

## **FFI RAPPORT**

### **JIHAD IN EUROPE - A survey of the motivations for Sunni Islamist terrorism in post-millennium Europe**

NESSER Petter

**FFI/RAPPORT-2004/01146**



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8) ABSTRACT <p>This report surveys the motivations for Sunni Islamist terrorism in post-millennium Europe. It provides in-depth case studies of four terrorist plots in Europe after 2000, attributed to Sunni Islamist militants.</p> <p>The analysis is based mainly on the press coverage of the investigations and trials of the terrorist cells. The aim of the analysis is to determine whether these acts of terrorism should be understood primarily within the framework of al-Qaida's global jihad, or largely as a spill-over effect local Islamist insurgencies or "jihad" in the Middle East and North Africa, or as an emerging "European jihadism" motivated by grievances generated in the European Muslim diaspora.</p> <p>The report provides an overview and some general observations about the recent patterns of Islamist terrorism inside Europe. The appendix of the report contains a list of thwarted terrorist plots against targets in Europe attributed to Islamist militants. It also contains profiles of radical Islamist movements, which are believed to maintain structures inside the region.</p>				
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## PREFACE

This report is based on my thesis submitted for the cand. polit. Degree at the Department of Political Science, University of Oslo in January 2004. Research was conducted within the framework of the terrorism research project at the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, TERRA. \*

Islamist terrorism has received a great deal of attention in the media since September 11, 2001. The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 created general fear of an increase in Islamist terrorist activity on the global scene in general and in Europe in particular. Until March 11, 2004, Islamist radicals in Europe had launched only minor terrorist attacks since the millennium. The data gathered for this study shows that a considerable number of mass casualty attacks against targets in Europe were prevented. The terrorist events summarized in the appendix of this study suggest that the threat of Islamist violence and terrorism against international and European targets in Europe since September 11, 2001 was very real, and is most probably increasing. I did not want merely to describe and quantify this development; I have also tried to move beyond this, and analyze and problematize the motivations of the Islamist militants involved in attempted attacks in Europe.

On March 11, 2004 a horrific terrorist attack struck Spain resulting in a bloodbath. Terrorists bombed four commuter trains in Madrid killing 191 people and injuring approximately 1600 more. At the time of writing, the investigation strongly suggests that Moroccan radical Islamists affiliated with al-Qaida were behind the Madrid blasts.

This report was originally meant to survey and problematize the motivations for Europe-based Islamist radicals' *attempts* to attack targets in Europe, and discuss different explanations for why they have prepared attacks in the region. In the aftermath of the atrocities in Madrid, the report might also provide a useful background for understanding what happened in the Spanish capital on March 11, 2004. It offers general observations of the recent patterns of Islamist terrorism in Europe, in addition to in depth analyses of four recent terrorist conspiracies attributed to al-Qaida affiliated Islamists.

The appendix of the study provides a chronological and fairly comprehensive overview of foiled terrorist plots attributed to Europe-based Islamist radicals, which have been covered in press articles after 2000. In addition the appendix gives an overview of the radical Islamist groups with a known presence in Europe. The report was near completion when the terrorist attacks in Madrid occurred. The attack is thus only

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\* This study was completed with excellent guidance and support from colleagues at the FFI, Brynjar Lia, Thomas Hegghammer, Åshild Kjæk, Truls Halleberg Tønnessen, Laila Bokhari, Synnøve Marie Kvam and Tore Nyhamar. I would also like to thank Tore Bjørge, Jane, Thomas, Ingrid and Lars.

commented on in an epilogue, while references to the Madrid-investigation are included in the text where relevant.



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## JIHAD IN EUROPE - A survey of the motivations for Sunni Islamist terrorism in post-millennium Europe

### 1 INTRODUCTION

“The plan was that I would break through the gates at the Kleine Brogel army base in a Mercedes delivery van carrying a 100-kilogram bomb and crash into the canteen. It would happen between 12:00 and 13:00. Between 50 and 70 American soldiers would be eating there at that time. I would place a photo of a Palestinian child killed by the Jews on the van's dashboard to remind myself of why I was doing it.”

These are the words of a Tunisian Islamist militant and a former soccer player, Nizar Trabelsi, describing how he intended to launch a suicide attack against a U.S. airbase in Belgium, probably in the spring of 2002. On September 29, 2003, Trabelsi was sentenced to ten years in prison for his terrorist plans by a Belgian court.<sup>1</sup> Trabelsi was a member of an al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra network behind a wider conspiracy to strike U.S. targets in Europe, probably in France or Belgium.<sup>2</sup> United Arab Emirates security officers arrested the alleged leader of this terrorist network, Djamel Beghal, at Dubai airport on July 28, 2001, after receiving a tip-off from British intelligence sources. He was on his way back to France after a stay at a terrorist training facility in Afghanistan. The arrest was considered a major breakthrough in the investigation of Sunni-Islamist terrorist networks in Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Subsequent anti-terrorist operations by European police and intelligence services, sometimes supported by U.S. intelligence, have revealed that attacks on civilian, military as well as public targets on European soil were indeed imminent. At the time of writing there is publicly available information about 15 planned mass casualty attacks attributed to radical Islamists. This might be only a fraction of the actual number. European intelligence agencies have estimated that Islamist terrorists have prepared approximately 30 “spectaculars” or massive attacks in Europe since September 11, 2001.<sup>4</sup> There is thus no doubt that Islamist militants or *mujahidin* (holy warriors) allegedly “linked to al-Qaida”, have intended to attack targets in post-millennium Europe.

<sup>1</sup> Al-Farid, Nur al-Din, “The US arrests an Arab doctor working at Guantanamo, and the Prison for Trablusi and his group in Belgium,” *al-Hayat* 01 October 2003, [http://www.daralhayat.com/world\\_news/09-2003/20030930-01p01-02.txt/story.html](http://www.daralhayat.com/world_news/09-2003/20030930-01p01-02.txt/story.html). For a definition of Islamism, see ch. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra (Excommunication and Emigration), is an originally Egyptian Salafi-Jihadi cult-like movement, which considers the killing of fellow Muslims as justifiable if they do not subscribe to the movement's strict interpretation of the fundamental sources of Islam, al-Quran and al-Sunna (the Prophet's traditions).

<sup>3</sup> Steven Erlanger and Chris Hedges, “Missed Signals; Terror Cells Slip Through Europe's Grasp.” *New York Times* 28 December 2001, <http://www.pulitzer.org/year/2002/explanatory-reporting/works/122801.html>; Vermaat, Emerson (2002 May 26): “Bin Laden's Terror Networks in Europe” Mackenzie Institute Occasional Paper [www.mackenzieinstitute.com/commentary.html](http://www.mackenzieinstitute.com/commentary.html)

<sup>4</sup> See ch 12.4, for an overview of Sunni-Islamist terrorism in Europe 1998-2003. The terrorist activities are categorized as “terrorist conspiracies”, “terrorist attacks”, “export of terrorism from within Europe” and “poorly documented terrorist events”. Terrorist support activities such as financing and the like, are not included.

This study suggest that the large and most populated central European countries, Germany, France, United Kingdom and Italy have been the most exposed as arena for planned Islamist terrorist operations. The selected targets were either strategic or symbolic (e.g. military bases, embassies, parliament buildings, churches, synagogues, landmarks), or suitable to cause mass casualties randomly amongst civilians (e.g. marketplaces, subways, restaurants). The United States' government or military facilities (and NATO bases) were frequently selected targets, but citizens, interests and symbols of Israel, Russia, and European countries have also been potential targets of Islamist terrorism in Europe. Most often the terrorists intended to use improvised weapons such as homemade fertilizer bombs. In a few cases, Islamist terrorists appearantly planned to employ unconventional weapons such as ricin and cyanide, or conventional weapons such as like machine guns, rifles, hand grenades or surface to air missiles.

The conspirators were almost exclusively men, who had been residing in Europe. They were, with the notable exceptions of a few European converts and a group of Pakistanis, of Middle Eastern or North African origin. Algerians, Tunisians, Jordanians and Moroccans were strongly represented. Some of them were political refugees, some were second-generation immigrants with European citizenship, and some were illegal immigrants. Their occupations varied between regular jobs and studies, to criminal activities. Several of the disrupted terrorist-cells were multi-national, i.e. members belonged to different nationalities. All of the key operatives in the disrupted terrorist cells analyzed below are believed to have spent time in training facilities run by al-Qaida or like-minded groups in Afghanistan. During the planning and preparation of attacks, the Islamist militants traveled extensively both inside Europe and in other regions. One of the terrorist conspiracies analyzed below was probably planned in Afghanistan and the U.K., further preparations were made in Germany, whereas the attack was to be launched in France.<sup>5</sup>

Investigations and trials of the terrorist cases revealed that the majority of the Islamist militants belonged to the so-called "Salafi-Jihadi" movements originating from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and their front organizations or support networks in Europe. The movements involved in the cases analyzed below are: the Jordanian-Palestinian al-Tawhid movement, the Algerian movement GSPC, the above-mentioned al-Takfir-wa'l-Hijra, and a terrorist cell labeled "The Chechen Network".<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the discovery of multiple Islamist terrorist conspiracies to attack targets inside Europe, and the actual launching of two minor Islamist terrorist attacks in the region post-millennium, al-Qaida's leaders Ayman al-Zawahiri and Usama bin Ladin have issued specific threats against European countries.<sup>7</sup> In the wake of these threats we have seen an increase in

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<sup>5</sup> See for example ch. 6.

<sup>6</sup> The expression "Salafi-Jihadi movements" defines radical Sunni-Islamist movements embracing the Salafi-Jihadi doctrine of Islamism promoted by the al-Qaida leadership (see ch. 5 and ch. 12.).

<sup>7</sup> On October 9, 2001, Associated Press Television News received a cd-rom containing a statement from Ayman al-Zawahiri, in which he issues a specific warning to US allies or "the deputies of America" to get out of the

terrorism against European targets in other regions, attributed to al-Qaida (e.g. in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Turkey). The appendix of this report also refers to several examples of Europe-based Islamists being implicated in terrorism outside Europe (e.g. in Israel, the U.S., Morocco, Iraq etc).<sup>8</sup>

The terrorism research group at FFI has previously argued that Islamist militants during the 1980s and early 1990s mainly perceived Europe as a *sanctuary* and a base of *support activities* for local Islamist insurgencies. Europe was suitable as a sanctuary because of the region's asylum legislations, relatively open internal borders, possibilities to raise funds, and relative operational freedom with regard to propaganda efforts and recruitment, etc.<sup>9</sup> Radical Islamists in Europe have raised funds and recruited fighters for local Islamist insurgencies in the MENA region and/or the jihads in, for example, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kashmir, and Chechnya, etc.

Europe was, however, haunted by Islamist terrorist attacks in the past. In the mid-1980s the Lebanon-based Shia movement Hizballah attacked targets in Europe. In the mid-1990s the Algerian *Armed Islamic Group* (GIA) launched a terrorist campaign in France. Towards the end of the 1990s the GIA splinter group *The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat* (GSPC) allegedly planned to attack the 1998 soccer World Cup in France and the Euro 2000 soccer tournament. The French anti-terrorism apparatus cracked down on the Algerian Islamist networks in France, forcing several radicals to emigrate from France and reorganize in other European countries, especially in Belgium and the U.K.

Analysts perceived the Islamist terrorism in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s as being motivated mainly by political developments and events in the MENA region. It was seen as a continuation or spillover from the region's Islamist movements' "local jihads" against their authorities, which they perceive as corrupt, repressive, incompetent, treacherous and

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Muslim World, see Hegghammer (2002), p184. He specifically mentions Germany and France and refers to the bombing of the Ghriba Synagogue in Tunisia in April 2002, and the bombing of the French oil tanker Limburg on October 6, 2002. On May 21, 2003 *al-Jazeera* published a 3-4 minute tape-recorded speech by al-Zawahiri in which he urges fellow Muslims to attack foreign interests in Muslim countries. In the recording he specifies U.S., U.K., Australian and Norwegian interests, see Brian Whitaker, "Al-Qaida tape calls for more attacks; Follow example of 9/11, urges voice purportedly of top Bin Laden aide," *The Guardian* 22 May 2003 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/alqaida/story/0,12469,960962,00.html>. The latest statements by al-Zawahiri and Bin Ladin (2001-2002), if authentic, tend to focus more on the United States' allies than before. In one statement attributed to Usama Bin Ladin in October 2003, he specifically mentions Spain, the U.K., Australia, Poland, Japan and Italy as a potential targets for al-Qaida, and emphasizes that the radicals have the right to attack U.S. allies at the "appropriate time and place", see "Message to US October 2003" *Al-Jazeera.net* 18 October 2003 <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/8E8EA580-943C-4FBF-9ABD-21B47627FECD.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> During the data-collection for this study, which is focused on terrorism inside Europe, we have seen several examples of how Europe-based Islamists have participated in the preparation and implementation of terrorism abroad, see ch.12 ; Export of terrorism from within Europe. On March 11, 2004, we probably saw the first massive attack launched by al-Qaida affiliated Islamists in Europe, see ch. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Lia and Kj ok (2001), for similar views, see Burgat (2003), and Kepel (2003). Kepel's interpretation is that Islamists perceived Europe as "the domain of contractual peace" (*Dar al-Ahd*) until the diaspora communities were politicized during the 1980s. Since then Europe has been increasingly perceived as *Dar al-Harb*, a zone in which Muslims have to defend themselves and wage jihad against the infidels, see Kepel (2003), p 185 ff.

hypocritical.<sup>10</sup> The GIA's terrorist campaign in France and Belgium from 1994 to 1996 was designed to punish France for supporting the Algerian military regime after it cancelled the 1992 elections in Algeria, in which the Islamist party FIS was posed to win an overwhelming majority of votes. It was also designed to deter France and other Western powers from further involvement in the conflict between the Islamists and the secular government. The GIA attacked French and Algerian targets in Europe. They also threatened to attack Belgian targets in order to deter Belgian authorities from extraditing GIA members arrested in Belgium to France.<sup>11</sup>

The "new" Islamist terrorism in Europe differs from that in the past in several respects. First, it involves multiple Salafi-Jihadi movements originating from several Arab-Islamic countries. Secondly, it is aimed almost exclusively at Western targets. Thirdly, the majority of the militants have received paramilitary and/or terrorist training in camps run by al-Qaida and Taliban in Afghanistan. Because of this, analysts perceive the recent patterns of Islamist terrorism in Europe as a new front in Usama Bin Ladin's and al-Qaida's "global jihad" mainly directed against the U.S., Israel and their closest allies.<sup>12</sup>

The Islamist radicals conspiring to attack targets in Europe originated from the MENA region, resided in Europe prior to initiating the plans, and almost all of them had received training in Afghanistan, which was the base of the promoters of "global jihad" until spring 2002. In this study they are referred to as "global mujahidin".<sup>13</sup> Methodologically, three contexts or "levels of analysis" must therefore be considered relevant when searching for potential explanations concerning the terrorists' motivations. One is the local MENA context, the other is the European diaspora context, and a third might be defined as a "context beyond borders" or the "global context". Since most of the terrorists have lived in Europe for some period of time we must pay special attention to the diaspora context when searching for explanations concerning their motivations for attacking targets within Europe.

An increase in *transnational relations* between radical Islamist movements (transnational radical Islamism), facilitated by globalization, sanctioned and encouraged by Islamist doctrine have "broadened the minds" of the modern mujahidin.<sup>14</sup> These developments along with specific socio-economic issues and political events increasingly motivated by a mixture of

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<sup>10</sup> The Jordanian, Egyptian and Saudi regimes in particular are dismissed as traitors and hypocrites by Islamists, because they claim religious legitimacy, but fail to implement Islamic law, al-Sharia, because they persecute the Islamist opposition, and because they forge alliances with Western powers, most notably the U.S.

<sup>11</sup> Lia and Kjøk (2001), Kjøk (2004).

<sup>12</sup> See for example Gunaratna (2003).

<sup>13</sup> A "global mujahid", or a "global holy warrior", is here defined as one who operates beyond state borders, and perceives local Islamist insurgencies as integrated parts of a "global jihad" mainly directed against the world's only superpower, the United States. The "global mujahid" is motivated by structural injustice, perceived as U.S. - led neo-imperialism.

<sup>14</sup> The term "mujahidin" is Arabic for "holy warriors" or the plural of "one who struggles". In this study it is used about members of Salafi-Jihadi-movements.

local, regional and global grievances while being heavily influenced by a globalist religio-political ideology promoted by Bin Ladin and the “al-Qaida hardcore”.<sup>15</sup>

## 2 THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The main question which we seek to answer in this study is: *what was the relative importance of these three contexts or “levels of analysis” in motivating Sunni Islamist militants to launch terrorist attacks on various targets in post-millennium Europe?* That is, is the recent Islamist terrorism in Europe mainly the continuation of Usama Bin Ladin’s and al-Qaida’s “global jihad” on European soil, or does it rather constitute a spill over of terrorism into Europe from the local Islamist insurgencies in the Middle East North Africa (the “local jihad”)? Or, do we see the emergence of a “European diaspora jihadism”, mainly motivated by grievances generated in Europe? Put more simply, we ask whether the militants conspiring to attack targets in Europe were mainly driven by “local motivation”, “diaspora motivation” or “global motivation”.

The main hypothesis of the study is that the motivations for Sunni Islamist terrorism inside post-millennium Europe are “complex” in the sense that they involve both social and religio-political grievances generated from multiple “levels of analysis”. Europe-based Islamist radicals draw their motivations from the local MENA context, the European diaspora context, and the “global context” simultaneously. The relative importance of the three contexts might vary from one case to another, and grievances generated in the different contexts seem to be mutually dependent on each other. Based on source collection and analyses, together with day to day monitoring of press sources on Islamist terrorist activity in Europe for more than one year at the Norwegian Defence Research Institute (FFI), I argue that “global motivation”, sometimes in combination with “diaspora motivation”, is increasingly important compared to “local motivation”. The source material of this study suggests that a common pattern is that grievances generated in the diaspora have been fuelled by ideas of a “global jihad”, manifesting in Sunni Islamist terrorism inside Europe.

The purpose of this study is to test this hypothesis by exploring and measuring the relative importance of the terrorists’ grievances at the various political contexts we assume they perceive relevant. The hypothesis above is built on the assumption that an “either-or” perception of “local jihad” and “global jihad” is futile. Islamist movements never forgot the local battles, and al-Qaida always incorporated them in its ideology. The insurgencies against secular and semi-secular regimes in the Middle East, North Africa, and South East Asia have probably become more integrated parts of the “global jihad”.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See ch 5. The expression “al-Qaida hardcore” defines the inner circles of al-Qaida; see Burke (2003), p. 7. For a definition of transnational relations, see ch.12.

<sup>16</sup> al-Qaida’s no. 2 Ayman al-Zawahiri is the main advocate for the local jihad among al-Qaida’s leaders, see for example extracts from al-Zawahiri’s book “Knights under the Prophets banner” (see al-Sharq al-Awsat (2001)), via FBIS.

The Norwegian Defence Research Establishment has systematically compiled press reports and articles covering patterns of Islamist terrorism in Western Europe dating back to 1998. Based on these sources a chronological list was made of activities indicating that Islamist fighters were in “attack mode”, and thus possessed the necessary motivation to launch attacks in Europe. These activities were defined as “terrorist conspiracies”, “terrorist threats”, and “terrorist attacks”.<sup>17</sup> “Terrorist conspiracies” was the category proving most suitable when studying the terrorists’ motivations for reasons elaborated below.

In order to measure the relative importance of the Islamist militants’ motivations along the local, diaspora, global dimension, we conducted case studies of the four best documented Islamist terrorist conspiracies in Europe apparent since the millennium, which were attributed to Europe-based Salafi-Jihadi Islamists. The study is mainly based on press sources, and almost exclusively on publicly available sources.

Foiled terrorist conspiracies under investigation or on trials represent unique opportunities to study a broad set of proxies concerning the terrorists’ motivations. During the interrogations and court hearings, the terrorists, investigators and witnesses provide first-hand information about the terrorist conspiracies and information about why and how the terrorist attacks were to be launched. Testimonies, witness accounts and assessments by prosecutors and investigators can be interpreted in the broader political contexts of the terrorist conspiracies, enabling us to draw a more accurate picture of the terrorists’ motivations. Based on the sources gathered it was decided to focus on four “proxies of motivation”.

- First we analyze *the type and nationality of the targets* chosen for the terrorist operations. It is commonly acknowledged among terrorism experts that terrorists communicate through their violence.<sup>18</sup> Because of this, target selection is an important proxy of terrorist motivation. Do the terrorists select targets that symbolize their country of origin, the diaspora “host state” (see below), or the United States-Israel axis?
- Secondly we analyze *the backgrounds of the militants* (profiles and organizational affiliations). What is the ideological orientation of the movements with which the militants are affiliated? Some movements are, for example, ideologically more exclusively committed to the “local jihad” than others, and reluctant to allowing the globally orientated al-Qaida network to co-opt their local battle. Concerning the profiles of the militants we also ask whether they were socially most embedded in their countries of origin, or in the diaspora in which they have been based prior to the terrorist plots.
- Thirdly we analyze *the militants’ own justifications* for engaging in terrorism inside Europe. Do they, for example, justify the terrorism with reference to political events in their countries of origin, social problems in the European diaspora, or Western U.S.-led neo-imperialism? Do they refer to one or more of these contexts?
- Fourthly we analyze *the broader political contexts* considered relevant to the militants at the time of the conspiracy, the local context, the diaspora context, and the global context. Are there political developments or issues at one or more of the relevant “levels of analysis” that potentially could motivate a terrorist attack in Europe (such as

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<sup>17</sup> See ch. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Jongman et al (1988), p. 21 ff.



arrests of Islamist leaders in the terrorists' countries of origin, break up of support cells in Europe, or the war in Afghanistan, etc)?

The physical evidence of the terrorist cases is also presented in some detail to define *the immediate* context of the conspiracy and the *modus operandi* of the terrorist groups involved, as well as to underscore the extent to which the militants were motivated to launch attacks in Europe. The methods of analysis used below are termed *interpretive contextual analysis* and *pattern matching*.<sup>19</sup> This means assessing the internal consistency between the terrorists' target selection, backgrounds, justifications and the broader political context. The aim of the pattern matching analysis is analytical generalization based on predicted and empirical patterns of Islamist terrorism in Europe. The terrorist cases are not chosen randomly, but constitute the only cases which are sufficiently covered in the press to allow for to survey a broader set of proxies concerning the motivations of the radicals. If the empirical patterns of terrorist motivation match the predicted patterns, this will strengthen the study's hypothesis. This is a theoretically informed, but largely empirical study. It hopefully represents a genuine contribution to our understanding of transnational radical Islamist movements in Europe.

Political violence designed to have psychological effects, especially when civilians are targeted or put at risk is here seen as terrorism, despite the fact that radical Islamists see such acts as both justifiable and legitimate.<sup>20</sup> Sources have been gathered from the period 1998-2003, but the cases chosen for in-depth study are from the period 2000-2003. This is partly because we see an increase in Islamist terrorist activity in Europe after 2000, and partly because terrorist cases towards the end of the 1990s were controversial and often based on speculations and poor evidence.<sup>21</sup> The terrorist plots discovered in the period we study exclusively involve Sunni-Islamist militants. Shia-Islamists, primarily the Lebanon-based international organization Hizballah, are significant political actors on the Middle Eastern political scene. Hizballah has been involved in international operations, and it has previously attacked targets in Europe.<sup>22</sup> Ad hoc cooperation between Shia-Islamists and their Sunni counterparts is a scenario discussed and feared by Israel and the United States. The Salafi-Jihadi movements studied here are ideologically opposed to such cooperation and have sometimes launched terrorist attacks against Shia communities in different parts of the world, most recently in Iraq.<sup>23</sup> There is nothing in the gathered source material to suggest that either Hizballah or other Shia groups were involved in terrorist conspiracies in Europe.

In the following section we discuss the reliability of the data and the boundaries of the study. Following from that we provide a context and present some analytical concepts for studying an emerging jihad in Europe. Then we move on to an in-depth analysis of four foiled terrorist

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<sup>19</sup> Trochim in Yin (1994), p. 106.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of the concept of terrorism, see 12.3; Glossary.

<sup>21</sup> "France jails Islamic radicals," *BBC News* 22 January 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/260393.stm>.

<sup>22</sup> MIPT-RAND Database (2003) [http://db.mipt.org/rand\\_68\\_97.cfm](http://db.mipt.org/rand_68_97.cfm), Ranstorp (2003).

<sup>23</sup> "US points finger over Iraq massacre," *BBC News* 03 March 2004, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/3530663.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3530663.stm).

conspiracies attributed to Sunni Islamist radicals in Europe after 2000. Finally, we sum up the analysis and findings, conclude, and discuss the various implications of the study.

### 3 DATA, SOURCES AND RELIABILITY

The main sources of this study are newspaper articles from the Western and Islamic-Arab press, compiled and systematized at the FFI.<sup>24</sup> The sources are cut from online newspapers and other web resources. The database *World News Connection*, now taken over by *Dialog*, contains translated newspaper articles from all over the world, and has proved very useful for the purpose of the study.<sup>25</sup> A few relevant articles from the Arab press have also been included and translated by the author when gathering sources. The sources encompass immediate press reports from news agencies like *Reuters*, and background and “in-depth” articles from U.S. or Europe-based independent daily newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel* and *Le Monde*. It also encompasses articles from the three most reliable Arab newspapers, the Saudi owned London-based Arab dailies *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, *al-Quds al-Arabi* and *al-Hayat*. The reason U.S. newspapers were included is that their investigative journalists have been able to obtain unique sources from the investigations in Europe, e.g. unreleased court documents, transcripts from intercepted phone calls, etc. The major European dailies, such as *The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel* have also published insightful background articles based on similar exclusive sources. The tensions between U.S. and European perspectives are useful for analytical purposes.<sup>26</sup>

The investigations and trials of the terrorist conspiracies have been surveyed over time. “Up-to-date articles” and “in-depth articles” have been gathered as more information has been released to the press. The quality and reliability of the information usually increases with time, because disinformation and errors have been removed or corrected in reports and “specials” as the investigations and trials proceed. The information might however also become distorted with time if manipulated by the different actors involved. Although the method of organizing and analyzing data involves analyzing different types of articles as well as both Western and Arab press coverage, this is not *triangulation* strictly speaking. The sources can seldom be perceived as perfectly independent. Because of time pressure, journalists often have to take short cuts and they cite each other uncritically in a way that might lead to distortions of the facts. We are not able to remove all such distortions, but by systematically and critically assessing the *accumulated information* in each case, they might be minimized. The newspaper

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<sup>24</sup> The compilation of sources consists of four documents containing hundreds of newspaper articles and articles from research publications, anti-terrorism web sites, etc. One document contains articles sorted by country covering the conspiracies, threats and actual attacks in Europe. A second document contains general background articles on the Islamist movements in each country and Islamist group profiles. A third document contains profiles of Europe-based Islamist terrorist suspects and convicts. A fourth document contains statements by the militants from trials and interrogations and also statements by investigators, prosecutors and expert commentators concerning the motivations for attacking targets in Europe.

<sup>25</sup> WNC articles are translated by the U.S. government’s Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. newspapers did for example emphasize the links between the Jordanian-Palestinian movement al-Tawhid and al-Qaida, whereas German newspapers emphasized information suggesting that the movement was independent of al-Qaida.

articles contain primary sources such as statements by investigators, suspects and witnesses, and secondary sources such as analyses by terrorism analysts, government officials, and journalists.

Newspaper articles are sometimes unfairly dismissed as “low quality” sources because of the media’s time pressure, its commercial considerations and political biases. Furthermore, it is often argued that journalists possess limited knowledge on the subjects they cover and perform poor source criticism. While it is true that journalism is by nature immediate, and lacks the hindsight advantages of historical analysis, when studying contemporary phenomena like radical Islamism and al-Qaida, it might be argued that the media, and especially the genre of investigative journalism is one of the best sources of knowledge.<sup>27</sup> *Journalists have had unique opportunities to get close to Bin Ladin and other leaders of the radical Islamist movement because the leaders use the international press to communicate their political message.*<sup>28</sup> This point is illustrated in the case studies below. Two of the terrorists managed to give radio interviews when imprisoned, whereas the BBC managed to obtain an interview with one of the terrorists in prison in February 2004.<sup>29</sup>

Based on the available press sources, researchers, having radically different time frames than journalists, have the opportunity to generate and test hypotheses using the methods of social science, but based upon the information derived from journalists. In terms of research economy, the use of press sources enables us to survey a vast and complex field of study very effectively. According to a former U.S. intelligence analyst and historian who has written an outstanding historical account of Usama Bin Ladin and al-Qaida almost entirely based on press sources, European and U.S. media are of “modest value” when it comes to understanding and reporting on the background, the intentions and beliefs of Bin Ladin and his radical allies. He argues the Arab-Islamic press is the superior source in this field, but that Western press is accurate when reporting on terrorist events, providing facts such as “names of suspects, dates, places, quotes by Western government officials and documents...”<sup>30</sup>

Because this study is about Islamist terrorism in Europe, however, European and U.S. press must be considered the most important sources. Still, an effort is made to capture Arab perspectives on the terrorist events in Europe by analyzing articles from the London-based, Saudi owned Arab newspapers. When studying motivation, one has to go behind the observable facts, and try to understand the background and ideology of the movements to

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<sup>27</sup> Anonymous (2002), p. 277 ff, Lia (2003a), p. 43 ff.

<sup>28</sup> *The Independent* journalist Robert Fisk has interviewed Usama Bin Ladin three times. *ABC News*’ John Miller has met him twice. The Qatari news channel *al-Jazeera*, Pakistani journalists, and journalists with the London-based Arab newspapers seem to have been regularly in contact with Bin Ladin and other radicals in Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to Reeve (1999), p. 193, the editor of *al-Quds al-Arabi*, Abd al-Bari ‘Atwan, was invited to stay at Usama Bin Ladin’s “headquarter” cave in the Afghan mountains in November 1996. CNN journalist Peter Bergen, the author of a comprehensive and critical source account of al-Qaida’s origins and development, has also met with and interviewed Bin Ladin (see e.g. Hegghammer (2003a)).

<sup>29</sup> “Inside story, A Jihad warrior in London” *The Guardian* 09 February  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,3604,1143819,00.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Anonymous (2002), p. 277 ff.

which the Europe-based militants belong. To this end, Arab-Islamic sources provide useful information. To perform contextual analysis of Islamist terrorist motivation, possession of historical knowledge about the evolution of the respective Islamist movement is necessary. In order to gain such knowledge I have turned to the vast secondary literature on Islamism, and studied primary sources such as texts by the founder of Muslim Brotherhood Hasan al-Banna, the radical Islamist movement's chief ideologue Sayyid Qutb, al-Qaida's number two Ayman al-Zawahiri, etc.<sup>31</sup>

Court documents have been considered one of the most reliable sources of knowledge about the motivations and modus operandi of al-Qaida and affiliated groups.<sup>32</sup> Access to such documents from the trials in Europe is needed to increase the reliability of the data presented and analyzed below. The terrorist conspiracies studied here have resulted in three trials to date. Final verdicts have only been reached in the trial of the "Strasbourg plotters".<sup>33</sup> The terrorist cases have resulted in 6 verdicts at the time of writing. The procurement of court documents from these trials has turned out to be a relatively time-consuming process, and as such we have not been able to obtain this valuable source for this report.

In the present situation in which there is an urgent need for systematic analysis of the recent patterns of Islamist terrorism in Europe, I argue that an analysis based on the press coverage of the ongoing investigations and trials constitutes a promising point of departure. It is however important constantly to try to obtain new and more reliable sources in this field of study. One interesting development concerning information about the terrorists' motivations is that several of the imprisoned Islamist terrorists have agreed to be interviewed by the press in order to excuse or justify their actions.<sup>34</sup> Contextual interpretation of such interviews gives valuable insights concerning the motivations of the radicals. With an increasing number of militant Islamists imprisoned, access to first hand knowledge about the radical Islamist networks will probably improve in the years to come.

#### **4 CONTEXTUALIZING AND CONCEPTUALISING AN EMERGING JIHAD IN EUROPE**

This section provides the context and analytical tools for the case studies below. Before analyzing the cases we need to identify the object of study more clearly. We study the terrorist motivations of Islamists belonging to Europe-based clandestine militant movements. These movements originated in the MENA region and they are believed to have various degrees of ideological and/or organizational ties to the al-Qaida movement. It is probably too early to conclude that the recent patterns of Islamist terrorism in Europe is an al-Qaida led offensive against the U.S. and Israel's European allies. *However, as we shall see, the analysis of the*

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<sup>31</sup> Vogt (1993), Ayoubi (1998), Esposito (1999), Burgat (2003), Kepel (2003).

<sup>32</sup> Hegghammer (2002).

<sup>33</sup> See ch. 6.

<sup>34</sup> See for example *BBC* reporter Peter Taylor's interview with Salim Boukhari, analyzed in *The Guardian* "Inside Story, A Jihad warrior in London" *The Guardian* 09 February (year?) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,3604,1143819,00.html>.

