

The Synergy between White Supremacist and Jihadist Violence in the Targeting of Religious Institutions

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ABSTRACT

The 2019 Easter Islamic State (IS) attacks on Sri Lankan churches is seen by the government as retribution for a white nationalist attack on Christchurch New Zealand mosques. This article analyses the synergy between white nationalist and jihadi violence. It examines the growth of the Western extremist right as a response to economic globalization and the cultural-religious transformation of European and North American society. In part right-wing terrorism is a response to past jihadi attacks in the West and radicalized minority sub-communities within Europe's large Muslim Diaspora population. Much like the left-right terrorist violence that convulsed Europe in the 1970's we may be facing a destabilizing future of revenge attacks by jihadists and their far-right antagonists that target religious institutions and celebrations. This process results in a synergistic level of violence in which Jews are at the greatest risk for attacks.

Key words: Terrorism, clash of civilization and religious extremism.

"Multi-culturalism (cultural Marxism/political correctness), as you might know, is the root cause of the ongoing Islamisation of Europe which has resulted in the ongoing Islamic colonization of Europe through demographic warfare (facilitated by our own leaders.

- Anders Breivik

"For this reason, one should seek closeness to Allah by targeting their priests, monks, and others (those who serve as caretakers for the belligerent Christians), harming them, as they are in fact the leader of the Kufr---and in killing them is the greatest of rewards, by Allah's permission".

- Islamic State magazine Rumiya [Rome] 9: Ruling on the Belligerent Christians

INTRODUCTION

White supremacist violence has struck against synagogues and mosques in the U.S., Britain, Canada, Norway, Germany and New Zealand. The far right's targeting of Jews and Muslims is partially a response to globalization and the tensions associated with multi-cultural integration in Western society. White nationalist rage focuses upon the rise of Muslim immigrant populations whose growing demographic weight in the West far right militants see as heralding an impending Islamic conquest. White nationalists view such forces as a threat to their cultural identity. Such sentiments moreover cannot be divorced from resentment over past jihadi terror attacks in the West. Jihadi

attacks and plots against churches and Christmas markets in Europe have contributed to the far right's xenophobic angst.

Despite their enmity, far right and Islamist extremists share a moral universe reliant on *Judeophobic* conspiratorial and victimisation narratives. Jihadists and white nationalist hostility toward Jews is justified by resorting to conspiracy theories that claim they aim to destroy their respective cultures making Jewish communities a prime target of their rage. There have been high profile cases of neo-Nazi sympathisers who have converted to an extremist version of Islam to commit attacks against Jews. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross argues this process can result in cross-identification whose psychological complexity is only recently being investigated.¹ Some have even maintained dual allegiances solidified by a virulent Judeophobia. This is illustrated by a foiled plot by the FBI of an American soldier whose Neo-Nazism became the inspiration for efforts to contact Al Qaeda to attack his military unit.

Mitchel D. Silber's analysis of jihadist and far right attacks against Jewish targets in the West finds moreover ideological and tactical similarities between these groups.² Jihadists and white nationalists see the Jews as force for globalization that threatens their respective cultural and religious identities. Such connections are not surprising given that *Judeophobic* sentiment in the Arab Middle East borrows from Europe's anti-Semitic Christian and Nazi pasts.

Islamic extremists and American *Christian Identity* members see the Jews as a devilish force that must be eradicated in a future apocalyptic war³ Jihadists and far right extremists employ similar methods of violence. White supremacist websites praise jihadi terror techniques in their manuals, they take inspiration from Muslim *holy warrior* ethos and urge retaliation for past attacks by Islamist extremists.

These xenophobic feelings triggered attacks against mosques and Islamic cultural centres in New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom and Norway. Compelled by such resentments right-wing militant Alexandre Bissonnette killed six Muslim worshipers at a Quebec mosque in January 2017 in a terror attack.

Threatened by an imagined diabolical conspiratorial world, far right and Islamist movements seek retribution in a final struggle that they see in millenarian terms. Minority sub-populations within Europe's Diaspora Muslim communities hostile to Western values, moreover, are one dimension of this problem. Islamist hatred of the West is intense among some second and third generation Muslim immigrants in Europe who have served as the backbone for the Islamic State (IS) terror campaign in Europe that since 2014 has killed over 400 people⁴

RESEARCH METHODS

This paper examines synergistic violence between these groups. It does so in three parts. First, the jihadist terror campaign in the West is examined. Second, it analyses far right/white nationalist violence as a reaction to Islamist terrorism in the West. Third, it evaluates how these groups intersect in their targeting of religious institutions. It does so by examining primary and secondary research materials (past and present) to discuss the interplay between jihadi and right-wing violence and terrorism.

DISCUSSION

Europe has a history of terrorism. Since the 1960's terror groups across the left/right spectrum have assaulted the *old continent*. It was not however until the 1990's that jihadist terror organizations began to mobilize and use the continent to finance and recruit European Muslims to assist their strategic aims.

