



**Statement before the
Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs
Committee**

***“Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens
at Home and Abroad”***

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Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished members of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, I am honored to be with you today to discuss the current terrorist threat environment in Europe, the challenges facing our European partners, and the security implications for the United States. In the wake of the horrific attacks in Brussels recently and Paris in November 2015, this is a critical moment for the United States to take stock of the quickening terrorist threat and the adaptations spurred by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), along with the continued threat from and intent by Al Qaida and its affiliates to hit the West.

The rise and reach of ISIS has continued to outpace expectations and surprise authorities and terrorism analysts. With the announcement of the caliphate in Iraq and Syria and the taking of Mosul and other major cities, ISIS has sought to redraw the map of the Middle East, threaten the West, establish provinces (“wilayats”) and terrorist alliances, and inspire attacks well beyond the Middle East. ISIS has perpetrated serious attacks not just in Europe but also in Beirut, Istanbul, Egypt, and the Gulf countries, and its affiliates and aspirant supporters have attacked far afield in Nigeria, Afghanistan, Indonesia, and San Bernardino. Likewise, al Qaida affiliates (hereinafter “al Qaida”) have continued to perpetrate terrorist attacks from West Africa to Yemen, with members perpetrating the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris.

All the while, these violent Islamic extremist organizations have occupied territory – creating a terrorist archipelago encompassing not just the deserts, jungles, and mountains of past safe havens but urban and resource-rich environments. This has allowed both ISIS and al Qaida to exploit civilian populations and to develop local and war economies. It has allowed ISIS in particular to leverage the establishment of the caliphate as its demonstration that it can govern an Islamic state and to animate the global terrorist movement in support of its cause.

Dangerously, failing to understand and anticipate ISIS’ intent and capabilities has led to some misguided assumptions that have now been shattered in the wake of the attacks in Paris and Brussels. As part of its broader strategy of confrontation and establishment of the caliphate, ISIS has intended to confront the West. While creating its caliphate and expanding its provinces to places like Libya and Yemen, ISIS has been planning to strike the West, using Western operatives flowing into the conflict zone by the thousands, and has openly attempted to inspire singular attacks by sympathetic radicals in Western societies. It has built these capabilities over time and taken advantage of intelligence and security gaps to implant operatives in Europe. This was a strategy not triggered by provocation or weakness, but is rather a deliberate part of ISIS’ long-term planning. European authorities are coming to grips with the realization that ISIS is targeting the heart of Europe with dozens of operatives. The ongoing raids and manhunts for those involved in the Paris and Brussels attacks and terrorist networks planning additional strikes continue to expand.

This should not have come as a surprise to those watching ISIS erase the border between Iraq and Syria, occupy major cities in the Middle East, and take advantage of the safe haven it has established and the foreign fighters flowing in and out of the region. Almost two years ago, my CSIS colleague, Tom Sanderson, and I wrote an OpEd in the New York Times detailing the story of the sale of Belgian passports on the Syrian-Turkish border:

A few feet from the Bab al-Salam border crossing near the Turkish town of Kilis, there is a shabby cafe where the most interesting items for sale are not found on the menu. The cafe is the final stop for young radicalized men from Europe or North Africa who are planning to slip past the lax Turkish border officers and into Syrian territory. This is where they exchange their passports for cash. When one of us visited the cafe in January [2014], a Belgian passport was for sale for \$8,000. A buyer could have it altered for movement to Europe or visa-free travel to the United States. New passport photos were being snapped in the parking lot.

Indeed, with the thousands of foreign fighters traveling to terrorist-controlled territory and others animated by the allure and narrative of a historic and heroic caliphate battling infidel forces, ISIS and al Qaida can more easily mobilize attacks against the West. France and Belgium have been particularly vulnerable given the role and importance of Francophone terrorist networks embedded in pockets of radicalization like Molenbeek in Brussels. But they are not alone. The rest of Europe is vulnerable, and the United States is at risk for acts of terror resembling what occurred in San Bernardino or from more organized attacks by foreign fighters or sympathizers.

