighters have come from France.⁹⁶ The overall effect of European Fighters may be debatable, but they remain a security threat and the flow will have to be stopped on the “supply side.”⁹⁷ This must be accomplished through effective intelligence, policing, and border control.⁹⁸

The 13/11 Paris Attacks proved Daesh’s efficacy in its recruiting and use of mujahideen.⁹⁹ The suspected mastermind of the attack, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, had joined Daesh in Syria in 2014 and had subsequently returned to Brussels in order to plan and coordinate the attacks.¹⁰⁰ In addition to the foreign fighters, policing and intelligence must also be better at dismantling organized crime and building trust with the local community. The Kouachi brothers procured their arsenal for the Charlie Hebdo attack from a Brussels’ arms trafficker.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Walberg, *France's Response to Paris Attacks Encourages ISIS's Caliphate Fantasy*, 2.

⁹⁶ Ashley Kirk, "Iraq and Syria: How Many Foreign Fighters are Fighting for Isil?" *The Telegraph*, last modified 24 March 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/03/29/iraq-and-syria-how-many-foreign-fighters-are-fighting-for-isil/>.

⁹⁷ Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, 46.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁹⁹ McCabe, *A Strategy for the ISIS Foreign Fighter Threat*, 140.

¹⁰⁰ Fenwick, *Responding to the ISIS Threat: Extending Coercive Non-Trial-Based Measures in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015*, 3.

¹⁰¹ Downing, *Paris Attacks: Why France must Avoid Viewing its Muslim Population as a Security Threat*, 4.

Disturbingly, neighbors of the brothers had seen the arsenal but never reported it to the police due (perhaps) to “a generalized mistrust of the effectiveness of the French police.”¹⁰² Dr Khaled Beydoun, Professor of Law and one of the United States’ foremost experts on Arab and Muslim American profiling and policing, argues that the inefficiencies and failures in preventing the attacks and stopping the exportation of fighters seem to reside in France’s poor cooperation and limited level of connection with the affected communities.¹⁰³ France’s counter-terror policing and intelligence efforts are focused on policing Muslim men and is akin to the New York Police Department’s “Stop-and-Frisk” tactics.¹⁰⁴ The strategies and techniques employed are primarily punitive and engage every Muslim as threats instead of potential counterterror allies, which “further marginalize French Muslims and deepen their mistrust of law enforcement and the state at large.”¹⁰⁵ Predictably, France reacted strongly against Muslim communities following the 13/11 Paris Attacks, and within a month it had conducted 2,700 administrative searches, placed 360 persons under house arrests and another 287 in custody.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, President Hollande promised to increase the police force by five thousands and the 2,500 additional jobs in the prison and judiciary services in order to specifically support the counterterror policing efforts.¹⁰⁷ These promises were made in spite of the fact that France already has a very “strong police and intelligence presence” in the Muslim communities.¹⁰⁸ These measures are not addressing the need to mitigate tensions and build effective relationships with the communities in order to prevent radicalization. Increased police presence will undoubtedly result in increased numbers of arrests, which will further divide trust between the Muslim population and the authorities. Thus

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Beydoun, *Beyond the Paris Attacks: Unveiling the War within French Counterterror Policy*, 41.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 5, 39.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰⁶ Jean-Claude Paye, "France: An Algorithmic Power," *Monthly Review* 67, no. 9 (2016): 10.

¹⁰⁷ Hollande, *French President Sets Out Response to Paris Terror Attacks*.

¹⁰⁸ Beydoun, *Beyond the Paris Attacks: Unveiling the War within French Counterterror Policy*, 41.

far, no terrorists identified have emerged from the religious places that France is actively targeting.¹⁰⁹ Daesh is not specifically looking for disturbed individuals, it is rather seeking those “with an inclination to violent radicalism with ambitions” to settle grudges.¹¹⁰ Sunni tribal sources are reporting that “hard-core ideologues represent only 10%” of the Daesh’s fighters.¹¹¹ The group recruits many more that are yearning for “adventure, personal power, and ... of course [wanting to] kill” than for religious righteousness.¹¹² Recruiting is primarily conducted online, but also on the ground (outside of mosques) because of the increase oversight and control measures implemented by governments and social media companies.¹¹³