*terrorist cases below does strengthen the hypothesis that perceptions of a “global jihad” are increasingly important as motivation for Islamist terrorism in Europe.*

Islamist terrorism in post-millennium Europe represents the most violent expression of the broader phenomenon of *transnational radical Islamism* phenomenon. Radical Islamist movements have proliferated the global scene and in the West from the 1970s onwards. During the late 1980s and throughout 1990s in particular radical Islamists escaped persecution in their MENA countries of origin and found sanctuary in the democratic West. These militants organized themselves in the diaspora in order to support jihad in their countries of origin or the ongoing jihads in Afghanistan and Chechnya, etc. As this study shows, Europe-based radical Islamists have also attempted to launch attacks in Europe.<sup>35</sup>

Islamism is in general an under theorized field of study. The bulk of earlier research on Islamist movements has theoretically, methodologically and empirically failed to acknowledge fully the importance of its transnational character. Authoritative studies such as those by Kepel (1985), Ayoubi (1998), and Esposito (1999) explained the motivations and behaviors of Islamist movements mainly with reference to domestic politics in the MENA region. For example, John Esposito’s 1999 account of the Egyptian and Algerian groups only briefly touched on the issue of these movements’ international presence and activities. Post-millennium, and especially post-September 11, 2001, researchers of Islamism have increasingly focused on the local-global nexus in the study of Islamism.<sup>36</sup>

Since September 11, 2001 political analysts have provided models for conceptualizing the most important movement of transnational radical Islamism, al-Qaida.<sup>37</sup> “The new school” of al-Qaida analysts usually compares al-Qaida with other and more familiar research entities. In this way, al-Qaida has been compared with a military alliance (NATO), business enterprise (al-Qaida incorporated), an educational institution or a university of radical Islam, and terrorism, etc.<sup>38</sup> One problem concerning such analogies is that al-Qaida seems to be constantly and rapidly changing and adapting to the realities and challenges it faces. The institutions and enterprises used for comparison are more static because they are more institutionalized and most often have to change in accordance with democratic laws and regulations. Al-Qaida exists beyond such systems and it is thus very flexible. Static models might capture aspects of al-Qaida’s motives and modus operandi in certain situations at certain times, but they do not cope with rapid changes. In addition al-Qaida has become a truly ideological movement, an aspect that is not captured by the analogies.

Another problem with the aforementioned al-Qaida models is that whereas universities, enterprises and military institutions are identifiable entities, it is not obvious that al-Qaida is an entity at all. In my view, Jason Burke provides the most flexible and thus the most useful model of al-Qaida so far. To him, al-Qaida is both an entity and an idea, existing on three

<sup>35</sup> See for example Paz (2004), Nesser (2004).

<sup>36</sup> See for example Paz (2002), Lia and Kjøk (2001).

<sup>37</sup> Rohan Gunaratna (2003), Jason Burke (2003), Hegghammer (2002), Anonymous (2002), Peter Bergen (2002).

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

different levels. One level is the “al-Qaida hardcore”, the closest companions of Bin Ladin, those who followed him for a long time (e.g. Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Zubaydah, Ramzi Binalshibh, Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, etc). The other level is “the network of networks” various affiliated groups and cells worldwide (e.g. GIA/GSPC, al-Jihad, al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya, al-Jemaah al-Islamiyya in Indonesia etc). The third level is the “idea of al-Qaida” that lives on through “the network of networks” probably relatively independently of the “hard core”. Burke argues that the closest al-Qaida ever came to being an entity was between 1996 and November 2001, during Taliban rule in Afghanistan.<sup>39</sup>

The Islamist terrorism in post-millennium Europe is attributed to Islamist radical movements, which would fall under Burke’s category “the network of networks”: various local Islamist groups, which subscribe to the Salafi-Jihadi ideology, promoted by “al-Qaida hardcore”. In order to understand and further theorize the dynamics of transnational radical Islamism in Europe, we do however need to study more closely these movements’ origins, how they organized beyond state borders, how they cooperated across organizational boundaries, and what kind of grievances motivated them to launch attacks in Europe under the Salafi-Jihadi banner. This study is a contribution to that end.

Most conceptualizations of al-Qaida involve the word “network”. This word has previously most often been used to define commercial networks or “transnational advocacy networks” (TAN’s), transnational networks of norm promoters growing out of the social movements of 68 (what does this 68 mean – explain more clearly) (the human rights movement, the environmental movement, the anti-globalization movement etc).<sup>40</sup> True, al-Qaida and affiliated groups are in some ways comparable to such networks in the way they emerge, organize, operate and cooperate beyond state borders, how they communicate and use the media to spread their political messages. However, to define something as a social network usually implies *regular contacts* between the persons or groups that constitute the “nodes” of the network. In the investigations of al-Qaida and affiliated groups, people have been defined as belonging to networks based on sporadic relations, such as meetings or telephone calls. There are other differences between radical Islamist movements and TAN’s. Transnational advocacy networks are based on voluntarism and non-hierarchical organizational structures. They consist of legal organizations committed to non-violent activism. Islamist movements on the other hand constitute hierarchical, patriarchal structures. They are clandestine revolutionary movements, which are committed to the use of violence to force the infidels (kuffar) to withdraw from the Arab lands, and to reestablish a worldwide Islamic community, the Umma, based on God’s law (al-Sharia). They are intolerant and moralistic, and claim that violent jihad against the “forces of global unbelief” is an individual duty for every Muslim.

Although the word “network” might be inaccurate to define the nature of al-Qaida and its affiliated groups, it is established terminology, and it will be used in the analysis below. For future theorizing about transnational radical Islamism, one alternative is to use the vaguer and

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<sup>39</sup> Burke (2003), p 7 ff.

<sup>40</sup> For a definition of transnational advocacy networks, see Keck and Sikkink (1998).

more flexible word “structures” to define the transnational Islamist movements. It seems transnational radical Islamism symbolized by al-Qaida constitutes structures the world has not seen before. Al-Qaida is something unique, which in many ways resembles historically established structures within terrorism, various forms of political and religious activism, insurgent movements, and mafia organizations, etc. It is important that the research community develops flexible models, which can cope with both the uniqueness and constantly changing nature of transnational radical Islamism and al-Qaida. It is not within the scope of this study to present alternatives to the existing models of transnational radical Islamism. We make use of the available models, but have developed *operationalisations and a method* for specifically studying the motivations for Islamist terrorism in Europe in relation to levels of analysis. The method of analysis acknowledges the transnational character of transnational Islamism by combining levels of analysis.

#### **4.1 The rise of transnational radical Islamism in Europe**

There are multiple explanations rooted in both internal and external contexts as to why the radical Islamist movements established support structures and operation cells in Europe. The explanations are found at the domestic level in Arab-Islamic countries, at the European diaspora level, and at the global level of analysis. The following section highlights four issues, which are considered particularly relevant as a background for understanding contemporary transnational radical Islamism and its ramifications in Europe. The first is the ideological impetus for globalism found in radical Islamist doctrine. The second issue is how the MENA regimes’ domestic policies and open societal structures in the West have facilitated transnational radical Islamism. The third issue is how technological and economic aspects of globalization have made it easier for radical Islamists to form alliances and cooperate beyond state borders. The fourth is the importance of concrete political developments and events as symbols and motivations for the Islamist radicals operating beyond state borders.

#### **4.2 The ideological impetus for transnational radical Islamism**

Radical Islamists have an ideological impetus for linking the local and global jihads, to operate and cooperate beyond state borders, and to establish tactically bases abroad in support of a “local jihad”. As noted above, the radicals who have been waging jihad in Europe belong to the Salafi-Jihadi strand of Islamism. This is the most influential contemporary radical Islamist doctrine.<sup>41</sup> Radical Islamist shaykhs find ideological legitimacy for establishing support structures and operation bases outside the historical core areas of the Islamist movements (the MENA region) in the Prophet’s traditions (al-Sunna). They instigate this modus operandi with reference to the concepts *takfir* and *hijra*. *Takfir* is Arabic for deeming someone as an infidel or kafir (i.e. excommunicating someone). *Hijra* is Arabic for emigration.<sup>42</sup> As ideological concepts they refer to Muhammad’s historical emigration from Mecca to Medina where the first Muslim community was established. The Meccans persecuted Muhammad and his followers because they posed a political threat. Faced with persecution they *excommunicated*

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<sup>41</sup> See Ch. 12.

<sup>42</sup> Wehr (1994).

the Meccans and *emigrated* to Madina. In Medina Muhammad built an army capable of recapturing Mecca in 630 A.D.<sup>43</sup>

The “manifesto” for modern radical Islamism, *Milestones* (Maalim fi al-Tariq), written by Muslim Brother Sayyid Qutb, has been interpreted as a recipe for armed jihad based on Muhammad’s emigration to Mecca. Most often *Milestones* has been interpreted as a strategy for local jihad against the Egyptian regime, but it might also be interpreted as strategy for the global jihad. In fact, Qutb states several times throughout the book that the jihad is not confined to the Arab lands, but that it is global in scope and methods.<sup>44</sup> Qutb starts out by saying that the whole world is in a state of *jahiliyya* (ignorance), and that “true Muslims” are in a state of weakness and under *permanent attack* from the kuffar (the infidels). In a world of *jahiliyya*, armed jihad is necessary to reinstate *hakimiyya* (the Rule of Allah). To succeed, a “vanguard” of “true Muslims” has to build itself up mentally and physically (militarily), to be able to launch an all out war on the kuffar. Because Muslims are in a state of weakness, the build up requires the “vanguard” to excommunicate the infidel society, emigrate and establish a true Islamic community based on the undistorted principles of Islam. From this new community or base, the kuffar shall be attacked with all necessary means.<sup>45</sup> Emigration is not an option, but a religious duty.

The radical Salafi ideologues of the “al-Qaida hardcore”, e.g. Ayman al-Zawahiri and Usama Bin Ladin consider it an individual duty for every Muslim who faces persecution in his homeland to follow the example of the Prophet, to emigrate and find a secure base abroad from which he continues to wage jihad against the infidels.<sup>46</sup> Usama Bin Ladin himself has several times emphasized how hijra is a necessary precondition for jihad, and publicly criticized fellow Muslims for not emigrating from their “quasi-Islamic” countries of origin in order to join the “global jihad”.<sup>47</sup> Ideologically, the radical Salafi Islamists in the European diaspora constitute this “vanguard”, which follows the example of the Prophet, emigrates to the jahili MENA societies, builds capacities in Europe, and wages jihad against the infidels both in Europe and in other regions.

One challenge facing the “vanguard” living among the infidels, elaborated by Qutb, is how to interact with the kuffar. An important ideological concept in this respect is *taqiyya*. Salafis

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<sup>43</sup> See for example Vogt (1993), p 83 ff.

<sup>44</sup> Qutb (1964), p 48, 57, 59, 60, 73ff, 108. Sayyid Qutb is believed to have had a profound influence on the “worldviews” of Usama Bin Ladin and Abdallah Azzam, the founders of al-Qaida.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> The most important ideologues of the modern Salafi-Jihadi movement are Abdullah Azzam (1941-1989), Ayman al-Zawahiri, Usama Bin Ladin, Abu Qatada al-Filastini, Umar Abd al-Rahman al-Masri, and a group of Saudi Arabia-based shaykhs such as Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Bani, Abd al-Aziz Bin Baz. The co-founder of al-Qaida, Abdullah Azzam, was the first among the al-Qaida leadership to recognize how the principles of jihad should be applied globally. Azzam issued fatwas and wrote books on the obligation of Muslims to emigrate from their homelands and join a jihad beyond borders. He also emphasized how local issues such as the Palestine question should be understood as integrated parts of the “global jihad”, see Azzam (1987), Kepel (2003), p. 151. For a more thorough discussion of the ideological impetus for transnational radical Islamism see Nesser (2004).

<sup>47</sup> Anonymous (2003), p 62ff, Bin Ladin in al-Jazeera (1998).



adopted *taqiyya* from Shia-Islamist doctrine. *Taqiyya* is translated as “fear, caution, prudence, dissimulation of one’s religion”.<sup>48</sup> To the Shias it meant that they were allowed to follow Sunni practices in societies dominated by Sunni-Muslims, in order to protect themselves from persecution. Radical Salafis in the West practice *taqiyya*. It allows them to display considerable pragmatism to pursue what they believe is in God’s interests. According to the principle of *taqiyya*, the “Vanguards” are permitted to cooperate on an ad hoc basis with basically anyone as long as it serves their cause in the long run.<sup>49</sup> It also means that the Salafi radicals can “blend into” western societies, using western clothes and even drink alcohol in order not to attract unwanted attention to their activities.<sup>50</sup> One example is how the September 11, 2001 suicide-pilots were observed drinking and partying a few days before the attacks.<sup>51</sup> The case studies below show that most of the radicals arrested in Europe had an outward Western appearance, and did not display their religious or political beliefs.

### 4.3 Local pressures and external sanctuary

The harsh policies of the MENA regimes such as Egypt, Jordan and Algeria against domestic Islamist opposition, were instrumental in pressuring scores of radical and moderate Islamists to search for sanctuaries and operation bases in the democratic West.

Islamist insurgents in MENA regimes found sanctuaries in neighboring states, in Europe or the United States.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, Western “sanctuary states” themselves facilitated the influx of Islamists to the Western world. Open and democratic societies in the West became effective bases, from which radical Islamists in exile enjoyed a degree of operational freedom with regards to recruitment, propaganda, fundraising, etc, and from which they could continue the battle against the repressive “home states” and/or expand the jihad to include battle against the infidels of the West. Diaspora-based Islamists’ criticisms and attacks against the authorities in the countries from which they emigrated might be conceptualized as “boomerang throws”.<sup>53</sup>

Local Islamist insurgents faced with massive pressures established operation bases abroad as well as forging alliances with established transnational networks of radical Islamists in order to launch attacks and pressures against the repressive home state from abroad. GIA’s support networks in France were, for example, initially established in support of the “local jihad” in Algeria. GIA pressured and criticized French authorities because they supported the Algerian regime. When the local GIA faced massive pressures in Algeria, the networks in France launched a terrorist campaign in France.<sup>54</sup> French authorities cracked down on Islamists suspected of involvement in the attacks. One can probably say that the conflict between GIA

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<sup>48</sup> Wehr (1994).

<sup>49</sup> Anonymous (2002), pp 55 ff.

<sup>50</sup> Sifaoui (2003).

<sup>51</sup> Brian Ross, “By the Book, Terrorists May Have Used Bin Laden Manual,” *ABC News* 04 October 2001 [http://abcnews.go.com/sections/2020/2020\\_010926\\_terrormanual\\_ross.html](http://abcnews.go.com/sections/2020/2020_010926_terrormanual_ross.html).

<sup>52</sup> Kepel (1997), Paz (2002).

<sup>53</sup> Analogy to a model developed by Keck and Sikkink (1998) “a boomerang pattern of influence”, used to conceptualize how domestic oppositions in repressive states “bypass” the state and reach out for support from transnational networks, which have capabilities to highlight their grievances and launch pressures on the repressive state from abroad.

<sup>54</sup> Lia and Kj ok (2001).

militants in France and French authorities developed its own dynamic of attacks and counter-attacks.

Islamists living in exile in Europe established political organizations and advocacy networks in the diaspora in order to pressurize and launch attacks against the states from which they emigrated, and also to advocate the interest of diaspora Muslims vis-à-vis their “host states”. In Europe, radical and semi-radical NGOs such as al-Muhajirun, al-Hizb al-Tahrir, FIS, GIA, GSPC, al-Tawhid, al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra, etc, have been active in settings such as Finsbury Park Mosque in London, al-Aqsa mosque in Hamburg and the Saint Denis and Rue Myrrah mosques in Paris. In particular, the Finsbury Park mosque has been seen as a hub for recruitment and indoctrination of radicals. Because of the radiant propaganda efforts of the U.K.-based shaykhs and “jihad veterans” Abu Qatada, Abu Hamza and Umar Bakri Muhammad, and because it appears that London is the “last stop” before radicals leave for Afghanistan, the British capital is ironically labeled “Londonistan” by several analysts.<sup>55</sup> As we shall see, the diaspora communities in Europe constitute an important context in which Islamist radicals are recruited, and terrorist motivation generated.

#### **4.4 Globalization and transnational radical Islamism**

Several political, economic and technological features of globalization have facilitated interactions between radical Islamists at operational and ideological levels and must be considered important catalysts for the rise of transnational radical Islamism and its ramifications in Europe. Low cost travel, possibilities for political asylum in the democratic West and modern systems of communication have accelerated the dynamics of interaction between Islamists in the Middle East, North Africa and in the Muslim diaspora. Such features made cross-border cooperation and coordination possible at an operational level, and enabled them to launch pressures on the authorities in the MENA, as well as directly criticizing and attacking their diaspora “host states”. The branches of the semi-radical movements al-Muhajirun and Hizb al-Tahrir in the U.K. have established websites and held conferences in which they have openly criticized the policies of MENA governments, as well as the British government. Radical movements such as the GIA channeled money, fighters and weapons to the Islamist insurgents in Algeria, as well attacking France directly for supporting the Algerian secular regime.<sup>56</sup>

Low-cost travel enabled thousands of young Arab men to seek out the “Afghan experience” and receive basic paramilitary training as well as religious “guidance”.<sup>57</sup> Several of the Europe-based Islamist radicals surveyed in this report have traveled extensively back and forth between Europe and the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Some of them point to the influence of patrons in Afghanistan as the main motivation for attacking targets in Europe.<sup>58</sup> The activities of the Hamburg cell preparing the 9/11 attacks, and the terrorists who

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<sup>55</sup> Thomas (2003).

<sup>56</sup> Lia and Kjøk (2001).

<sup>57</sup> See for example Bergen (2002).

<sup>58</sup> See for example ch. 7.

have prepared attacks in Europe also included extensive travel in several European countries, the U.S. and Pakistan/Afghanistan.<sup>59</sup> Because of the substantial migration from Arab-Islamic countries to Europe, facilitated by European asylum legislation and welfare systems, militants are able to hide among fellow Muslim immigrants and exploit the possibilities represented by these systems. Former CNN journalist Steven Emerson (2003) has, for example highlighted how radicals exploited the “family reunification” system, to obtain permits of stay. In addition there has been a substantial influx of illegal immigrants to Europe.

The Internet is an important feature of globalization facilitating transnational radical Islamism. To Islamists, the World Wide Web has become a “virtual Ummah” for propaganda and exchange of ideas. Communication over the Internet has facilitated cooperation and coordination between Islamists in different countries. The proliferation of the Internet in the Middle East, North Africa and other regions in which Islamism is widespread, links the issues of concern for Islamists locally, in the diaspora and those operating beyond borders. For example, in 1999, Syria had only one state controlled and censored Internet server. During fieldwork in March 2002, I could observe how Internet cafes had blossomed and were filled with “net surfers” in Beirut, Damascus, Amman and Cairo.<sup>60</sup> The observation is significant considering that coded email messages were used regularly when planning the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York, and other attacks worldwide.<sup>61</sup> Reuven Paz has emphasized the importance of the Internet not only for propaganda purposes and ideological discussions, but also for engaging in “electronic warfare” against the infidels.<sup>62</sup> For example, al-Qaida has its own media center and its own websites. It has issued video statements and documentaries about attacks attributed to al-Qaida in Saudi Arabia. The media crew was probably situated in Saudi Arabia, before its leader, Yusuf al-Ayeri was killed by Saudi security forces in June 2003.<sup>63</sup>

Satellite phones and cell phones are communication devices widely used by the Islamist radicals. For example, the suicide-bomber of the attack on the Ghriba synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia, on April 11, 2002, Nizar Nawar, received a “go” on a satellite phone or a cell phone from one of the main “operations chiefs” in al-Qaida, Khalid Shaykh Muhammad.<sup>64</sup> The case studies of this report also exemplify how such electronic devices were used during the planning and preparation for attacks in Europe.

The digitalization of money transfers is another significant feature facilitating the financial transactions of Islamists. One example in the case studies below shows how the Algerian

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<sup>59</sup> Fouda and Fielding (2003).

<sup>60</sup> Observations, fieldwork in Syria, Jordan and Egypt (2002).

<sup>61</sup> Fouda and Fielding (2003), p138 ff.

<sup>62</sup> Paz (2002).

<sup>63</sup> Jonathan S. Landay, "CIA report: Al-Qaida plans major push to destabilize Saudi Arabia," *Knight Ridder Newspapers* 10 December 2003 <http://www.realcities.com/mld/krwashington/7462692.htm>

<sup>64</sup> Sebastian Rotella, (2003c March 13). “Al Qaeda Operative Seen as Master of Remote Control, European authorities describe Khalid Shaikh Mohammed plotting a bombing on the run.” *Los Angeles Times* 13 March <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-khalid30mar30001520,1,1568297.story?coll=la%2Dheadlines%2Dworld>.

Islamist shaykh Abu Doha, aka Umar Makhlouf, was asked to wire money to the terrorist cell that plotted to blow up the Notre Dame cathedral in Strasbourg, in December 2000. Since the U.S. intensified the efforts to cut off terrorist funding, Islamists have increasingly turned to less traceable forms of financial transfers such as carriers or the informal Hawala system.

#### 4.5 Political events and the importance of Afghanistan

Specific political events have been important in the evolution of transnational radical Islamism. Such events include Israel's occupation and colonization of Palestine, resulting in the wars of 1948, 1967 and 1973; the Intifadas of 1987 and 2001, the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and its withdrawal in 1989; the Gulf War in 1990-1991 resulting in U.S. military presence in the Gulf (one of Bin Ladin's main grievances); the civil war in Algeria starting in 1991; United States' intervention in Somalia in 1993; the conflicts in Kashmir, Indonesia, Bosnia, Indonesia, Chechnya, where Muslims fought non-Muslims; the Rushdie affair in 1989 and re-actualized political dispute about veiling in France dating back to the 1980s; and the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq in 2003.<sup>65</sup> These political events and others generated common grievances among Islamists in different corners of the world. They made Islamist militants from the Muslim world believe in the necessity of armed jihad and actively seek arenas in which they fulfill their duty to wage jihad against the infidels. Islamist insurgents traveled to Afghanistan during the 1980s and 1990s and they travel to Chechnya, Kashmir and Iraq today, to fight the U.S.-led "crusader alliance".

*The importance of the jihad in Afghanistan can however not be overstated.* The "Afghan jihad" and the establishment of al-Qaida were particularly important catalysts of transnational radical Islamism.<sup>66</sup> The "Afghan experience" produced a relatively small number of "hard core" Salafi militants having fought side by side in jihads worldwide. These "holy warriors" and "global mujahidin" became top and intermediate leaders of, as well as religious guides for radical Islamist movements around the world. Personal relations and friendships between such "veteran mujahidin" further facilitated cooperation between movements with compatible ideologies. Several of the "jihad veterans" found sanctuary in Europe, especially in the United Kingdom, where they encouraged young Muslims to join the "global jihad", and collected religious taxes (zakat), which they channeled to "terrorist projects" both inside and outside Europe. The Salafi-Jihadi movements in Europe look to these experienced mujahidin as religious leaders or "shaykhs".<sup>67</sup>

During the last two decades, the Islamist movements in the Western diaspora have been increasingly politicized and vocal. Gilles Kepel explains the politicizing of the Muslim

<sup>65</sup> Ayoubi (1998), Esposito (1999), Bergen (2002), Paz (2002), Kepel (2003).

<sup>66</sup> The merger between al-Qaida and Ayman al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad (al-Jihad) into Qaidat al-Jihad (the bases of jihad or the principles of jihad), is an example on how the global and local jihad became more integrated when mujahidin from all over the world fought together in Afghanistan. Al-Jihad has been, and remains in theory, mainly committed to the battle against Egyptian authorities, see for example al-Zawahiri (2002). In the mid-1990s it extended its operations to include attacks on Egyptian state representatives abroad. In 1998 it merged with al-Qaida, and joined a terrorist campaign mainly directed against U.S. and Western targets.

<sup>67</sup> See case studies below and ch. 5.

diaspora in Europe by pointing to events like the Rushdie affair in 1989, the ban on veiling in France, and spillover effects from the jihad in Afghanistan.<sup>68</sup> In addition to such political events and developments, general socio-economic discontent among Muslims in the diaspora (because of unemployment, racism, etc), made for a fertile ground for radical Islamist recruiters. One highly political, semi-radical movement, Hizb al-Tahrir, invited Islamists from all over the world to conferences in the U.K. In the wake to the U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, for example, the leader of Hizb al-Tahrir and al-Muhajirun (the emigrants), Umar Bakri Muhammad, invited 15 major militant movements to a conference called “Western Challenge and the Islamic Response” in London.<sup>69</sup> Al-Bakri has openly criticized the British government and leaders of Muslim states for their general policies and injustice against Muslims in the U.K. and abroad. In addition he has incited Muslims to use violence against Jews, for which he is currently under arrest. The Internet sites of al-Muhajirun and al-Hizb al-Tahrir illustrate both visually and in terms of content that they are transnational organizations. For example, in 2001, the opening page of al-Muhajirun’s site showed a world map with “nodes” of the network in the Middle East, Central Asia, Europe and the United States.<sup>70</sup>

#### **4.6 Four in depth case studies of Islamist terrorist conspiracies in post-millennium Europe**

The four conspiracies analyzed below involve transnational contacts and cooperation between Islamist radicals in several European countries and also between Europe-based Islamists and local Islamist insurgents in the Middle East, North Africa and Chechnya. The militants have traveled extensively both inside and outside Europe. Some of the conspiracies seem to have been initiated outside Europe, but planned, financed and prepared in several European countries. The first case, the “Strasbourg plot” was, for example, planned and financed from the U.K., prepared in Germany, and the attack was going to be launched in France.

The cases show the relevance of combining “levels of analysis” when studying Islamist terrorism in Europe. The militants originated from the Middle East and North Africa, they were situated in the European diaspora prior to their arrests, and the vast majority of them had been influenced by “global mujahidin” when training in Afghanistan. The militants’ actions and statements strongly suggest that they have been influenced by the Salafi-Jihadi doctrine. There is available information on the backgrounds and organizational affiliations of the militants, the nationality and type of target they selected for terrorist attacks, and their justifications and excuses for taking part in terrorism inside Europe.

The sources gathered for this report suggest the extremist milieu in Europe is relatively small and the most fanatic and violent Islamists probably can be counted as hundreds, rather than thousands. The case-studies show that there have been multiple links and contacts between

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<sup>68</sup> Kepel (2003), p.185 ff.

<sup>69</sup> Khaled Dawoud, “Islamist international readies for London conference,” *al-Ahram* 19 - 25 November 1998 <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/1998/404/eg10.htm>.

<sup>70</sup> al-Muhajirun U.K. website, observation (2001).

militants involved in the different conspiracies. Although the Europe-based Islamist radicals surveyed here belong to movements that in theory emphasize the “local jihad” more than the “global jihad” or the vice-versa, it is important to note that despite differences in their emphasis, the movements’ ideologies are largely compatible. In training camps run by al-Qaida and like-minded groups in Afghanistan, personal relationships were established between members of different movements. These personal contacts seem to have lived on in Europe, in the sense that Islamists belonging to different movements supported each other on an operational level. For example, Islamists perceived as mainly committed to the “local jihad” have supported operations against targets typically associated with the “global mujahidin”.<sup>71</sup>

## **5 “THE STRASBOURG PLOT”, GSPC’S CONSPIRACY TO ATTACK THE NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL IN STRASBOURG.**

On December 26, 2000, German anti-terrorism police raided two apartments in the Frankfurt area and one in Baden Baden, 60 kilometers from the French border. They arrested four Algerian Islamists belonging to the so-called “Frankfurt cell”. The cell members planned to bomb the Notre Dame cathedral in Strasbourg, France, and also to shoot randomly at people at the nearby Christmas marketplace. A fifth suspect was arrested in April 2001. The Algerian Islamists were identified as Aeroubi Beandali, aka Mustapha Kelouili, aka Dijilliali, aka Adam (26), Lamine Marouni, aka Bernard Pascal (31), Salim Boukhari, aka Kamal (31), Fouhad Sabour (37) and Samir Karimou (33). Karimou was acquitted of terrorist charges because of lack of evidence, and released. The real identities of the terrorists remain uncertain.<sup>72</sup> Allegedly, the terrorist cell had planned to launch the attack on New Year’s Eve 2000. The “Strasbourg plot” was the first significant terrorist conspiracy in Europe in the new millennium attributed to Islamist militants.

Approximately 20 Islamists in Europe have been arrested suspected of being directly involved in the terrorist plans, or being “linked” to one or several of the plotters. An exact number is impossible to give, based on open sources, because the nature of these “links” is not known in detail. Some of the arrested Islamists have been involved in other terrorist conspiracies or support activities, and their alleged roles in the “Strasbourg plot” have not been sufficiently documented to convict them in this case.

The main source of information when analyzing the motivations of the militants arrested in Frankfurt December 2000 along the local, diaspora and global dimension, is the extensive press coverage of the investigation and the trial in Frankfurt, Germany. The four Strasbourg plotters were convicted of conspiracy to commit murder by planting a bomb, and of weapons violations on March 10, 2003, in Frankfurt.<sup>73</sup> An important source and a corrective to the

<sup>71</sup> See ch 9, The “Chechen Network’s conspiracy to attack the Russian embassy in Paris.”

<sup>72</sup> “German Terror Trial Begins,” *CBS News* 16 April 2002, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/04/16/attack/main506245.shtml>.

<sup>73</sup> The defendants were sentenced to between 10 and 12 years in prison. Salim Boukhari received the longest sentence, 12 years, followed by Fouhad Sabour, 11 and a half years. Both men denied intent to kill, and insisted that they were to target an empty synagogue in Strasbourg. The alleged organizer of the attack, Aeroubi Beandali,

initial analysis appeared in February 2004, when one of the convicts, Salim Boukhari, accepted to be interviewed in his prison cell by BBC reporter Peter Taylor. The interview with Boukhari made me rewrite parts of the justification section as well as the conclusion of the case study.

## 5.1 The evidence and “links”

The arrests of the main suspects resulted from joint anti-terrorism efforts by German and French police intelligence services.<sup>74</sup> These services were warned by British domestic intelligence (MI5) that intercepted a suspicious telephone call from Aeroubi Beandali to a London-based radical Islamist, the Algerian Haydar Abu Doha, aka Umar Makhlouf, aka “the Doctor”. Abu Doha is believed to be a central leader of the GIA splinter organization GSPC. He is also believed to have forged ties with the “al-Qaida hardcore” in Afghanistan. Beandali asked Doha for more money to execute the attacks in Strasbourg. Doha is currently detained in the U.K. under the Terrorism Act of 2000. He is also charged with terrorism by U.S. authorities for his involvement in the so-called “millennium plot”, and suspected of plotting terrorist attacks against the water supplies of the U.S. embassy in Rome, a cyanide attack against the London underground, and attacks against tourist sites in Jordan in 1999.<sup>75</sup> Doha’s activities suggest he must be considered a “global mujahid”. The telephone call from Beandali to Abu Doha, the fact that three of the suspects had been residing in the U.K., and evidence collected at Lamine Marouni’s former apartment in Abbeydale Road, Sheffield, led German prosecutors to believe that the operation was organized and financed from the United Kingdom.

The raids in Germany revealed solid physical evidence that an attack was imminent. German anti-terrorism squads (GSG-9) seized 44 pounds of potassium permanganate, acetone, hydrogen peroxide and battery acid, basic ingredients sufficient to make a powerful bomb, and instructions for making explosives. The chemicals had been collected from 48 separate chemists around Germany, under the cover of gathering urgent materials for hospitals in Africa. The police also confiscated forged passports, computers and encrypted discs, together with a mini arsenal of weapons.

This arsenal of weapons contained homemade detonators similar to one used by Richard Colvin Reid in his attempt to blow up a Paris-Miami flight in 2001, rifles with telescopic sights, a hand grenade, revolvers and silencers, Scorpio submachine guns, and large amounts of ammunition. Investigators suspected that the cell also planned to blow up devices made from pressure cookers packed with nails and explosives in the in the middle of the Christmas

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cooperated with the interrogators and received 10 years in prison. Lamine Marouni shouted Islamist slogans and threats to the public and press outside the German court, but remained silent throughout the trial. He was sentenced to 11 years, see for example Melissa Eddy, “Four Algerians sentenced in French bomb plot,” *Associated Press* 10 March 2003, via <http://www.sacbee.com/24hour/world/story/800326p-5705786c.html>.

<sup>74</sup> Bundeskriminalamt-BKA and Territory Surveillance Directorate-DST.

<sup>75</sup> John Crewdson, “Germany sends 4 to prison in New Year's plot,” *Chicago Tribune* 11 March 2003.