It is important that we examine and understand the threat soberly. ISIS and al Qaida are neither omnipotent nor comprised of ten-foot giants. They have not been able to mobilize large percentages of susceptible Muslims to violence, and its message has been largely rejected by the communities impacted by its brutality. But they have rallied thousands to their cause, perpetrated some of the worst brutalities of the 21st century, and caused major disruptions and dislocation in an arc of instability from Central Asia to West Africa. Their rapid and devious adaptations – in attack methodologies, messaging, recruitment, financing, and governance – are dangerous and cannot be ignored or discounted. Their use of chemical weapons, establishment of a chemical weapons unit, and surveillance of Belgian nuclear infrastructure and personnel raise the specter of a group intent on using weapons of mass destruction. The blind spots in our intelligence only heighten the concerns of what we are not seeing or hearing regarding terrorist plans. And these groups remain intent and capable of striking the West in strategically impactful ways. This is the reality we are facing in the wake of the recent terrorist attacks in Europe.

The Terrorist Threat in Europe

ISIS and al Qaida objectives in Europe are to strike strategically in ways that cause terror, inflict significant human and economic damage, attract recruits, and exacerbate ongoing, internal European pressures. Countries like France and the United Kingdom remain central “far enemy” targets – the focus of extremist propaganda and operational plotting. With French troops deployed to fight al Qaida in the Maghreb, they remain a central focus for North African cells along with radicalized French citizens.

ISIS has decided to use three forms of attacks that make European counterterrorism efforts even more difficult to manage. They have planned and are orchestrating directed attacks from ISIS leadership in Syria, with growing sophistication and reliance on an operational lead (“directed attacks”). They are also framing the broad parameters and timing of plots and enlisting operatives to launch attacks entrepreneurially (“framed attacks”). Finally, ISIS – like al Qaida – is trying to animate radicalized individuals to kill fellow citizens in any way possible where they

live (“inspired to attack in place”). These three forms of terrorist plotting create a tapestry of complicated threats for European authorities.

Europe suffers from three fundamental and inter-related terrorist problems.

1. *Immediate Threat: ISIS European Network.* ISIS has trained and deployed Europeans back into Europe to perpetrate sophisticated attacks. European authorities have disrupted plots and recruitments pipelines and made arrests in the wake of the Paris and Brussels attacks. But European authorities are playing catch-up, with no clear sense of the expanse of the terrorist networks that have emerged. Recent French and Belgian raids and arrests continue to reveal new network members and potential plots, and manhunts are underway.

The concern that ISIS or al Qaida would be able to leverage foreign fighters and embed them back into Western societies has now come to pass. ISIS has had over 5,000 Western foreign fighters, as well as upwards of 40,000 total foreign fighters, from which to choose to leverage for different purposes, including returning to Europe to perpetrate attacks. ISIS organized an external operational unit, and has marked operatives for attacks in Europe, many of which have been thwarted. The ISIS External Operations Unit has been led by Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, an ISIS spokesman and one of its most senior leaders, and its European External Operations Branch, led by Abdelhamid Abaaoud, has been responsible for recruitment and mounting attacks in Europe.

Francophone cells – comprised of French, Belgian, and dual nationals – have proven a lethal network for ISIS attack plotting in Europe. These Western operatives have been trained to evade scrutiny, engage in operational security, including the use of encryption technologies, and execute strategic attacks in concert. The sheer volume of potential operatives, along with unknown actors, has overwhelmed even the best European services.

2. *Ongoing Threat: Embedded, Leveraged Networks.* ISIS and al Qaida have taken advantage of long-standing, radicalized networks in Europe as a baseline for recruitment and plotting in the heart of Europe. Many of the transnational networks that have long served violent extremist causes, to include prison and criminal networks, have been coopted or repurposed by ISIS for their European strategy. Embedded recruitment pipelines, often led by charismatic clerics, have supplied hundreds of recruits. Terrorist networks unearthed or involved in recent attacks have tended to have a common ideological and operational lineage with ties back to known radical elements and operatives.

Belgium has been the largest source of European foreign fighters per capita, with an upper estimate of almost six hundred fighters. Many of those recruits have come from known and embedded radical networks already established in Belgium. Shariah4Belgium, an extremist organization formed by radical preachers in 2010 in Antwerp, began to radicalize recruits and eventually became a major source of foreign fighters traveling to Syria. In February 2015, Belgian authorities labeled the group a terrorist organization and tried forty-five members, most in absentia since they had already traveled to Syria.