Al Qaeda's (AQ) cells in Europe facilitated the catastrophic 9/11 attacks by using German educated Muslims ushering in America's *longest war*. Hoping that its *Holy Tuesday* operations would force an American military disengagement from the Mideast, Al Qaeda instead faced a determined enemy intent upon liquidating its Taliban protected terror network. Osama bin Laden's (OBL) miscalculation of American resolve resulted in the overthrow of Mullah Omar's government and the deaths of thousands of Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters.⁶

For Al Qaeda radicalized Muslim sub-populations in Europe are conduits to recruit foreign fighters and nature home grown terrorist to weaken European allies of the US directed *war on terror*. Past recruitment of Muslim immigrants in Europe proved efficacious for the terror organization. Al Qaeda trained European educated Muslim immigrants in Hamburg Germany formed the leadership nucleus of its *Holy Tuesday* operation. The 9/11 Hamburg cell was an example of Al Qaeda's penetration in Europe and its utilization of the region as a base for financing, indoctrination, and recruitment. This European jihadi infrastructure is well documented.⁷

Lorenzo Vidino argues that Al Qaeda in the 1980's and 1990's developed logistical, indoctrination and recruitment hubs across Europe.⁸ Masquerading as Muslim religious, education and charitable institutions, Al Qaeda supported clerics and scholars actively promoted extremist causes. Radical preachers and jihadi entrepreneurs regularly spoke at the Milan's Islamic Cultural Centre, Hamburg's Al Quds Mosque and London's Finsbury Park. AQ ideologues Abu Qatada and Abu Hamza in London pioneered the development of jihadi religious-cultural networks across the region.⁹

Fernando Reinares similarly argues that Madrid's M-30 Mosque organized jihadi recruitment and that Al Qaeda's Spanish cadres were involved in planning of the organization 9-11 attacks.¹⁰ The Spanish coastal town of Taragona featured a meeting between *Holy Tuesday* planner Ramzi bin al-Shibh and 9/11 bomber Mohammad Atta to finalize the blueprint for the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks.¹¹

Al Qaeda used Europe to raise money, recruit foreign fighters and assist its network in its war against the Muslim apostate *near enemy* and the United States *far enemy*. During the 1980's London was Al Qaeda's European headquarters with jihadi ideologues Abu Musab al-Suri and Abu Qatada managing its media operations.¹² Though Al Qaeda's despised Europe's Christian heritage and loathed its *immoral* secularism the continent's instrumental value outweighed its ideological antipathy.

The organization's religious scholars justified its European fundraising operations by referencing past *covenants of security* with European states.¹³ Provided that Europe remained a safe harbour for Al Qaeda's network OBL refrained from mounting terrorist operations against the continent. After all any AQ directed attacks would violate religious convention.

The United Kingdom's pre 9/11 generous asylum and amnesty laws created a permissive environment for thousands of Islamic extremists escaping *political persecution*. Many of these militants made a livelihood off the largesse of the British taxpayer. Al Qaeda ideologue Abu Qatada notoriously preached jihad on welfare.¹⁴ European Union Courts furthermore shielded many radical Islamists from deportation to their home countries. Al Qaeda's *covenant of security* with its European patron ended after 9/11.

European repression of Al Qaeda's regional network after 9/11 effectively weakened OBL's organization. The seizure of its financial assets, the closure of its media operations and the arrest of hundreds of its operatives by European governments ended Al Qaeda's European logistical base. The dismantling of its support network put Al Qaeda under significant duress. Having seen its regional and global operations eroded, Al Qaeda searched for new partners to strike back against European interests. Fortunately for OBL other jihadi cells in Europe connected to North African terrorist networks provided Al Qaeda an opportunity to strike back.

These organizations responded favourably to Al Qaeda's offers of cooperation for association with OBL's network accorded them enhanced status. They like Al Qaeda blamed European support for Mideast governments for their inability to establish Sharia governance in the region. Jihadists had attacked Europe in the past. The Algerian (Armed Islamic Group) GIA for example bombed the Paris Metro in 1995 in retaliation for Paris support for Algiers repression of the Islamist insurgency.