Marketplace.<sup>76</sup> In the militants' hide outs the police found 14,000 USDs and a 12-minute surveillance videotape of the locations chosen for the attack. The prosecutors have relied heavily on this piece of evidence during the trial. According to press reports, in one sequence of the video, a camera is pointed at the cathedral and the cell member Salim Boukhari says, "this is the cathedral of God's enemies....You will all go to hell, God Willing".<sup>77</sup>

In addition to the U.K. contacts, investigations have linked the Strasbourg cell to North African GSPC militants in France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Canada, the U.S. and Italy. The Algerian Mohammad Bensakhria (36), aka Mohamed Ben Aissa, aka "Meliani" is believed to be one of the leaders of the terrorist cell in Frankfurt, together with Aeroubi Beandali and Salim Boukhari. Bensakhria escaped German and French police, and was later arrested in Alicante, Spain. He has been extradited to France, where he is awaiting trial.<sup>78</sup> In April 2001, German and Italian anti-terrorism squads arrested six Algerian Islamist militants in Milan and Frankfurt suspected of giving logistical support to the Strasbourg plotters. This group was also suspected of being involved in plans to attack the U.S. embassy in Rome, and a conspiracy to attack the 2001 G8 Summit in Genoa.<sup>79</sup>

French police arrested the Algerian Yacine Akhnouche, assumed to be an affiliate of the Frankfurt cell in February 2002. On October 22, 2002, French authorities detained a 33-year-old Tunisian, Lazhar Ben Muhammed Tlili (33), suspected of inspiring and financing the Strasbourg terrorist plot, and also of being connected to a Tunisian al-Qaida support network based in Italy.<sup>80</sup> On November 25, 2002, the French police intelligence (DST) arrested six Algerians in Paris. They were suspected of involvement in preparations for the Strasbourg attack. One of them was reported to be a woman.<sup>81</sup> A few weeks later, the DST arrested yet another Algerian, Merouane Benahmed (29), suspected of heading the so-called "Chechen network", and being linked to one of the main suspects in the "Strasbourg plot".<sup>82</sup> A Tunisian, Heni Ben Lased, went to trial in Italy on the charges of trafficking arms, explosives and chemical agents. Wire tapping of Ben Lased's phone calls revealed that he had shown an interest in using poison gas to suffocate worshippers in the Notre Dame cathedral.<sup>83</sup> Prosecutors believe Ben Lased has been involved in planning several attacks in Italy.

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<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, "Germany takes no chances as terrorist bomb plot trial opens" *Telegraph* 17 April 2002.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=%2Fnews%2F2002%2F04%2F17%2Fwtrial17.xml>.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Eddy, Melissa, "Four Algerians sentenced in French bomb plot," *Associated Press* 10 March 2003, via <http://www.sacbee.com/24hour/world/story/800326p-5705786c.html>.

<sup>79</sup> Anonymous (2002), p.218.

<sup>80</sup> Sciolino, Elaine, "France Links Tunisian in Jail to Terror Cells in 5 Nations," *New York Times* 23 October 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>81</sup> "Press Says German Police Received 'Important Information' About 9/11 Attacks," *Agence France-Presse (AFP)* 24 August 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>82</sup> For a profile of Benahmed, see case study below.

<sup>83</sup> "Germany takes no chances as terrorist bomb plot trial opens" *Telegraph* 17 April 2002

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=%2Fnews%2F2002%2F04%2F17%2Fwtrial17.xml>.



## 5.2 The target selection

The target selection of the Algerian Strasbourg plotters was consistent with Algerian groups' attacks in France in the past. It followed an established pattern of Algerian Islamist terrorism in the French diaspora. Seen isolated this suggested that the operation was motivated by grievances concerning France's support for Algeria, and France's crack down on the GIA's and GSPC's networks in France (local and/or diaspora motivations).

France was not on an "official target list" of al-Qaida and "the global mujahidin" until Ayman al-Zawahiri included the country for the first time in October 2002. An attack against a French target by an Algerian Islamist group in 2000 does not necessarily indicate "global motivation", unless we, like the al-Qaida analyst Rohan Gunaratna, consider GIA and GSPC integrated parts of al-Qaida as having pursued a "global jihad" since the early 1990s.<sup>84</sup> Gunaratna's interpretation is however an issue of debate among the analysts.<sup>85</sup>

It is important to note that France is one of a group of countries that al-Qaida perceives as a coalition partner with its main enemy, the United States. Being former colonial power of Islamic countries, France lies well within the scope of al-Qaida's potential targets. It would probably be of interest to al-Qaida to support an attack against France if Algerian groups did the "dirty work". Still, at the time when the Strasbourg attack was going to be launched, there appear to have been no indications that France was a target *of priority* for al-Qaida.

The Strasbourg plotters planned to strike a French national and religious symbol. The fact that the chosen target was a religious symbol does not clarify the sources of motivation for an attack. Al-Qaida and other Salafi-Jihadi groups have targeted both religious and political symbols consistent with the Islamist ideological principle that there is no distinction between religion and politics.<sup>86</sup> The GSPC's forerunner, the GIA, mainly targeted Algerian government facilities and personnel in addition to foreign visitors and employees in Algeria, and mainly civilian targets in France. The GIA did however attack religious representatives and symbols in Algeria and France, illustrated for example in the murder of catholic priests in Tizi-Ouzou in 1994, and the two bombs planted close to the Jewish synagogue in Lyon in 1996.<sup>87</sup>

When the French-Algerian journalist Mohamed Sifaoui infiltrated a GSPC cell in France in October-December 2002, the leader of the cell, Karim Bourti, told him about plans to strike "Algerian leaders and other targets in France". According to Sifaoui's insider story, Bourti was very focused on the political situation in Algeria and on striking the Algerian regime, and appeared less interested in pursuing Usama Bin Ladin's "global jihad".<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Gunaratna (2002, 2003).

<sup>85</sup> See below.

<sup>86</sup> Vogt (1993), p 217.

<sup>87</sup> MIPT-RAND database (2003) [http://db.mipt.org/rand\\_68\\_97.cfm](http://db.mipt.org/rand_68_97.cfm), Schweitzer et al (2003), p. 72 ff.

<sup>88</sup> Sebastian Rotella, "Extremists Find Fertile Soil in Europe, Threat of war in Iraq is adding to the pool of potential recruits for Al Qaeda and others" *Los Angeles Times* 2 March 2003 <http://www.latimes.com/>.

The defendants in the Strasbourg trial exercised *taqiyya* and tried to confuse the court. Two of them, Salim Boukhari and Fuhad Sabour, insisted until the end of the trial that the intended target of the operation was an empty synagogue in Strasbourg. In this way they tried to convince the court that the bomb attack was motivated by Israel's policies in Palestine and not directed towards innocent civilians. Islamist radicals on trial often use the situation in Palestine in order to gain sympathy and understanding.<sup>89</sup> Boukhari was the one speaking on the surveillance tape of the target referring to the people outside the cathedral "the enemies of God".<sup>90</sup> In the mentioned February 2004 interview, he maintained that the intended target was a synagogue.

The most talkative of the terrorists during interrogations and trial was Aeroubi Beandali. At first he supported the "synagogue version" saying that on his return to Germany from Afghanistan, he intended to attack a Jewish installation in France. Confronted with the seized surveillance tape of the cathedral, he explained that it had been recorded by mistake as one of his companions had mistaken it for a synagogue.<sup>91</sup> The Judges considered this version "absurd". As the trial proceeded, Beandali altered his explanation and was the only defendant to admit that the group was targeting the French cathedral and civilians outside.<sup>92</sup> When reading the verdict, presiding Judge Karl Heinz Zeicher, concluded that the target indeed was the cathedral, and that the plotters wanted to "kill indiscriminately Jews, Christians as well as other people" in the proximity of the cathedral.<sup>93</sup>

### 5.3 The backgrounds of the militants

The backgrounds of the Strasbourg militants were similar to those of the GIA fighters, who launched terrorist attacks in France in the mid-1990s. Though incomplete, their profiles showed they had little in common with Muhammad Atta and the other "global mujahidin" of the September 11, 2001 Hamburg cell and the al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra militants planning to attack U.S. targets in France or Belgium.<sup>94</sup> Atta's companions and the al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra militants were well educated and seemingly well integrated in European societies. Several of the Strasbourg plotters and most of the GIA fighters launching attacks in France from 1994 to 1996, had criminal records as petty criminals and drug dealers, and relatively short histories in Europe. The information available on the terrorists' backgrounds is not sufficient to decide whether the Algeria-France dimension (local-diaspora motivation) or the idea of a "global jihad" (global motivation) was the main driving force behind the terrorist plans. The information is also insufficient to decide whether terrorists were sent from Algeria to Europe

<sup>89</sup> See below.

<sup>90</sup> "Germany takes no chances as terrorist bomb plot trial opens," *Telegraph* 17 April 2002

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=%2Fnews%2F2002%2F04%2F17%2Fwtrial17.xml>

<sup>91</sup> Militant admits French bomb plot," *BBC News* 23 April 2002 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/europe/1946653.stm>.

<sup>92</sup> Roger Boyes, "Algerians jailed for Christmas bomb plot," *Times* 11 March 2003

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,5470-607004,00.html>.

<sup>93</sup> John Hooper and Martin Wainwright (2003 March 11), "British-based plotters are jailed for market bomb,"

*The Guardian* 11 March 2003 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/terrorism/story/0,12780,911945,00.html>; Mellissa

Eddy, "Four Algerians sentenced in French bomb plot," *Associated Press* 10 March 2003

<http://www.sacbee.com/24hour/world/story/800326p-5705786c.html>.

<sup>94</sup> See case study below.

as GSPC “sleeper agents” with the orders to carry out an attack against France, or whether they were indoctrinated by GSPC recruiters in the diaspora. One plausible explanation based on what is known about their backgrounds is that their motivations originated from Algeria and were fuelled in the diaspora and in Afghanistan. One should never underestimate the importance of camps in Afghanistan, the attraction of al-Qaida’s ideology and the socialization and indoctrination of mujahidin in those camps.

The “Strasbourg plotters” belonged to the Algerian GSPC movement. Analysts have in the past perceived this movement to be ideologically focused on the “local jihad” against the Algerian regime.<sup>95</sup> The GSPC and its forerunner, the GIA, have targeted French and Algerian targets in Algeria and France. Attacks in France were mainly motivated by France’s support for the secular military regime in Algeria, which seized power in the early 1992 elections. Profiles of GIA fighters that attacked France in the mid-1990s show that some of them were seemingly well integrated second-generation Franco-Algerians, whereas others were illegal immigrants and/or petty criminals.<sup>96</sup> During the 1990s there were examples of GIA commanders sending fighters or mid-level leaders on ad hoc special missions to France from Algeria.<sup>97</sup> The militants of the Frankfurt cell had been in touch with close associates of Bin Ladin who had been involved in conspiracies to strike U.S. and Jewish targets in the United States and Jordan. Such contacts could imply that they had been inspired by ideas of a “global jihad”.<sup>98</sup> It is beyond doubt that at least three of the Strasbourg plotters spent time in training camps in Afghanistan. Still, it is important to note they have this in common with thousands of Islamists worldwide. Islamists went to Afghanistan for lots of reasons. Some of them went there to receive training, inspiration, and funding for a local battle, and some went to realize what they perceived as an individual religious duty to support Muslims under attack and participate in a true jihad. Others may have seen Afghanistan as an arena to initiate a “global jihad” against the infidels. The “Afghan jihad” also attracted many young adventurers who simply were fascinated by the “Afghan myth”.

German prosecutors concluded that the Strasbourg plotters belonged to an independent, loose network mainly consisting of North African extremists called the “Non-aligned Mujahidin”, with “links” to al-Qaida. The court believed that they decided by themselves, after receiving training in Afghanistan to “infiltrate Western countries as terrorists”.<sup>99</sup> German authorities underscored how such “independent” networks could attack at any time without orders from patrons in Afghanistan, emphasizing the initiative taken by the militants. The court thus considered the Strasbourg plotters as “independent”, yet mainly globally motivated fighters. If we survey the scarce information on the backgrounds and contacts of the Strasbourg plotters more closely, it is not obvious that the operation was mainly planned within a framework of

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<sup>95</sup> Burke (2003), Sifaoui (2003), p 28.

<sup>96</sup> Kjøk (2003).

<sup>97</sup> Kjøk (2003), Sifaoui (2003).

<sup>98</sup> In a “global jihad” perspective France’s role as a former colonial power in the Maghreb and the Middle East and as a trusted ally of the United States would typically have been emphasized.

<sup>99</sup> “German Authorities Indicting Suspected Terrorists Trained in Afghan Camps Hamburg,” *Der Spiegel* 10 December 2001, via FBIS.

“global jihad”. They had lived in Europe a relatively short time, and as noted above the reported links and contacts strongly suggested that they belonged to the GSPC movement.<sup>100</sup> The GSPC movement has built a substantial support-infrastructure in Europe, and allegedly been planning terrorist operations in France against the 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000 soccer tournaments.<sup>101</sup>

The Algerian Islamist movements’ relations to al-Qaida are debated. Based on interviews with Algerian intelligence officers, Jason Burke claims that the GIA turned down aid from Bin Ladin in the early 1990s and that GSPC refused to meet emissaries from al-Qaida in 2001.<sup>102</sup> Other sources argue that Bin Ladin was instrumental in setting up GSPC in 1998 as an alternative to GIA and contributed with funding to the new organization.<sup>103</sup> With reference to U.K. police sources Rohan Gunaratna claims that al-Qaida infiltrated the networks of GSPC and GIA in Europe.<sup>104</sup> Gunaratna considers GSPC an integrated part of al-Qaida, and claims France has been al-Qaida’s number one target in Europe since the start of GIA’s terrorist campaign in 1994. This does not seem very likely considering al-Qaida’s obsession with U.S. targets and the fact that the GSPC has never attacked U.S. targets outside Algeria in the past.<sup>105</sup> In October 2003, the movement’s new leader Nabil Sahrawi, aka Abu Ibrahim Mustafa, for the first time publicly announced the movement’s support for al-Qaida.<sup>106</sup> This development might be interpreted in two ways. It might imply that the movement previously had no relations to al-Qaida but that ties have been developed recently after Sahrawi became the movement’s new leader, following Hasan Hatab.<sup>107</sup> It might however also imply that the movements have forged an alliance in the past, but that strategic considerations prevented the GSPC from publicizing their support for al-Qaida until they did. It is also important to note that an alliance with al-Qaida does not necessarily mean that the “global jihad” is the main motivation for group’s terrorist attacks, but might indicate that the GSPC in Algeria is in need of financial and operational support from al-Qaida’s “global mujahidin”.

The Strasbourg plotters entered Europe during the 1990s as asylum seekers and illegal immigrants.<sup>108</sup> Only the identity of Fouhad Sabour has been verified. The fact that the

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<sup>100</sup> Harris, Paul and Wazir, Burhan in London, Kate Connolly in Berlin, “Observer investigation: Christmas shoppers were the target for a massive blast planned by bin Laden's terror network. Drug deals paid for the operation. But a single error alerted MI5,” *The Guardian* 21 April 2002 <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/islam/story/0,1442,688014,00.html>.

<sup>101</sup> Anonymous (2002), Burke (2003), p 196 ff.

<sup>102</sup> Burke (2003), p. 1.5

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, Jonathan Schanzer, “ALGERIA'S GSPC AND AMERICA'S 'WAR ON TERROR' The Washington Institute. 02 October 2002, no 666 <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/watch/policywatch/policywatch2002/666.htm>

<sup>104</sup> Gunaratna (2002), p.139.

<sup>105</sup> MIPT-RAND Database (2003) [http://db.mipt.org/rand\\_68\\_97.cfm](http://db.mipt.org/rand_68_97.cfm).

<sup>106</sup> Muqdim, Muhammad, “Algeria: “The Salafi-group” declares for the first time its support for the leaderships of al-Qaida and Taliban,” *al-Hayat* 23 October 2003, p 7 <http://pdf.alhayat.com/pages/10-2003/23P07.pdf>.

<sup>107</sup> According to al-Zaman (2002) Hatab was killed in clashes with Algerian security forces in February 2002. *Al-Hayat* (2003) reported recently that Hasan Hatab is still alive and that he remains the leader of GSPC. Hatab must not be confused with Hassan Khattab, a Saudi national who headed the Arab fighters in Chechnya. Khattab was killed in Chechnya April 2002.

<sup>108</sup> Aeroubi Beandali immigrated to Germany in 1992, see Schelzig, Erik and Peter Finn, “Repentant Algerian Tells of Bomb Plot: Muslim Militant, 'Horrorified' by Sept. 11, Says His Target Was French Synagogue,”

identities of the other terrorists have not been verified does indicate they have not settled or integrated properly in Europe. They spent their youth in Algeria, and might have been exposed to Islamist influence there as well as in the diaspora. According to the interview with Salim Boukhari published in February 2004, he was not politically active in Algeria before he came to the U.K., but claims he was recruited by radical Islamists in Europe. Because he has already received his sentence, we might possibly consider his claims more reliable than during trial. The families of the Strasbourg plotters stayed behind in Algeria. In Europe the militants lived on “the outskirts of society”, as unemployed small time criminals. Marouni, Sabour and Boukhari were registered in the U.K. as asylum seekers from early 2000 until they left for Germany in October and teamed up with Aeroubi Beandali in his Frankfurt apartment in November.

Investigators claimed that the three U.K.-based Islamists had been in Afghanistan from 1998 to 2000, where al-Qaida lieutenants allegedly trained them in handling explosives. Several of the suspects explained how Europe-based Islamists recruited them to militancy, and the testimony of Beandali suggested local politics in Algeria had been the main focus of the indoctrination.<sup>109</sup> The terrorists themselves denied being members of specific Islamist organizations. Aeroubi Beandali explicitly told the court that his nine month stay in Afghanistan had “nothing to do with al-Qaeda or Osama Bin Laden”.<sup>110</sup> He said he had received tuition at a private Taliban school, which he had paid for himself. This thus not seem reliable, however, in light of his subsequent activities.

Fouhad Sabour had been closely associated with the GIA in the mid-1990s, having been convicted in absence by a French court in 1999 for involvement in the GIA terrorist attacks on the Paris Metro in 1995 and a TGV railway line near Lille, France.<sup>111</sup> The fifth suspect Karimou, acquitted of terrorist charges, applied for asylum in Germany based on the fact that he was a FIS sympathizer. Because of this one should probably not put too much emphasis on the Strasbourg plotters’ claims that they were recruited in Europe, but be open to the possibility that they had been affiliated with radical Islamists in Algeria.

By constructing the term “Non-Aligned Mujahidin” prosecutors were able to avoid the time consuming process of proving that they belonged to a terrorist organization under the new German anti-terrorism law. The law requires German authorities to prove that the cell was formed in Germany and not abroad. By dropping charges of belonging to the GSPC, they managed to speed up the trial, and to have the defendants convicted in Germany.

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*Washington Post* 24 April 2002 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A37537-2002Apr23&notFound=true>.

<sup>109</sup> See below, “The militants’ justifications for attacking.”

<sup>110</sup> “Militant admits French bomb plot,” *BBC News* 23 April 2002 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/europe/1946653.stm>.

<sup>111</sup> Roger Boyes "Algerians jailed for Christmas bomb plot," *Times Online* 11 March 2003, [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,3-606481\\_00.html](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,3-606481_00.html).

#### 5.4 The militants' justifications for attacking

The terrorists' justifications for attacking were not coordinated and consistent; Aeroubi Beandali's testimony indicated that the conspiracy was mainly motivated by his own personal frustrations as an immigrant in Germany, and political grievances because of France's support for the Algerian regime. Statements from Salim Boukhari, on the other hand, indicated that the terrorist plot was motivated by the French anti-terrorism campaign against Algerian Islamists and broader more globally oriented political grievances concerning the U.S. and Israel's policies in the Middle East, and the Russians' policies in Chechnya.

The testimony of Aeroubi Beandali suggested that the plot was mainly locally motivated, but that this "local motivation" was generated in the diaspora and fuelled in Afghanistan. He justified the terrorist attack almost exclusively with reference to French support for the Algerian regime. In the immediate context of a trial, however, one should not emphasize his justifications and excuses too much, but rather see them as one out of several proxies to analyze in the broader context of the case. The 2004 interview with Salim Boukhari did on the other hand suggest that the diaspora grievances and ideas of a global jihad were his main motivations for taking part in the conspiracy. He did not mention Algeria at all. He pointed to persecution by French police when he lived in France, and atrocities committed towards Muslims in Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.

Aeroubi Beandali's testimony contained few statements that could be interpreted as displaying "global motivation". On the contrary, he distanced himself from the "global mujahidin". Still, as noted, we have to bear in mind that the Strasbourg plotters faced heavy charges, and needed to play down issues that potentially could add to their time in prison. Aeroubi Beandali was the only defendant that displayed some credible political reflections about the group's motivations during trial. He first tried to drag the Palestine issue into his defence. When talking about the "empty synagogue version" of the conspiracy, he said that an attack "was intended to send a message to both France and Israel and to destabilize relations between the two countries".<sup>112</sup>

In another exercise of *taqiyya* he said "At no point did I think about killing one German or French citizen, as I cannot reconcile this with my beliefs".<sup>113</sup> Confronted with the mass of evidence, Beandali altered his explanation and told German justice officials that his group wanted "to punish France for its policy of support for the Algerian government". He accused France of interfering in Algeria and supporting a government guilty of slaughtering Muslims. Beandali admitted he acquired some of the weapons listed in the indictment, but that they were

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<sup>112</sup> "Militant admits French bomb plot," *BBC News* 23 April 2002

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/europe/1946653.stm>.

<sup>113</sup> Erik Schelzig and Peter Finn, "Repentant Algerian Tells of Bomb Plot: Muslim Militant, 'Horrorified' by Sept. 11, Says His Target Was French Synagogue," *Washington Post* 24 April 2002

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A375372002Apr23&notFound=true>.

intended for shipment to Algeria and not for use in Europe, trying to convince the court that the main occupation of the cell was logistical support for the local battle in Algeria.<sup>114</sup>

He also tried to excuse his behavior by referring to personal problems and indoctrination by Algerians living in Germany. He explained how he was transformed from “an irreligious drug dealer on the streets of Germany” into an Islamist activist, and how he changed back on September 11, 2001. About his arrival in Germany in 1992 he said, “I was a man who loved the joys of life and was very happy”, and continued, “I had no relationship to religion and lived in the European style: alcohol, women and hashish”.<sup>115</sup> He said he was drawn to militancy in 1998 when an exiled Algerian who had deserted the army showed him “evidence of massacres of women and children by Algerian troops“. Analyzing his reaction to this Beandali said, “I was very shaken and decided to change my life, which had previously been devoted on my own well being, to focus on my own country”. He added that “I began praying and seeking the truth”.<sup>116</sup> An Algerian neighbor told him that he could find “truth” in Afghanistan, so he cashed out his savings and went to the border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan where he attended a Taliban run religious school. Then he said he moved on to Afghanistan where he took courses in handling weapons and explosives, obligatory to every male Muslim according to radical Islamist shaykhs. Beandali emphasized how he did this of his own initiative, independently of any Europe-based Islamist group. He further distanced himself from Bin Ladin and al-Qaida by saying how he changed his views on Islamist militancy on September 11, 2001 while imprisoned in Germany. He told the court, “September 11 was a black day in history, especially for the entire Islamic world”, and that he was “horrified about such a terrible crime, particularly since it is allegedly justified through our religion”. He continued saying that he “would never again participate in explosives attacks and the like, since after September 11 it is no longer possible to use such acts to call attention to political grievances in a meaningful way, since they are automatically associated with al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden”.<sup>117</sup>

Salim Boukhari was not cited on justification during the trial, but his comments on the surveillance tape of the target, and the fact that he has been convicted for his role in the 1995 GIA attacks, strongly indicates that he has grievances against the French and Algerian governments as well as against Western society in general. In the recent BBC interview Boukhari is portrayed as an immigrant who was recruited and indoctrinated by promoters of the “global jihad” in Europe. During the interview, he described his grievances against Israel and the U.S. because of the situation in Palestine, and he also talked about Russia’s “slaughtering” of Muslims in Chechnya. In addition he refers to the French police’s harassment of Algerians in France. From the interview it appeared that Boukhari perceives Iraq as the “new jihad”, and he specifically told the BBC reporter that “It’s the duty of every

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<sup>114</sup> Roger Boyes, “Algerians jailed for Christmas bomb plot,” *Times Online* 11 March 2003 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,5470-607004,00.html>.

<sup>115</sup> Erik Schelzig and Peter Finn (24 April 2002).

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*

Muslim to get the Americans and the British out of Iraq”. Boukhari’s justifications thus indicated “complex motivations” for the planned terrorist attack.

Lamine Marouni remained silent throughout the trial, but swore in Arabic, English and German while urging his fellow defendants not to testify. He also shouted to bystanders in the courtroom “You’re all Jews. I don’t need them. I don’t need the court. Allah is my defender”. Bizarrely he also uttered the following sentences as he was guided out of the courtroom “You want to kill me, baby, don’t you?” and “We’ll get out of prison soon and go to heaven.”<sup>118</sup>

After hearing out the militants, Prosecutor Brinkman concluded that the attacks were partly locally and partly globally motivated. According to him, the motive for the attack was “a militant rejection of Western society and a hatred of all unbelievers”, as well as wanting to punish France for cooperating with the Algerian government, clearly a description of “complex motivation”.<sup>119</sup>

## 5.5 The context in which the conspiracy developed

If we survey the relevant contexts at the time the attacks were planned, we see that there were political developments and events at all the three levels of analysis (local, regional, global) that potentially could have motivated the Strasbourg plotters. French anti-terrorism efforts against the GSPC in France stand out as a strong potential explanation for why the terrorists wanted to attack France on New Year’s Eve 2000. As noted above, Salim Boukhari specifically mentioned harassment by French police as one of his political grievances.<sup>120</sup>

So far the analysis has not been able to determine whether grievances generated in Algeria or in France were the main motivation for the plans to attack the French cathedral. The proxies analyzed above do however suggest that the conspiracy was more a continuation of the GIA’s and GSPC’s terrorist campaign in the past in France, maybe with support from “global mujahidin”, than a mainly globally motivated general attack against the Western infidels.

We have seen how the mujahidin probably belonged to the Algerian GSPC, and how they wanted to attack a French national and religious symbol. As noted above, the exact character of the relationship between the GSPC and al-Qaida is an issue of debate. It would certainly be in the interest of Algerian authorities to establish links between GSPC and al-Qaida. Despite this, Algerian intelligence officers denied the existence of an alliance between the movements in October 2002.<sup>121</sup> The GSPC itself announced support for al-Qaida in October 2003.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>118</sup> “Germany takes no chances as terrorist bomb plot trial opens,” *Telegraph* 17 April 2002

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=%2Fnews%2F2002%2F04%2F17%2Fwtrial17.xml>

<sup>119</sup> Carsten Hauptmeier, “German prosecutors seek heavy jail terms for bomb plot suspects. Agence-France-Presse (AFP) 11 February 2003, via *Hot News* [http://quickstart.clari.net/qs\\_se/webnews/wed/am/Qgermany-france-trial.RWZ2\\_DFB.html](http://quickstart.clari.net/qs_se/webnews/wed/am/Qgermany-france-trial.RWZ2_DFB.html).

<sup>120</sup> “Inside story, A Jihad warrior in London” *The Guardian* 09 February (year?)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,3604,1143819,00.html>

<sup>121</sup> Burke (2003), p. 15, note 14.

<sup>122</sup> Muhammad Muqdim, “Algeria: “The Salafi-group” declares for the first time its support for the leaderships of al-Qaida and Taliban,” *al-Hayat* 23 October 2003, p 7 <http://pdf.alhayat.com/pages/10-2003/23P07.pdf>.



Whether GSPC is allied with al-Qaida or not is however not of crucial importance when surveying the motivations of the Strasbourg plotters. The group may have forged an alliance with al-Qaida for strategic purposes and still remained mainly committed to the “local jihad” in Algeria. The Strasbourg plotters were in contact with the U.K.-based GSPC leader Abu Doha. Because Doha has been involved in terrorist plots in several countries, including the U.S., he must be perceived as a “global mujahid”. Contacts between the “Frankfurt cell” and Doha might be interpreted as signs of “global motivation”, but it might also be interpreted as reaching out for financial support to implement the terrorist plans. If we survey the relevant contexts more closely, we might further clarify which motivations are more important. At the time when the Strasbourg attack was about to be launched there were no clear signs that the GSPC had shifted focus from the local battle against the Algerian regime towards Bin Ladin’s “global jihad”. On the contrary, Algerian intelligence believed that the Algerian groups had refused to join Bin Ladin’s ranks because they wanted to remain independent and stay focused on Algeria and France.<sup>123</sup>

The organized “local jihad” in Algeria ended with the partial dissolution of the GIA in 1997.<sup>124</sup> Since then, the GSPC, which has its strongholds in the Kabylia province, has taken the lead in the insurgency against the Algerian government. The GSPC claims to have confined its operations in Algeria to the targeting of visible representatives of the regime, mainly soldiers and policemen. Amnesty International’s annual reports from 1998 to 2002 report that the Algerian regime has continued fiercely to persecute Islamists in the country. People suspected of belonging to the radical Islamist movement in Algeria have been thrown in jails without trials, or simply executed on the spot. Some 4000 people have simply “disappeared” in recent years, and the authorities have refused to comment on their whereabouts.<sup>125</sup>

The situation in Algeria must thus be seen as a constant motivation for Algerian groups. In the spring of 2003, the GSPC kidnapped a group of German tourists in Mali. The kidnappings coincided with the Strasbourg trial, and German Authorities believed that the tourists were kidnapped to avenge the convictions.<sup>126</sup> Algerian commandos freed some of the hostages, and the GSPC did not issue any explanations for why they were kidnapped. The above-mentioned French-Algerian journalist Mohamed Sifaoui infiltrated a GSPC support network in Paris in October-December 2002. Karim Bourti, the leader of this network emphasized the GSPC’s commitment to the local battle in Algeria. When Sifaoui, using the under-cover name Djamel, praised Bin Ladin’s activities, Karim Bourti promptly told him, “Djamel, we must never forget our main enemies. The Algerian authorities, I mean”.<sup>127</sup> There were, however, no specific events in Algeria in the immediate context of the Strasbourg plot that stood out as a strong candidate explanation for why the GSPC wanted to strike a French target on New Year’s Eve 2000.

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<sup>123</sup> *ibid*, p. 15 and 185.

<sup>124</sup> Kepel (2003), p 273.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>126</sup> Roger Boyes, “Algerians jailed for Christmas bomb plot,” *Times Online* 11 March 2003

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,5470-607004,00.html>.

<sup>127</sup> Sifaoui (2003), p.28.

In France on the other hand, the front hardened between the authorities and the Islamists residing in the country. The GIA campaigns in 1994-1996 prompted hard-liner anti-terrorism measures in France. French authorities started their own war on terrorism, which has resulted in mass arrests of suspected Islamist militants. The investigations and trials of the GIA terrorists dominated the discourse concerning Islamism in France towards the end of the 1990s and some of the trials are still not concluded. For example, in 1999 French authorities put 138 Islamists on trial in the so-called “Chalabi case”, suspected of being connected to the GIA’s terrorist campaigns in the mid-1990s. At the same time, the French anti-terrorism apparatus has focused on the GSPC, as it appeared it was building a new support structure in France, the U.K. and other European countries on the ruins of the GIA’s euro-networks. France’s persecution of the GSPC members intensified after the movement’s plans to attack soccer tournaments in 1998 and 2000 were revealed. About 50 Islamists were rounded up prior to the 1998 World Cup, and suspected Islamist terrorist cells were disrupted in France and the Netherlands prior to the Euro 2000 tournament.<sup>128</sup>

At the global level, the U.S. started to take al-Qaida very seriously following the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. Cruise missiles were launched at training camps in Afghanistan immediately after the attacks resulting in new threats from the al-Qaida leadership. The U.S. also targeted an alleged plant for production of chemical weapons in Sudan, and started the process of cutting off terrorist funding worldwide. In addition the manhunt for al-Qaida leaders and operatives was intensified. The U.S. cut deals with pro-U.S. Middle Eastern and North African regimes in order to have terrorist suspects extradited, or to gain access to Islamists imprisoned in these countries.

In addition to the general intensification of the conflict on the global level, there was one specific event in the immediate context of the Strasbourg attack that could tie the Frankfurt cell to the “global jihad”. In December 1999, Canadian border police arrested the Algerian Ahmad Ressaym on his way to detonate a bomb at Los Angeles Airport (the Millennium plot, which also involved terrorist operations in Jordan). Ressaym was strongly affiliated with the London-based Islamist shaykh Abu Doha who also played a role in the Strasbourg plot. Several sources refer to Ressaym as a GSPC member. Ressaym and Doha were in Afghanistan at approximately the same time as the Strasbourg plotters. Considering that the camps in Afghanistan were partly organized along ethnic lines, it is plausible that the “Millennium plot” and the “Strasbourg plot” were connected, but there is no hard evidence to support this hypothesis. The cross-border contacts of the Frankfurt cell also involved the Algerian Merouane Benahmed, a former GIA amir and a “mujahid globetrotter”, who trained in Chechnya, Afghanistan and Georgia. Benahmed is described as an expert in handling explosives and chemicals. The

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<sup>128</sup> “French footballers face terror threat,” *BBC News* 20 June <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/799388.stm>.

journalist Sifaoui met Merouane Benahmed a few days before he was arrested on December 16, 2002, suspected of preparing an attack on the Russian embassy in Paris.<sup>129</sup>

## 5.6 Conclusion

The analysis above supports the hypothesis that the motivations for the “Strasbourg plot” were “complex”, involving local, diaspora and global motivations. The “Strasbourg plot” was here interpreted as either an attempt indirectly to strike the Algerian regime by deterring France from offering support to the Algerian regime, or as a direct attack against France in retaliation for its hardliner anti-terrorism efforts against the Algerian Islamists in France. Of the operationalised motivations, the plot thus seemed mainly driven by “local motivation” and “diaspora motivation”, and can be seen as a continuation of Algerian Islamists’ earlier efforts to strike Algerian and French interests. Because the radicals received training in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and because there were reported links to al-Qaida affiliates, it is possible that the operation has been inspired, and maybe supported by “global mujahidin”. The information available on the links to “global mujahidin” is not sufficient to determine whether these were contacts of convenience or contacts that made deeper impacts on the Strasbourg plotters’ motivations, but there is no doubt there were contacts. A statement by GSPC’s leadership in October 2003 did however suggest that the Algerian Islamist movement is moving towards a more “global orientation”. Whether the GSPC had joined the “global jihad” at the time of the Strasbourg plot is debated among analysts. The analysis above suggested it was not. The Strasbourg plotters seemed more socially embedded in Algeria than in the European diaspora, and they belonged to the GSPC movement that primarily has been committed to the “local jihad” in Algeria. The testimony of one of the terrorist cell’s leaders, Aeroubi Beandali, suggests that the situation in Algeria was important as a motivation for the planned operation.