Another network led by Khalid Zerkani, known as “Papa Noel” because he would hand out gifts to troubled youth in Brussels and encourage shoplifting to raise funds, became a major recruitment ring for foreign fighters. His group is suspected to have sent at least forty-five people to Syria, including Abdelhamid Abaaoud. Abaaoud has claimed to have led ninety trained ISIS fighters back into Europe through refugee routes to set up a vast array of cells to carry out bomb attacks and shooting sprees.

In France, criminal and extremist networks, often reinforced in French prisons, have helped funnel foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq, estimated at approximately 1600 fighters. They have also cemented operational cells, including the terrorists who perpetrated the Charlie Hebdo and Jewish supermarket attacks in Paris on January 7, 2015. The Charlie Hebdo attackers and brothers, Cherif and Said Kouachi, were long known to police for their militant Islamist activities and formed part of the “Buttes-Chaumont network” (named after the neighborhood in northern Paris) that helped send fighters to al Qaida in Iraq (AQI) after the 2003 U.S. invasion. They were both linked to al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which claimed the attack. Both Said and Amedy Coulibaly, who perpetrated the Jewish supermarket attack on the same day, had attempted to free Smain Ait Ali Belkacen, a former militant Islamist fighter, from jail and were known to French authorities.

These networks have also relied on “family and friends” networks to recruit and support operatives, to include the recruitment of women, to serve in various roles for ISIS. This has allowed for more trusted and confidential communications used to ISIS’ operational advantage. These existing and expanding networks have been amplified with newer recruits, some lured by ISIS’ targeted recruitment via social media and the romantic and heroic appeal of the ISIS media campaign, amplified by the “fan boys” accounts on Twitter.

Though these recruitment networks have been most dangerous and manifest in France and Belgium, ISIS has relied on other pre-existing networks of radicals in the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, and the Balkans to move fighters out of and back into Europe, including embedding in refugee flows into Europe. Germany and the United Kingdom – along with other European countries -- remain concerned that Europeans involved in the foreign fighter pipeline may be planning attacks and targeting their interests at home.

3. *Long-Term Threat: Longstanding, Deep Pockets of Radicalization.* A serious, long-term challenge for European authorities lies in the radicalization affecting their nationals and embedded in particular communities and neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods have served as breeding grounds and safe havens for violent Islamic extremists, ideologues, and recruitment. Factors such as economic and social isolation of immigrant communities and failed integration policies, along with festering questions of individual identity, loyalty, and alienation, have fueled these pockets of radicalization. No single factor – political, social, familial, or psychological -- can explain all the “hot spots” of radicalization in Europe or why particular individuals versus others in the same environment decide to join or engage in terrorist activities. Throughout Europe, such nodes of radicalization persist in particular prisons, universities, and apartment blocks.

Neighborhoods in Brussels, like Molenbeek and Schaerbeek, have been the subject of much recent attention, as Belgian security forces executed raids and found wanted terrorists, like the Paris attack operative Salah Abdeslam who had been hiding and evading authorities for weeks. Certain Paris suburbs, such as Grigny, have long been depressed areas where Muslim communities have congregated and violence and extremism have taken hold. In the United Kingdom, the embedding of extremist groups, including al Muhajiroun and radicals like Abu Hamza al Masri and Anjem Choudary, has earned sections of London the label “Londonistan,” with pockets of disaffection in East London, Birmingham, Luton, and other neighborhoods. Yet others, like Mullah Krekar, who has led Ansar al Islam from Norway, have long played the role of extremist ideologue and terrorist recruiters and facilitators.

The disaffected and alienated, often in search of a singular identity and romantic cause, have been drawn to the siren song of radicalizers and on-line recruiters. The al Qaida narrative has become pervasive and impacted the global recruiting environment. It is a simple message: the West is at war with Islam, and every Muslim has a religious obligation to defend Islam and fellow Muslims against such attacks – either by fighting infidels or supporting the militant jihad. ISIS has not only leveraged that message but converted it to their cause and for their purposes, proclaiming that the caliphate is the only place where a Muslim can practice true Islam and that it must be defended and expanded against all who would attack it, including the West.

ISIS messaging has echoed in sophisticated ways via recruiters, the Internet, and targeted social media. On June 29, 2014, al-Adnani declared the caliphate after ISIS’ June offensive in Iraq and the capture of Mosul. In July 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed “caliph,” called on Muslims around the world to “rush” to the Islamic State. On September 21, 2014, al-Adnani encouraged followers to carry out lone wolf attacks, especially if they cannot travel to the Islamic State. ISIS has used images of its brutality to cow enemies and fuel the enthusiasm of supporters. It has devoted the majority of its messaging to demonstrating that the caliphate is real and that ISIS can govern justly and well under Islamic law. The ISIS “fan boys” have used thousands of Twitter accounts to echo such messages and send videos around the world.