Al Qaeda's post 9/11 cooperation with regional terror groups blurred jihadi distinctions between *far* and *near* enemy. Thomas Hegghammer argues that this jihadi *ideological hybridization* furthered the organizational and tactical goals of local and international terror networks.¹⁵ Al Qaeda's use of North African networks was orchestrated by its director of external terror operations Egyptian Hamza Rabi'a and his Moroccan lieutenant Amer Azizi.¹⁶

Having served Al Qaeda's network in Spain and Morocco Azizi facilitated the creation of a North African terror network committed to attack European interests. Fernando Reinares argues that Azizi met with representatives for Algerian and Moroccan terror organizations in Istanbul in 2002 to plan operations against Spanish and British interests for supporting the US led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁷

Al Qaeda hoped to weaken European support for Washington's *war on terror* and revive a post 9/11 version of its *covenant of security*. To realize its goal the network had to make its threats credible by inflicting mass casualty attacks. Prior to its terrorist assault OBL offered to make Europe secure from attacks in return for ending European participation in the *war on terror*. Al Qaeda's May 2003 assault against Spanish interests in Casablanca killing dozens and its attack in November 2003 in Istanbul against the British Consulate and a HSBC bank branch that killed more than 30 people hoped to remind Europe that its network remained capable. Having failed to convince the UK and Spain to militarily disengage from Afghanistan and Iraq, Al Qaeda escalated its terror campaign. The Istanbul and Casablanca assaults were precursors to AQ's 2004 Madrid and 2005 London attacks.

Though weakened by post 9/11 European security operations, AQ's regional network was robust enough to plan terrorist actions. Land transport systems, for example, proved vulnerable to Al Qaeda inspired attacks. Though the 2004 Madrid rail and 2005 London subway and bus attacks

were initially blamed on *home-grown* extremists, subsequent analysis proved a more direct Al Qaeda role.¹⁸

The Madrid attack was a huge success for Al Qaeda. It stands as the network's *greatest* post 9/11 triumph and as the most successful terror attack in history for it altered the course of a democratic nation's elections and the trajectory of its public policy. Timed during the Spanish elections on March 11, 2004 and aimed as retribution for the governing party's support for the Iraq war the death of 200 Spaniards in four remotely controlled explosions on commuter trains affected the country's political direction.

Most public opinion polls predicted the governing party *Partido Popular* (PP) victory yet the conservative government's eagerness to blame the Basque National Liberation Movement (ETA) for the attack was viewed by the electorate as a ploy to conceal the attacks real motivation. The PP's Socialist Party opponents exploited the train assaults to secure their election victory and redirect policy in Al Qaeda's desired direction. Prior to their election the Socialists had argued that Madrid's entry into the controversial Iraq war made the country ripe for the terror organization's reprisal. Such fears proved prescient.

The Socialist administration followed through with its pre-election pledge to withdraw its troops from Iraq. Hastily organized and done without consulting coalitional allies, Socialist President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero brought Spanish troops back home leaving vast amount of weaponry and vehicles behind. Al Qaeda hoped to use the Madrid attacks as a springboard to fracture European resolve. It followed up its 3-11 attacks with more threats against *Crusader Europe* with renewed offers for a negotiated truce.

Despite the Madrid attack's alteration of Spanish policy on Iraq, no European government withdrew its support for the *war on terror*. Persecution of AQ's network persisted and, in some cases, intensified. Even when Al Qaeda agents successfully struck the European homeland as in the July 2005 London underground and bus bombings (killing over 50 people), the British government continued its support for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Al Qaeda's efforts to attack trans-Atlantic air traffic between the US and Britain met with little success.¹⁹ Faced with operational failures Al Qaeda hoped to exploit the cultural divide between radicalized Muslim Diaspora subpopulations and European secular society through internet radicalization. Donald Holbrook for example argues that Al Qaeda's hostility toward European secular and Christian values should not be underestimated.²⁰

Bin Laden's media operations during the post 9/11 era railed against Europe's *discriminatory* treatment of Muslims by emphasizing its burka bans and moratoriums on minaret construction. It heralded the 2005 beheading of filmmaker Theo Van Gough by a Moroccan immigrant enraged by his film dramatizing Islam's repression of women and berated the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo for its cartoonish depiction of the Prophet Mohammad. It later hailed French terrorist Mohammad Merah's 2012 killing of three Jewish school children and their rabbinical teacher in Toulouse.

Al Qaeda sympathizers (Said and Cherif Kouachi) headed Al Qaeda's entreaties to punish the media organ for its parody of the Prophet Mohammad stormed *Charlie Hebdo's* Parisian headquarter in January 2015 killing eleven of its editorial staff. Though one of the brothers had been trained by Al Qaeda's Yemeni branch, the network had little operational role in the terrorist's action.²¹ Significantly the brothers had to borrow funds from a friend to mount the *Charlie Hebdo* attack belying Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's claim of having directed the assault.²² Al Qaeda's breakaway Iraqi branch has been even more aggressive in its targeting of the European continent.

Europe emerged as an important battleground in the Islamic State's *total war* strategy that sees *near, far, and sectarian* enemies aligned in their desire to destroy the Sunni Muslim world. Driven by its hatred for the Western *far enemy* the Islamic State has executed its Eurocentric terrorist strategy with devastating consequences.

The movement's success in executing its *far enemy* strategy is made clear by a 2016 U.S. congressional report that documents some 101 IS directed or inspired plots against the Western countries.²³ Since 2014 Islamic State attacks have killed more than 300 Europeans.²⁴ The terrorist danger endures in France, Belgium, United States, Britain and Germany.