Statements by another key player in the terrorist plot, Salim Boukhari, as well as the contextual analysis, suggest that French anti-terrorism efforts against these networks must be seen as strong candidate explanations for why the militants decided to attack the French cathedral in 2000. Salim Boukhari also used rhetoric typical of al-Qaida and referred to Iraq as the “new jihad”, and blamed the Russians for the “slaughtering” of Muslims in Chechnya. GSPC’s infrastructure in Europe is considered crucial for the “local jihad” in Algeria. It would be consistent with Algerian Islamist groups’ modus operandi in the past to retaliate if targeted by French or Algerian authorities. The Strasbourg plotters references to social problems in the diaspora were not emphasized in the analysis, but such problems on the personal level might have made the young Algerians more receptive to indoctrination by Islamist radicals. This report contains several examples that young frustrated men of Middle Eastern origin have struggled with drug problems, and been involved in crime, before they were recruited to militancy.

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<sup>129</sup> Richard A. Serrano, “Details on “shoe bomber” released,” *Los Angeles Times* 22 January 2003, via *SITE Institute* <http://www.siteinstitute.org/exposing.asp?id=40>; Mark Eeckhaut, “Trabelsi Wanted To Kill Americans,” *De Standaard* 28 May 2003, via FBIS; Sifaoui (2003).

## 6 AL-TAKFIR WA'L-HIJRA'S CONSPIRACY TO ATTACK U.S. TARGETS IN EUROPE

The arrest of Djamel Beghal (37) in Dubai on July 28, 2001, prompted joint anti-terrorism operations in France, the U.K., Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy. During interrogation by United Arab Emirates intelligence officers, Beghal admitted being the head of an al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra terrorist network planning a suicide attack on the U.S. embassy in Paris, in the spring of 2002. Beghal claimed that Nizar Trabelsi, a Tunisian and a former professional soccer player who turned to Islamist militancy, was the designated suicide bomber for the attack. Trabelsi was arrested in Belgium on September 13, 2001. He insisted the target of the terrorist operation was the canteen at the U.S. airbase at Kleine Brogel, Belgium, near the Dutch border. On September 29, 2003, Trabelsi was sentenced to ten years in prison for his intentions to launch a terrorist attack against the airbase canteen.<sup>130</sup> The conspiracy to attack U.S. interests in France or in Belgium by Beghal's network was revealed a short time before the attacks in New York, September 11, 2001. The investigation of the conspiracy made European intelligence services realize that more cross-border cooperation and coordination was needed to tackle something that appeared to be an increased threat of transnational Islamist terrorism in Europe.<sup>131</sup>

On Monday, September 10, 2001, French anti-terrorism squads raided an apartment in Chilly-Mazarin, Essonne, arresting three Islamists suspected of playing central roles in the plot. General Intelligence (RG (what?)-police intelligence unit) had placed the suspects under surveillance from August 23 until September 11, and they were identified as Nabil Bounour, Yohan Bonte and Jean-Marc Grandvizir. Yohan Bonte is Djamel Beghal's brother-in-law. A sixth key suspect, the French-Tunisian computer expert Kamil Daoudi (27), managed to escape to the U.K. one day before the raid. Armed local police and MI5 later arrested him in Leicester, the United Kingdom. The analysis below is mainly based on the extensive press coverage of the investigations in Belgium, the trial of Nizar Trabelsi in Brussels, and the investigation of Djamel Beghal and Kamil Daoudi in France.

### 6.1 The evidence and "links"

Two of the most important pieces of evidence in the al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra investigation were Djamel Beghal's "confession" to United Arab Emirates intelligence officers in July-September, 2001, the trial of Nizar Trabelsi and an interview with him transmitted by the Belgian radio network RTBF. Beghal retracted his testimony from Dubai when he was extradited to France and put in front of France's "anti-terrorism-sheriff", Judge Jean-Louis

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<sup>130</sup> Nur al-Din Al-Farid, "The US arrests an Arab doctor working at Guantanamo, and the Prison for Trablusi and his group in Belgium," *al-Hayat* 01 October 2003 [http://www.daralhayat.com/world\\_news/09-2003/20030930-01p01-02.txt/story.html](http://www.daralhayat.com/world_news/09-2003/20030930-01p01-02.txt/story.html).

<sup>131</sup> Emerson Vermaat, "Bin Laden's Terror Networks in Europe," *Mackenzie Institute Occasional Paper* 26 May 2002 [www.mackenzieinstitute.com/commentary.html](http://www.mackenzieinstitute.com/commentary.html).

Bruguere, saying “I would like to point out at this stage that the police officers who interrogated me in the United Arab Emirates forced me to say certain things that are false”.<sup>132</sup>

The United Arab Emirates intelligence officers used “unconventional” methods of interrogation, involving physical beatings and visits by Islamic clerics trying to convince the suspect that his dealings were against Islamic principles.<sup>133</sup> Despite the methods of interrogation, a DST report used extensively in the investigation, was mainly based on Beghal’s confessions in Dubai. The report stated that Beghal established relations with “several dangerous individuals”, and that these relations underscored “the existence of an active Islamic terrorist organization”. It also paralleled the “modus operandi” of the planned operation with those of al-Qaida’s attacks on the U.S. embassies in East Africa in August 1998, and the attack on the U.S. destroyer Cole off the coast of Yemen in October 2000.

Police raids in the above-mentioned countries revealed hard physical evidence that the network was preparing an attack. In the French raid the police seized “helicopter manuals and aeronautical charts showing air approaches to Paris”.<sup>134</sup> *The Times* reported that police agents had seen several of the terrorist suspects visiting helipads and taking flying lessons.<sup>135</sup> In a Belgian anti-terrorism operation, the police seized an Uzi submachine gun and a recipe for bomb making in the suspected suicide bomber Nizar Trabelsi’s Brussels apartment. In an Egyptian snack bar frequented by the Belgium-based Islamist militants, they found “220 pounds of sulphur and 13 gallons of acetone”.<sup>136</sup> Police sources said the chemicals were sufficient to make a bomb powerful enough to blow up a building.<sup>137</sup> Fake passports and maps of the U.S. embassy in Paris were also seized during the raids. Nizar Trabelsi was convicted in a trial of 23 Islamists who were accused of planning and preparing a terrorist operation in Belgium, and of giving logistical support to the assassins of the Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud in Afghanistan on September 9, 2001. This trial might have triggered one of the minor terrorist attacks attributed to Islamist radicals in post-millennium Europe. A 45-year-old Iraqi sent letters laced with toxic powders to the court, the Belgian Prime minister and to U.S. and Saudi Arabian representations and firms in Belgium. The letters were signed “the International Islamic Society”.<sup>138</sup> Considering that the original al-Takfir wa’l-Hijra in Egypt also was referred to as “the Society of Muslims”, the signature on the letters might indicate that the Iraqi was connected to this group. As noted, Beghal’s network spanned

<sup>132</sup> Pascal Ceaux and Fabrice Lhomme, “French Police Get Details of Djamel Beghal's Islamist Network,” *Le Monde* 20 October 2001, via FBIS.

<sup>133</sup> Erlanger and Chris Hedges, “Missed Signals; Terror Cells Slip Through Europe's Grasp.” *New York Times* 28 December 2001, <http://www.pulitzer.org/year/2002/explanatory-reporting/works/122801.html>.

<sup>134</sup> Diana Muriel, “Terror web unravelling in Europe,” *CNN* 29 September 2001 <http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/09/29/muriel.europe/index.html>.

<sup>135</sup> Daniel McGrory and Dominic Kennedy, “The hunt; Raids crush terrorist cells and foil plot to kill Bush,” *Timesonline* 27 September 2001 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,34-118685,00.html>.

<sup>136</sup> Diana Muriel (2001) <http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/09/29/muriel.europe/index.html>.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Nur al-Din Al-Farid, “The US arrests an Arab doctor working at Guantanamo, and the Prison for Trablusi and his group in Belgium,” *al-Hayat* 01 October 2003 [http://www.daralhayat.com/world\\_news/09-2003/20030930-01p01-02.txt/story.html](http://www.daralhayat.com/world_news/09-2003/20030930-01p01-02.txt/story.html), “Iraqi arrested in Belgium for mailing toxic letters,” AP 05 June 2003, via *ajc.com*, [http://www.ajc.com/news/content/news/ap/ap\\_story.html/Intl/AP.V7670.AP-Belgium-Suspici.html](http://www.ajc.com/news/content/news/ap/ap_story.html/Intl/AP.V7670.AP-Belgium-Suspici.html).

several European countries. Dutch authorities arrested a native French Islamist identified as Jerome Courtellier, two Algerians, Abdelkader Rabia and Adel Tobbichi, and one Dutch-Ethiopian, Saad Ibrahim.<sup>139</sup>

They were all suspected of providing fake credit cards, passports and driving licenses to the al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra conspirators in the plot to bomb U.S. targets in Europe.<sup>140</sup> Spanish police, cooperating with FBI, CIA and Spanish military intelligence, arrested six Algerian Islamists identified as Mohammed Boualem Khnoui, Mohammed Belaziz, Yasin Seddiki, Hakim Zerzour, Hocine Khouni and Madjid Sahouane. They were, according to Spanish Government sources, GSPC members, who were “directly related” to some of the detainees in Belgium and the Netherlands.<sup>141</sup>

## 6.2 The target selection

The target selection strongly suggested that the al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra militants were driven by “global motivation”, and that the conspiracy was initiated within the framework of “global jihad”. The radicals managed to establish confusion concerning *where* the attacks were to be launched, but all versions of the plot involve U.S., Western or international targets. French intelligence picked up signals that other potential targets were assessed by Beghal’s network. Among them were the U.S. consulate in Marseilles, and the U.S. cultural center in Paris. The Egyptian president Husni Mubarak passed on domestic intelligence to the U.S. indicating that al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra was planning to attack the G8 summit in Genoa in 2001, using an airplane loaded with explosives.<sup>142</sup> If the terrorists wanted to symbolize local or diaspora grievances they most probably would have chosen European targets or, for example, the representations of their countries of origin in Europe. It would probably have been considerably easier and less costly to attack European or MENA targets in Europe, than to attack U.S. targets in the period between the U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and September 11, 2001 when security measures were tightened at U.S. international representations around the world. However, if locally motivated Islamist militants wanted to express more general frustrations and grievances and “just do something” it would perhaps be easier to gain financial and logistical support from al-Qaida if the target was within a global framework of attack (i.e. attacking a U.S. target).

According to Djamel Beghal's confession, his terrorist cell was planning to attack the U.S. embassy in Paris using either a powerful car bomb, or a helicopter packed with explosives. He specified that the Tunisian Nizar Trabelsi was the designated suicide-bomber for the attacks.

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<sup>139</sup> The native French butcher’s sons Jerome and David Courtellier have been labeled “the blue-eyed terrorists” and they are believed to have played central roles in the conspiracy to assassinate Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud on September 9, 2001.

<sup>140</sup> Isabelle Wesselingh, “The Netherlands tries 4 suspected Islamic radicals,” *Agence France-Presse (AFP)* 2 December 2002 [http://www.inq7.net/wnw/2002/dec/03/wnw\\_1-1.htm](http://www.inq7.net/wnw/2002/dec/03/wnw_1-1.htm).

<sup>141</sup> “Six Algerians Allegedly Linked to Bin Ladin Arrested in Spain,” *Xinhua* 27 September 2001, via FBIS.

<sup>142</sup> Daniel McGrory and Dominic Kennedy, *Timesonline* 27 September 2001 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,34-118685,00.html>.

Nizar Trabelsi denied Beghal's allegations, claiming that, "I don't even know where that embassy is located". He said that the selected target was the canteen of the U.S. air base in at Kleine Brogel, and that he acted on direct orders from one of Bin Ladin's chief operatives in Afghanistan, Abu Zubaydah. During trial he said, "The plan was that I would break through the gates at the Kleine Brogel army base in a Mercedes delivery van carrying a 100 kilogram bomb and crash into the canteen. It would happen between 12:00 and 13:00. Between 50 and 70 American soldiers would be eating there at that time".<sup>143</sup> Trabelsi received information about the routines at the U.S. airbase from an insider at the base. French authorities want to have Trabelsi extradited to France. Brugiere, French investigators and prosecutors need Trabelsi to strengthen the cases against Djamel Beghal and Kamil Daoudi, and believe Trabelsi lied to the Belgian Court about the intended target of the planned operation, in order to receive a lower sentence. Their theory is that Trabelsi believes French courts are much tougher on Islamists than Belgian courts.<sup>144</sup>

### 6.3 The backgrounds of the militants

The organizational affiliations and the backgrounds of the al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra militants analyzed, indicate "diaspora motivation" and "global motivation". It appears social discontent in the diaspora made them receptive to ideological guidance or indoctrination from influential "global mujahidin" in Europe and in Afghanistan. In line with the main hypothesis of the report one could say that diaspora grievances, which had been fuelled in Afghanistan, created a combined diaspora-global motivation for the conspiracy. Personal relations with "global mujahidin" or "the al-Qaida hardcore" were however interpreted as most important source of motivation. The histories of the key members of the terrorist cell illustrate how radical recruiters approached them when they were vulnerable and frustrated because of personal problems seemingly related to being Muslims in the West. The al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra cell was multi-ethnic consisting of Franco-Algerians, Tunisians and one Dutch-Ethiopian. Several European converts were believed to have been affiliates of the group. The leaders of the cell were second generation immigrants or people who had been living in Europe for a long time. They have been described as well integrated and socially embedded in European societies. In addition they were above average, talented, skilled and relatively successful as students or in their professions. There was not much in the terrorists' backgrounds to suggest that they were especially concerned with the political situation in the countries from which their families originated, at least not more than must be considered normal among second generation immigrants.

The three key players in the conspiracy, Beghal, Trabelsi and Daoudi, admitted being members of al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra. Beghal has even confirmed that he is "the link between three terror cells in Europe belonging to al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra".<sup>145</sup> The ideology of this movement does not focus on territory, but on belief. To followers of al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra, the world consists of true believers and infidels, and infidels should be attacked independently of their nationality or

<sup>143</sup> Mark Eeckhaut, "Trabelsi Wanted To Kill Americans," *De Standaard* 28 May 2003, via FBIS.

<sup>144</sup> Jean-Pierre Stroobants, "Brussels Questions Practices" *Le Monde* 22 June 2003, via FBIS.

<sup>145</sup> Daniel McGrory and Dominic Kennedy (2001) <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,34-118685,00.html>.

ethnic background.<sup>146</sup> One affiliate of Beghal's network, Nacer Eddine Mettai, claims that an alliance was forged between al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra, al-Qaida and the Taliban at the end of the 1990s. According to the agreement, Bin Ladin would finance al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra if the movement joined the "global jihad" and focused on U.S. targets.<sup>147</sup> All such statements must be assessed critically, but this particular statement fits with the modus operandi of al-Qaida, which involves sub-contracting other Islamist movements, and providing finances on the condition they attack U.S. targets. According to Dutch police, Beghal's terrorist network was made up of approximately 20 people living in Belgium, Britain, Canada, France, Germany and the Netherlands.<sup>148</sup>

Several witnesses who frequented the Finsbury Park mosque in London confirm that Djamel Beghal stood out among the militants at the mosque, and that he and his comrades were feared among the other worshippers at the mosque because they were seen as too extreme and violent. One witness claimed that they would "kill their own fathers if they caught them smoking or drinking".<sup>149</sup> Djamel Beghal and Nizar Trabelsi also admitted receiving terrorist training in al-Qaida camps in Afghanistan. Beghal and Trabelsi testified that they developed close relationships with prominent al-Qaida leaders including Usama Bin Ladin and Abu Zubaydah aka Zayn al-Abidin Mohammed Husain aka Abd al-Hadi al-Wahab, one of al-Qaida's leading commanders who was captured in Pakistan March 2002.<sup>150</sup> Profiles of the al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra militants plotting attacks in Belgium or France differ from the profiles of the Strasbourg plotters, but are similar to those of the members of the September 11, 2001 Hamburg cell and some of the GIA fighters of the 1994-1996 terrorist campaigns in Europe. They are described as resourceful "model immigrants" who integrated well, at least initially.<sup>151</sup>

Djamel Beghal was born in Algeria in 1965, and grew up in the Corbeil-Essonnes housing project in the Paris suburbs. He married a French woman and is the father of three boys. He speaks French fluently and is described as an intelligent and charismatic man with talents for leadership.<sup>152</sup> Despite this, Beghal, as many other North African immigrants in France, was "stuck at the bottom of society", status wise, and on the job market. He was drawn to the

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<sup>146</sup> Al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra's ties to al-Qaida are debated. Members of the movement allegedly tried to assassinate Bin Ladin in Sudan in 1994. Bin Ladin seems to disagree with the movement's emphasis on takfir and their justifications for killing fellow Muslims, not agreeing with their interpretation of al-Quran and al-Sunna. The alleged strife between the GIA and al-Qaida did revolve around this controversial issue in Islamist doctrine. Bin Ladin disagreed with the targeting of Muslims in Algeria by takfiri elements within the GIA movement, see Anonymous (2002), p 143.

<sup>147</sup> Sebastian Rotella and David Zucchino, *Los Angeles Times* 21 October 2001, via *The Nation* <http://ktla.trb.com/news/nationworld/nation/la102101terror.0.2688293.story>.

<sup>148</sup> Isabelle Wesselingh (2002) [http://www.inq7.net/wnw/2002/dec/03/wnw\\_1-1.htm](http://www.inq7.net/wnw/2002/dec/03/wnw_1-1.htm).

<sup>149</sup> Martin Bright et al, "The secret war, War on Terrorism" *The Guardian* 30 September 2001 <http://www.observer.co.uk/waronterrorism/story/0,1373,560787,00.html>.

<sup>150</sup> Fouda and Fielding (2003), p 44.

<sup>151</sup> Sebastian Rotella and David Zucchino, "In Paris, a Frightening Look at Terror's Inconspicuous Face; Probe: Officials say plot against U.S. Embassy offers insight into recruitment and training of ordinary young men," *Los Angeles Times* 21 October 2001, via *The Nation* <http://ktla.trb.com/news/nationworld/nation/la102101terror.0.2688293.story>.

<sup>152</sup> Steven Erlanger and Chris Hedges Erlanger, "Missed Signals; Terror Cells Slip Through Europe's Grasp," *New York Times* 28 December 2001 [http://www.pulitzer.org/year/2002/explanatory\\_reporting/works/122801.html](http://www.pulitzer.org/year/2002/explanatory_reporting/works/122801.html).



mosques in which Islamist shaykhs lectured about atrocities and crimes carried out against fellow Muslims in Chechnya, Bosnia, and Palestine, etc. Beghal was engaged in the local conflict in Algeria to a certain degree. In 1994 he was among those picked up during French police sweeps against suspected GIA militants, but it is unclear whether he was imprisoned. In 1997 he moved with his family to the United Kingdom and came under the influence of the Palestinian Islamist shaykh Abu Qatada, aka Omar Mohamed Othman (43), who is described as al-Qaida's "spiritual leader in Europe" or "Bin Ladin's ambassador" to Europe by European intelligence agencies.<sup>153</sup> British police detained Abu Qatada in October 2002, under the Terrorism Act of 2000. He is currently held at London's Belmarsh prison. While belonging to Abu Qatada's group in London, Beghal recruited other activists for al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra with the intention of carrying out attacks against U.S. targets in Europe.

Kamil Daoudi's family emigrated from Algeria to France when he was five. He grew up in the Paris suburbs and is characterized by his family and teachers as a quiet and shy, but intelligent and skilled person, who "never expressed hatred against anyone or anything in particular".<sup>154</sup> Daoudi had a strong interest in computers, and studied aeronautical mechanics for two years. Seemingly he faced some personal problems and left school for a period in 1993. In 1996 he dropped out of his studies for good. Daoudi's father noticed that his son started acting strangely, and he later found out that he had been seeing a psychiatrist. It is believed that it was during this period he was drawn to Islamist militancy and Beghal's circle. He moved out of his parent's house and moved in to Beghal's former apartment in Paris. According to French authorities he also traveled to London and Afghanistan, using the money his family had raised for his education. He worked in a cyber-café, and is believed to have been in charge of the terrorist cell's communication via the Internet. Daoudi is also suspected of being the network's bomb maker.<sup>155</sup> In 1999 he moved permanently to London and joined Beghal's operation cell.

Nizar Trabelsi, who was a member of a German al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra network involved in the plans to strike U.S. targets in Europe, defies the commonly perceived stereotype of an Islamist activist, as a religiously devout bearded young man, shunning worldly pleasures. In fact, he has this in common with most of the Europe-based radical Islamists.<sup>156</sup> He had a career as a professional soccer player for the German team Fortuna Düsseldorf before turning to Islamist militancy. Former team mates said, "He never mentioned Islam or Middle East politics". The only outward sign of his faith was a tiny Koran he tucked into his sock as a shin guard.<sup>157</sup> Despite a western appearance he struggled to socialize properly among his colleagues, and to follow team rules. His contract was cancelled, and his life apparently fell apart. He was divorced, and turned to alcohol and drugs. He then pursued a criminal career, and received

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<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Sebastian Rotella and David Zucchino, "In Paris, a Frightening Look at Terror's Inconspicuous Face; Probe: Officials say plot against U.S. Embassy offers insight into recruitment and training of ordinary young men," *Los Angeles Times* 21 October 2001 [http://ktla.trb.com/news/nationworld/nation/la102101terror\\_0,2688293.story](http://ktla.trb.com/news/nationworld/nation/la102101terror_0,2688293.story).

<sup>155</sup> Martin Bright et al, "The secret war," *The Guardian* 30 September 2001 <http://www.observer.co.uk/waronterrorism/story/0,1373,560787,00.html>.

<sup>156</sup> Kjøk (2003).

<sup>157</sup> Sebastian Rotella and David Zucchino, *Los Angeles Times* 21 October 2001, via *The Nation* [http://ktla.trb.com/news/nationworld/nation/la102101terror\\_0,2688293.story](http://ktla.trb.com/news/nationworld/nation/la102101terror_0,2688293.story).

sentences for drug trafficking, theft, unauthorized use of cars and weapons possession. At the same time he started traveling extensively, to Saudi Arabia, to Tunisia, to Spain and finally in October 2000 he went to Afghanistan. It is believed that Trabelsi was recruited and given direction by Islamist militants during his vulnerable transition phase from a successful athlete to a petty criminal.

#### 6.4 The militant's justifications for attacking

The justifications offered by the Islamist radicals indicated that the terrorist plot was globally motivated, and initiated by the "al-Qaida hardcore". Djamel Beghal and Nizar Trabelsi emphasized how their allegiances to prominent al-Qaida leaders in Afghanistan were the most important driving force behind their plans to attack U.S. targets in Europe. They said they "had no choice", or were "ordered" by patrons in Afghanistan. Their justifications did however contain references to Middle Eastern politics and social discontent in Europe. Personal problems in the diaspora were referred to as catalysts of their radicalization.

When in prison, Trabelsi gave an interview to the Belgian broadcaster RTBF in which he said that he loved Bin Laden "like a father". One of his three defence lawyers Fernande Motte de Raedt said Trabelsi had been "under the spell, hypnotized, impressed by <Usama Bin Ladin's> piercing eyes and simple life".<sup>158</sup> The defence pointed out how his father abandoned him at an early age, and how Trabelsi saw Bin Ladin as a substitute paternal figure. Another lawyer said the client would plead guilty on several counts of the indictment, but that he "agreed to these things because he was under the influence of Osama bin Laden".<sup>159</sup> Trabelsi's own statements underscored his allegiance to Usama Bin Ladin. For example, "I am guilty; I will have to pay for it. What I did is not good, but I had no choice". He further emphasized the strong personal relationship to his mentor by saying, "I don't care about everything he has done - September 11 and all that. I had good relations with him. He helped me and gave me advice". He also mentioned the conflict in Palestine as a source of motivation. When talking about his plans he said, "I would place a photo of a Palestinian child killed by the Jews on the van's dashboard to remind myself of why I was doing it".<sup>160</sup> In the context of the trial we must assume Trabelsi tried to lower his sentence by expressing regrets, parallel to Aeroubi Beandali in the Strasbourg case. He said, "I would not do it again. Violence is not the answer. Look how the Americans reacted after 11 September. Fortunately I can think clearly again. I was a machine then. Even my wife's tears could not move me".<sup>161</sup> Towards the end of the trial, Trabelsi displayed his "global motivation" in a rather comical way by saying, "I love Islam, I love Muslims and I love all human beings, except the Americans". The court did not buy "the new and loving Trabelsi" and sentenced him to 10 years in prison.

<sup>158</sup> "Defense Pleads for Leniency in Belgian Al-Qa'ida Terrorist Trial," *AFP* 10 June 2003, via FBIS

<sup>159</sup> "Al-Qaida trial opens in Belgium" *The Guardian* 23 May 2002  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/alqaida/story/0,12469,961838,00.html>.

<sup>160</sup> Eeckhaut, Mark, "Trabelsi Wanted To Kill Americans," *De Standaard* 28 May 2003, via FBIS.

<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*

Djamel Beghal on the other hand made no references to conflicts in his country of origin Algeria, Palestine or other issues. He focused only on his duties towards his patrons in Afghanistan. According to Radio 1 Europe, which saw documents from the interrogations, he told Judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere that he was specifically ordered to prepare an attack on the US embassy in Paris. Like Trabelsi he said that the orders came from one of the chief operatives in al-Qaida Abu Zubaydah. The al-Qaida commander told him “that the time to act had come”. He asked Beghal if he was ready and gave him three presents from Bin Ladin.<sup>162</sup> Beghal said that his role in the plot was to “observe, collect information and assess the extent of the surveillance in place around the embassy”.<sup>163</sup>

Kamil Daoudi explained to interrogators he “was not psychologically well”. He said, “going to Afghanistan to join the jihad gave my life direction and it was going to allow me to find my roots”.<sup>164</sup> The search for “roots” or the “truth” parallels Aeroubi Beandali’s explanations for why he traveled to Afghanistan. Daoudi denied that the operations were headed by al-Qaida chiefs saying, “Al-Qa’ida did not assign me the task of committing any kind of terrorist attack in Europe or elsewhere”.<sup>165</sup> The witness account of Daoudi’s father mentioned above support his claims that he had severe problems on a personal, psychological level.

## 6.5 The context in which the conspiracy developed

In the al-Takfir wa’l-Hijra case there were potential motivations for a terrorist attack on the diaspora level and global level, whereas the local level did not seem particularly relevant as a source of motivation. The proxies analyzed above suggest mainly “global motivation” and some degree of “diaspora motivation”. The al-Takfir network was multi-ethnic, but most of its leaders originated from North Africa. They were raised and educated in Europe. Except Beghal’s possible affiliations with the GIA in the early 1990s, none of them are known to have been members of Islamist organizations or to have participated in “local jihads”. Al-Takfir wa’l-Hijra was originally an Egyptian movement, which was crushed by the Egyptian regime in 1977. It resurfaced across the Middle East and North Africa, and had a particularly strong position in Lebanon. During the 1990s, the movement and its ideology gained a foothold in Europe. As established in the previous section, the al-Takfir mujahidin were not sent to the diaspora by local Islamist movements. They were recruited in Europe. The MENA context did not appear to be particularly significant for the terrorists.

Beghal’s network operated mainly in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. These three countries have a relatively high percentage of Muslim immigrants, 7%, 3.4% and 2.7%

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<sup>162</sup> “Paris suspect denies Bin Laden link,” *BBC News* 02 October 2001 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/europe/1574842.stm>; “Paris plot reveals link to terror chief - Bombs aimed at embassy and cultural center” *The Guardian* 03 October 2001 www version <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,562175,00.html>.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> Pascal Ceaux and Fabrice Lhomme (2001 October 20), “French Police Get Details of Djamel Beghal’s Islamist Network,” *Le Monde* 20 October 2001, via FBIS.

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*

respectively.<sup>166</sup> Radical Islamists hid and built an infrastructure in these diaspora communities. As noted above, certain mosques in France, Germany and the U.K. were “hijacked” by radical elements and served as bases for fundraising, indoctrination, communication, and for preparing terrorist operations. Until recently, only France had cracked down very hard on such activities. Since the millennium German and British authorities have issued new anti-terrorism laws and intensified the hunt for Islamist militants. As of today, the main hub for Islamist militancy in Europe, the Finsbury park mosque in London, is closed down and its radical preachers and leaders Abu Hamza, Abu Qatada, and Umar Bakri Muhammad are detained and under investigation. Shaykh Umar Bakri Muhammad, the head of the U.K. branches of the semi-radical transnational organizations al-Muhajirun and Hizb al-Tahrir, boasts about having sent “hundreds” of fighters from Europe to Afghanistan. European police and intelligence sources confirm that Islamist recruits have been sent from Europe to join jihad in Chechnya, Kashmir, Iraq, etc.

There are also examples of Europe-based Islamists who were sent to carry out operations in the U.S., Israel and Australia, Iraq, and Morocco.<sup>167</sup> The French anti-terrorism Judge, Jean Lois Bruguiere, said recently “dozens of poor and middle-class Muslim men had left France for Iraq since the summer”.<sup>168</sup> The cases of this study show us that the terrorist cells consisted of both poor and unemployed people, as well as people having been relatively “successful” in their lives. The profiles and justifications of the al-Takfir mujahidin suggested that they were discontent with their status in the European diaspora. One possible explanation is the “relative deprivation” mechanism, implying expectations of being included as a fully fledged member of Western society, not being fulfilled.

On the global level the conspiracy of al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra coincided in timing with the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York. This fact made analysts speculate that the plot was designed to draw attention away from the build up to the “Holy Tuesday”. Tensions at the global level increased steadily after the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings. From 1999 to September 10, 2001, terrorist were thwarted plots in the U.S. and Jordan, the hijacking of an Air India plane by Kashmiri insurgents, several operations by Chechen rebels in Russia, threats against annual celebrations in Belgium and Jordan, the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole destroyer, anti-Christian attacks in Indonesia, and so on, all attributed to al-Qaida affiliated groups.<sup>169</sup> As noted above, the U.S. retaliated by attacking al-Qaida’s training camps in Afghanistan, and an alleged chemical plant in Sudan, and started destroying terrorist infrastructures worldwide. Operations against U.S. symbols in Europe would definitely fit into the conflict pattern developing at the global level of analysis.

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<sup>166</sup> “West Europe’s Muslims and the Iraq war. No war in their name—but no jihad against the West either,” *Economist* 03 April 2003 [http://www.economist.com/PrinterFriendly.cfm?Story\\_ID=1683148](http://www.economist.com/PrinterFriendly.cfm?Story_ID=1683148).

<sup>167</sup> See ch. 12.

<sup>168</sup> Don Van Natta Jr. and Desmond Butler, “Calls to Jihad Are Said to Lure Hundreds of Militants Into Iraq,” *The New York Times* 01 November 2003 <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/01/international/middleeast/01RECR.html?hp>.

<sup>169</sup> Anonymous (2002).

## 6.6 Conclusion

The planned operation against U.S. targets in France or Belgium was probably motivated by a combination of socio-political grievances generated in the European diaspora and ideological influence from prominent al-Qaida leaders and other “global mujahidin” in Afghanistan and Europe. It seems that diaspora and global grievances were interlinked and mutually dependent of each other. Diaspora frustrations made the terrorists receptive to the propaganda and indoctrination of “global mujahidin”. The allegiance to top level al-Qaida leaders seems to be the most important source of motivation for the mujahidin. Of the operationalised motivations, these allegiances were considered “global motivation”. The patterns of motivation match the predicted pattern of the main hypothesis of the report. The al-Takfir militants were raised and educated in Europe, and radical Islamist recruiters picked them up when they struggled with personal problems seemingly related to problems of “fitting in” among Westerners. They did not emigrate from an Arab-Islamic country in order to support a local Islamist insurgency, or to launch an attack against their country of origin from abroad. The local level of analysis is largely absent in the case, probably because the militants were second generation immigrants socially embedded in Europe. Their justifications, target selection and the relevant political contexts indicate ideological “global motivation” and they display great admiration for Bin Ladin and his “global jihad” against the United States and allied states. The ideology of al-Takfir wa’l-Hijra is strongly inspired by the Egyptian radical Islamist shaykh Sayyid Qutb. Although the original al-Takfir wa’l-Hijra was focused on targeting the Egyptian state, Qutb’s doctrine emphasized that the battle is global and not confined to a particular state.