These messages have resonated in the networks and neighborhoods of Europe and with specific individuals who have been willing to mobilize on behalf of ISIS. The ISIS mythology, amplified by the establishment of the caliphate, piggybacks off the al Qaida narrative and has drawn adherents and converts from around the world.

The problem of disaffected communities and marginalized individuals will only be exacerbated with new refugees flowing into Europe, the difficulty of their economic and social integration across Europe, and the potential for the fueling of right-wing reactionary forces. The refugee crisis offers ISIS strategic advantages of using the flows to infiltrate operatives back into Europe, increase destabilizing pressure on Europe’s economies and structures at time of social and institutional fragility, and the potential of future radicalized refugees if they can be recruited and are not well integrated or insulated from such radical forces. The long-term challenges of radicalization and integration in Europe present a current and long-term challenge for European counter-terrorism efforts.

The Limitation of European Capabilities

The challenges to European security include the limitations of European capabilities to disrupt and confront the terrorist and ideological threat within Europe and against ISIS and al Qaida outside of Europe. ISIS has been able to take advantage of weaknesses and seams in the European system, from lax border controls to imperfect information sharing, and longstanding terror networks and pockets of radicalization and recruitment. Many of these are systemic challenges, while others reflect a function of political will and focus.

The first question that remains to be answered is whether Europe as a whole sees the threat from terrorism in the same way and whether all European countries are prepared to commit resources in concert to confront the short and long-term implications of the ISIS and al Qaida-driven threat. After the November 2015 Paris attacks, French President Francois Hollande declared that “France is at war” against terrorism. After the recent Brussels attacks, he declared that Europe was “at war.” France certainly has been at war with al Qaida and ISIS abroad, with troops fighting in the Maghreb and West Africa against terrorism groups and partnering in the coalition against ISIS.

Yet, it remains to be seen whether all of Europe is at war and whether there is consensus as to what this means. To be at war requires a fundamental shift in national attention and resources to confront an enemy. In the case of Europe, that enemy is not just ISIS and al Qaida abroad, but the radicalization of its own citizens and the threats of attacks within Europe. Achieving a common political and security agreement across Europe regarding a “war-footing” in this context is difficult and potentially confusing, since it involves both soft and hard power and their associated approaches. This requires a question as to whether ISIS and al Qaida safe havens in places like Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Yemen will be allowed to persist, where Europeans are being recruited and trained. It also involves a question of how best to contest the ISIS and al Qaida narrative and recruitment online. At a minimum, there must be a common understanding of the threat followed by the necessary political attention and requisite resources throughout Europe to confront terrorism and its underlying ideology effectively.

This depends in part on the Europeans moving to an explicit, aggressive prevention mode – to gather intelligence from all sources, analyze information on a real-time basis, uncover terrorist cells, and prevent attacks before they occur. Much of this is reliant on European structures and laws that would allow for more aggressive sharing of information, including information tied to its own citizens, while still preserving the necessary privacy and civil liberties protections. For example, European authorities do not share passenger name records internally to vet passengers on commercial flights in real time. The open borders in Europe hamstring border authorities’ abilities to track and monitor suspect individuals, as seen with some of the Paris attackers who traveled in and out of Europe freely without detection.

There have also been limitations on how law enforcement can gather and share information on its own nationals as well as execute lawful search warrants. In permissive environments and micro-safe havens, terrorists have been able to operate relatively freely. The Paris attackers, some of whom were well known ISIS members on watch lists, could mix chemicals, buy illegal

guns and hide in plain sight in Brussels and then easily travel to execute attacks on high profile targets in France.

A successful prevention mode also depends on law enforcement and security forces posturing their collection and cases to allow for disruption of plots and discovery of networks, vice evidence-gathering for the sake of proving past cases. Some of these deficits have been borne out in recent days, with the revelation that certain information about terrorist networks and suspicions about individuals were not shared more broadly and some in the terrorist networks were arrested only to be released before they attacked. According to press reports, the questioning of suspects and those arrested has often been limited, and there has been a failure to acquire information about existing cells and future plots. It is never easy to prevent all terrorist attacks, but Europe's overarching counter-terrorism approach needs to be explicitly focused on disruption and prevention.