Another concern that the policing strategy must address is that of the returning fighters: those that have been allowed by Daesh to leave Iraq and Syria in order to coordinate attacks abroad and recruit more fighters, as well as those that have defected from the group.¹¹⁴ There are two main thoughts in dealing with the phenomenon. The first is to welcome them back in order to help break terror cells at home as well as to help preventing radicalization.¹¹⁵ The second, being considered by France, is to prevent them from returning to the country by tightening borders and revoking their citizenship or passports.¹¹⁶ That solution could potentially prove to be extremely counterproductive in two ways. First, fighters would be unable to defect from Daesh as they wouldn’t be allowed to return home and would have no other option but to stay and fight. Second, those risking returning home would most likely be deported to another country, as they

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹¹⁰ McCabe, *A Strategy for the ISIS Foreign Fighter Threat*, 145-146.

¹¹¹ Fromson and Simon, *ISIS: The Dubious Paradise of Apocalypse Now*, 15.

¹¹² Cronin, *ISIS is Not a Terrorist Group: Why Counterterrorism Won'T Stop the Latest Jihadist Threat*, 4.

¹¹³ Shah, *Countering Radicalisation by Engaging Mosques and Imams: The UK's Case*, 7.

¹¹⁴ Fenwick, *Responding to the ISIS Threat: Extending Coercive Non-Trial-Based Measures in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015*, 5.

¹¹⁵ Geraghty, *The Perils of "French Islam": France's Misguided Response to the Paris Attacks*, 4.

¹¹⁶ Browne, *François Hollande Wants to Reform the French Constitution to Fight 'Army of Jihadis'*, 1; McCabe, *A Strategy for the ISIS Foreign Fighter Threat*, 152.

would no longer be French citizens, where they may or may not be prosecuted or tracked to prevent further participation in terrorism. France would be much better served by continuing to allow them to return in order to prosecute them, but more optimistically to have them become influential individuals against radicalization. In the United Kingdom, it has been shown that reformed jihadists “who had renounced violence but not their religious beliefs” could effectively counter al-Qaeda’s radicalization narrative.¹¹⁷ They retained great credibility in the eyes of those seeking to join extremist organization because they share similar Islamic interpretations and they are not seemed to be controlled by the State as they still “advocate hardline political views.”¹¹⁸ In deciding what to do with returning fighters, States must balance the need to alleviate public fear by keeping the bad guys out against the need to better understand its enemy in order to defeat it. The argument seems to favor accepting returning fighters as the most effective counterterror solution.

CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

This paper proposed that Daesh attacked Paris in order to prove its might and entice more foreign fighters to join its ranks. It was argued that France’s response, predominantly informed by its concept of *laïcité*, via religious repression risks aiding Daesh’s recruitment effort by reinforcing the group’s narrative of Muslim oppression. Although there is a very limited number of evaluation research on counter-terrorism strategies and therefore limited scientific knowledge on their effectiveness, there is some evidence that some of the reviewed strategies have regrettably increased the risks of terrorism.¹¹⁹ The consequences of France’s counterterror

¹¹⁷ Geraghty, *The Perils of "French Islam": France’s Misguided Response to the Paris Attacks*, 4.

¹¹⁸ Geraghty, *The Perils of "French Islam": France’s Misguided Response to the Paris Attacks*, 4.

¹¹⁹ Cynthia Lum, Leslie Kennedy and Alison Sherley, "The Effectiveness of Counter-Terrorism Strategies," *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, no. 2 (2006): 3, <http://campbellcollaboration.org/lib/download/53/>.

actions will be difficult to assess, but a few indicators may provide some clue as whether the efforts are being effective or counterproductive.