## 7 AL-TAWHID’S CONSPIRACY TO ATTACK JEWISH TARGETS IN GERMANY

In April 2002, German anti-terrorism police arrested nine Islamists belonging to the Jordanian-Palestinian al-Tawhid movement in raids which “spanned Germany from Essen to Munich”.<sup>170</sup> German government officials said the arrestees included Jordanian, Egyptian, Iraqi and Palestinian nationals. According to the federal prosecutor Kay Nehm, the group was “on the brink” of carrying out attacks in Germany. Six militants were identified in the press as Mohammed Abu Dhess (36), Shadi Abdullah (27), Ashraf al-Dagma, Ismail Shalabi, Djamel Mustafa and Yasser H. (36). Yasser H. allegedly headed a local branch of al-Tawhid in Jordan and was also believed to be a ringleader of al-Tawhid militants in Germany. German television reported that authorities believed “several” of the suspects had been to camps in Afghanistan, and that they had acquired weapons to use in terrorist attacks.<sup>171</sup>

Al-Tawhids’ plans to attack targets in Germany was the third significant terrorist conspiracy in Europe to have reached the courtrooms. The group was initially accused of “planning to shoot people in a square in one German city and detonate a hand grenade near a Jewish or Israeli

<sup>170</sup> “Terror suspects “planned German attacks”,” *BBC News* 25 April 2002  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1949762.stm>.

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*

target in another”.<sup>172</sup> In late November 2003, Shadi Abdallah received four years in prison for his role in the plot. The low sentence is described as a “discount” because he cooperated extensively with investigators and prosecutors. According to the verdict, the targets of the operation were the Jewish Museum in Berlin, a café and a discothèque in Düsseldorf, owned by Jews.<sup>173</sup>

The analysis below is based largely on released statements from the interrogations of Shadi Abdallah and his court testimony. Abdallah shared detailed information about the conspiracy and about Islamist terrorist cells in Europe. Investigators and prosecutors did however express doubts concerning when Abdallah was lying and when he was not. Despite such concerns, he ended up as a key witness in the al-Tawhid trial, and also the 2003 trial against Munir al-Mutassadiq, an affiliate of the September 11, 2001 Hamburg cell.

### 7.1 The evidence and “links”

As in the cases analyzed above, the al-Tawhid investigation involved anti-terrorism services in several countries. German police investigators and intelligence discovered that al-Tawhid’s “central command” in Europe was situated in the United Kingdom.<sup>174</sup> The movement considers the London-based Palestinian shaykh Abu Qatada, aka Umar Mahmoud Uthman (43) its religious guide, and the German-based militants were in touch with him. Qatada is described by Spanish intelligence as al-Qaida’s “spiritual ambassador” to Europe.<sup>175</sup> He is currently detained in Belmarsh prison, U.K., for promoting Islamist violence in the Middle East and in Europe. He is also convicted in absentia by Jordanian authorities for planning attacks against U.S. and Israeli targets in Jordan. Investigators believed the suspect Muhammad Abu Dhess was the leader of the disrupted al-Tawhid cell in Germany. Apart from Shadi Abdallah’s testimony, the main evidence against the al-Tawhid network stemmed from intercepted phone calls.

In April 2002, Shadi Abdallah, who was arrested in the German town of Krefeld, received a phone call from al-Tawhid’s alleged operational leader the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, aka Ahmed al-Khalayleh (36), in which he received his final orders to prepare a spectacular attack on a Jewish target somewhere in Germany, in “a big square where a lot of people gather”. Abdallah was also ordered to obtain a “mute” (code for a gun with silencer) and “Russian apples” (code for Russian made hand grenades). The United States’ Secretary of State, Colin Powell, presented al-Zarqawi as “the link” between the Iraqi regime and al-Qaida

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<sup>172</sup> Geir Moulson, “Jordanian Admits He’s Aide of al-Qaida,” *Associated Press* 24 June 2003 [http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=535&ncid=535&e=9&u=/ap/20030624/ap\\_on\\_re\\_eu/germany\\_terror\\_trial\\_10](http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=535&ncid=535&e=9&u=/ap/20030624/ap_on_re_eu/germany_terror_trial_10).

<sup>173</sup> “German Authorities Indicting Suspected Terrorists Trained in Afghan Camps Hamburg,” *Der Spiegel* 10 December 2001, via FBIS.

<sup>174</sup> Jason Burke, “Terror cell’s UK poison plot,” *The Guardian* 25 May 2003 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/alqaida/story/0,12469,963204,00.html>.

<sup>175</sup> Gunaratna (2002).

before the UN Security Council during the lead up to the war on Iraq.<sup>176</sup> During, and in the aftermath of the war he has been linked to multiple terrorist groups and terrorist plots worldwide. On Islamist web sites he has been referred to as the leader of the armed resistance in Iraq. European and U.S. intelligence refer to him as the leader of al-Tawhid and Ansar al-Islam, and the leader of the radical Islamist networks in Europe. Some analysts believe al-Zarqawi pursues his own agenda independently of al-Qaida, and it has also been suggested he is a rival to Bin Ladin. His whereabouts and exact role is unknown. He is a shadowy figure whose name has come up in connection with several conspiracies in Europe. Al-Zarqawi headed the Bayat al-Imran group in Jordan (the forrunner of al-Tawhid). He was arrested and spent many years in Jordanian jails. Allegedly he is an expert in manufacturing and the use of chemical and biological weapons and ran his own camp in Herat, Afghanistan around 2000. Terrorist cells in Italy, the U.K., and France that have planned poison attacks in Europe are believed to receive orders from al-Zarqawi.<sup>177</sup>

The collected evidence in the al-Tawhid case strongly suggested that the conspiracy to attack targets in Germany was the work of an organized group. Police raids, in which 19 homes were searched, revealed physical evidence that an attack was in the making. The police seized Islamic “jihad propaganda”, forged documents and passports along with forgery equipment, and written documents indicating Islamist militancy and terrorist activity, computers, software and a handgun. Media reports suggested a large number of nails had been found in one of the terrorist cell’s hideouts, indicating that the group was planning a nail bomb attack. Federal prosecutor Kay Nehm denied this, however.<sup>178</sup> No chemicals or explosives were discovered in the raids. During interrogations, Shadi Abdullah named at least five individuals belonging to al-Tawhid living in Luton, U.K. These Islamist militants were allegedly planning a poison attack against British targets. Telephone interceptions of the U.K. cell’s communications contained several references to “fruit juice”. According to the detainees in Germany, this was a code for poison.<sup>179</sup>

Abdullah did also inform the police about an al-Tawhid agent in Ireland. The investigation of al-Tawhid’s activities in Germany, and operations attributed to the group in the Middle East, made British security officials concerned about possible future suicide operations in the United Kingdom. According to European and U.S. intelligence sources Abdullah’s cooperation was very helpful in breaking up terrorist cells both in Italy and the United States. As noted earlier, Shadi Abdullah was called in as a witness in the trial of Munir al-Mutassadeq, convicted of supporting the September 11, 2001 Hamburg cell headed by Muhammad Atta. He claimed he

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<sup>176</sup> Geir Moulson, “Jordanian Admits He's Aide of al-Qaida,” *Associated Press* 24 June 2003  
[http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=535&ncid=535&e=9&u=/ap/20030624/ap\\_on\\_re\\_eu/germany\\_terror\\_trial\\_10](http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=535&ncid=535&e=9&u=/ap/20030624/ap_on_re_eu/germany_terror_trial_10).

<sup>177</sup> Burke (2003), p 234, Lia (2003b)

<sup>178</sup> “Terror suspects “planned German attacks”,” *BBC News* 25 April 2002  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1949762.stm>.

<sup>179</sup> Jason Burke, “Terror cell's UK poison plot,” *The Guardian* 25 May 2003  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/alqaida/story/0,12469,963204,00.html>.

attended a meeting in one of Bin Ladin's camps in Afghanistan in which he saw Mutassadeq.<sup>180</sup>

## 7.2 The target selection

An attempt by Jordanian-Palestinian Islamist group to attack Jewish targets in Germany indicates “local motivation”, an operation designed to punish Israel for its policies in Palestine. This must be considered a highly plausible motivation for the attack, considering Jordan's proximity and entanglement in the Palestine conflict, and the fact that the vast majority of Jordanian Islamists are Palestinians. However, Palestine is also an important symbol of the “global jihad”. If the motivation was mainly drawn from the local context, one should also ask why Jordanian symbols in Europe were not selected as targets. Because of the al-Tawhid radicals' seemingly extensive contacts with al-Qaida leaders and affiliates, it is also plausible that ideas of a “global jihad” were the main motivations for the conspirators. As noted above, the al-Tawhid militants acted on orders from Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who by most analysts is believed to be a “global mujahid” although he is also said to have “an obsession” with Israeli or Jewish targets, and his exact relationship with al-Qaida is an issue of debate.

An analysis of the target selection alone is insufficient to determine which of the operationalised motivations was the more important. German prosecutors claimed the terrorists intended to strike German citizens in the attacks. If this was the case, the target selection can be seen as isolated could be interpreted as “diaspora motivation”. However, considering the immediate context of the conspiracy, it seems more plausible that the operation was globally and/or locally motivated. The accusations about targeting Germans were considered speculative, and Shadi Abdullah was convicted exclusively on intent to attack Jewish targets.

All the terrorists said they intended to attack Jewish or Israeli targets on orders from al-Zarqawi, and as noted above, the evidence supports their claims. During interrogation Muhammad Abu Dhess said explicitly that the selected targets were Berlin's Jewish Museum, a Jewish owned discothèque and a pub owned by a Jew in Düsseldorf. Shadi Abdullah told the police his organization had planned attacks against Jewish and Israeli institutions.<sup>181</sup> He said his “commanding officer”, al-Zarqawi, ordered him to launch the first attack by quoting verses 6 and 7 from the first sura of the Quran. The sura reads “lead us to the right path, the path of those to whom Thou art merciful. Not that of those with whom Thou art angry, nor that of those who stray”. For reasons not discussed in the press coverage, the sura was interpreted by prosecutors as a signal to strike a Jewish target.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> “Bin Laden boasted of plan to kill thousands: witness,” *Khaleej Times* 27 November 2002

<http://www.khaleejtimes.co.ae/ktarchive/271102/theworld.htm>.

<sup>181</sup> “Press Says German Police Received 'Important Information' About 9/11 Attacks,” *Agence France-Presse (AFP)* 24 August 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>182</sup> “Germany: Arrested Terror Suspect Could Provide Leads to Al-Qa'ida, Bin Ladin,” *Der Spiegel* 26 August 2002, via FBIS; One theory concerning the interpretation of this sura is that the Jews were the first to receive the divine message, and also the first to misinterpret the holy principles of faith and thus “go astray”, Kjøk (2003).



Abdullah said he received his orders for the first time in Afghanistan, in May 2001. Despite the wording of Abdallah's final verdict, German authorities were not convinced that al-Tawhid exclusively targeted Jewish interests. They also believed that U.S., British, and possibly German symbols in Germany had been alternative targets for the operation.<sup>183</sup> For example, at the opening of the trial German prosecutors said that Abdullah was part of the German-based al-Tawhid group and "developed a plan to attack people in a busy square of a German city using a pistol with a silencer, and to detonate a hand grenade in another German city in the immediate vicinity of an Israeli or Jewish installation with the goal of killing as many people as possible". The target city was not named.<sup>184</sup>

### 7.3 The backgrounds of the militants

The backgrounds and organizational affiliations of the al-Tawhid militants indicate that the terrorist cell was motivated by local and/or global grievances. Given that Shadi Abdullah was telling the truth during trial, the group acted on direct orders from Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who has been described as an Islamist fighter pursuing both a local and a global agenda. Considering the backgrounds of the al-Tawhid militants it was not likely that poor living conditions for immigrants, slow asylum procedures, etc, in Germany could have been the main reasons that the terrorists wanted to launch an attack in the country. "Diaspora frustration" caused by problems related to being Muslim immigrants in Europe must however be recognized as a possible catalyst for the radicalization of the Europe-based Islamists. As we shall see, the radicals referred to such problems during the trial. However, political developments and events at the local and global level seemed more plausible as motivations considering the context in which the conspiracy was developing.

The radicals lived in Europe a relatively short time before they were arrested and they belonged to al-Tawhid, a movement historically committed to the local battle against the Jordanian regime and Israel. Towards the end of the 1990s al-Tawhid was also involved in operations against Westerners in Jordan and operations outside Jordan.<sup>185</sup> The militants had been to training camps in Afghanistan, and they were believed to have established close relationships with prominent al-Qaida leaders. Their "Europe records" were parallel to those of the Strasbourg plotters. They came to the diaspora in the mid- or late-1990s as asylum seekers or illegal immigrants. They lived as small time criminals in addition to being involved with hardliner Islamist extremists in Germany, the U.K. and other European countries. The dynamics were diffuse and raised several questions. Were the suspects affiliated with al-Tawhid before they came to Europe, and possibly sent to Europe in order to establish support networks for the local branch of the movement, in accordance with the "boomerang logic"? Or, were they picked up from the "bottom of European societies" and indoctrinated by Europe-based al-Tawhid recruiters?

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<sup>183</sup> "Terror suspects "planned German attacks"," *BBC News* 25 April 2002  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1949762.stm>.

<sup>184</sup> "Jordanian accused of terror plot," *The Guardian* 25 June 2002  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/alqaida/story/0,12469,984431,00.html>.

<sup>185</sup> Anonymous (2002).

As noted, Al-Tawhid was in the past strategically and tactically focused on the local battle against the Jordanian regime, with an ultimate ideological aim of establishing a true Islamic al-Sharia state in Jordan. Shadi Abdullah explicitly told German interrogators “although the group was linked with Al Qaeda, it focused on toppling the Jordanian monarchy”.<sup>186</sup> Typically, the “link” to al-Qaida was unclear, and an issue of debate. German intelligence considered al-Tawhid as a movement “independent of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda organization”, but following a similar hardliner agenda.<sup>187</sup> According to one German intelligence report, al-Tawhid’s alleged operations leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was in opposition to Bin Ladin, and al-Tawhid functioned as a group that “was especially for Jordanians who did not want to join al-Qaida”.<sup>188</sup> This characteristic contradicts Colin Powell’s description of Zarqawi as “the link” between al-Qaida and the Iraqi regime. As a movement, Al-Tawhid considers shaykh Abu Qatada in London to be its “religious guide”. In downloaded video sessions from Qatada’s sermons at Finsbury Park Mosque and an interview with him published by CBS News, he openly and eagerly supports al-Qaida’s “global jihad”.<sup>189</sup>

German intelligence had for some time been aware that al-Tawhid maintained a network in Germany. It did however conclude that the activities of al-Tawhid cells in the country were restricted to support activities such as supplying fake identity documents and gathering donations for Islamist insurgents abroad. The network was, for example, believed to have provided logistical aid for Islamist fighters campaigning against Western forces in Afghanistan.<sup>190</sup> Shadi Abdullah confirmed that some of the funds collected by his cell went to al-Qaida “at the request of donors”.<sup>191</sup> Al-Tawhid’s connections with al-Zarqawi and Abu Qatada, along with support activities for Islamists in Afghanistan suggested “global motivation”. Al-Tawhid might also be globally committed independently of its alleged organizational ties with al-Qaida. Furthermore, targeting the Jordanian Monarchy does not exclude “global motivation”. Jordan is considered to be the United States’ main ally in the Middle East.<sup>192</sup> Al-Zarqawi and al-Tawhid were suspected of murdering U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley in Amman in October 2002, and of planning to strike Israeli and U.S. tourists in the same city on New Years Eve 2000 (the millennium plot).

The key suspects Shadi Abdullah and Muhammad Abu Dhess came from the same Jordanian town of Irbid. Abdullah described his family as very poor, and dropped out of his training as a

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<sup>186</sup> “Captured operative providing an inside view of Al Qaeda,” *New York Times* 18 February 2003, via International Herald Tribune <http://www.iht.com/articles/87052.html>.

<sup>187</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> “German Terror Trial Begins,” *CBS News* 16 April 2002

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/04/16/attack/main506245.shtml>, Internet Haganah (2003) <http://haganah.rkka.org/jihadi/>.

<sup>190</sup> Jason Burke, “Terror cell's UK poison plot,” *The Guardian* 25 May 2003

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/alqaida/story/0,12469,963204,00.html>; “Terror suspects “planned German attacks”,” *BBC News* 25 April 2002 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1949762.stm>.

<sup>191</sup> “Terror Suspect Testifies Group Received Orders for Fresh Attacks Sept. 12, 2001,” *Associated Press (AP)* 25 July 2003, via OSAC <http://www.ds-osac.org/view.cfm?key=7E445D454455&type=2B170C1E0A3A0F162820#>.

<sup>192</sup> Ranstorp (2003).

hairdresser and an automobile technician a short time before he left Jordan for Europe. Abu Dhess worked as a professional singer in Jordan. Dhess was believed to have held a leading position within al-Tawhid. They traveled to Germany together in 1995 and applied for political asylum. Abdullah's application for asylum was filed in 1996. Before that he filed a similar application in Belgium. Both applications were rejected, but he was allowed to stay in Germany on humanitarian grounds. In the applications he falsely claimed he was an Iraqi facing political persecution in Iraq. Abdullah maintained he did not know that Dhess was an al-Tawhid leader until they were in Germany. Abdullah is believed to have been in Afghanistan from December 1999 until May 2001.

He allegedly met al-Zarqawi in May 2000 and the two “developed a close, trusting relationship”, according to the German prosecutor Dirk Fernholz. Abdullah claimed he was asked to act as Bin Ladin's bodyguard during his stay in Afghanistan because of his physical size. He was one of few who were tall enough to cover Bin Ladin's body. According to testimonies, al-Zarqawi ordered Abdullah to return to Germany and team up with Abu Dhess for operations against Jewish targets in May 2001. The conspiracy was, according to German prosecutors, outlined properly in a meeting in Iran, on September 12, 2001, in which Abu Dhess was told by al-Zarqawi to attack Jewish or Israeli installations in Germany.<sup>193</sup>

#### **7.4 The militants' justifications for attacking**

The terrorists' justifications for attacking Jewish targets in Germany contained references to local, diaspora and global grievances. As noted above, because of their proximity to, and entanglement in the Palestine conflict, most Jordanian radical Islamists are eager to attack Jewish targets. In fact most Jordanian Islamists are Palestinians. For the same reasons, it would also be tempting for them to justify an attack on Jewish targets in Germany with reference to Palestine in order to gain sympathy, but they did not. This observation suggests that local context was less important than the global context as a source of motivation. As noted above, Shadi Abdullah did comment on the motivations of al-Tawhid as a movement during the trial, and said that the battle against the Jordanian Monarchy was considered its main project.<sup>194</sup> With the exception of this statement, Abdullah's testimony mainly suggested “global motivation”, parallel to those of the al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra militants surveyed above. Another parallel to the justifications of the al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra militants is that Abdullah referred to social problems in the diaspora as catalysts for his radicalization, but these problems cannot be interpreted as serious enough to generate substantial grievances against the German “host state”. The influence of “global mujahidin” in al-Qaida training camps had probably made the deepest impact on the radicalization and terrorist motivation of the prime witness in the al-Tawhid case, Shadi Abdullah.

Abdullah tried to convince the court that personal, social problems in Jordan and in Germany were crucial to his radicalization. Interestingly, he explained that social problems in the

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<sup>193</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> “Captured operative providing an inside view of Al Qaeda,” *New York Times* 18 February 2003, via International Herald Times Tribune <http://www.iht.com/articles/87052.html>.

diaspora led him to Europe-based extremists that in turn convinced him to join the “global mujahidin” in Afghanistan. After admitting lying about being an orphaned Iraqi persecuted by the Iraqi authorities, Abdullah said his family in Jordan was very poor, and that he wanted to start a new life in Germany.<sup>195</sup> He also said one of the reasons he left Jordan was his sexual preference for men. This particular statement must be interpreted as taqiyya to confuse the court.

As noted above Abdullah lived on German welfare and occasional jobs while he applied for political asylum. He described his life in Germany as “empty” and said he developed a drug habit that made him spend all his money.<sup>196</sup> During this time he was offered food and housing from a mosque on the condition that he would enroll in religious classes. In December 1999 he went on Hajj to Mecca with fellow students where he allegedly met Bin Ladin’s son-in-law, who personally convinced him to join the jihad in Afghanistan. When staying in Afghanistan he was further radicalized and came under the influence of Bin Ladin and al-Zarqawi, and met other high profile al-Qaida operatives such as Zacarias Moussaoui and Ramzi Binalshibh. Abdullah explained how the U.S was seen as the main enemy in the radical Islamist camps in Afghanistan, and how Bin Ladin “often called for attacks against the U.S.” and spoke about a future massive attack (probably September 11, 2001), that would cause “thousands of dead”.<sup>197</sup>

## 7.5 The context in which the conspiracy developed

The al-Tawhid plot in Germany coincided with an intensification of the “war on terrorism”, most importantly the U.S. led offensive against al-Qaida and Taliban bases in Afghanistan. The tensions at the “global level” were thus increasing. The contextual analysis coupled with the conclusions reached on the proxies analyzed above, suggests that “global motivation” was the main driving force behind the plans to attack Jewish targets in Germany. In particular, the group’s contacts with prominent Islamist leaders belonging to al-Qaida, or with alleged ties to al-Qaida, seen in combination with the heightened tension on the “global level”, support the hypothesis that the conspiracy was mainly globally motivated. The following analysis of the relevant contexts shows consistency with the conclusions reached on backgrounds, organizational affiliations and target selection. The justifications for attacking, on the other hand, emphasized the diaspora context as an additional source of motivation.

As noted, there was a general intensification of anti-terrorism efforts in Europe following September 11, 2001, the plot to strike U.S. targets in France or Belgium analyzed above, and the implementation of new anti-terrorism laws in the United Kingdom and Germany. The reason the diaspora context was considered to play a minor role in motivating the attacks compared to the local and global contexts, was the militants’ relatively short periods of stay in Europe, interpreted as insufficient to generate strong grievances against the German “host state”. Although social problems in the diaspora were referred to extensively during the trial,

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<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> “Jordanian accused of terror plot,” *The Guardian* 25 June 2002  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/alqaida/story/0,12469,984431,00.html>.

these problems were not considered serious enough to have motivated a group of Islamist militants to punish the German society. In addition there were contextual political developments, such as deployment of German troops in Afghanistan, suggesting that a possible attack on German citizens was more likely motivated by politics on the global scene than social problems facing Islamists in Germany. However, the cases analyzed in this study, do underscore that we should not underestimate how social problems in the diaspora might have facilitated radicalization of young Muslims in Europe.

The suspected terrorists were Jordanians and Palestinians belonging to the movement al-Tawhid, which is focused ideologically on seizing power in Jordan, and implementing al-Sharia. The local level of analysis is thus politically significant. The Jordanian regime and Israel were historically the main targets of al-Tawhid.<sup>198</sup> Amnesty International's annual reports of 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002 tell stories about a constant low intensity conflict between Jordanian Islamists and Jordanian authorities. Jordanian Islamists criticized the regime for its close relations with the United States, for maintaining peaceful relations with Israel, and for not properly implementing al-Sharia in Jordan. The Jordanian Islamists' grievances might be understood in a combined local and global perspective because the Palestine issue is an important symbol for the "global mujahidin". Scores of Islamists were sent to Jordanian jails, often without proper trials, accused of being affiliated with al-Qaida or engaging in illegal Islamist activism such as anti-regime propaganda and arms trafficking.

In 2000, for example, 16 Islamists were arrested suspected of belonging to al-Qaida and tortured by Jordanian police. The same year, 100 activists were arrested during mass demonstrations in support of the Palestinian intifada, and all together 1700 persons, mainly Islamists.<sup>199</sup> There have been several terrorist operations and terrorist conspiracies attributed to radical Islamists in Jordan during the past three years attributed to al-Qaida affiliates. The most well known are the attempts to attack tourist hotels and Holy Christian sites in December 1999, and the murdering of the U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley in Amman in October 2002. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is suspected of involvement in these events. The local level might here be perceived as a local battleground and an arena for "global jihad". One significant observation in this respect is that according to *Pew Global Attitudes Project 2002*, a majority of Jordanians and 71% of the Palestinians say they have at least some confidence in Usama Bin Ladin to "do the right thing regarding world affairs", indicating that the "global jihad" has substantial popular support in the country.

At the global level of analysis, al-Tawhid's plans to strike targets in Germany coincided with the war against al-Qaida and Taliban in Afghanistan, in which several European countries participated, including Germany. Because of this, attacks on German targets might be interpreted as retaliation for Germany's participation in the coalition. On April 11, 2002, just before the arrests of al-Tawhid militants in Germany, a Tunisian, Nizar Nawar, launched a

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<sup>198</sup> See 12.5.5.

<sup>199</sup> Amnesty International Annual Reports, The Middle East and North Africa (1998-2003) <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aireport/index.html>.

suicide attack on the Ghriba Synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia, killing 19, among them 11 German tourists. Nizar Nawar received logistical support from his brother Walid in France and the operation was allegedly financed by the Spaniard Enrique Cerda Ibanez. Immediately before the attack, Nizar Nawar made a telephone call to Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, the alleged mastermind of the September 11, 2001 attacks, and received his “go”. Nawar allegedly also made a phone call to a German of Polish origin, and a convert to Islam and al-Qaida affiliate, Christian Ganczarski (36) aka Abu Ibrahim a short time before the attack. Ganczarski was arrested by German police, but released because of lack of evidence. He immediately fled to Saudi Arabia.<sup>200</sup> The Djerba attack was perceived as being orchestrated by al-Qaida in retaliation for the offensive in Afghanistan. Because of the deaths of the German tourists, and the German connection to Ganczarski, there were speculations that the attack was specifically designed to deter Germany from further involvement in the Afghanistan and the “war on terrorism” in general, but probably it was a coincidence that German tourists visited the Ghriba Synagogue in Djerba on that particular day. Al-Tawhid’s terrorist plans in Germany could however have been meant as a message to the German authorities as well as a direct attack on Israelis abroad.

## 7.6 Conclusion

Al-Tawhid’s planned attacks against Jewish targets in Germany were probably mainly globally motivated, although the local level seems highly relevant as a source of motivation. The motivation pattern is thus partly matched by the pattern of the study’s main hypothesis. The motivations appear to be “complex”, but the diaspora level of analysis was considered less relevant than the local and the global level. The analysis emphasized the terrorists’ contacts with prominent al-Qaida leaders, given the context of the plot. The cell members made references to the situation in Jordan and the Palestine issue, and they exclusively selected Jewish targets. It was considered unlikely that an attack on Jewish targets in Germany was meant as a locally motivated attack against the Jordanian Monarchy. If they wanted to strike Jordan it would have been both easier and more effective to target Jordanian symbols in Germany instead. In this case the Palestine conflict might be seen as both a local and a global issue. Jordanian Islamists’ grievances against the Jordanian regime and Jews are partly local and partly global. The Jordanian regime has persecuted radical Islamists in Jordan. In addition the Monarchy has cooperated extensively with the U.S., and is seen as the Western World’s main ally in the Middle East.<sup>201</sup> Their grievances against Israel and Jews are related to the conflict in Palestine. Some references were made to social grievances generated in the German diaspora, and there were speculations about plans to strike German targets. The diaspora level was not emphasized because of the terrorists’ short histories in Europe and the context of the conspiracy. If they were planning to hit German targets, we would have interpreted this as retaliation for Germany’s support for the “global war on terrorism” (for example, deployment of troops to Afghanistan), rather than more general grievances against the German “host state”.

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<sup>200</sup> “German - French Cooperation Leads to Arrest of Terror Suspects,” *Der Spiegel* 16 June 2003, via FBIS.

<sup>201</sup> Ranstorp (2003).

## 8 “THE CHECHEN NETWORK’S” CONSPIRACY TO ATTACK THE RUSSIAN EMBASSY IN PARIS

On December 16, 2002, French police SWAT teams struck suspected Islamist terrorists residing in two different areas of the Paris suburbs. Nine suspects were detained. They allegedly belonged to the so-called “Chechen Network”, and according to French authorities they were planning a bomb attack on the Russian embassy in Paris. The leaders of the network were the three Algerian nationals Merouane Benahmed (29), Menad Benchellali (28) and Noureddine Merabet. Merouane Benahmed is suspected to have provided logistical support for the Strasbourg plotters. The former two were arrested during the two main raids, whereas Benahmed was arrested in a separate police operation on the French-Spanish Border. Benahmed’s wife was also arrested. Menad Benachelli is the brother of Mourad (23) who was captured in Afghanistan. He is currently detained at Camp X-Ray, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.<sup>202</sup> Two other cadres arrested in the raids in December 2002 were Mohamed Merbah and Ahmed Belhoud.

The plan of Algerian Chechnya veterans to attack the Russian embassy in Paris in December 2002 is the fourth well documented conspiracy to strike targets in Europe attributed to Islamist radicals. As in the other cases, the plot involved contacts between Islamists situated in the country in which the attack was to be launched, and radicals based in other European countries and other parts of the world. It appears the “Chechen Network” was in contact with Islamists in Chechnya, Georgia, Afghanistan, France, the United Kingdom, and Italy.

Despite the fact that the trial has not started yet, we are still able to analyze a set of proxies similar to those analyzed in the previous cases. The reason is that French officials, in response to demands for more information about the French anti-terrorism efforts, released information about the investigation to the press. The French Interior Minister, Nicholas Sarkozy, for example, issued a detailed statement about the interrogations, the items seized during house searches, and the basic profiles of the individuals in question.<sup>203</sup>

### 8.1 The evidence and “links”

There was substantial physical evidence that the Algerian radicals were preparing an attack. In the home of the prime suspect Merouane Benahmed, the police seized packages of iron perchlorate and other chemicals which when mixed together form a powerful explosive. They also seized a hand written list of chemicals, which might be used to make bombs and toxic gases, and bottles containing a substance used to connect electronic circuits. Police also confiscated two empty 13 kg gas canisters (similar to those used by the GIA in their 1995 terrorist campaign in France), 5,000 USDs and 20,000 euros in cash, fake passports and a computer with coded instructions. In a second search of Benahmed’s apartment, DST

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<sup>202</sup> Other members of the Benchellalli family have been detained in France suspected of planning poison attacks in the country. See Appendix, 12.4.1.

<sup>203</sup> “Terrorist Cell Dismantled in France Reportedly Planned Russian Embassy Attack,” *Le Monde* 29-30 December 2002, via FBIS.

investigators discovered electronic components required to make a remote control detonator hidden inside a washing machine. In one of the raids the police also found a military nuclear-biological-chemical protection suit causing investigators to suspect the militants of preparing an attack in Paris with a so-called “dirty bomb”. Fear of a chemical attack was heightened following the arrests of Algerian Islamists manufacturing the poison ricin in London, in January 2003.<sup>204</sup> A small amount of this poison was also found in a railway station locker in Paris shortly after those arrests. In addition, the ringleader of the “Chechen Network”, Merouane Benahmed is believed to be skilled in the manufacturing and use of chemical weapons and toxins. Despite this, French officials stated that it was most likely that the conspiracy involved one or several “conventional” bomb attacks.<sup>205</sup>

According to the French Interior Minister Nicholas Sarkozy, Benahmed had been in touch with Rabah Kadri, an Islamist militant arrested in London in November 2002, suspected of being a member of a terrorist cell planning to launch a cyanide attack on the London Underground (The Tube). It was the interrogation of Kadri that led to the raids against “The Chechen Network”. In turn, the interrogations of Benahmed led to the arrests of Algerians in London manufacturing ricin in January 2003. Further investigations into a possible link between the ricin cell in London and the Chechnya veterans operating in France revealed that several of the detainees in London came to the United Kingdom from France shortly before they were arrested. Knowing this, the ricin found in France was seen as a sign of a U.K.-France-connection. Merouane Benahmed was also suspected of providing expertise in bomb making to the group convicted of planning an attack in Strasbourg in December 2000 (see above). In addition he appears to have been affiliated with an alleged al-Qaida cell in Italy. Information from Benahmed’s computer resulted in the arrests of North African Islamists in Scotland and in the United Kingdom. The investigation of the “Chechen network” seemed to involve interrogations of the previously French-based Islamists Mourad Benchellali and Nizar Sassi detained in Guantanamo, Cuba. These two detainees have probably provided the French investigators with useful information about the structure and activities of the network of North African Chechnya veterans operating in France, which will probably be important in the upcoming trial.<sup>206</sup>

## 8.2 The target selection

The target selection of the “Chechen Network” clearly suggested “global motivation” for the conspiracy. In this case there was no doubt about the nationality and type of target chosen for the attack. The target was symbolic and Russian. Several of the suspects, including the ringleader Merouane Benahmad, admitted they intended to strike Russian targets in France. One suspect specified that the Russian embassy in Paris on Boulevard Lannes in the 16th

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<sup>204</sup> See Appendix ch. 12.

<sup>205</sup> “Terrorist Cell Dismantled in France Reportedly Planned Russian Embassy Attack,” *Le Monde* 29-30 December 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>206</sup> Kenneth Timmerman, “Sweden’s Highjacking,” *Insight on the News* April 2003  
<http://www.insightmag.com/main.cfm?include=detail&storyid=267192>.



district was the chosen target.<sup>207</sup> There were speculations that the group conducted reconnaissance against various U.S. targets, but no official sources have confirmed that this was the case.<sup>208</sup> A French Magistrate involved in the investigation stated that the evidence collected suggested that the network planned several different types of attacks, but no other sources have confirmed this.