Materially, there is a mismatch of resources and capabilities within Europe. Some of Europe's intelligence and counter-terrorism services, like the French and British, are among the best in the world, and many countries, like Spain and Italy, have long dealt with dangerous terrorist and criminal organizations of various stripes. However, Europe's services are uneven in their capabilities and professionalism, and the mismatch of trust and competence has bedeviled a Europe-wide approach. Within countries, like Belgium and Germany, there are political and bureaucratic divisions that have made it harder for internal collaboration and information sharing. Belgium has required assistance from France and others with active raids and investigations stemming from the terrorist networks tied to the Paris and Brussels attacks.

The challenges of preventing terrorist attacks in this environment are enormous. Even the best authorities in Europe are overwhelmed by the number of new and historical terrorist and radicalized individuals for whom they need to account. Known suspects have to be prioritized for surveillance while arrests and disruptions must be balanced against the need to maintain operational security and to build defensible cases. Many of the actors who have perpetrated recent attacks in Europe were known to authorities, came from the same social circles, and touched or were part of historical networks of radicalization. As in the case of the Charlie Hebdo attackers, French authorities knew these were violent radicals but had not focused more attention on them because of the lack of recent, concerning activity.

New networks and suspects are being discovered every day, with questions about how far and deep such individuals reach into existing networks or whether they represent completely new actors on the scene. Authorities are often operating with imperfect information and attempting to prioritize disruptions, arrests, and cases. All Western authorities are playing catch-up to understand the extent of terrorist cells in Europe and ISIS and al Qaida plotting and planning. The dearth of intelligence – from within ISIS safe havens and deployed networks in Europe -- and the operational security of terrorist cells have compounded the challenge to authorities.

Finally, Europe is dealing with a host of systemic problems that are challenging the very foundation of the European Union. From economic stagnation and high unemployment, to bulging refugee populations and questions about the viability of a common, open border, Europe is under stress. The terrorism threat exacerbates all of these tensions and has the potential to

drive deeper political and social rifts within European societies, including by fueling the rise of reactionary forces. The ability to absorb refugee populations effectively and ensure that Muslim minorities are not marginalized and individuals alienated will become an important element of any European counterterrorism response. The stability, resilience, and strength of European societies are ultimate bulwarks against the dangerous effects of terrorism directed at Europe.

Implications of the European Terrorist Threat to the United States

The United States does not face the same kind of threats from ISIS and al Qaida that Europe does, but the threat from ISIS and al Qaida remain real – for U.S. citizens and interests abroad and for the Homeland.

Recent terrorist attacks inspired by ISIS and violent Islamic extremism in San Bernardino, California; Garland, Texas; Brooklyn, New York; Chattanooga, Tennessee; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania reflect an environment in which radicalized or deranged individuals are willing to attack fellow citizens on behalf of a foreign terrorist organization or its brand. Terrorism-related prosecutions brought by the U.S. Department of Justice over the past few years demonstrate a fairly consistent, yet small number of cases of radicalized individuals willing to support ISIS and al Qaida as well as plan attacks.

There have been small pockets of radicalization that have emerged, as in the Somali-American community which has seen young members of its community travel to Somalia to fight with al Shabaab and more recently to fight in Iraq and Syria. ISIS and al Qaida have continued to target Americans specifically for recruitment, including the use of targeted social media and peer-to-peer communications to identify, isolate, and mobilize operatives in the United States, to include young women.

The FBI Director has stated that there are open “homegrown violent extremist investigations” in all fifty states, fueled by the ideology of ISIS and al Qaida. The diversity and volume of cases have challenged U.S. counter-terrorism capabilities to identify, monitor, and determine the seriousness and priority of each case.

In the past, Americans have played important if not prominent roles in the broader violent Sunni extremist movement. The American-Yemini cleric Anwar al Awlaki became a “terrorist icon,” whose extensive corpus (in colloquial English, no less) includes sermons delivered to several 9/11 hijackers and advice to the Ft. Hood shooter, American Nidal Malik Hasan. Even in his death, Awlaki’s sermons have continued to attract Americans and Westerners. Others like Omar Hammami, born and raised in America, found his way to Somalia, where he became a prominent leader of al Shabaab. Adam Gadahn, an American convert to Islam, produced videos and other propaganda for al Qaeda, and Adnan Gulshair Muhammad el Shukrijumah, a South Florida computer programmer, was one of al Qaeda’s most highly trained sleeper agents. Both were killed overseas. Though not common, the al Qaida and ISIS narrative has found root even among some Americans and people raised in America.