The Islamic State's call for violence against the West has radicalized some young Muslims. A 2017 study reports 34 plots across 7 Western countries involving teenagers. Some 50% of these young people had contact with IS operatives across social media forums. One plot involved a twelve year old boy who failed to ignite an explosive device at a Christmas market in Germany. Had it not been for a poorly designed bomb, many casualties would have resulted.

Though 1,600 terror suspects have been arrested across Europe Islamic State's sympathizers continue their attacks.²⁴ Some analysts worry that IS' terror campaign could intensify with the destruction of its proto-jihadist state.²⁵ Undaunted by the caliphate's military reversals IS' supporters during 2017-2018 attacked in Stockholm, London, Manchester, Barcelona, Strasbourg and Paris.

Past IS terror operations in Europe were dominated by French and Belgian militants eager to attack their native homelands. Seven of the nine terrorists that hit Paris on November 13, 2015 were French and Belgian. Frenchman Fabien Clain and Belgian Abdelhamid Abaaoud in Syria selected most of these fighters.²⁶ The November 13, 2015 Paris assault killed over 130 people. Not surprisingly Islamic State fighters struck Brussels a year later killing over 30 people. Some members of these assault teams were radicalized by the Brussels based Zerkani network.²⁷

Belgium has the highest per capita number of foreign fighters traveling to Syria in Western Europe. Of the 451 estimated fighters a majority are second and third generation immigrants who were raised in isolated impoverished neighborhoods.²⁸ Many were in their twenties with criminal backgrounds. Alienated by Western culture and embittered by their criminal past these young people sought redemption by embracing extremist Islam. Jihadi entrepreneurs like Moroccan extremist preacher Khalid Zerkani are eager to *religiously* guide their violent proclivities.

His organization in the Brussels suburb of Molenbeek recruited over 170 Belgian fighters some of whom served in IS' external operations branch. Unemployment and criminal activity in this

immigrant dominated suburb has been a conduit for extremist indoctrination of religiously illiterate young men. Often financed by clandestine activity the network generated funds to send fighters to Syria.

The Zerkani Network is part of Europe's infrastructure of jihadi *entrepreneurs* involved in the religious training of impressionable young men with violent criminal pasts. Led by charismatic preachers like Britain's Anjem Choudary, France's Fabien Clain and Germany's Abu Wala these organizations have groomed hundreds of European jihadists. Choudary's significance was especially profound for *Sharia4Belgium* is an offshoot of his organizational blueprint to spread jihadi activism across Europe.²⁹

Jihadist terrorism in Europe has sown a climate of fear conducive to the extremist right's mobilization and desire for revenge attacks. Australian terrorist Brenton Tarrant, for example, justified his attack on two Christchurch, New Zealand mosques by referencing an IS attack in Stockholm.³⁰ There could be other retaliatory attacks by the far right may force a jihadist counter response. Al Qaeda and the Islamic State representatives have called for retribution attacks across social media forums.³¹ We may be headed for destabilizing revenge attacks targeting religious institutions and celebrations.³²

One analysis of far-right attacks in the West reports that at least of third of them are retribution for past Islamist terrorism.³³ Europe has experienced past cycles of synergistic terrorism. From the 1960's to the 1980's right and left wing terrorists battled each other in France, Germany, and Italy hoping to advance their respective causes.³⁴ The communist *Red Brigades* in Italy kidnapping and killing of former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1976 inspired a neo-Fascist reprisal that killed 80 people at a Bologna rail station some four years later. Bruce Hoffman in a comparative analysis of the upsurge of European right-wing terrorism in the early 1980's argues the Bologna attack that a neofascist group wanted to assault a city infamous for local communist rule that it saw as sympathetic to leftist terror networks.³⁵ Dormant since the early 1990's rising immigration and especially the Syrian refugee crisis has led to a resurgence of the extremist right.³⁶

THE RISE OF FAR RIGHT WHITE NATIONALISTS IN THE WEST

White nationalist terrorism, moreover, is growing. Some analysts believe that right-wing terrorism in the United States eclipses the jihadist threat.³⁷ There is even talk of a global right-wing terrorist fifth wave.³⁸ White supremacist violence is a complex problem that cannot be reduced to political talking points. It represents a pernicious ideology that has its historic roots in European Christian and biological anti-Semitism. Hitler's fusion of these two *Judeophobic* traditions produced the horrific Nazi movement and its annihilationist ideology still has adherents.

The Nazi legacy has spawned a new generation of right wing extremism that is anti-immigrant, anti-gay, anti-liberal, anti-feminist, anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim. A minority within this movement are violent and terroristic. The movement's capacity for horrific violence was graphically seen in 2011 when Norwegian Anders Breivik killed 77 people, 69 of them teenagers associated with the Labour Party's youth league. His attacks in Oslo and Utoya Island featured improvised explosive devices and firearms. Breivik's attack mimicked jihadi methods of assault that show little sympathy for its victims.