What made the target selection problematic in relation to levels of analysis and motivation was the fact that the militants were Algerian nationals or Franco-Algerians who maintained operational ties with Algerian Islamists in France and received support from France-based GSPC militants during preparation for the attack. The GSPC and GIA have almost exclusively attacked French and Algerian targets in France in the past and these attacks were mainly motivated by French support for the secular Algerian regime. The Algerians surveyed here spent time in Chechnya, Georgia and probably Afghanistan, and planned to attack a Russian symbol in Europe. How should we interpret this?

One interpretation is that Benahmed and his cadre have “gone Chechen”, that they perceive the Chechen context to be more important than the local Algerian context, and used Europe as an arena to launch attack against the Russians out of convenience, because they could hide among Algerian “brothers” and rely on their infrastructure in France. Another interpretation is that the militants have become truly “global fighters” that do not think in terms of local politics, but fight a global war against the United States and its allies (including Russia in this context), independently of state borders. Both interpretations imply a “globalization” of jihad. If Algerian Islamists have “gone Chechen” this must also be interpreted as a form of “globalization” of jihad.

### **8.3 The backgrounds of the militants**

There was shortage of available information on the backgrounds and organizational affiliations of the Algerian militants planning to strike the Russian embassy in Paris. The leader of the terrorist cell, Merouane Benahmed is the only suspect profiled in the press coverage of the case, and his profile is largely incomplete and superficial. However, if his profile is representative of the other Algerian Chechnya veterans constituting the “Chechen network”, this was a group mainly affiliated with the global Salafi-Jihadi networks of al-Qaida, driven by “global motivation”. What we do know about the militants as a group is that they originated from Algeria and that Merouane Benahmed, Menad Benchellali and Nouredine Merabet all went to Islamist training camps in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Georgia. In Chechnya they forged ties with Chechen warlords, received paramilitary training, and joined the separatist guerillas fighting the Russians. Some of the terrorists were affiliated with the GIA in the past. As we shall see the cell leader, Merouane Benahmed, has maintained contacts with the GIA’s splinter group, the GSPC. Benahmed’s extensive traveling in recent years, the scope of his

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<sup>207</sup> “Terrorist Cell Dismantled in France Reportedly Planned Russian Embassy Attack,” *Le Monde* 29-30 December 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>208</sup> Kenneth Timmerman, “Sweden's Highjacking,” *Insight on the News* April 2003 <http://www.insightmag.com/main.cfm?include=detail&storyid=267192>.

contacts, and his alleged role in Chechnya, suggest “global motivation” rather than “local motivation” generated in Algeria, or “diaspora motivation” generated in Europe.

Merouane Benahmed is considered a “spider” of the radical Islamist networks in Europe, having multiple contacts with other Islamist radicals situated in the region, and in other parts of the world. Benahmed is known to have been a former commander (amir) of the GIA. Investigators describe him as a “globetrotter” having spent time in Afghanistan, Germany, the United Kingdom, Georgia and Chechnya using different identities. Police and intelligence agencies have hunted Benahmed since he was believed to be implicated in the Strasbourg conspiracy, in 2000. In Afghanistan he allegedly trained in camps run by al-Qaida, and attended special courses in bomb making and the manufacturing of chemical weapons. In these camps he was also believed to have established close contacts with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al-Tawhid’s operational leader, an al-Qaida associate and a chemical weapons expert, who also has been described as a “spider” in the web of radical Islamists operating transnationally. When the French-Algerian journalist Mohamed Sifaoui infiltrated a GSPC cell in France in 2002, he met Benahmed on December 14, two days before he was arrested. Sifaoui believed the GSPC cell he infiltrated provided logistical support for Benahmed’s planned operation against the Russian embassy. During the meeting, which took place at a restaurant run by an Algerian Islamist, Benahmed was dressed as an “operational” according to the principle of taqiyya, shaved, and with Western clothing.

Cooperation between GSPC militants and Chechnya veterans illustrates how the aims and motives of militant Islamists are merging when they move beyond state borders and become involved in jihad outside of their country of origin. Sources “close to the investigation” believe the militants belonging to the “Chechen Network” were “acting on their own initiative, although no doubt with (Al-Qa’idah’s) overall approval”.<sup>209</sup> French and U.K. security agents described the network as “a large structure of international terrorism uniting Algerian and Chechen cells”, and claimed the radicals arrested in London and Paris had established a “terrorism academy” in Chechnya and in the Pankisi Gorge province of Georgia. The size of such an “academy”, if it existed, cannot have been large. According to one Chechnya expert, the Russians would easily have detected and destroyed a training facility of considerable size.<sup>210</sup> The fact that the “Chechen network” relied on support from an Algerian GSPC cell probably exemplifies how pragmatism, personal relationships and common histories stand above organizational affiliations and ideological programs, but, as noted above, it might also be an example of how ideas and motives converge and the how the “local jihads” and the “global jihad” are increasingly seen as one whole. Statements by the leader of the GSPC cell infiltrated by Mohamed Sifaoui in 2002 exemplified this complexity. He expressed moderate admiration for and respect for Bin Ladin and his “global jihad”, but at the same time he emphasized the importance of not forgetting “the main enemy”, the Algerian regime.<sup>211</sup> It is

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<sup>209</sup> “Islamists’ target were Russian interests in France, Ministry says,” *Agence France-Presse* 28 December 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>210</sup> Wilhelmsen (2003b).

<sup>211</sup> Sifaoui (2003), p. 28.

also significant that the target selection of Benahmed's cell differs considerably from that of Algerian groups in the past.

#### **8.4 The militants' justifications for attacking**

The justifications of the militants indicate that the conspiracy to attack the Russian embassy in Paris was mainly globally motivated. Algerian Islamists planned to avenge the deaths of "brothers" in the "Chechen jihad", which they probably perceived as an integrated part of the al-Qaida led "global jihad". The justifications for attacking were explicit, and indicated that the operation was motivated exclusively by concrete events in the battle between the Russian government and Chechen rebels, such as the killings of the Chechen hostage takers in the Dubrovka theater, Moscow, in October 2002. It is however important to note that the justifications released to the press mainly stemmed from the testimony of one single person in custody, most probably Merouane Benahmed. As we have seen, Benahmed nurtured ties with Islamists in many countries, and he is also believed to have made contacts with top level leaders of the al-Qaida network. It could be in Benahmed's interest to downplay his al-Qaida contacts, obscure a possible "global motivation", and focus on a concrete local issue in his defence in order to lower his sentence. On the other hand he probably faces a long sentence regardless of his links to al-Qaida. If he is a true "global mujahid", he might also have perceived an up coming trial as an arena to instigate others to join the "global jihad".

At the beginning of the interrogations none of the detainees said a word about the conspiracy and their motivations. When the silence broke, they said they were "jihad fighters trained in Chechnya to fight and defend their brothers", according to "sources close to the investigation".<sup>212</sup> Benahmed made one statement implying that his motivations for launching an attack in Europe were "complex" and involved political grievances from different parts of the world. He admitted learning to make explosives intending to "strike Russians in Chechnya and the Israelis in Palestine".<sup>213</sup> As in the other cases references were made to the Palestine issue. Whether we can perceive this as an indicator of "global motivation" or *taqiyya* is difficult to say. The Palestine conflict has a strong symbolic value and must be considered a grievance for all Islamists and other Arabs and Muslims, secular or Islamist. The context of the case did however suggest that the Palestine question was of minor importance as a motivation to strike a Russian target in Europe. French authorities considered the motivations of the attack as unproblematic based on the interrogations.

The French Interior Ministry issued a statement saying that the terrorist cell "had decided to strike Russian targets in France", and that the attack was mainly motivated by a desire to avenge "the elimination of the members of the Chechen commando who took a Moscow theatre audience hostage". Retaliation for the killing of a Movsar Barayev, the alleged leader of the Dubrovka theater hostage taking was thus seen as the main motivation for the plans to strike the Russian embassy in Paris. Another press report by *Le Monde* added two concrete

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<sup>212</sup> "Terrorist Cell Dismantled in France Reportedly Planned Russian Embassy Attack," *Le Monde* 29-30 December 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*

events to the justifications and motivations of the Chechen Network. One was the death of one of their “brothers”, al-Moutana, who was killed by Russian forces in Chechnya. Al-Moutana is in some press reports said to have been implicated in the Strasbourg plot in 2000.

The second event was the death of the alleged “Head of the foreign legion” in Chechnya, the Saudi born Hassan Khattab. The foreign legion is said to have consisted of fighters who came to Chechnya from the Arab World to wage jihad against the Russians. Khattab died under mysterious circumstances in April 2002. People close to Khattab claim he was poisoned, and blame it on the Russians. According to Julie Wilhelmsen, Khattab was an important financier of the jihad in Chechnya.<sup>214</sup> Press reports claim that Khattab had problems being accepted by the Chechens, but that he forged an alliance with President Maskhadov’s rival Shamil Basayev, one of the Chechen warlords. Movsar Barayev who is said to have headed the Dubrovka operation is the nephew of Arbi Barayev, an Islamist Chechen warlord who headed the “Special Islamic Regiment” from his strongholds near Grozny. Arbi Barayev was reported killed in June 2001, and was replaced by his nephew Movsar, who was killed when Russian Special Forces pumped nerve gas into the theatre and shot the terrorists. The death of Movsar in the Dubrovka hostage taking is seen as the main motivation of the plans to attack the Russian embassy in Paris.<sup>215</sup>

## 8.5 The context in which the conspiracy developed

The context of the conspiracy to attack the Russian embassy indicate that this was a mainly globally motivated operation. Target selection and justifications suggest that an attack on the Russian embassy in Paris was mainly motivated by specific events in Russia and Chechnya. The backgrounds and organizational affiliations of the suspects are not well documented, but the information available does show some potential for terrorist motivation being generated at the local Algerian level and in the European diaspora level. The militants originated from Algeria, some of them were former GIA fighters, and they were affiliated with the GSPC militants in France, mainly focused on the jihad against the Algerian regime. The leader of the cell, Merouane Benahmed, allegedly has connections with Islamist militants all over the world and must be considered a “global mujahid”. Perceiving Chechnya as the local level for the Algerian Islamists would be an artificial approach. According to a Norwegian Chechnya expert, the Arabs did not integrate well among Chechen rebels.<sup>216</sup> The same has been said about the relationship between “Afghan Arabs” and Afghans in Afghanistan. There were problems of language, disagreement on strategy and tactics, etc.<sup>217</sup>

The conspiracy to strike Russian targets in Europe was rather understood as the works of Algerian Islamists who had “gone global” and probably perceived the conflict in Chechnya as an integrated part of a “global jihad”. The global level of analysis is thus considered the

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<sup>214</sup> Julie Wilhelmsen (2003).

<sup>215</sup> “Terrorist Cell Dismantled in France Reportedly Planned Russian Embassy Attack,” *Le Monde* 29-30 December 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>216</sup> Wilhelmsen (2003).

<sup>217</sup> Bergen (2002).

strongest candidate source of motivation for the Algerian Chechnya veterans. Affiliation with the GSPC was in the Strasbourg case seen as indicating “local motivation” with reference to the GSPC movement’s ideological and strategic focus on the local battle in Algeria. As noted above, the leader of the GSPC cell in Paris providing logistical support for the “Chechen network”, Karim Bourti, emphasized that the Algerian government was the Algerian Islamists’ “main enemy”. The conspiracy to strike the Russian embassy in Paris was considered another example of the pragmatism of the Islamist militants. Radicals who differ in their interpretations of what constitutes the main enemy might maintain cooperation on an operational level. In the Strasbourg case, the militants referred to the local battle when they justified an attack on the cathedral in Strasbourg. Some references were also made to social problems in the diaspora. The local Algerian context and the diaspora context were absent as justifications in the “Chechen Network” case. This interpretation might however be biased due to shortage on information concerning the profiles of the militants.

When we receive more information about the histories of the Chechnya veterans, we could come across information suggesting that political developments and grievances in Algeria and in Europe may have pushed the suspected terrorists into the arms of recruiters for the “global jihad”. If Algeria and Europe should prove to be relevant contexts for the Chechnya veterans, the analysis would probably contain the same arguments as the analysis of the “Strasbourg plot”. This analysis considered the conflict between Islamists and the regime in Algeria as a constant motivation, and it also highlighted the French government’s anti-terrorism efforts targeting Algerian groups, as well as social problems for Algerian Muslims in the French diaspora. At this point we simply do not have enough information to say whether the militants had such local and diaspora grievances or not in the “Chechen Network” case. All the available information suggests the Chechnya veterans were motivated by political events in Chechnya, which they probably perceived as “global jihad”.

If we survey the developments at the global level at the time the plans to strike the Russian embassy was about to be implemented, we see that the conspiracy coincided with an escalation of the conflict. The allied forces had crushed the bases of al-Qaida in Afghanistan. President Bush and the U.S. administration were making preparations for an attack on Iraq. Ayman al-Zawahiri issued a statement in October 2002 in which he threatened to launch attacks against the U.S.’s European allies. The same month the U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley was murdered in Amman. The assassination was attributed to a network of Jordanian Islamists headed by the now familiar Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. On October 12, Jemaah Islamiyya, perceived as al-Qaida’s South East Asian arm, launched an attack on a nightclub in Bali, Indonesia, killing more than 200 people. Most of them were Western tourists. Finally, there was the escalation of the conflict in Chechnya, with the hostage taking in Moscow, which was presented as the main motivation for plans to strike the Russian embassy in Paris. As we can see, an attack on the Russian embassy in Paris could easily be interpreted as part of an al-Qaida led offensive at the global level of analysis. The analysis of the proxies above supports this hypothesis.

## 8.6 Conclusion

An attack by Algerian Islamists on a Russian target in France was probably mainly, and perhaps exclusively, globally motivated. The members of the “Chechen network” were former GIA militants who seemingly have “gone global” and joined the insurgency in Chechnya. The target selection and explicit justifications for an attack were consistent. The network’s leader was considered a “nomadic mujahid” linked to prominent elements in “al-Qaida hardcore”, for example Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who is also considered the operational leader of al-Tawhid. These links strengthen the impression that motivation was “global.”

The analysis suggests that “going global”, and the local jihad in Algeria were less important to them than the “global jihad” against the United States and its allies in the “war on terrorism”. If the militants were Chechens, the operation would follow a pattern of “local motivation” and spillover of a local conflict to the European arena. The militants were all Algerian Islamists who had been training for jihad in Chechnya, Georgia and Afghanistan. The examination of the case suggests that the Algerian militants had “gone global”, and that an attack on the Russian embassy in Paris probably should be understood within the framework of “global jihad”. The Algerian groups traditionally fought a combined local and diaspora jihad mainly targeting French and Algerian authorities. The target selection in this case was thus “out of character” for Algerian Islamists. Despite this, it seems evident that the network of Chechnya veterans led by Merouane Benahmed received logistical support from a GSPC cell in Paris. This is an interesting observation. If it is correct, it could imply strengthened cooperation between Algerian groups and “global mujahidin”, but cooperation could also be attributed to personal contacts between the Islamists relatively independent of ideological emphasis. Recent developments elaborated above do however suggest that the GSPC too, is moving towards a more global orientation.<sup>218</sup>

## 9 FINAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has provided an overview and some general observations about recent patterns of Sunni Islamist terrorism in Europe since 2000. It offers a method of analysis for surveying motivations for this type of terrorism in Europe. The aim of the analysis was to determine the relative importance of the local Middle Eastern context, the European diaspora context and the global context in motivating the terrorists who were conspiring to attack targets in Europe. *The main hypothesis of the study was that motivations were drawn from multiple levels of analysis, but that the combination of “diaspora motivations” and “global motivations” was more important than “local motivations”.*

To test this hypothesis I conducted four case studies of terrorist conspiracies, in which Islamist militants were planning and preparing mass casualty attacks against targets in Europe. A contextual interpretive analysis was conducted for each terrorist case study, based mainly on

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<sup>218</sup>Muhammad Muqdim, “Algeria: “The Salafi-group” declares for the first time its support for the leaderships of al-Qaida and Taliban,” *al-Hayat* 23 October 2003, p 7 <http://pdf.alhayat.com/pages/10-2003/23P07.pdf>.

the media's coverage of the investigations and trials. The analysis relied on multiple proxies of analysis, including the relevant political contexts of each case. Prior to the analysis we operationalised analytical concepts such as "complex motivation", "local, diaspora" and "global motivations", "local jihad", "global jihad" and "global mujahid". In addition we presented some Islamist ideological concepts including "taqiyya", "hijra", "takfir", that were relevant to the analysis. Given that the proxies of analysis measure what they are intended to measure, these are the broad conclusions concerning the terrorists' motivations:

First, the analysis of the four cases shows that the terrorists drew their motivations from more than one level of analysis, supporting the hypothesis that the motivations of the terrorists who were planning to attack targets in Europe were indeed "complex". The motivations also appeared "complex" in the sense that they involved both social and religio-political grievances.

Secondly, all four cases involved "global motivation", supporting the hypothesis that the idea of a "global jihad" is the most important driving force or motivation for "the new" Islamist terrorism in Europe. This is a significant finding considering that Islamist terrorism in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s was mainly locally motivated. For example, leaders and "operatives" like Jamal Beghal, Kamil Daoudi, Aeroubi Beandali and Shadi Abdullah are believed to have received support and training, and direct orders from alleged al-Qaida associates and leaders. They also displayed great admiration for Bin Ladin and his religio-political Salafi-Jihadi program.

Thirdly, the findings of the study indicate that the relative importance of the three levels of analysis is sensitive to the relevant political contexts. For example, we saw that the planned attack on the cathedral in Frankfurt in 2000 seemed to be more motivated by issues concerning the Algeria-France dimension, despite the fact that the militants had been to training camps in Afghanistan and most likely established contacts with, and received support from promoters of the "global jihad" in Europe. The other three conspiracies coincided with a significant increase in tensions on the global level and the intensified "war on terrorism" prompted by the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York and Washington. The analysis strongly indicates that "global motivation" was the most important driving force for the terrorism in these cases. The patterns of motivation thus partly match the predicted patterns of my main hypothesis.

Fourthly, as predicted, "local motivation" appears to be a less important driving force for Islamist terrorism inside Europe than in the past. In two out of four cases, the conspiracy to attack U.S. targets in France or in Belgium, and the conspiracy to strike the Russian embassy in Paris, "local motivation" appears to be totally absent. The analysis of the conspiracy to strike Jewish targets in Germany indicates a combination of "local motivation" and "global motivation", but the latter was probably the more important considering the context of the terrorist plot.

Fifthly, as predicted, the analysis indicates some significance of the diaspora context in motivating the terrorists. Diaspora grievances and frustration seem to have made several of the

terrorists receptive to indoctrination from Europe-based radical recruiters, but we lack sufficient information about the process through which they were recruited to militancy. One challenge for further research about the motivations of radical Islamists in Europe is to obtain more and more reliable information about these processes.

Sixthly, only one out of the four cases, the conspiracy to attack U.S. targets in France or in Belgium matches the predicted pattern perfectly (a combination of diaspora and global motivation). The “Strasbourg plot” suggests a combination of diaspora and local motivation. In the conspiracy to attack Jewish targets in Germany and the conspiracy to attack the Russian embassy in Paris the militants referred to social problems in the diaspora, but their statements appeared unreliable and were not emphasized in the analysis.

Because we have been studying ongoing processes in a new field of research based on data with varying reliability, these tentative conclusions must be read carefully. However, compared to the available literature on Islamist terrorism in Europe, this study is far more analytically rigorous and empirically detailed than previous studies. Central questions we have to ask ourselves as researchers when developing methods of analysis in such new research areas are: do the proxies of motivation measuring what they are intended, and is the source material sufficient to establish reliable and valid “scores” on these proxies? For example, in this study “local motivation” may appear absent in a given case, because we do not have information to determine its importance, because we have misinterpreted the information available, or because we did not find the appropriate proxy to measure its importance. The challenge is thus constantly to search for more and more reliable sources which can be used in triangulation, and also to search for additional operationalisations and proxies which might help us to measure what we want to measure, in this case terrorist motivation.

On the practical-political level, the findings suggest that European intelligence and police forces have been relatively successful in preventing radical Islamists from launching a terrorist attack in Europe, at least until March 11, 2004. The findings also imply that those combating terrorism should search for potential motivations at local, diaspora and global levels of analysis when trying to predict where the next attack is going to be launched. The cases considered here show us how motivations could be traced back to specific political trends or events at the three levels of analysis. For example, the plan to attack the Russian embassy in Paris reportedly came as a direct response to the anti-terrorism operation at the Dubrovka theater in Moscow. Importantly, the attack was to be implemented by a network of Algerian Islamists, implying that one should not base threat assessments on ethnicity and group affiliations alone, but consider how previously locally motivated Islamist militants might “go global” and operate beyond state borders and ethnicity. The al-Takfir wa’l-Hijra conspiracy exemplified that Islamist terrorists are unfortunately also found among seemingly well-adjusted and well-integrated individuals with an outward Western appearance. How this type of militant can be detected and prosecuted without stigmatizing whole communities of well-integrated Muslims in the West remains a tremendous challenge for the authorities. In addition, in terms of dealing with the causes of terrorism, one must address socio-economic and political



issues in all the contexts or levels of analysis relevant to potential Islamist terrorists. Several of the cases indicate that problems related to being a Muslim immigrant in the West had some influence on the terrorists' motivations. These problems seem to have made the terrorists receptive to indoctrination from radical Islamist recruiters. Dealing with Muslims' social problems in the diaspora could then probably be one way to hamper recruitment to radical Islamist movements in the diaspora.

## 10 EPILOGUE; CARNAGE IN MADRID

On March 11, 2004, terrorists bombed four commuter trains in three station areas in Madrid during the busy morning rush hour, causing the deaths of 191 innocent civilians and injuring more than 1600. The attack coincided with the runup to the Spanish elections, and it was the most lethal terrorist operation in Europe post-World War II, with the exception of the downing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie in 1988, which killed more, but injured very few compared to Madrid.<sup>219</sup> Spanish Authorities immediately blamed the Basque separatist group ETA for the attacks. Except for the timing with the Spanish election, the modus operandi of the operation was very atypical for ETA.<sup>220</sup> The Basque group has most often targeted visible representatives of the Spanish government, politicians and policemen, and sometimes tourists. ETA seems to have preferred small scale attacks in the past. However, the movement has killed over 800 people since it started its campaign in Spain in 1961.<sup>221</sup> ETA usually issues warnings and threats before it attacks.<sup>222</sup> There had been some disturbing signs that ETA was planning "something big" in Spain in connection with the election in March. Spanish police intercepted two suspected ETA members who in possession of 500 kilograms of explosives in a car heading for Madrid in February 2004. In addition Spanish intelligence picked up signals that the movement was planning attacks against a railway station in the Spanish capital.<sup>223</sup> On the day of the Madrid attacks, the leader of "ETA's political wing" Batasuna, Arnaldo Otegi, vehemently denied that this was an ETA operation, and blamed the attack on "the Arab resistance".<sup>224</sup>

The *modus operandi* of the terrorist attack in Madrid supported Otegi's claim. The attacks bore the hallmarks of the al-Qaida affiliated movements surveyed in this report. Mass murder of civilians through simultaneous bomb attacks is typical of al-Qaida. Most often, but not always, al-Qaida and its affiliates use suicide bombers to deliver their bombs. At the time of writing

<sup>219</sup> "Analysis: The whole story?," *BBC News* 31 January 2001 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1146240.stm>.

<sup>220</sup> "Madrid blasts: Who is to blame?," *BBC News* 12 March 2004 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3501364.stm>; "For tidlig å frikjenne ETA," *Dagbladet* 11 March 2004 <http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/2004/03/11/393164.html>.

<sup>221</sup> "Eta: Key events," *BBC News* 11 March 2004 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/545452.stm>.

<sup>222</sup> "Madrid blasts: Who is to blame?," *BBC News* 12 March 2004 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3501364.stm>.

<sup>223</sup> "Mas de 170 muertos y 600 heridos en una masacre de ETA en Madrid," *El Pais* Madrid, 11 March 2004, "Acebes atribuye la autoria de los atentados a ETA," *El Mundo* Madrid, 11 March 2004 <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2004/03/11/espana/1079003714.html>.

<sup>224</sup> "Scores die in Madrid bomb carnage," *BBC News* 11 March 2004 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3500452.stm>.

this report, it is not confirmed that there were no suicide bombers involved in Madrid, but the way the bombs were constructed indicated that the attackers wanted to get out alive. The bombs were placed in backpacks and were detonated by the use of mobile phones.<sup>225</sup> By its sheer scale, and its civilian targeting, the operation bore some resemblance to the attacks in Casablanca on May 16, 2003, in which 12 suicide-bombers launched attacks against civilian targets in the Moroccan city, killing 45 people including the suicide-bombers and four Spanish tourists. Most of the targets were Jewish, but they also targeted one Spanish social club.

This study has shown that radical Islamist groups in Europe have possessed both the motivation and capacities to launch a terrorist attack of a similar scale to what we saw in Madrid. In addition, there were two clear political developments that had to be considered potential motives for the attacks. Firstly, Spain's military participation in Afghanistan and in Iraq, and secondly Spain's hardliner crackdowns of its radical Islamists led by Judge Baltazar Garzon. When the investigation progressed more and more evidence suggested that this was the work of al-Qaida. For example, the police found a stolen van in the town Alca Henares, from which the trains left for Madrid. This van contained detonators and a tape with Quranic verses.<sup>226</sup> On the day of the attack the London based Arabic newspaper al-Quds al-Arabi received an email from the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades claiming responsibility for the attack.<sup>227</sup> The brigades have claimed responsibility for several terrorist attacks in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. They even claimed responsibility for electricity blackouts in the U.S. and elsewhere. Nobody claiming to be a member of the Brigades has ever been arrested and based on the available information about the brigades, it is impossible to decide whether it is a fictive media group, or an operative terrorist unit. On March 14, a Spanish newspaper was tipped off about a video, in which a man calling himself al-Qaida's military leader in Europe, Abu Dujana al-Afghani, claimed that al-Qaida was behind the terrorist operation.<sup>228</sup> Abu Dujana has not been mentioned in connection with the terrorist conspiracies surveyed in this report. Another development initially strengthening the al-Qaida track of the investigation was the finding of what appeared to be an al-Qaida strategy document on the Internet, translated and analyzed by my colleagues Brynjar Lia and Thomas Hegghammer at the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment.<sup>229</sup> They concluded that this was a general strategy document directed towards the armed resistance in Iraq, suggesting military and political strategies to pressure the occupation forces out of Iraq. The document provides political analyses of the countries involved in Iraq, and recommends painful "strikes" against the Spanish forces (in Iraq), which should coincide with the Spanish elections to maximize the political effect of such attacks in

<sup>225</sup> For an illustration of the bomb see

[http://www.elmundo.es/documentos/2004/03/espana/atentados11m/grafico\\_bolsa.htm](http://www.elmundo.es/documentos/2004/03/espana/atentados11m/grafico_bolsa.htm).

<sup>226</sup> "Madrid blasts: Who is to blame?", *BBC News*, 12 March 2004,

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3501364.stm>; "Documentos: Masacre en Madrid: La investigación", *El Mundo*, March 2004, <http://www.elmundo.es/documentos/2004/03/espana/atentados11m/pistas.html>; The Spanish articles used in this epilogue are translated by the research assistant at the TERRA project Synnøve Marie Kvam.

<sup>227</sup> "¿Quién os protegerá de nosotros?", *El Mundo* Madrid, 12 March 2004,

<http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2004/03/12/espana/1079048160.html>.

<sup>228</sup> Abu Dujana is a fake name or a "kunya", referring to one of the historical companions of Muhammad, who was a great warrior wearing a red headscarf during battles with the infidels. The fact that he is referred to as "the Afghan" (al-Afghani) suggests he has been training for jihad in Afghanistan, Hegghammer and Lia (2004).

<sup>229</sup> Lia and Hegghammer (2004).

Spain. The researchers from the FFI consider it likely that the terrorists behind the Madrid massacre were familiar with the contents of this strategy document.

After the initial confusion, Spanish police and intelligence concentrated its efforts on the al-Qaida track. At the time of writing, the evidence leaves few doubts that the attacks in Madrid were carried out by al-Qaida affiliates in Spain. The Spanish police have unraveled a multi-national network of radical Islamists originating from North Africa. The majority of the Islamists are Moroccans, but the network also consists of Tunisians and Syrians. In addition, two Indians have been arrested and remain in detention. Initially, the police managed to trace the mobile phone detonators to Jamal Zougam (30), a Moroccan, and owner of a mobile phone shop in Madrid. Zougam and two other Moroccans - including his half brother, Mohamed Chaoui (34). The Indians were also arrested in the initial police raids. The terrorists are suspected of belonging to radical Islamist movements originating from North Africa, including the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group and its splinter group al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya, Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, or the multi-national movement al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra. One fact supporting the theory that the terrorists might belong to al-Takfir wa'l Hijra is that they have been described by witnesses as westernized, showing few, if any outward signs of being Muslims, which is typical of the members of al-Takfir wa'l Hijra<sup>230</sup> Jamal Zougam came to Madrid with his mother and half-brother in 1983 from Tangier, Morocco. Zougam traveled frequently back to Tangier to visit his father. During these visits he frequented radical mosques, and attended the sermons of the militant preacher Muhammad al-Fazazi, who was promoting the vision of the “global jihad”, and maintained contacts with the radical shaykh Abu Qatada in the U.K. Zougam appears to have become gradually more radicalized, and was drawn in to the circles of Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas aka Abu Dahdah, who is described as an al-Qaida leader in Spain, and was arrested for his alleged role in the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York.<sup>231</sup> Several members and affiliates of the “Hamburg cell” visited Dahdah in Spain prior to the attacks, and some of Dahdah’s “disciples” made surveillance tapes of potential targets in the U.S., including the Twin Towers.<sup>232</sup> Zougam was investigated in 2001 because of his contacts with Abu Dahdah, but he was not arrested or put under surveillance.

The further investigation of the terrorist suspects suggests that they have travelled extensively in Europe and also back to North Africa, and that they have links to radical Islamists in the U.K., Germany and Denmark. At least one of the suspects has lived in Germany before moving to Spain. German police suspect that the Madrid attacks might have been planned from Germany, and that the aforementioned Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was involved in the planning.

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<sup>230</sup> Keith Johnson and David Crawford, “New Breed of Islamic Warrior Is Emerging , Evidence in Madrid Attack Points to Takfiris, Who Use Immigration as a Weapon,” *The Wall Street Journal* 29 March 2004; Page A16 [http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB108045711735167119,00.html?mod=todays\\_us\\_page\\_one](http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB108045711735167119,00.html?mod=todays_us_page_one)

<sup>231</sup> Mark Townsend in Tangier, John Hooper in Madrid, Greg Bearup in Peshawar, Paul Harris in Washington, Peter Beaumont in Baghdad, Antony Barnett, Martin Bright, Jason Burke and Nick Pelham in London “Investigation: The global terror network The secret war” *The Guardian* 21 March 2004 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/alqaida/story/0,12469,1174625,00.html>.

<sup>232</sup> Jerome Socolovsky “Spain Arrests Three With WTC Videos,” *The Associated Press*, 17 July 2002. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A17980-2002Jul17.html>.

<sup>233</sup> U.S. intelligence has also pointed to Zaraqawi as a possible “mastermind” of the attacks. On April 2, railway-workers found explosives of the type that was used in the Madrid-operation (Goma 2 Eco) on the tracks of a high-speed train from Madrid to Zaragoza, heightening the fear of more attacks in Spain. <sup>234</sup> On April 11, Spanish police surrounded an apartment in the Spanish city Leganes, hunting for the man believed to be the leader of the terrorist cell, the Tunisian Sarhane Ben Abdelmajid al-Fakhet. Al-Fakhet and five other Morrocans hiding in the apartment blew themselves up, leaving the first-floor hideout apartment rubble. Before they detonated the bombs they made phone-calls to the U.K. There have been multiple contacts between U.K.-based Islamists and the Madrid-plotters. In the rubble of the appartement, the police found 10 kilograms dynamite and 200 detonators. They also found a timetable for the high-speed train from Madrid to Zaragoza. A video obtained by the police shows three of the men threatening further attacks in Spain unless the country pulls out its troops in Afghanistan and in Iraq.<sup>235</sup>

The terrorist operation in Madrid bore many similarities to the foiled terrorist plots surveyed in this report. The terrorists belonged to a multi-national terrorist cell, which appears to have maintained links to radical Islamists in other European countries and in North Africa. They have traveled extensively in Europe and resided in several European countries before they moved to Spain. The kunyas of spokesmen that took responsibility for the operation suggest they have been in Afghanistan. The fact that they chose to attack a civilian transportation target, with the aim to cause mass casualties amongst randomly chosen civilians is in line with the modus operandi of several of the conspiracies summarized in the Appendix of the report. Planned attacks against transportation targets have been recorded in the U.K., Italy and Belgium.<sup>236</sup> Likewise, several of the foiled terrorist plots involved simultaneous bomb attacks, using self-made improvised bombs. Another striking similarity is that the terrorist suspects in Spain showed few outward signs of being pious Muslims. For example, ten days after the attacks those who were not arrested threw a barbeque party in Leganes, in which several of them showed up with Spanish girlfriends or wives. Some of the girlfriends had “piercings, tattoos and crop tops”. Witnesses as have described several of the terrorist suspects as, “keen on football, fashion, drinking and hashish and their Spanish girlfriends”.<sup>237</sup>

What was different about the Madrid operation compared to the foiled terrorist plots, was the political sophistication by timing the attacks with the runup to the Spanish elections, and the very explicit reference to Spain’s participation in the coalition in Iraq, made by the spokesmen

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<sup>233</sup> "TERRORANSCHLÄGE VON MADRID, Verdächtiger aus Hessen festgenommen," *Der Spiegel* 25 March 2004 <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,292459,00.html>, "German link to Madrid bombings", *BBC News*, 26 March 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3570755.stm>

<sup>234</sup> Giles Tremlett, "Madrid bombers planned more attacks, Video found in flat of dead terrorists gave ultimatum," *The Guardian* 09 April 2004 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/spain/article/0,2763,1188936,00.html>

<sup>235</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> See ch. 12

<sup>237</sup> Giles Tremlett, "Cornered, they blew themselves up - but others are still on the run, Police claim ringleaders of Madrid train attack died in suburban shootout," *The Guardian* 05 April 2004 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/spain/article/0,2763,1185915,00.html>

claiming responsibility for the attacks.<sup>238</sup> This might indicate that the al-Qaida affiliated groups or “global mujahidin”, have opened an Iraq-front in Europe, and that they are planning use the European opposition against participation militarily in Iraq more actively in a scheme to make European governments pull out their coalition-troops. In the case of Spain, they seem to have been overtly successful in this respect.