Overall, however, the scope and nature of the problem for the United States is different than in Europe. The volume of known foreign fighters from the United States who have traveled to

terrorist conflict zones is minimal compared to Europe – with approximately 200 foreign fighters and a relatively smaller proportion of the overall population mobilized to act against fellow citizens. The distance from the conflict zones has helped shield the United States from the direct effects of uncontrolled refugee flows and migration in and out of the war zones – and the ease of access across borders for groups like ISIS.

Muslim Americans have historically been well integrated into American culture and society and have done well economically, relative to other groups. The notion of a common American identity – regardless of race, ethnicity, or creed – and the ideal of the American dream with equal opportunity for all have served as pillars of strength to forge a common national identity and allegiance.

Since 9/11, the United States has been aggressive about acquiring and analyzing intelligence about terrorist intentions and capabilities; breaking down walls of information sharing within the federal government and key local, state, tribal, and international partners; and has framed and executed a preventative counterterrorism approach. There have been good faith efforts to enlist local communities to counter extremist ideologies and to prevent neighborhoods and individuals from falling prey to the al Qaida and ISIS call to action. Though not perfect and not without controversy, the U.S. approach has been defined by urgency of action and a commitment to prevention of terrorist attacks.

Even so, there are direct and immediate effects and potential threats to the United States of the terrorist threat to Europe. European vulnerabilities create gaps in security for the United States.

- *Attacks on U.S. Interests and Citizens in Europe.* The most immediate threat to the United States are to her citizens and interests in Europe. American military personnel, tourists, businesses, and economic interests are all at risk in a European security environment under threat from terrorists. This is all the more so when ISIS and al Qaida remain intent on attacking Americans wherever they can be found. The security vulnerabilities in Europe directly impact the security of American interests abroad.
- *Visa-Free Travel for Europeans.* The visa-free travel for Europeans and others creates a gap that could allow an ISIS or al Qaida operative into the country unknowingly. Without a visa requirement, there is one less U.S. government vetting mechanism for those seeking to travel to the United States, though there is travel vetting for security purposes. Currently, citizens of thirty-eight countries are eligible to travel to the United States for ninety days or less without a visa.

Congress has attempted to limit these vulnerabilities. Under current restrictions, such citizens cannot be a dual-national of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, or Yemen. This also excludes those who have traveled to or been present in Iran, Iraq, Sudan, or Syria on or after March 1, 2011, with limited exceptions. This challenge is exacerbated by the ability of ISIS and al Qaida to forge and alter existing travel documents, acquire authentic Western passports, or even print new travel documents.

- *Lack of Information and Real-Time Information Sharing.* The limitations of timely information and intelligence sharing in Europe have direct implications for the United States. In order to vet travelers, uncover terrorist networks, and prevent attacks, the United States must receive relevant information tied to known cells and suspected individuals. Indeed, the United States serves as an intelligence enabler for the international community. Thus, if the United States is not receiving accurate or timely information about terrorist networks and suspects, there will be gaps of understanding and less of an ability for the United States and European allies to track and disrupt terrorist actors, funding, and networks.

Significantly, the lack of specific information about suspect actors and the dearth of information about ISIS-inspired networks of concern and ISIS intentions and capabilities deepen serious concerns over what U.S. authorities do not know and what they are not seeing or hearing. U.S. and Western authorities do not know the identities of all foreign fighters, and do not know all the individuals who may have been deployed back to the West to attack. There are dark alleys of communication between terrorist operatives and from ISIS commanders. Greater terrorist operational security and the use of encryption technologies and secure communications techniques are making it even more difficult to discover terrorist suspects, cells, and plots.