Breivik planning for the attacks took two years. He employed multiple credit cards to finance the materials to construct explosive devices. Breivik considered targeting mosques and Muslim cultural centres but feared a backlash could hurt the far right's cause.³⁹ His antipathy against Muslims was outweighed by hatred for what he considered to be the cultural Marxist Social Democratic enablers of Islamist conquest. Like the jihadist terrorists attacks against the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, Breivik considered targeting the press that he saw complicit in fostering multi-culturalism and open immigration. Instead he opted to attack the governing party and affiliated institutions hoping to attain the greatest maximum publicity

Breivik justified his actions by blaming Norway's Social Democratic Labour party for the influx of Muslim migrants who in his view were economically and culturally destroying the country. Sentenced to 21 years in prison, Breivik is the extreme right's most revered figure.

Breivik's 1,800 page compendium *2083: A European Declaration of Independence* argues that Europe is under siege by Muslim *invaders* facilitated by Europe's pro-immigration and liberal amnesty policies.⁴⁰ The Nordic extremist believed that liberal-social democratic governments were promoting *multi-culturalism* that undermined European economic and cultural institutions. Breivik saw a future Europe where high Muslim birth rates portends Western civilization's destruction and Islamic conquest.

Breivik is part of a larger intellectual current popular in far right circles known as the *Counter Jihad Movement* in Europe.⁴¹ Its members employ crusader symbols that evoke past wars between Christendom and Islam celebrating Christian military victories against Muslim armies. The *Counter Jihad Movement* sees Muslim immigration as a demographic time bomb aimed at conquering Europe and has politically mobilized to defend European culture and society.

Its progenitors were the 1990's *English Defence League's* that saw Muslim immigration as an existential threat to British cultural identity. Though banned in the United Kingdom, such far right groups have persisted through rebranding their organizations and by clandestine underground organizations.⁴² The *Counter Jihad* movement has inspired other defence leagues across the European continent that underscored the cultural threat posed by liberal immigration from the Muslim world and the danger of jihadi terrorism.⁴³ Daniel Koehler documents that following the 9-11 attacks, German nationalist violence against Mosques and refugee centres increased dramatically.⁴⁴ He further argues that violence between Neo-Nazis and Salafi extremists in Germany feed mutual radicalization that intensifies the terrorist violence.⁴⁵

The revival of a European warrior ethos is also seen by the Nordic far right anti-immigrant and sentiment reflected in the *Soldiers of Oden* Movement.⁴⁶ The group has made trans-Atlantic connections from Finland to Canada as the extreme right becomes connected through social media chat forums where Breivik's writings have attained great popularity.

Breivik *2083* is popular in far right social media forums. His incendiary extremist philosophy has inspired others. Dylan Roof killed 9 African Americans attending Sunday services at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, Christopher Hasson a Coast Guard officer who plotted a foiled mass casualty attack in the Washington D.C. area and mosque attacker Brenton Tarrant all admired Breivik.⁴⁷

Tarrant, moreover, claims he communicated with Breivik. The 28 year old Australian even posted a manifesto along the lines of Breivik's 2083. Taking Breivik's advice Tarrant planned his attacks meticulously for two years employing firearms and explosives. Tarrant's manifesto *The Great Replacement* sees white nationalist terrorism as a *defence* of Western civilization against Muslim invaders.⁴⁸ Like Breivik he mentions the Crusades and he argues that there is an inherent clash of civilization between the Western and Muslim worlds underway. Even in places that historically have been tolerant toward immigrants such as Italy there is evidence of anti-immigrant extremist violence.⁴⁹ *The Great Replacement Theory* has also referenced by German terrorist Tobias Rathjen who in February 2020 gunned down nine people dining in sisha bars in 2 terrorist attacks in Hanau, Germany before killing his mother and himself.⁵⁰

European extremists have been inspired by American far right violence that they often evoke in manifestoes.⁵¹ Though it borrows ideas from its European cousin, North American white nationalist extremism has distinct properties. White separatism is not unprecedented in America and is far from a nefarious innovation of the Trump era. Instead it is embedded in America's *Confederate* and the *Reconstruction* eras. The Confederacy's destruction and Northern occupation spawned the *Ku Klux Klan* (KKK) and a host of white supremacist groups that continue to endure.

With anti-black, anti-Jewish and anti-Catholic sentiments and driven by the need to restore and preserve white Protestant privileges the Klan's repugnant violent history continues to divide American society. Successful Federal government prosecution of its members and the 1960's Civil Rights Revolution, however, made white nationalist movement more regionally diffuse and ideologically variegated.⁵² Generational changes, racial minority empowerment, and rapid Third World immigration have facilitated the formation of white separatist and extremist Christian movements.