## 11 APPENDIX

### 11.1 Note on the transliteration of Arab names and expressions

Arab names and expressions are almost without exceptions transliterated wrongly in the newspaper articles used as the main source material in this study. I have chosen to use the transliterations most commonly found in the newspapers articles when addressing the Islamist militants even though the letters used do not exist in Arabic. The reason is that it makes it easier to undertake Internet searches using these names for checking and clarifying the information provided in this study. We use a simplified transliteration in which the Arab letters ‘ع’ (ayn), ‘إ’ (hamza) and the female denominator ‘ة’ (tamarbuta) are omitted, leaving only the belonging vowels. The letter ‘ى’ (i.e. a long i) is transliterated ‘iyy’ (e.g. jamiyya) in the middle of a word, and simply ‘i’ at the end of words. Long vowels and double letter ‘ّ’ (shadda) are also omitted. The letter ‘غ’ (ghayn) is transliterated ‘gh’, the letter ‘خ’ (kha) is transliterated ‘kh’. The letter ‘ظ’ (dha) is transliterated ‘z’, and the letter ‘ث’ (tha) ‘th’. When addressing movements, leaders and prominent persons among the Islamists, only the Arabic vowels “a”, “i” and “u” are used.

### 11.2 Glossary

Globalization: Globalization defined widely implies flows of tangible and intangible items across state boundaries.<sup>239</sup> Some scholars argue that in order to be useful, the term globalization should be utilized more narrowly to describe a fundamentally new political system in which actors other than states (international organizations and non-governmental organizations, firms, etc) become more influential compared to states.<sup>240</sup> Al-Qaida is a phenomenon certainly indicating that non-state actors have become increasingly important in world politics. The world’s only superpower is fighting a “war” against a worldwide terrorist network consisting of Islamist groups and individuals. Transnational terrorist networks are designed to exploit the possibilities represented by globalization.

Hajj: Pilgrimage to Makka, one of the five pillars or religious duties of Islam.

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<sup>238</sup> see, for example TIM GOLDEN, DESMOND BUTLER and DON VAN NATTA Jr., "As Europe Hunts for Terrorists, the Hunted Press Advances" The New York Times 22 March 2004 via <http://middleeastinfo.org/article4096.html>

<sup>239</sup> For example, people, money, contacts, information, knowledge, culture, ideas, beliefs and norms, etc.

<sup>240</sup> See for example Østerud (1999).

Hijra: Arabic for flight or emigration. Hijra is an important concept in Islamist doctrine. It refers to the historical emigration of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions from Makka to Madina in 622 AD. According to a strict interpretation of al-Sunna, it is the duty of any true Muslim to escape persecution in a given societal context, abandon this context, and emigrate to a secure base (qaida) in which he is able to prepare for jihad against the infidels.

Islamism: The religio-political program, ideology and movement, calling for “an Islamic state governed by the principles of al-Shariah, the non-codified Islamic law, emanating from the Koran and the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad”.<sup>241</sup> In Arabic terms implementing al-Sharia is the process of replacing jahiliyya (paganism; the rule of the ignorant) with hakamiyya (the Rule of Allah). Islamists make no distinction between religion and politics.<sup>242</sup> According to them al-Sharia represents an all-encompassing system, governing all aspects of human life. The grievances that motivate Islamist terrorists are thus indeed political, or more accurately religio-political. Students of Islamism make a distinction between radical and moderate Islamism. Moderate Islamists like the international Muslim Brotherhood organization want to implement al-Sharia through non-violent political participation, and bottom-up religious socialization of societies, by calling to Islam and religious education.<sup>243</sup> Radical groups like al-Qaida and the GIA are revolutionary movements that want to overthrow what they consider to be pagan regimes and implement al-Sharia through armed jihad. The dominant ideological trend within radical Sunni Islamism today is Salafi-Jihadism. All the movements involved in the conspiracies analyzed above might be defined as Salafi-Jihadi movements.

Jihad: The word jihad has two main meanings. The literal meaning is “striving in the cause of God”, and refers to the inner struggle of the believer to resist worldly temptations and sins in order to follow the straight path of Islam.<sup>244</sup> The word jihad is also used about defensive and offensive holy war against the infidels. If the religious authority proclaims defensive holy war, it is an individual duty for every Muslim. Defensive holy war implies that the Muslim must do everything in their capacity to protect Islam, even sacrifice their own life or commit martyrdom (istishhad). The Prophet Muhammad told his followers that the inner struggle for submission to God was the “greater jihad”, and that warfare in the name of God is “the lesser jihad”.<sup>245</sup> Islamists interpret the Quran differently, and see armed struggle as the “greater jihad”.<sup>246</sup> They perceive Islam to be under permanent attack from Western crusaders and the hypocrite (munafiq), quasi-Islamic regimes in the Middle East and North Africa. In this study the two meanings are combined and used about Islamist militants’ “struggle” to strike targets in Europe.

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<sup>241</sup> Lia and Kj ok (2001), p 8.

<sup>242</sup> Vogt (1993), p 217 ff.

<sup>243</sup> See for example el-Ghazali (2001).

<sup>244</sup> Johnson (1997).

<sup>245</sup> *ibid*: 35.

<sup>246</sup> Wendell (1978).

Mujahid: The Arabic word Mujahid means “one who struggles in the cause of God”, or “Holy warrior”.

Salafism: Salafism is a movement and an ideology representing “a transnational effort for religious purification, connecting members of an “imagined community” through a common approach to Islam”.<sup>247</sup> Salafism is the State religion of Saudi Arabia, labeled Wahabism by Westerners. Salafism exists in moderate and radical interpretations. The moderate Muslim Brotherhood and the radical al-Qaida are both Salafi movements. The Saudi State supports Salafis worldwide. Salafis are literalists and accept only al-Quran and al-Sunna as the legitimate sources of moral and just human behavior. All diversions of Islam as it was presented to Muhammad are rejected. Salafis are thus anti-Shia, anti-Sufi, anti-Judaism, anti-Christianity, anti all other religions and anti atheism. According to *Wiktorowicz* it is the fastest growing trend of modern Islamism.<sup>248</sup>

Shaykh: Religious guide or leader.

Takfir: Takfir is the Arabic verbal noun for deeming someone as an unbeliever, i.e. excommunication. The concept is strongly associated with the radical Islamist ideologue and Muslim Brother, Sayyid Qutb, and his book *Milestones*, in which he creates a formula for global armed jihad. To Qutb, takfir means that the true Muslims, the “vanguard” who have captured the essence of Islam and reject any deviation from al-Quran and al-Sunna, excommunicate the secular societies that surround them. In principle this means that everyone except the “vanguard” are excommunicated and thus legitimate targets for armed jihad.<sup>249</sup> The takfir concept is highly controversial among Islamists. It is, for example, believed to have been the main point of disagreements between Usama Bin Ladin and the leadership of the GIA in the mid-1990s. An expressed emphasis on takfir may hamper much needed popular support for the global jihad. The radical groups surveyed in this study emphasize takfir to varying degrees, but none of them seem to reject the concept. It appears that the extent to which takfir is emphasized is guided by tactical considerations.

Terrorism: Political violence designed to communicate political grievances and demands, and to have psychological effects beyond the immediate target.<sup>250</sup> Target selection is thus an important factor when assessing terrorists’ motivations. Terrorism is most often aimed indirectly or directly at civilians.<sup>251</sup> The planned operations in Europe have mainly been aimed

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<sup>247</sup> Wiktorowicz, Quentin (2001): “The New Global Threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad”, *Middle East Policy*, 8, 4, via <http://groups.colgate.edu/aarislam/wiktorow.htm>.

<sup>248</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> Qutb (1964) Kepel (1985).

<sup>250</sup> See for example, Whittaker (2001), p 9; *Patterns of Global Terrorism* (2003). The US State Department’s definition reads: premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience,

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2002/html/19977.htm>.

<sup>251</sup> *ibid.*

at symbolic and strategic targets, but civilians have been targeted directly.<sup>252</sup> The terms “terrorism” and “terrorist” are sensitive to the political, sociological, cultural, geographical and historical context. Terrorism means different things to different people and the meaning changes with time. Islamist radicals view the activities surveyed here as legitimate measures to retaliate for atrocities carried out by Westerners and Jews against Muslims worldwide. They label the terrorists “mujahidin” or “holy warriors”. No large-scale Islamist terrorist attack has materialized in post-millennium Europe, but a terrorist threat is considered “equally important” as violence itself.<sup>253</sup>

**Motivation:** A psychological quality. In a Dictionary of Psychology, motivation is defined as a “driving force or forces responsible for the initiation, persistence, direction, and vigor of goal directed behavior. It includes the biological drives such as hunger, thirst, sex, and self-preservation, and also social forms of motivation such as need for achievement and need for affiliation”.<sup>254</sup> Motivation is a “driving force”, a necessary precondition for terrorism. Terrorists’ motivations stem from their perceptions and interpretations of the political context, reality or what the terrorist perceives as such. *Perceptions of injustice* are central to terrorists’ motivations. Most often they want to punish and/or overthrow rulers perceived as unjust.

**Transnational relations:** Important features of globalization. Thomas Risse defines them as: “regular interactions across state boundaries when at least one actor is a non-state agent or does not operate on behalf of a national government or an intergovernmental organization”.<sup>255</sup> Transnational relations between radical Islamists situated in different countries make them better informed about the religio-political grievances of “brothers” with whom they identify, and facilitate cooperation and coordination on an operational level. The base-line model for the hypotheses of this study is that an increase in “transnational radical Islamism” makes Islamists’ motivations more complex, in the sense that they draw their motivations from the local, diaspora and global context simultaneously.

### 11.3 An overview of Sunni-Islamist terrorism in post-millennium Europe

**Terrorist conspiracy:** An event in which there is substantial evidence that an attack against a target in Europe was planned / prepared, and reliable information that Sunni-Islamist militants were behind the plans. Substantial evidence includes: video surveillance of the target, bomb making materials hidden in the suspects’ apartments, written plans on computer files, money transfers, testimonies and released intelligence, wire tapping, etc.

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<sup>252</sup> Attacking symbolic and strategic targets often involves collateral damage to civilians. Al-Qaida’s simultaneous car-bomb attacks on the U.S. embassies in East Africa in 1998 did for example result in 310 deaths and more than 5100 injuries.

<sup>253</sup> Whittaker (2001), p 9. The threat from al-Qaida and affiliated groups is especially effective because the network has displayed both the will and the capacity to launch lethal attacks all over the world.

<sup>254</sup> Andrew M. Colman (2001), *A Dictionary of Psychology*, via *Oxford Reference*  
<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t87.005239>.

<sup>255</sup> Risse (1995), p 3.



Terrorist attacks: An attack launched against targets inside Europe by Islamist militants.

Terrorist threat: A signal or communiqué by Islamist militants or group that an attack is imminent, specifying a target or a type of target.

Terrorist “export” from within Europe: Terrorist operations or conspiracies outside Europe, in which Europe-based Islamist militants were involved.

Poorly documented terrorist events: Events within an Islamist framework of attack, which are lacking sufficient documentation to fall under any of the categories defined above. These events might be defined as “terrorist conspiracies”, “terrorist threats” or “terrorist export”, when more information about the events is released.

The list of conspiracies gives an idea of the scale of Islamist terrorism activity in Europe from 1998 to 2003, and provides an empirical basis and context for the case studies. A certain chronology is maintained in each category based on when the information about the terrorist events reached the press. When reading the list, one should bear in mind that European intelligence services have estimated that approximately 30 “spectaculars”, or mass casualty attacks against targets in Europe have been planned by al-Qaida affiliated groups since September 11, 2001.<sup>256</sup> The list gives a short description of the events. According to the definitions outlined above, at the time of writing, we have registered 14 conspiracies, 3 terrorist attacks, 2 examples on terrorist threats, 4 examples on “terrorist export from within Europe” and 16 poorly documented terrorist events. If we look at the “terrorist conspiracies” all over Europe, and the “terrorist attacks” in Belgium, Germany and Spain, which are the best-documented events, we see that U.S. or NATO targets were selected in 7 out of 18 cases. If we look at “terrorist conspiracies”, “terrorist attacks”, “terrorist threats” and “poorly documented terrorist events”, U.S. and NATO targets have also been selected frequently - in 12 cases.

### 11.3.1 Terrorist conspiracies

In December 2000, German anti-terrorism police raided apartments in the Frankfurt area and arrested four Islamist terrorists planning to bomb the Notre Dame cathedral in Strasbourg. They also planned to shoot people gathered at the Christmas marketplace in front of the cathedral. The attack was probably initiated and financed by UK-based Islamists. Preparations were made in Germany, in Frankfurt, and the town Baden Baden on the French-German border. A number of Islamists of Middle Eastern and North African origin in Germany, France, Belgium, Italy and Spain, were detained suspected of being “linked” to the Strasbourg

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<sup>256</sup> Martin Bright, Antony Barnett, Burhan Wazir, Tony Thompson and Peter Beaumont in London, Stuart Jeffries in Paris, Ed Vulliamy in Washington, Kate Connolly in Berlin; Giles Tremlett in Madrid, Rory Carroll in Rome, “The secret war, War on Terrorism” *The Guardian* 30 September 2001  
<http://www.observer.co.uk/waronterrorism/story/0,1373,560787,00.html>.

plotters.<sup>257</sup> According to *The Guardian*, the Strasbourg plot also involved an airplane attack against the European Parliament in the city.

In October 2001, French newspapers reported that a terrorist cell led by French-Algerian Islamist Djamel Beghal had been plotting to attack the U.S. embassy in Paris, and other targets, among them the American consulate in Marseilles. The plans involved suicide-bombings. Bombs were supposed to be delivered either by truck, by helicopter or by airplane. Beghal holds a leading position in the extreme, cult-like movement al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra. He cooperated with other al-Takfir members in the U.K., France, Belgium and Spain during the preparation of the attacks. Investigations prompted by a tip from Egyptian intelligence, revealed that the network was also plotting to attack the G8 Summit in Genoa in July 2001 with an airplane loaded with explosives. The designated suicide-bomber, the Tunisian Nizar Trabelsi was sentenced to ten years in prison by a Belgian court for preparing an attack against the canteen of the U.S. Air Base, Kleine Brogel. It was believed that he acted on direct orders from Usama Bin Ladin.<sup>258</sup>

In April 2002, German police arrested nine members of the Jordanian-Palestinian group al-Tawhid, allegedly “on the brink” of carrying out attacks in Germany. They were accused of “planning to shoot people in a square in one German city and detonate a hand grenade near a Jewish or Israeli target in another”.<sup>259</sup> During the trial, one defendant claimed only Jewish targets were picked (a Synagogue, a Jewish owned discothèque and a bar). German police were aware of al-Tawhids presence in Germany, but believed that the main preoccupation of the group was support activities for al-Tawhid branches abroad.<sup>260</sup>

In October 2002, Italian police raided a GSPC cell in Milan and arrested five North Africans plotting to attack U.S. representations in Hague and Brussels. The arrests were based on information gained in a raid on a GSPC support network in the same town. The cells were multi-ethnic, and led by Faraj Hassan, aka Hamza, the Libyan. Several cell members had “Afghanistan records”, and there were reports of links to Islamists in Iran and Malaysia. The arrests were prompted by wire tapping of conversations in which the suspects talked about obtaining explosives in Southern France, and about punishing Italy for its support of the U.S.. One conversation described by an investigator contained the message “Maybe you’ll find 300 or 400 dead in the subway”.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> *ibid.*, Erik Schelzig and Peter Finn, “Repentant Algerian Tells of Bomb Plot: Muslim Militant, 'Horried' by Sept. 11, Says His Target Was French Synagogue,” *Washington Post* 24 April 2002  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A37537-2002Apr23&notFound=true>.

<sup>258</sup> Ceaux et al 2001; Martin Bright et al, *The Guardian* 30 September 2001  
<http://www.observer.co.uk/waronterrorism/story/0,1373,560787,00.html>.

<sup>259</sup> Geir Moulson, “Jordanian Admits He's Aide of al-Qaida,” *Associated Press* 24 June 2003  
[http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=535&ncid=535&e=9&u=/ap/20030624/ap\\_on\\_re\\_eu/germany\\_terror\\_trial\\_10](http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=535&ncid=535&e=9&u=/ap/20030624/ap_on_re_eu/germany_terror_trial_10).

<sup>260</sup> *ibid.*, “Terror suspects “planned German attacks”,” *BBC News* 25 April 2002  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1949762.stm>.

<sup>261</sup> Sebastian Rotella, “6 Alleged Members of Milan Cell Held,” *Los Angeles Times* 12 October 2002.

In November 2002, Islamist shaykh Abu Qatada told interrogators that al-Qaida was planning to attack London's Heathrow airport. Al-Qaida lieutenant Abu Zubaydah, whilst in U.S. captivity, spoke of plans to hit European airports according to *The Herald*. On February 13, 2003, *The Guardian* reported that British authorities had received "high quality intelligence that Islamist extremists with links to al-Qaida have smuggled portable SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles into Britain". This information prompted immediate security measures at Heathrow. On April 19, 2003, *The Sun Herald* reported that the missiles were to be fired against passenger planes taking off, from the nearby "Legoland". All together, six men were detained and interrogated in connection with this event.<sup>262</sup>

In November 2002, American authorities warned of plans by al-Qaida to launch simultaneous bomb attacks against European ferries. The bombs were allegedly to be placed in trucks. The Americans were contacted by an anonymous source that specified November 9 as a possible date of an attack. The ferries of the Scandinavian Company Stena Line were specifically mentioned as targets. The threats prompted security measures by ferry companies in Europe.<sup>263</sup>

In December 2002, French police struck French-Algerian Islamists living in the Paris suburbs, acting on intelligence that they were planning to attack the Russian Embassy in Paris. The suspects belonged to the so-called "Chechen network", consisting mainly of Algerians having waged jihad and received paramilitary and terrorist training in Chechnya. One of them, Merouane Benahmed, a former amir in the GIA, was presented as a "spider" of the Islamists' networks in Europe. He was also believed to be an expert in bomb making, and chemical warfare.<sup>264</sup>

In January 2003, British policemen raided an apartment in "Little Algiers", Wood Green, North London. Traces of the lethal toxin ricin were found in the apartment. One policeman was stabbed to death with a kitchen knife during the raid. Several persons of North African origin were detained suspected of belonging to a group planning a poison attack in the U.K., most probably against the food suppliers of a British military base. The investigations revealed links to the "The Chechen network" in France. In April 2003, Italian intelligence and police detected links between Ansar al-Islam's camps in Northern Iraq, a support network in Italy and the cell in Wood Green.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Ian Bruce, "Heathrow named as al Qaeda target," *The Herald* 14 November 2002 <http://www.theherald.co.uk/news/archive/14-11-19102-0-11-2.html>; Nick Hopkins and Richard Norton-Taylor "U.S. huge hunt for missile smugglers," *The Guardian* 13 February 2003. [http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,3604,894515,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,894515,00.html).

<sup>263</sup> "Amerikansk advarsel: Terrorfrykt på europeiske ferjer," *Boarding.no* 09 November 2002 <http://www.boarding.no/art.asp?art=5373>.

<sup>264</sup> "Terrorist Cell Dismantled in France Reportedly Planned Russian Embassy Attack," *Le Monde* 29-30 December 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>265</sup> Muhammad al-Shafi'i, "Leader in al-Qa'ida Is One of Detained Persons in Operation at Finsbury Park Mosque" *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* 22 January 2003, via FBIS; Sebastian Rotella, "Extremists Find Fertile Soil in Europe, Threat of war in Iraq is adding to the pool of potential recruits for Al Qaeda and others," *Los Angeles Times* 02 March 2003.

In January 2003, five Moroccans were arrested in a building in the Northern Italian city Rovigo. Italian police found 2.2 pounds of C4 explosives (the same explosive that was used in the Bali bombings in 2002), maps with NATO bases in Northern Italy encircled, and maps of central London.<sup>266</sup>

In January 2003, Italian police detained 28 Pakistanis in a raid in Naples. According to Reuters they found enough explosives “to blow up a three story building”, Islamic religious texts, photos of “jihad martyrs”, false documents, maps of Naples with NATO installations identified, more than one hundred cell phones, and addresses of contacts around the world.<sup>267</sup> Despite this seemingly crystal clear evidence, an Italian court released all 28 because of “lack of evidence”.<sup>268</sup> One must assume they remain under surveillance.

In May 2003, *The Guardian* reported that al-Tawhid had been planning to strike civilian targets in the U.K., possibly using poison. The report was based on German intelligence documents, and interrogations of al-Tawhid members arrested in Germany in April, for planning attacks there. Al-Tawhid was also linked to the “millennium plot” targeting the Los Angeles Airport and a tourist hotel in Jordan, and the assassination of U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley in Amman in October 2002.<sup>269</sup>

In December 2003, German authorities received “concrete indications” from U.S. intelligence that Ansar al-Islam were planning a car bomb attack on a military hospital in Hamburg, which had been treating U.S. troops wounded in Iraq. No Americans were at the hospital when the warning came. Apparently two members of the organization had entered Germany with intentions to carry out the attack.<sup>270</sup>

In January 2004, French police claimed to have interrupted plans by Islamist militants to launch terrorist attacks using deadly botulism or ricin toxins. The suspects were relatives of Menad Bechellali who was arrested in connection with the conspiracy by the so-called “Chechen network” to attack the Russian embassy in Paris in December 2002. The 2004 arrests have made investigators believe that members of the Chechen network were producing toxins for distribution to Islamist terrorists throughout Europe in addition to planning a bomb attack on the Russian embassy in Paris. Bechellali is by a police source described as a chemicals expert and an expert in handling poison, trained in al-Qaida camps in Afghanistan.

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<sup>266</sup> “London Map Found in Terror Raid,” Washington Post/The Associated Press 24 January 2003 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A37749-2003Jan24.html>; (AP) (2003a January 18): “Terror busts in Britain,” *Associated Press* 18 January 2003 <http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/World/2003/01/18/12594-ap.html>.

<sup>267</sup> Emilio Gioventu, “Italy Arrests 28 Pakistanis in Al-Qaeda Linked Bust,” *Reuters* 31 January 2003 [http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story2&cid=564&u=/nm/20030131/ts\\_nm/italy\\_arrests\\_dc\\_3&printer](http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story2&cid=564&u=/nm/20030131/ts_nm/italy_arrests_dc_3&printer)

<sup>268</sup> “Italy Releases 28 Pakistanis Accused of Terrorism,” *AFP* 12 February 2003, via FBIS.

<sup>269</sup> Burke (2003).

<sup>270</sup> Richard Bernstein, “German Police Seal Off Hospital in Hamburg in Terror Alert,” *New York Times* 31 December 2003 <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/31/international/europe/31GERM.html?ex=1073451600&en=f25909ac6bc3aa93&ei=5062&partner=GOOGLE>.

According to the same source, he was actively trying to produce botulism toxin and ricin in France.<sup>271</sup>

In February 2004, Italian police arrested Tunisian and Moroccan Islamists suspected of planning attacks against the subway systems in Milan and a church in the Italian city of Cremona. According to Italian press reports citing police sources and referring to testimonies, the militants had planned attacks on the subway using the explosive C4, an explosive favoured by al-Qaida militants.<sup>272</sup> The militants themselves estimated that the attack on the subway would kill approximately 250 civilians, and said it should have been followed up by an attack on the church in Cremona. The motive for the attack was, according to the press, Berlusconi's support for the "war on terrorism".

In February 2004, domestic security service in the U.K. arrested eight Pakistani suspects in a massive anti-terrorist operation. 700 policemen took part in the raids. In the suspects' hideouts they found half a ton of ammonium nitrate fertilizer. The suspects were aged between 17 and 32. The target has not yet been identified; there were speculations that the terrorists had planned to attack either a high profile building or a shopping center in central London.<sup>273</sup> Al-Qaida affiliated Islamist groups have used the same type of fertilizer in the recent attacks in Istanbul and Saudi Arabia. Police sources believe the suspects might be linked to an al-Tawhid cell based in Luton and London, which was disrupted because of information from al-Tawhid militants interrogated in Germany after their capture in April 2002. The group is led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and it considers the London-based Islamist shaykh Abu Qatada its "religious guide".

### 11.3.2 Terrorist threats

In November 2002 Belgian authorities received threats against the country's ferry and channel ports, and believed that they came from Islamist militants.<sup>274</sup>

In May 2003, the *Sunday Express* reported that the U.K. intelligence agency MI6 picked up "credible" information that the UEFA Cup soccer final in Seville was the chosen target of an al-Qaida suicide operation. MI6 feared the terrorists would use plastic explosives produced in China, difficult to detect in regular security checks.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Jon Henley, "Al-Qaida terror plot foiled, say French police," *The Guardian* 12 January 2004 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/alqaida/story/0,12469,1120823,00.html>.

<sup>272</sup> "Planla terrorangrep på Milanos T-bane," *VG Nett* 25 February 2004 <http://www.vg.no/pub/vgart.hbs?artid=216395>; John Hooper, "Al-Qaida man planned Italy bomb," *The Guardian* 26 March 2004 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/alqaida/story/0,12469,1178378,00.html>.

<sup>273</sup> Rosie Cowan and Richard Norton-Taylor, "MI5 agents foil bomb plot, Security services claim huge attack was halted with arrests after dawn raid by 700 police," *The Guardian* 31 March 2004 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/terrorism/story/0,12780,1182570,00.html>.

<sup>274</sup> "Terrorism alert heightened in Belgium," *Agence France-Presse* 12 November 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>275</sup> Harald Berg Sævereid, "UEFA-finalen terrortruet," *VGnett* 19 May 2003 <http://www.vg.no/pub/vgart.hbs?artid=60006>.

There have been multiple other threats of Islamist violence. Some of them have been put under the category poorly documented terrorist events. The threat category is problematic, because many threats are reported, and most often sympathizers or “practical jokers” are behind. The examples above are registered because the threats have been assessed as serious by the authorities.

### 11.3.3 Terrorist attacks

In April 2001 the Turkish Consulate General office in Düsseldorf was attacked with a hand grenade, causing only damage to the building. On April 17, 2001, an unidentified person called a Turkish newspaper and claimed that the attack was on behalf of the Islamic Great East Raiders Front (IBDA-C), an extreme fundamentalist group.<sup>276</sup>

On June 6, 2003, *International Press* reported that Belgian police had detained a 45-year-old Iraqi for sending letters laced with toxic powders to the Belgian Prime Minister, U.S., U.K., and Saudi embassies and companies, and a court in which 23 Islamists suspected of being involved in terrorist operations in Europe were being tried. According to *The Straits Times* “Government toxicologists said the toxic powder on the letters contained hydrazine, used as a garden pesticide, and phenarsazine, an arsenic derivative used in rat poison”. The letters were signed “the International Islamic Society”. One of the defendants in the Islamist trial was former soccer player Nizar Trabelsi, who allegedly belonged to al-Takfir wa’l-Hijra, also known as “the Society of Muslims”. Trabelsi was suspected to be the suicide-bomber in a plot to strike U.S. targets in France or in Belgium. Trabelsi claimed he was supposed to blow up the canteen at Kleine Brogel Air base in Belgium, which houses U.S. soldiers. It is believed that the base also contained nuclear materials. The alleged al-Takfir wa’l-Hijra leader Djamel Beghal claimed Trabelsi was supposed to bomb the U.S. embassy in Paris.<sup>277</sup>

On March 11, 2004, simultaneous bomb attacks were launched against commuter trains in Madrid, killing 191 civilians and injuring more than 1600. This was the most lethal terrorist attack on European soil after the downing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988. At the time of writing, the evidence strongly suggests that a group of Moroccan Islamists with ties to al-Qaida were behind the operation.

### 11.3.4 Terrorist “export” from within Europe

On September 11, 2001, 19 Islamist extremists hijacked four U.S. airliners and attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon with three airplanes. A fourth airplane was heading for Capitol Hill but crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. The four suicide-pilots studied and lived in Europe prior to the attacks, and were probably recruited by Europe based Islamist recruiters. It

<sup>276</sup> MIPT-RAND terrorism incident database (2003) [http://db.mipt.org/rand\\_68\\_97.cfm](http://db.mipt.org/rand_68_97.cfm).

<sup>277</sup> Nur al-Din Al-Farid, “The US arrests an Arab doctor working at Guantanamo, and the Prison for Trablusi and his group in Belgium,” *al-Hayat* 01 October 2003 [http://www.daralhayat.com/world\\_news/09-2003/20030930-01p01-02.txt/story.html](http://www.daralhayat.com/world_news/09-2003/20030930-01p01-02.txt/story.html); Bart Crols, “Ex-Soccer Player Jailed in Al Qaeda Anti-NATO Plot,” *Reuters* 29 September 2003, via Yahoo [http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=564&ncid=564&e=4&u=/nm/20030930/ts\\_nm/security\\_belgium\\_qaeda\\_dc\\_8](http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=564&ncid=564&e=4&u=/nm/20030930/ts_nm/security_belgium_qaeda_dc_8).

was believed that much of the preparation of the attacks could be attributed to the “Hamburg cell” led by Muhammad Atta. The pilots lived in Germany until 2000 when they started taking flying lessons in the U.S..<sup>278</sup>

On December 22, 2001, Richard Colvin Reid tried to blow up a trans-Atlantic flight from Paris to Miami with plastic explosives concealed in his shoes. The suicide operation was prevented because passengers and crew managed to restrain Reid in his seat, and two doctors on board sedated him. Reid received a life sentence in Boston on January 30, 2003. He showed no remorse, and defended his actions ideologically with reference to Bin Ladin, and U.S. support for the regimes in Egypt, Turkey, Syria and Jordan. Prosecutors claimed Reid had received paramilitary training in Afghanistan prior to the attack.<sup>279</sup>

On April 11, 2002, a Tunisian named Nizar Nawar launched a suicide attack against the Ghriba synagogue in Tunisia. Nawar drove a truck bomb up to the doors of the synagogue and detonated the device. 21 people were killed, mostly German and French tourists. The investigation revealed links to Islamist radicals in France and Spain. According to intelligence reports Nawar made a satellite phone call to al-Qaida’s former chief of international operations Khalid Shaykh Muhammad and received a “go” only a few hours before he launched the attacks.<sup>280</sup>

On April 30, 2003, two U.K. citizens belonging to the “semi-radical” Islamist organization al-Muhajirun, attacked the nightclub Mike’s Place in Tel Aviv with explosives strapped to their bodies. Assif Muhammad Hanif (21) killed two musicians, one waiter and himself. He injured 60. Omar Kahn Sharif (27) failed to detonate his device, managed to escape, and was found drowned in a city channel two days later.<sup>281</sup>

Since the focus of the study lies on terrorism inside Europe, I only offer a few examples on this aspect of radical Islamism outside of Europe. The list is by no means comprehensive. Europe-based radical Islamists have been put in connection with, or been involved in actual and planned terrorist operations in the U.S., Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Australia, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Iraq, etc.

### 11.3.5 Poorly documented terrorist events

In 1998, 138 Algerians were put on trial charged with belonging to the so-called “Chalabi network” allegedly a support structure for the GIA’s 1994-1996 terrorist campaign in France

<sup>278</sup> “The Warriors From Pearl Harburg,” *Der Spiegel* 26 November 2001, via FBIS.

<sup>279</sup> Pam Belluck, “Unrepentant Shoe Bomber Sentenced to Life,” *New York Times* 31 January 2003, via <http://www.hvk.org/hvk/articles/0203/37.html>.

<sup>280</sup> Sebastian Rotella, “Al Qaeda Operative Seen as Master of Remote Control, European authorities describe Khalid Shaikh Mohammed plotting a bombing on the run,” *Los Angeles Times* 13 March 2003 <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-khalid30mar30001520,1,1568297.story?coll=la%2Dheadlines%2Dworld>.