- *Demonstration Effects.* The United States is always concerned about the demonstration effects of successful or attempted terrorist attacks, especially in the West. Radicalized individuals in the United States could always be inspired to attack – to feed off of the attention and momentum of attacks in Europe or to engage in copycat attacks. In a globalized, instantaneous, and fluid information environment, would-be terrorists can learn quickly from those who have executed successful attacks and may understand or study the security protocols employed to attempt to thwart such attacks. The more successful terrorist attacks in Europe, the more concern there will be that radicalized individuals in the United States will be mobilized to attack.
- *New Technologies and Methodologies.* ISIS and its operatives have continued to adapt quickly to their environment – taking advantage of opportunities to radicalize and attack and reacting to pressure. The growing sophistication of the networks in Europe reflects a graduation of capabilities, with operatives able to execute strategic attacks under the noses of European authorities focused on preventing such attacks. These adaptations are likely to continue, and those could ultimately be reflected in the United States, with terrorists sharing methodologies.

Importantly, there could also be adaptations in the use of social media and communications technologies not just to radicalize and animate individuals but also to mobilize and direct them to act in concert for strategic purposes. A key influencer – in the United States or from abroad -- could use peer-to-peer technologies to choreograph disparate, radicalized individuals to attack in the Homeland. Such methodologies might allow terrorists to turn lone wolves into a coordinated pack attacking the West.

- *Weakening of Europe.* The most strategic impact of the European threat environment is whether it ultimately weakens or strengthens European resolve and capabilities to counter the terrorist threat from ISIS and al Qaida and the radicalized citizens and micro-havens in their midst. The United States needs a strong, vibrant, and healthy Europe to be able to confront the growing safe havens around the world, uncover Western plots and networks, and undermine and ultimately discredit the ideology and narrative drawing Muslim men and women to the ISIS cause. Thus, the ultimate vulnerability to American security from the terrorism threat to and in Europe comes in the weakening of our European partners.

Moving Forward with Europe

The United States and Europe are facing a common terrorist enemy, and we are all at war together. The United States must therefore work closely with its European partners – to enable, support, and lead where necessary – to disrupt the short and long-term threats from terrorism. Much of this work is underway, including with the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS, and the U.S. counterterrorism community continues to focus on the emerging threats and disrupting them in concert with European partners.

The United States must apply a sense of urgency and importance to countering ISIS, al Qaida, and the underlying and motivating ideology that animates the global Sunni extremist movement, even if the threats do not appear immediate or as grave to U.S. interests as they do in Europe.

The United States, Europe, regional partners, and the international community must deny physical safe haven and territory to terrorist groups – and ultimately wrest control of territory back from ISIS and al Qaida. It is in these terrorist archipelagos now occupied and governed by terrorist groups that they are able to plot, train, interact, and adapt. With time, space, and leadership, motivated global terrorists will always innovate and surprise. These territories must be disrupted, and the links between various ISIS provinces and al Qaida affiliates must be cut.

In the case of ISIS' proclaimed "caliphate," the denial of this haven is also important to denying ISIS its central narrative and recruiting tool. As long as ISIS appears to be succeeding in establishing and ensconcing an Islamic State in the face of local and global pressure, the more attractive its narrative will be to those in search of meaning and identity in a functioning caliphate. Though difficult to dislodge, it is hard to imagine that the international community would allow a global terrorist organization that has struck so many parts of the world, including the heart of Europe, to occupy and govern urban environments like Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq.

In denying safe haven, we must in the first instance rely on and support legitimate local and regional partners that have a vested interest in ensuring that such zones are not allowed to fester. U.S. counter-terrorism strategy for the past decade has involved relying on and working with regional partners to disrupt and dismantle terrorist networks and safe haven. In Southeast Asia, East Africa, Central Asia, and other regions, this model has helped empower and enable U.S. allies to work together to combat terrorist groups in their midst. This model has yet to prove fully effective in all regions, and the expanding reach of ISIS and continued al Qaida-controlled territory is a challenge to the United States, Europe, and the international community.

The United States should enable European partners by spurring even greater intelligence and information sharing, forcing European partners to sit together to understand the unfolding threat and determine or establish new mechanisms to increase real-time information sharing tied to terrorist suspects and plots. This will involve capacity building with European partners and increased collection and analysis to fill the gaps in knowledge around terrorist intentions and capabilities. This becomes critical as ISIS establishes or expands beachheads in places like Sirte, Libya, and the Sinai, and the West needs to defend against expeditionary terrorism coming from new safe havens. In concert with Europe, the United States should help enable local proxies and allies on the ground to fight ISIS and al Qaida directly.