The effectiveness of France's counterterror actions could be measured, as suggested by the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, with respect to what "a lack of success would look like."¹²⁰ Future work would therefore assess whether there has been an increase in the number of attacks, casualties, and foreign fighters joining Daesh following the 13/11 Paris attacks. These quantitative indicators would be intuitively logical in determining if the counterterror measures implemented are ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst.¹²¹ The numbers of attacks and casualties "generally gives a good impression of the success of terrorist activities" and would therefore be good indicators of an unsuccessful counterterror strategy.¹²² France is infamously the lead European exporter of fighters to Daesh. While a reduction in number would not be very telling as it could be indicative of a depleted source of recruits instead of an effective counter-narrative, a continuation or increase in France's exportation of fighters would certainly indicate that its methods are not successful.

Dr Spencer, Chair of Global Governance and Public Policy at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, counter-argues that such numbers say little if anything on the effectiveness of counterterror strategies.¹²³ Terrorists may have paused or reduced their attacks in order to: prepare for a large scale attack, lure its enemy into a false sense of security and expose vulnerabilities, or to focus on other strategic objectives such as training and recruiting.¹²⁴ These quantitative indicators are also difficult for academics to analyze because they are "shrouded in

¹²⁰ Peter Romaniuk and Naureen Chowdhury Fink, "From Input to Impact: Evaluating Terrorism Prevention Programs," *Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation* (2012): 19.

¹²¹ Diane Maye, "Measures of Effectiveness Israeli Counterterrorism Strategies and Tactics during the Al-Aqsa Intifada" (Master of Arts in Security Studies, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey California, 2006), 52.

¹²² Alexander Spencer, "The Problems of Evaluating Counter-Terrorisms," *UNISCI*, no. 12 (2006): 183.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

secrecy.”¹²⁵ It would be impossible to know how many attacks are being foiled by the State, which would affect the validity of any scientific research on counterterrorism effectiveness.¹²⁶ Quantitative assessments lend themselves well in determining trends and patterns but terrorism is rare and random, which “run counter to the idea of trends and patterns.”¹²⁷ The U.S. Congressional Research Service noted in 2007 that governments often rely on quantitative indicators to report on their counterterror effectiveness, but should also use qualitative indicators in order to effectively monitor and evolve their strategies.¹²⁸

Future work on the effectiveness of France’s counterterror measures should therefore also assess its impact on individuals’ fear and civil liberties, as well as the public opinion toward the State and Islam.¹²⁹ These would again be difficult to measure and assess, but it would be possible to obtain the necessary data through surveys, interviews, focus groups and social media analysis.¹³⁰ The concept of assessing fear seems particularly difficult, but various indicators could be used. Researchers could use consumer confidence and tourist travel patterns, as well as “domestic and international support for the government and its policies” as qualitative indicators of counterterror strategy effectiveness.¹³¹ In the case of France, reduction in tourism in Paris and an increase of public support towards far-right political parties such as the Front National may be good indicators of a failing counterterror strategy.

The area of counterterrorism effectiveness remains understudied and warrants greater attention. The threat of violent extremism has evolved from al-Qaeda to Daesh and strategies

¹²⁵ Lum, Kennedy and Sherley, *The Effectiveness of Counter-Terrorism Strategies*, 33.

¹²⁶ Maye, *Measures of Effectiveness Israeli Counterterrorism Strategies and Tactics during the Al-Aqsa Intifada*, 52.

¹²⁷ Spencer, *The Problems of Evaluating Counter-Terrorism*, 186.

¹²⁸ Raphael Perl, "Combating Terrorism: Challenge of Measuring Effectiveness", (Congressional Research Service, United States, 2007).

¹²⁹ Lum, Kennedy and Sherley, *The Effectiveness of Counter-Terrorism Strategies*, 35.

¹³⁰ Romaniuk and Chowdhury Fink, *From Input to Impact: Evaluating Terrorism Prevention Programs*, 12.

¹³¹ Spencer, *The Problems of Evaluating Counter-Terrorisms*, 192.

trying to defeat them must be able to evolve as well.¹³² France has been a victim and a contributor (through its supply of Foreign Fighters) of terrorism. It has taken various steps to address the threat and to reassure its population but, without proper performance management, France runs the risk of implementing various policies and measures that are further contributing to terrorism instead of combatting it.

¹³² Romaniuk and Chowdhury Fink, *From Input to Impact: Evaluating Terrorism Prevention Programs*, 19.

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