Known as the *Christian Identity* movement a white religious-nationalist subculture hostile to Federal government power grew throughout the 1980's and 1990's.⁵³ Though anchored in America's racist past the *Christian Identity* movement latched upon European neo-Nazi biological theories vilifying the Jews as *Satanic* and calling non-whites *mud peoples*.⁵⁴ The popularity of William Pierce's dystopian novel *The Turner Diaries* resonated strongly with many white nationalists.⁵⁵ Pierce's novel envisioned an America under Zionist occupation dominated by a Jewish commercial elite intent upon promoting African-Americans and annihilating the white Protestant race. Faced with destruction, whites in the *Turner Dairies* form an insurgent movement called *The Order* that eventual prevails against Zionist occupation through the use of nuclear weapons.

Pierce's fictional work energized violent extremists. Among them was Timothy McVeigh, whose 1994 Oklahoma City Courthouse attack killed 186 people. The courthouse bombing was the single worst act of terrorism committed on the U.S. continent prior to the 9-11 attacks. The *Turner Diaries* influence on McVeigh's action enhanced the novel's popularity with white extremists. Many of whom retreated to the American Northwest to wait for a coming apocalypse that would liberate whites from Zionist and black *subjugation*.⁵⁶

American white nationalism has evolved into an eclectic mix of skinheads, neo-Nazis, anarchistic libertarians and, survivalists. *Alt-right* militants and religious fanatics are united in their opposition

to globalization, federal power and multi-culturalism.⁵⁷ The explosion of social media forums in the 21st century has afforded this diverse movement greater capacity to mobilize, coordinate and indoctrinate on a global scale.

In the far right/white nationalist mobilization one sees racial, anti-government, and religious motifs that result in violence that targets Blacks, Jews, Latinos and Muslims. Such violence has been persistent. Far right terrorism in America on average has taken 18 lives a year since 1980.⁵⁸ It has resulted in a polarized racial-cultural context that threatens to increase the frequency of the white nationalist supremacist violence.

Most of the far right's terrorists have been archetypal loners who took years to plan and execute attacks.⁵⁹ They are tied to larger far right milieu increasingly connected to social media forums who venerate past acts of white supremacist violence.⁶⁰ Anti-Semitic hatred drove white nationalist Robert Bowers in October 2018 to kill eleven Jews at a Pittsburgh based synagogue during Saturday morning services.⁶¹ Wounded by police Bowers justified his act by claiming that the Jews were the cause of much of the world's misery.

White nationalist rage is opportunistic alternating between Jews and Muslims. John Earnest, who in April 2019 killed one person and wounded three others in a synagogue shooting during a Passover service in Poway, California was also linked to arson against an Escondido based mosque. Like Tarrant and Breivik he posted a xenophobic manifesto condemning Jews and Muslims.⁶² Far right chat boards praised Earnest's synagogue attack but lamented the lack of more Jewish deaths.⁶³

Tarrant's Christchurch attack also inspired 21year old Norwegian Phillip Manshaus' August 2019 attack on the Al-Noors Islamic Centre in Baerum foiled by a mosque parishioner that tackled the assailant. Like Tarrant the Norwegian shooter wore a Go-Pro camera, body armour and had multiple firearms. Based on press accounts prior to the attack Manshaus had praised the Christchurch attacker as a "saint" across 8Chan a far right chat room.⁶⁴ Attacks by far-right extremists continued later in the year when a former candidate of the French extremist *National Front* attacked a mosque in Bayonne shooting and seriously wounding two Muslim worshipers.⁶⁵

White nationalist assault on religious institutions continued three months later. Dressed in combat fatigues and equipped with a Go-Pro camera on top of a military style helmet a German far right extremist Stephan Bailliet mimicked Tarrant's tactics in an aborted October 2019 Yom Kippur day synagogue attack in Halle. Prevented from entering the synagogue by the structure's heavy doors he shot two people to death outside the religious center. Bailliet posted a 35 minute anti-Semitic diatribe on a Twitch live streaming service denying the Holocaust arguing that the Jews were the cause of the world problems.⁶⁶ Bailliet's exploits were hailed by far right extremist chat boards⁶⁷.

Breivik's *2083* evokes the *Knights Templar* and like Christchurch killer Brenton Tarrant he references the Crusades. Forging unity between such disparate groups, however, is elusive. Like their jihadists the far-right extremists advocate *leaderless resistance* and where white nationalists have engaged in terrorism it is dominated by lone actors like McVeigh, Roof, Bowers, Breivik, Earnest and Tarrant.⁶⁸

The lack of organized direction makes the movement dangerously unpredictable especially when its terrorist agents lack a criminal history. Security services find locating and pre-empting such people difficult. Confronting an extremist right-wing threat driven by ideological fanaticism could overwhelm an overly stretched security and intelligence agencies. This is especially true in Europe that since 2014 has been combated directed and inspired Islamic State terrorism.⁶⁹ Despite the collapse of its physical *caliphate* Europe has seen little respite from IS plots to attack Europe.⁷⁰

The commonalities between jihadists and their far-right antagonists are striking. White nationalist ideologue Louis Beam's *leaderless resistance* concept, for example, has its equivalent in Abu Musab al-Suri *leaderless jihad* doctrine.⁷¹ Both movements evoke past civilizational conflicts and venerate religiously sanctioned violence. Above all white nationalists and jihadists reject globalization and seek to resurrect a mythic past civilization.