The United States and Europe also need to work to undermine the ideology that animates the violent Sunni extremist movement. The Islamic State represents the latest manifestation of an ideological movement birthed by al Qaida. The underlying terrorist manifesto and heroic mythology of a religious obligation to fight against an assault on Muslims is heralded through ideological outposts in satellite sermons, garage mosque meetings, and Facebook friends. With a vast recruitment pipeline, slick media products, and targeted use of social media, new recruits and identities are forming.

With 62 percent of 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide under the age of thirty, this is a generational threat. And the terrorists know this – using schools, videos, and terror – to inculcate a new generation with their message.

In concert, ISIS is recruiting young girls and women to drive the spread of the ideology in new families while dispatching women to ISIS outposts well beyond Syria and Iraq to help regenerate radicalization. The radicalization of women and their willingness to become involved in all phases of terrorist operations is worrying security officials and families around the world.

Muslims themselves – to include our allies in Muslim-majority nations, local leaders, and communities – must confront this problem directly, deny it funding, while also defining and respecting modern, diverse Muslim identities. This requires curtailing and challenging the most extreme dimensions of radical Islamic proselytization and recruitment globally.

But we cannot simply assume that our allies – especially in Muslim communities -- can defend against the threat of terror and the allure of the ideology on their own. America and our European partners must lead -- empowering, enabling, and defending networks, communities, and individuals willing to confront the ideology. Some very good work and attention has been drawn to this in Europe over the years, but the scale and pace of work is not fast enough to match the threat.

The world must confront directly the outbreaks and manifestations of this ideology – like it does a pandemic. This requires empowering a new type of coalition – a “network of networks” of non-state and state actors – that not only counters the extremists’ narrative and seeks to intervene and replace it – but also gets ahead of it through inoculation.

We must first directly confront the sources and manifestations of the radical ideology plaguing

the world. America can do this. Successive Administrations – in concert with the private sector – have attempted to galvanize networks of women, ex-“jihadis”, clerics, technologists, Hollywood and Bollywood, and others who have been willing to confront and replace the narrative, identity, and culture of extremism. Groups like GoogleIdeas (now “Jigsaw”), the GenNext Foundation, Sisters Against Violent Extremism, Movements.org, and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue have funded and networked – often with enabling technologies -- disparate groups attempting to fight extremism.

Former extremists have organized to counter the ideology on the streets of radicalized neighborhoods and campuses of extremist universities. Attempts to amplify credible voices and create new platforms for expression have worked on a small scale – local radio programs run by kids in Mali or street theatre in Luton, UK. Initiatives like these to debunk, mock, and criticize extremists – and create a sense of modern identity not dictated by terrorists -- must be scaled up dramatically.

And the new and virulent manifestations of these threats offer opportunities to create new alliances and networks to confront the ideology – from human rights and women’s groups to archaeologists and conservationists. International security forces and private stability operations teams could be enlisted to protect vulnerable populations, sites, and individuals against violent extremists.

This ideological fight is not just about terrorism. These are enemies of humanity – attempting to spread their ideology like a virus while reshaping borders, history, and identity. This demands stopping the manifestations of the ideology itself.

In the United States, the Department of Homeland Security should move even more aggressively toward a model of layered, systemic defense and resilience for critical infrastructure and national systems. This is important as terrorist groups like ISIS begin to flirt with cyber capabilities, and other transnational actors and their state sponsors probe for weaknesses in the American system and economy, in particular in the cyber context.

Finally, we must push government agencies to imagine the unimaginable and not underestimate the will and capacity of global terrorist organizations to strike Europe and the United States. We must continue to invest resources and energy to prevent terrorist groups from developing, acquiring, or using weapons of mass destruction. The recent Nuclear Security Summit is a great example of the United States focusing global attention on the potential of nuclear terrorism and the need to prevent it. The United States has concentrated its strategy, programs, and international engagements on preventing terrorists from acquiring or using biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons.

Conclusion

In the wake of the terrorist attacks in Brussels, there is growing anxiety over the reach and capabilities of the Islamic State, well beyond the caliphate it has established in Iraq and Syria. The United States must work closely with her European allies to address the terrorist threats in and to Europe and the vulnerabilities this creates for the United States and her interests. We

should not underestimate the ability of ISIS, al Qaida, or like-minded terrorist groups to innovate, adapt, and ultimately threaten European and U.S. interests and societies.