Both groups link the spread of global capitalism to a pernicious international Jewish cabal.⁷² The hatred spawned by far- right extremist and jihadists have uncorked reciprocal terror attacks targeting religious institutions.

JIHADIST TARGETING OF CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS

Though rarely discussed Muslim extremists have desecrated dozens of churches in Germany and France.⁷³ IS attacks in Europe against Christmas markets in Berlin and Strasbourg and its supporters beheading of an elderly priest in Normandy have created an incendiary religious context scarcely commented upon in media circles.

The jihadist campaign has shaped an environment conducive to right-wing extremist retaliation across Europe. Enraged by past jihadi attacks in Britain, Darren Osborne in June 2017 drove a van into a crowd of Muslims exiting a Finsbury Park mosque in London killing one worshiper. He may have been motivated by Finsbury Park's reputation for jihadi recruitment. His act of retaliatory violence synchronizes well with the Islamic State's, hopes to widen the cultural and religious chasm between Muslim Diaspora populations and European society.⁷⁴

IS argues that Western Muslims live in a *grey zone* in countries at war with their faith. This existential *identity crisis* IS ideologues argue can only be overcome by emigrating to their caliphate or killing Westerners in their native lands. The Islamic State's call for Muslim minorities in the West to kill Europeans and North Americans by all means possible has intensified.

The Christchurch mosque attacks polarizes this explosive environment leading IS spokesman Abu Hassan al-Muhajir to urge the caliphates supporters to retaliate against the West.⁷⁵ Al -Muhajir's threat was seconded by IS' Arabic language weekly magazine *Naba* in its 174th issue that commanded its *soldiers* to make the *crusaders* "pay a price in their temples while they realize their incredulous rituals".⁷⁶ One IS aligned group pleaded with lone wolves to attack Spanish churches and cathedrals during Easter celebrations.⁷⁷

The Islamic State's targeting of churches reflects its sectarian hostility toward Christians it sees as a *polytheistic* sect and for their refusal to submit to Muslim authority. Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, for example, argues that IS justifies its killing of Christians for they are "muharibeen" those believers in Christ who are not subservient to Islamic authority and are therefore in a *state of war* with Islam.⁷⁸

The jihadi retaliatory strikes for the mosque massacres came a month after al-Muhajir's statement. Striking on Easter day (April 21, 2019) eight militants affiliated with a local Islamist group National Throwheeth Jama'ath (NTJ) launched near simultaneous suicide bombing attacks across Sri Lanka targeting three churches during mass services and three luxury hotels frequented by Westerners.⁷⁹ The coordinated attacks and the advanced explosives used fit the model employed by jihadi groups in places like Mumbai, Paris and Brussels. The scale of the attacks across multiple cities and towns and the targeting of Sri Lanka's small Christian community were unprecedented even in a country rocked by decades of ethnic civil war. Over two hundred and fifty people were killed and five hundred plus were wounded in total of six attacks.

American, Indian and the Sri Lankan governments believe that local Islamists were working with IS' global network facilitating NTJ's ability to execute the deadliest terror attack since 9-11. Though Sri Lanka's Muslim population accounts for a small percentage of the population, the country has over 30 foreign fighters tied to IS' network.⁸⁰ Police investigators have concluded that IS' network in the country included some fighters trained in Syria.⁸¹ Two days after the assault IS's *Amaq News Agency* via a Telegram channel claimed responsibility for the attacks offering a video featuring eight *martyrdom seekers* pledging loyalty to IS Emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.⁸² Significantly those swearing allegiance to IS in the video included NTJ leader Mohammad Zaharan known by his organizational *nom de guerre* Zahran Hashim.⁸³ After the attack investigators confirmed that Hashim died in one these *martyrdom* operations and police seizures of IS flags and uniforms in raids of NTJ safe houses reinforce *Amaq News Agency's* claim of responsibility.

The assaults were celebrated on IS-aligned jihadi social media sites that described the attacks as "punishment" for the Christchurch mosque attacks.⁸⁴ Capitalizing on the Sri Lankan attacks IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi appeared in a video praising the church and hotel massacres remarking that attacks against *crusaders* would be forthcoming.⁸⁵

His appearance was seen as symbolizing IS' resilience and serves as an inspirational message to the movement's believers that a new wave of terrorism was about to begin.⁸⁶ It may have been a trigger for future attacks.

The Sri Lanka attacks represent the most significant jihadist assault against Christians so far. It is part of a wave of Islamic anti-Christian sentiment seen in Indonesia, Egypt, Nigeria, Pakistan, France and the Philippines where jihadist groups have targeted churches. One 2018 assault involved a family of IS aligned extremists that launched three assaults (one of them on a motorcycle) against Indonesian churches that killed over a dozen people.⁸⁷

Emboldened by the success of the Sri Lankan attacks jihadi web sites have clamoured for church attacks in Europe and North America.⁸⁸ A week later a radicalized 26 year old American Afghan war veteran plotted a mass casualty bombing attack in the Los Angeles area to avenge the Christchurch mosque attacks was apprehended in a FBI sting operation. Muslim convert Mark Domingo sought help in plotting nail bomb attacks against Jews, churches, and members of the far right. Based on information provided by a *Federal Bureau of Investigation* (FBI) informant, Domingo was arrested for planning an act of terrorism against a neo-Nazi rally to be held in Long Beach, California.⁸⁹

After the 2019 Easter attacks the Islamic State saw Ramadan as an opportune time to strike against other Christian communities.⁹⁰ IS aligned jihadists killed 10 Christians, burned a church down and desecrated a statue of the Virgin Mary in Burkina Faso.⁹¹ Fuelled by a desire to strike back against the Christian world for the Christchurch massacre a IS affiliated Syrian refugee was arrested by the FBI for planning a bomb attack against a Pittsburgh based African American church. News reports of the incident suggested a filmed allegiance to IS' network by the suspect and his purchase of bomb making material.⁹² One IS sympathizer Safiyya Amira Shaikh's sought to bomb London's Saint Paul's Cathedral. Foiled by British counterterror services, the 36 year old woman travelled to London and surveyed the iconic attraction before her arrest.⁹³

IS' anti-Christian campaign has led supporters to threaten the Vatican. One IS linked web site justified targeting the *Holy See* by referencing the Pontiff support for the international community's war against the caliphate.⁹⁴ Though Italy had never experienced a significant jihadist attack, the influx of Muslim migrant populations, anti-immigrant sentiments and the maturation of its second generation immigrant population made it vulnerable to jihadist attacks.

Italy has served as a hub for Islamic extremist recruitment.⁹⁵ Some analysts have argued that Italy could be prone to future attacks.⁹⁶ The Islamic State's first English language magazine *Dabiq* moreover featured the Vatican's *Saint Peter's Square* on the cover of its *The Failed Crusade* issue.⁹⁷

The Sri Lankan church attacks mirror past IS terrorism in Egypt, Nigeria, Philippines, Indonesia, and France. Unlike Al Qaeda the Islamic State is violent toward Christians, heterodox Muslims, and the polytheistic Yazidi that it decries as "devil worshipers". The devastating Sri Lankan attacks are a potent reminder that IS in its post-Caliphate stage remains a formidable global threat. The demise of the group's emir in a U.S. Special Forces operation in Syria moreover may force the network to accelerate its terror campaign in the West.

CONCLUSION

If more churches are struck in the West white nationalists are likely to retaliate. Right-wing extremist chat boards have even suggested that the Christchurch mosque attacks were insufficient and that the movement should accelerate its anti-Muslim violence.⁹⁸ Increasingly jihadi and white nationalist terrorism are feeding off each other.⁹⁹ Right wing terrorists are adopting the tactics advocated in IS and Al Qaeda terrorist manuals.

Ander Breivik's manifesto gives prospective terrorists advice on firearms, explosives, knives, and how to evade security forces. His counsel parroted *Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula* (AQAP) English language magazine *Inspire's* guidance on how to conduct terror attacks. Copying French jihadist Mohammad Merah's self-filmed killing of Jewish school children and their rabbinical teacher in Toulouse in 2012, Brandon Tarrant posted his killings of Muslim worshipers on *Facebook*.

The far-right extremist violence directed against Jews and Muslims in Pittsburgh, Quebec, Halle, and Christchurch have ominous ramifications. First, white nationalist extremists are emboldened to attack more mosques and Islamic cultural institutions. Second, we will see more jihadi assaults targeting churches and Christian religious celebrations. Third, synagogues in the West are perhaps the most vulnerable to future attacks given the *Judeophobic* attitudes of far-right extremists and

jihadists. Each assault may have a cumulative and synergistic impact where Jews are especially at risk.

While hostile to each other white nationalists and radical Islamists see the Jews as *villains* bent upon annihilating their respective cultures. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross moreover highlighted cases of former Neo-Nazis who having converted to Islam became committed jihadists. In this instance the Judeophobia within jihadist ideology served as a vital pathway that psychologically eased right wing extremist adoption of militant extremist Islamism.¹⁰⁰ We may be facing a deadly cycle of violence between jihadists and white supremacists' intent upon targeting all religious institutions. Despite calls for more interfaith dialogue and reconciliation there is little chance that this sectarian violence will end soon. It could get worse.

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