<sup>281</sup> Sarah Lyall, “What Drove 2 Britons to Bomb a Club in Tel Aviv?,” *New York Times* 12 May 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/12/international/europe/12BRIT.html?th>.

and Belgium. All together 173 persons were detained during the Chalabi round-up on orders from Judge Jean Louis Brugiere. The trial has been described as “a scandal”. The prosecutors did not have the evidence to convict a single detainee with concrete acts of terrorism.<sup>282</sup> The trial heightened tensions between the French authorities and the Algerian diaspora community.

According to al-Qaida expert Rohan Gunaratna the network planned simultaneous airliner attacks on several U.K. targets on September 11, 2001.<sup>283</sup> The Houses of Parliament / Big Ben, Westminster and Tower Bridge were amongst the targets. Gunaratna’s source was unnamed, and no other independent sources have verified his claims. According to Gunaratna the attack was avoided because flights were cancelled when the news from New York broke.

In February 2002, four Moroccans were arrested in Rome, carrying 4 kilograms of cyanide and maps of the water systems of the city. The U.S. embassy was encircled on the maps. Investigation did not tie the suspects to Islamist organizations, although police believed there were links to Bin Ladin’s network. Police also discovered signs of digging in an underground utility tunnel near the U.S. embassy.<sup>284</sup> Charges of being in possession of a “dangerous chemical” were dropped because the cyanide type could not be characterized as “dangerous”. A U.S. official played down the link between “tunnel digging” and possession of cyanide, characterizing the whole thing as “speculative”. The Moroccans were released without being charged with terrorism.

In August 2002, Swedish police arrested Swedish-Tunisian Karim Sadok Chatti at Vasterås Airport. He was suspected of planning to hijack a Ryan Air Flight and crash it in to a U.S. embassy in Europe. Security personnel at the airport detected a loaded handgun in his hand luggage. The suspect had a long criminal record which included an assault against a U.S. Marine Corps guard working at the U.S. embassy in 1999. Chatti was also believed to have made connections with the al-Qaida network through fellow inmates in a Swedish prison. The FBI claimed that he attended flying lessons in Conway, U.S., showing no interest for take off and landing maneuvers.<sup>285</sup> A former Swedish intelligence officer told us there were no doubts about Chatti’s intentions to execute a terrorist operation, but that there were doubts concerning his alleged al-Qaida connections.<sup>286</sup>

In November 2002, British newspapers reported that six men of Tunisian and Moroccan origin were arrested, suspected of planning a cyanide attack against the London underground (the Tube). Three suspects were released after interrogation. British intelligence had infiltrated the

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<sup>282</sup> “France jails Islamic radicals,” *BBC News* 22 January 1999 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/260393.stm>;  
 “Mass Trial of 138 accused of participation in terrorist organization ends in a fiasco,” *Fortress Europe Circular Letter (FECL)* 57 March 1999 <http://www.fecl.org/circular/5701.htm>.

<sup>283</sup> Gunaratna (2002), p. 119.

<sup>284</sup> Courtney C. Walsh, “Italian police explore Al Qaeda links in cyanide plot,” *Christian Science Monitor* 07 March 2002 <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0307/p07s02-woeu.html>; “Two held after London ricin find had come from France, say investigators,” *Agence France-Presse* 08 January 2003, via FBIS.

<sup>285</sup> Kenneth Timmerman, “Sweden’s Highjacking,” *Insight on the News* April 2003 <http://www.insightmag.com/main.cfm?include=detail&storyid=267192>.

<sup>286</sup> Anonymous (2003).



North African diaspora community and detected plans to smuggle cyanide into the country. Police house searches discovered no chemicals or explosives, only false travel documents. The suspects were charged under the Terrorism Act of 2000, although evidence was poor.<sup>287</sup>

In December 2002, French police arrested a baggage handler (French citizen of Algerian origin) at the Roissy-Charles-de-Gaulle airport (Paris's main international airport). He was suspected of planning a terrorist attack. The suspect's, Abd al-Razak Besseghir's car, was parked outside the airport stuffed with weapons and explosives. In addition to Czech weapons and Yugoslav military explosives (Tolite), the investigators found radical Islamist texts and pro-Palestinian literature among the suspect's belongings.<sup>288</sup> The suspect has not been tied to radical groups. According to French newspapers, his wife's family might have set up Besseghir. Apparently the Franco-Algerian had marital problems.<sup>289</sup>

In January 2003, a Turkish man and his American fiancée were charged with conspiring to attack a U.S. military base in Heidelberg, Germany, in the fall of 2002. Investigators found gunpowder, pipes, chemicals sufficient to make 250 pounds of explosives, and a picture of Usama Bin Ladin among their belongings. The terrorist charges were dropped, and the couple was convicted on minor drug offences.<sup>290</sup>

In January 2003 Italian police arrested "dozens" of Moroccans and Egyptians suspected of planning attacks in Italy. One group in Anzio, south of Rome, was in possession of explosives and a map of a U.S. military cemetery.<sup>291</sup>

In February 2003, several men of Middle Eastern origin were arrested under the UK Terrorism Act of 2000 in separate incidents in the proximity of Gatwick Airport and a nearby government intelligence center.<sup>292</sup> The men were acting "strangely" and were detained by security personnel on high alert. In one incident on February 14, a man was arrested at the airport with a hand grenade in his luggage. Some sources claim that the man was a Venezuelan, and others say that he was a Bangladeshi Muslim "carrying a Koran" in his luggage. Scotland Yard confirmed he was Venezuelan, and did not comment on what he was carrying in his luggage except the grenade.

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<sup>287</sup> Joanna Walters, Gaby Hinsliff and Robin McKie, "Three held over 'poison gas' bomb plot on Tube," *The Guardian* 17 November 2002 [http://www.observer.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,6903,841996,00.html](http://www.observer.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,6903,841996,00.html).

<sup>288</sup> "Islamists' target were Russian interests in France, Ministry says," *Agence France-Presse* 28 December 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>289</sup> Kjøk (2003).

<sup>290</sup> "Couple Charged In German Bomb Plot," *CBSNews.com* 15 Jan 2003, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/09/08/attack/printable521179.shtml>.

<sup>291</sup> "Arrests trigger Italy terror alert," *BBC News* 24 January 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2689915.stm>.

<sup>292</sup> "Terror busts in Britain," *Associated Press* 18 January 2003, via <http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/World/2003/01/18/12594-ap.html>; Kirsty Scott, "Police quiz Gatwick and GCHQ terror suspects," *The Guardian* 20 January 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/terrorism/story/0,12780,878212,00.html>.

In June 2003, German newspapers reported that the police had detected a German-based group of Bin Ladin sympathizers planning a terrorist attack on the French vacation islands of Reunion. German police claimed the cell was headed by Christian Ganczarski (36), aka Abu Ibrahim, a native German of Polish origin living in the German city Duisburg. He was arrested at Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport on his way to Saudi Arabia. Ganczarski was said to know Usama Bin Ladin personally, and to be “a good friend” of one of al-Qaida’s top level leaders, the Egyptian Saif al-Adil. Ganczarski was described as one of al-Qaida’s operations coordinators. He had been frequently to Afghanistan and fought with the Taliban against the Northern Alliance. At one point he lived in Kandahar with his wife and children. The suicide-bomber of the Ghriba Synagogue, Nizar Nawar, made phone calls to Khalid Shaykh Muhammad and Ganczarski in Duisburg before the attack. Ganczarski’s al-Qaida connections were revealed during interrogation of another cell member, the Moroccan Karim Mehdi. Mehdi made a surveillance trip to the islands to seek out potential targets.<sup>293</sup>

In July 2003, Dutch counter-terrorism agents started investigating a scuba-diving school in Eindhoven, headed by a Tunisian instructor and frequented by Muslims. One of between 50 and 150 Muslims taking diving classes, Iraqi-born Kasim Ali, was suspected of recruiting terrorists for an operation in Europe. Statements by al-Qaida operatives about plans to use scuba divers in terrorist attacks against maritime targets prompted the investigations. Several of the scuba students were suspected of being Islamist extremists. A former Algerian student was arrested in France together with an Islamist militant who has since escaped from a Dutch prison.<sup>294</sup>

In November 2003, the *New York Times* published an article about how a considerable number of Europe-based Islamists traveled to Iraq to take part in anti-coalition operations. German intelligence confirmed that Islamists are leaving Germany heading for Iraq. The article also contained information about a planned terrorist attack on the tourist location Costa Brava in Spain. A German-based Islamist, Abderazak Mahdjoub, with ties to Islamist networks in Spain was put under investigation for his role in financing the attack.<sup>295</sup>

In November 2003, an alleged GSPC militant was arrested in Australia suspected of planning an attack on the Rugby World Cup. The suspect, a French citizen, a convert to Islam and a former social worker, Willie Virgile Brigitte (35), is originally from Guadalupe in the French Caribbean. Brigitte had been several times to Afghanistan, and investigators believe he was involved in the assassinations of Ahmad Shah Massoud and Daniel Pearl attributed to al-Qaida. Brigitte was believed to have been a spy for al-Qaida. He was also linked to the Pakistani Lashkar e-Taiba and Jamaal al-Fuqra movements and al-Qaida’s “South-East-Asian

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<sup>293</sup> “German - French Cooperation Leads to Arrest of Terror Suspects,” *Der Spiegel* 16 June 2003, via FBIS.

<sup>294</sup> Sebastian Rotella, “Fears Persist of Terrorism Links at Scuba School,” *Los Angeles Times* 31 July 2003, <http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/front/la-fg-scuba31jul31000428.1.7125083.story?coll=la-headlines-frontpage>.

<sup>295</sup> DON VAN NATTA Jr. and DESMOND BUTLER “Calls to Jihad Are Said to Lure Hundreds of Militants Into Iraq” *The New York Times* 1 November 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/01/international/middleeast/01RECR.html?hp>.

arm”, Jemaah Islamiyya (JI). Press reports also linked him to the British shoe bomber Richard Colvin Reid.<sup>296</sup>

In December 2003, U.K. police arrested 24-year-old Sajid Badat described as a “Briton of Asian decent”. He was suspected of being “a potential suicide bomber with links to al-Qaida” (*The Guardian* 2003). Badat allegedly knew the “shoe bomber” Richard Reid. Police found “a relatively small amount” of explosives in his Gloucester apartment. Badat was detained under the Terrorism Act of 2000, much to the disbelief of family and friends.<sup>297</sup>

In December 2003 several transatlantic British Airways and Air France flights were cancelled because of fear of a new September 11, 2001 type of attack in the United States. The reason for the cancellations was that U.S. intelligence had detected the names of terrorist suspects on the passenger lists. U.S. government officials said a “credible threat” from al-Qaida to board airplanes bound for the Washington and / or Los Angeles had been detected.<sup>298</sup>

In March 2004, the German News Magazine *Focus* reported that Islamist radicals had planned massive terrorist attacks against anti-war demonstrators in Berlin in 2003. The magazine referred to police sources and said the plans were foiled when the police arrested a Tunisian who was suspected of taking part in the planning of the attack.<sup>299</sup>

In addition to such poorly documented threats and plots, European police forces arrested several hundreds of Islamists all over Europe suspected of being engaged in support activities such as fundraising, weapons smuggling, credit card frauds, supplying false travel documents, recruiting, propaganda, etc. In the wake of al-Zawahiri’s statement in May 2003 in which he threatened European interests for the second time, we have seen actual attacks, and what appear to be serious threats against European interests and the military presence in Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa.

#### 11.4 Islamist radicals in Europe

The following section profiles the most important radical Sunni Islamist groups believed to maintain organizational structures in the Europe. Al-Qaida and al-Jihad are elaborated in more detail because the organizations merged in 1998, and because European intelligence agencies believe this merger has instigated, and probably supported financially several of the terrorist conspiracies surveyed here. The al-Qaida-al-Jihad merger is a powerful expression of the “globalization of jihad”.

<sup>296</sup> “Meet the French terror connection,” *WorldNetDaily* 02 November 2003, [http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=35388](http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=35388).

<sup>297</sup> Matthew Taylor, “Disbelief and anger greet arrest of devout Muslim,” *The Guardian* 29 November 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/alqaida/story/0,12469,1095981,00.html>.

<sup>298</sup> “France terror hunt reveals little,” *BBC News* 25 December 2003 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/americas/3348041.stm>.

<sup>299</sup> “Berlin var mål for terrorangrep,” *VG Nett* 21 March 2004 <http://www.vg.no/pub/vgart.hbs?artid=220118>.

### 11.4.1 Al-Qaida

*Al-Qaida, aka The World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders.*

Analysts have conceptualized al-Qaida in multiple ways. Most see it as an entity, but al-Qaida might also be understood as an idea or the basic principles for the “global jihad”.<sup>300</sup>

Understood as an entity, which still is the most common way to view it, al-Qaida is a multi ethnic worldwide web of Sunni-Islamist insurgents and terrorists waging a “global jihad”, mainly targeting the United States and Israel. Al-Qaida was founded by Usama Bin Ladin and Abdullah Azzam in Afghanistan towards the end of the 1980s, and is today headed by Bin Ladin and Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri. Leading al-Qaida experts have attributed a considerable level of command and control to the al-Qaida leadership. Al-Qaida has, for example, been characterized as a structured and hierarchical organization with a regional command system comparable to that of NATO.<sup>301</sup> Some analysts estimate that al-Qaida consists of about 3-5000 “members”.<sup>302</sup> Such estimates are probably more misleading than helpful. The numbers are highly uncertain, and there is no consensus on the definition of an “al-Qaida member”. Most analysts do however agree that more than 10,000 Islamists did receive paramilitary training in camps run by al-Qaida in Afghanistan.<sup>303</sup> Al-Qaida, perceived as an entity, consists of individuals and groups that subscribe to the Salafi-Jihadi ideology promoted by the leadership, and have varying degrees of ties to it, ranging from ad hoc cooperation and alliances, to incorporation or “al-Qaida membership”.

As noted above, al-Qaida belongs to the radical Salafi-Jihadi movement, an Islamist movement and doctrine which is based on a strict interpretation of al-Quran and al-Sunna, and which emphasizes the need for armed jihad. Since the movement is clandestine and constantly adapting to the political realities it faces, it is difficult to establish a useful “al-Qaida model”. Experts have conceptualized it as a terrorist enterprise; al-Qaida incorporated an educational institution or a university of radical Islam and terrorism, etc.<sup>304</sup> Jason Burke offers one of the best models of al-Qaida. For him al-Qaida is both an entity and an idea. He divides al-Qaida into “al-Qaida hardcore”, the closest companions of Bin Ladin, those who have followed him for a long time (Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Zubaydah, Ramzi Binalshibh, Khalid Shaykh Muhammad etc), “the network of networks” various affiliated groups and cells worldwide, and the “idea of al-Qaida” that lives on through “the network of networks” probably independently of the “hard core”. Burke argues that the closest al-Qaida ever was to an entity was between 1996 and spring 2002, during Taliban rule in Afghanistan.<sup>305</sup>

The ultimate goal of al-Qaida is to establish an Islamic Caliphate modeled on the ideal Muslim society founded by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina in 622 A.D. In order to reach this goal,

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<sup>300</sup> Burke (2003).

<sup>301</sup> See for example, Magnus Ranstorp in Sammy Ketz, "Despite arrests, Europe remains staging ground for al-Qa'ida," Agence-France-Presse 27 November 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>302</sup> Benjamin Orbach, “Usama bin Ladin and al-Qa’ida: Origins and Doctrines,” *MERIA* Volume 5, No. 4 - December 2001 <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2001/issue4/jv5n4a3.htm>.

<sup>303</sup> Anonymous (2002), Burke (2003).

<sup>304</sup> Bergen (2002), Hegghammer (2003).

<sup>305</sup> Burke (2003).

it is seen as necessary to pressure the crusader enemy of the Arab lands to overthrow the semi-secular, corrupt, “hypocrite” (munafiq) Arab regimes, and replace them with a true Islamic state based on the all-encompassing legal system of al-Sharia. In the process al-Qaida wants to reinstate global justice by slaughtering the enemies of Islam for the crimes committed against the Muslims throughout history (i.e. the historical crusades, and the contemporary conflicts in Palestine, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Kashmir and elsewhere). In 1998, Bin Ladin formed the “World Islamic Front against Jews and Crusaders” calling for global Jihad against the United States, Israel and their allies. The same year we saw the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the start of a full-scale war between the al-Qaida and the “crusaders”. Usama Bin Ladin initially declared war on the United States in 1996.<sup>306</sup> Al-Qaida is suspected of numerous attacks on U.S. and international targets, most importantly the spectacular airliner attacks against World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. The movement is believed to have a considerable presence in Western Europe, in the form of support networks and “sleeper” operation cells. Based on interviews with intelligence officers in several European countries, Rohan Gunaratna estimates that between 200 and 300 of al-Qaida’s “best trained operatives” hide in Europe as “sleepers”.<sup>307</sup> Again it must be emphasized that numbers are highly uncertain. This estimate probably includes people mainly connected to movements such as the GIA, GSPC, al-Tawhid and al-Takfir wa’l-Hijra, etc. The intelligence community considers these groups “linked to al-Qaida”.<sup>308</sup> Several of the suspects in the terrorism cases surveyed in this study are thus considered al-Qaida affiliates.

#### 11.4.2 Egyptian Islamic Jihad

*Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), aka al-Jihad, aka Vanguard of Conquest.*

Egyptian Islamic Jihad is a Salafi-Jihadi insurgent group, established by the electrician engineer Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj in 1979. The group considers the blind shaykh Umar Abd al-Rahman, imprisoned for life in the United States for involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, its religious guide. Al-Jihad’s original goal was to overthrow the pagan (jahili) Egyptian regime and establish an Islamist state governed by al-Sharia (hakimiyya). The group infiltrated the Egyptian state apparatus and military, and specialized in political assassinations of Egyptian state officials. Egyptian Islamic Jihad was behind assassination of president Anwar al-Sadat in 1981. Because it was established as a local Egyptian insurgent group, most members are Egyptians.

According to Rohan Gunaratna, al-Jihad “developed an international presence as a means of surviving the Egyptian government’s harsh domestic crackdown of their activities”.<sup>309</sup> In 1998, the international branch merged with al-Qaida into “al-Qaidat al-Jihad” (the bases of jihad or the principles of jihad). According to Nabil Abu-Stayt, Ayman al-Zawahiri has been the head of al-Jihad in exile since 1991.<sup>310</sup> A considerable number of its members participated in the

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<sup>306</sup> Hegghammer (2003a).

<sup>307</sup> Gunaratna (2002).

<sup>308</sup> Anonymous (2002), Bergen (2002), Burke (2003), Gunaratna (2002).

<sup>309</sup> Gunaratna (2002), p 136.

<sup>310</sup> Nabil Abu-Stayt, “Corrected version of a report by Nabil Abu-Stayt in Cairo (“Report on Egypt Islamic Jihad”),” Al-Sharq Al-Awsat 06 February 2000, via FBIS.

Afghan Jihad under his command. These mujahidin established an al-Jihad faction called the Vanguard of Conquest on their return to Egypt. The Egyptian security apparatus immediately targeted the organization and 800 persons were arrested. Abd al-Zumar heads the local Egyptian Branch of al-Jihad from prison. Arab press speculates a split between the local al-Jihad leaders and al-Zawahiri, after an al-Jihad member residing in Germany announced a tactical halt of violence inside Egypt.<sup>311</sup>

The truce seems to have been acknowledged by al-Jihad leaders imprisoned in Egypt, and their spiritual leader al-Rahman, but not by al-Zawahiri. European security agencies believe that the organization has a significant presence in the U.K., France, Germany, and Spain. One indicator that there is an al-Jihad structure in Europe is that al-Zawahiri's computer found in Afghanistan contained orders to launch an internal investigation of an al-Jihad member residing in the U.K. because of "overspending" from financial assets.<sup>312</sup> The U.S. State Department's annual Patterns of Global Terrorism estimated the number of al-Jihad members to be around 700. The number seems low compared to the number of suspected members imprisoned in Egypt over the years.<sup>313</sup>

#### 11.4.3 Al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra

*Al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra (Excommunication and Emigration), aka al-Jamiyya al-Muslimun (The Society of Muslims).*

Al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra or The Society of Muslims was an extremist, violent Sunni Islamist sect or movement founded by an Egyptian agricultural engineer named Shukri Mustafa in 1969. A former member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Shukri was radicalized during harsh imprisonment in the Tura prison and Abu Zabal concentration camp in Egypt. Mustafa emphasized the ideological principle takfir to the extreme, and believed any deviation from the principles of al-Sharia and al-Sunna (as interpreted by the in-group al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra, "the chosen ones", "Vanguard of Conquest" or "true Muslims"), should lead to excommunication. Consequently, members of al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra view all societies (Islamic, Arab and Western) and any individual that does not belong to the "in-group" they represent, as infidels (kuffar). These "vanguards" excommunicate societies, and literally leave and emigrate. The reason for emigration is that the group is in a state of weakness, and cannot launch an all out attack on the kuffar at this stage (which is the ultimate goal). They have to build themselves up through an enabling stage before facing the infidel enemy.

Following this ideology Mustafa and his group set up camps in the Egyptian mountains. In 1977 they felt strong enough to criticize and even threaten the Egyptian authorities. The same year they kidnapped and killed a former Egyptian minister (Muhammad Dahabi). Following the murder, Egyptian security forces arrested "hundreds" of its members, and seemingly

<sup>311</sup> Nabil Abu-Stayt, "Egypt's Islamic jihad group rises," *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* 06 February 2000, via FBIS.

<sup>312</sup> Muhammad al-Shafi, "Al-Zawahiri's Secret Papers--Al-Jihad Investigates Overspending by its Members in London and Fails to Lure a leading Member in Yemen who Revealed the Group's Secrets to the Egyptian Authorities" *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* 19 December 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>313</sup> Kepel (1985), Moussalli (1999).

dissolved the society.<sup>314</sup> Shukri Mustafa was executed in 1978. His ideas lived on among Islamist radicals, and new al-Takfir groups and networks resurfaced in Lebanon, Sudan, Algeria, Jordan, Libya, and during the nineties in Europe.

According to European intelligence agencies, al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra is a growing ideological trend among Arab Islamists in Europe. Several of the suspects in the recently discovered terrorist conspiracies in the region are suspected of belonging to al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra. A Belgian security official characterizes al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra in the following way: "... Takfir wa'l-Hijra has no structure, it has no leadership, but it constitutes an informal network, not only in our country, but throughout Europe. Its members travel a lot and know each other. These radical Islamists also jointly perpetrate criminal acts: burglaries and falsifying and trafficking official documents".<sup>315</sup> Witness accounts by Islamists frequenting the radical mosques in London characterize al-Takfir as a dangerous group isolating themselves from the other Islamists. They are feared because they are seen as too extreme and violent.<sup>316</sup>

#### 11.4.4 GIA and GSPC

*GIA, al-Jamiyya al-Islamiyya al-Musallaha or Armed Islamic Group) and GSPC, al-Haraka al-Islamiyya li Daw'a wa Qital (The Salafi Movement for Preaching and Combat).*

GIA and GSPC are radical splinter groups from the moderate Algerian Sunni Islamist party FIS. The GIA was formed in 1989 and was headed by Antar Zouabri until 2002 when he was killed in Algiers. The GSPC was formed in 1998 by former GIA-fighters, and was headed by Hasan Hatab until he was allegedly killed in Algeria in 2003. Nabil Sahrawi, who recently announced the GSPC's support for al-Qaida, replaced Hatab.

The original aim of the two movements was to overthrow the secular Algerian regime and establish an al-Sharia state in Algeria. The GIA started its campaigns during the insurgency or civil war that followed the early 1992 elections, in which the moderate Islamist party FIS won the majority of votes. In the beginning it targeted diplomats, clergy, industrialists, feminists, journalists and foreigners, but from 1996 it became associated with brutal and indiscriminate mass murder of civilians in villages throughout the Algerian countryside. The GIA consists of several factions and sub-groups, and has established support networks abroad (especially in France and the UK) in order to increase pressure on the secular Algerian government. In 1994-1996 it launched a terrorist campaign in France and Belgium that killed 20 civilians and injured "scores of people".<sup>317</sup> The GIA has been the dominating Islamist militant group present in Europe from the beginning to mid 1990s. According to Gunaratna, Bin Ladin cut a deal with GIA's euro-network, in which it was offered support in exchange for operational

<sup>314</sup> Kepel (1985), p.70 ff.

<sup>315</sup> Kepel (1985), Luk Van Eyllen, "Takfir Extremists Constitute Informal Network" *De Standaard* 25 September 2001, via FBIS; Xavier Ternisien, "Several People Questioned Reportedly Members of Takfir," *Le Monde* 26 September 2001, via FBIS.

<sup>316</sup> Martin Bright, Antony Barnett, Burhan Wazir, Tony Thompson and Peter Beaumont in London; Stuart Jeffries in Paris; Ed Vulliamy in Washington; Kate Connolly in Berlin; Giles Tremlett in Madrid; Rory Carroll in Rome "The secret war. War on Terrorism," *The Guardian* 30 September 2001, <http://www.observer.co.uk/waronterrorism/story/0.1373.560787.00.html>.

<sup>317</sup> Schweitzer and Shay (2003).

cooperation.<sup>318</sup> When takfiri elements within the GIA started killing fellow Muslims in Algeria, however, Bin Ladin is said to have denounced the movement and encouraged the establishment of GSPC.

According to Moussalli, the GSPC's ideology "allows violent acts against all non-Islamic governments all over the world."<sup>319</sup> This includes the army, the police, ministers, state employees, political leaders and others". The GSPC is the dominant factor of Algerian Islamist militancy today. It continues the insurgency in Algeria and maintains a significant presence abroad, especially in Europe and Chechnya. Several of the suspects in the cases surveyed here are believed to belong to GSPC's European network.<sup>320</sup>

#### 11.4.5 Al-Tawhid

Al-Tawhid (The Unity of God, the Oneness of God) is originally a Jordanian-Palestinian Salafi movement that allegedly established ties with al-Qaida during the nineties. The movement's original aim was to overthrow the Jordanian regime and establish an al-Sharia state in Jordan.<sup>321</sup> Al-Tawhid's operational leader is believed to be Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, currently on the run from U.S. investigators who believe he is "the link" between the Iraqi regime and al-Qaida. Al-Zarqawi is also charged with leading an al-Tawhid cell that planned to attack tourists in Jordan on New Year's Eve in 2000, and another cell behind the murder of U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley in Amman in October 2002. He received a death penalty in absentia for his involvement in these operations.

Al-Zarqawi was allegedly in charge of an al-Qaida camp in Herat, Afghanistan, mostly frequented by Jordanians and Palestinians. In this camp Islamist militants were trained in manufacturing and using chemical weapons. The movement's spiritual guide is the London-based Islamist shaykh Abu Qatada. Qatada is detained in Britain under the Terrorism Act of 2000 charged with supporting terrorism. German intelligence has been aware of an active Islamist group in the country providing financial support to Islamist radicals in other parts of the world, and kept the group under surveillance. Investigators in Germany and the U.K. concluded that al-Tawhid's base in Europe is Luton, and that the group has planned conventional and possibly poison attacks in the two countries. Al-Zarqawi contacted the German cell leader by telephone from Iran.<sup>322</sup>

#### 11.4.6 Ansar al-Islam

Ansar al-Islam (Followers of Islam) was established in September 2001, by Mullah Krekar (currently under investigation in Norway suspected of being involved in attempted suicide operations in Northern Iraq), and Abu Abdallah al-Shafi (former leader of Jund al-Islam that

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<sup>318</sup> Gunaratna (2002), p.114 ff.

<sup>319</sup> Moussalli (1999).

<sup>320</sup> Moussalli (1999), Gunaratna (2002), p 137 ff; Lia and Kjøk (2001), p 21.

<sup>321</sup> "Captured operative providing an inside view of Al Qaeda," *The New York Times* 18 February 2003.

<sup>322</sup> *ibid.*



merged with Krekar's splinter group from the Kurdish Islamic Movement into Ansar al-Islam). Mullah Krekar was granted asylum in Norway in 1991. Since then he has traveled extensively to the Kurdish controlled areas in Iraq. The question of whether Krekar is an operational leader or a religious guide for Ansar is for the moment highly unclear. There have been various statements released on Islamist web pages claiming that Krekar no longer is the movement's leader, but such statements might have been issued to take some of the pressure off the Norway-based mullah. Some statements claim he has been replaced with Muhammad Hasan, former leader of the Islamist group Soran Forces, while others claim Abdallah al-Shafi is the current leader of the movement. Al-Shafi was however reportedly killed in unconfirmed press reports in December 2002.<sup>323</sup>

The group's main base was in Biyarah in Northern Iraq, until March 2003, when U.S. bombers attacked its compounds. Ansar al-Islam's original goal was to establish an al-Sharia state in Kurdish controlled Iraq. According to U.S. intelligence and state officials, Ansar al-Islam is "a very dangerous group" tied to al-Qaida. U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, described the movement as the link between al-Qaida and the Iraqi regime during the lead up to the war on Iraq. Although no such link is proven, there are several indications that Ansar al-Islam has built an international support structure internationally, especially in Europe. Investigations of the camp in Biyarah revealed a chemical laboratory and equipment and raw materials for production of the lethal toxin ricin. Traces of this toxin were found in an Islamist hideout in London in January 2003, and in a railway station locker in Paris the same month. Italian police disclosed evidence that an Ansar network in Italy recruited and sent fighters to Northern Iraq via Syria. The shadowy al-Qaida affiliate and operational leader of al-Tawhid, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, is suspected of being an organizer of this trafficking of jihad recruits. Two Kurdish Ansar members in Italy have made telephone contact with al-Zarqawi. The phone numbers of these Kurds were found on Mullah Krekar when he was arrested in Amsterdam in September 2002.<sup>324</sup> In December 2003, in the raids leading to the arrest of Saddam Hussein, U.S. soldiers found documents confirming the existence of an Ansar-al-Islam network active in Italy, Germany, Norway and Spain supporting and recruiting fighters for the post-war insurgency in Iraq. Ansar militants are also believed to have built infrastructure in the United Kingdom.<sup>325</sup> In December 2003, U.S. authorities warned the Germans that Ansar Islam planned to attack a military hospital in Hamburg, which hosts U.S. soldiers wounded in Iraq. German authorities have launched an investigation into this possible event.

#### 11.4.7 "Chechen network"

French intelligence and police constructed the label "The Chechen Network" to define a network of Islamists that planned to attack the Russian embassy in Paris in December 2002.

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<sup>323</sup> Tønnessen (2004).

<sup>324</sup> Sebastian Rotella, "A Road to Ansar Began in Italy," Los Angeles Times 28 April 2003, <http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/front/la-war->

<sup>325</sup> *ibid.*; James Cox, "Kurds say al-Qaeda, Saddam link in his own nation," *USA Today* 2 May 2003 [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2003-02-05-iraq-islam-usat\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2003-02-05-iraq-islam-usat_x.htm); Daniel Williams, "Italy Targeted By Recruiters For Terrorists," *Washington Post* 17 December 2003 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A6172-2003Dec16?language=printer>.

The Network was headed by the Algerian former GIA amir Merouane Benahmed. The group consists of about 20 Algerians, Franco-Algerians and French nationals that have spent time in Chechnya, Georgia and Afghanistan. They have received paramilitary and terrorist training and have been waging jihad against the Russians in Chechnya. This network or “operational cell” seems to have received logistical support from GSPC’s network in France. The leader Benahmed is described as a “nomadic jihadi” with alleged ties to prominent members of al-Qaida. Benahmed has also been connected to the Strasbourg plot and Islamists planning poison attacks in the United Kingdom.<sup>326</sup>

#### 11.4.8 “Non-aligned Mujahidin”

German prosecutors defined the Algerian Islamist militants convicted in 2002 for conspiracy to blow up the Notre Dame cathedral in Strasbourg and shoot at people at a Christmas marketplace outside the cathedral as “non-aligned Mujahidin”. The definition incorrectly suggests that the terrorists were acting independently of established Islamist organizations. The label was constructed in order to circumvent legal technicalities of German terrorism legislation. Prosecutors managed to speed up the trial and have the militants convicted in Germany. The label obscures that the militants most probably belong to the Algerian GSPC movement.<sup>327</sup>

#### IBDA-C

The Great Eastern Islamic Raiders’ front, IBDA-C is a Turkish Salafi-Jihadi movement established in the 1970s, allegedly affiliated with al-Qaida. The main aim of the movement is to replace the secular government in Turkey with an al-Sharia state. Ideologically the movement mixes communist ideas with Salafi-Jihadism. IBDA-C has carried out assassinations, bombings, and violent demonstrations in Turkey. The movement claimed responsibility for terrorist attacks on two synagogues, the British consulate, and a London-based bank in Istanbul killing approximately 40 people in November 2003. Previously it has claimed responsibility for a hand grenade attack on the Turkish general consulate in Düsseldorf in April 2001. In the wake of these attacks the press obtained information from an internal report by the Federal Office of Criminal Investigations (BKA), that the IBDA-C was active in 8 German cities, and also in France, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. The same report estimated that the movement had about 40 members in Europe, and 500-600 supporters in Germany alone. It also described IBDA-C as “extremely violent”. *Der Spiegel* interviewed one member of the German branch of the movement called Zafer Yilmaz. He gave assurances that the movement would strike again, saying, “Istanbul war nur eine Kleinigkeit. Das richtige Schlachtfest kommt erst noch” (Istanbul was just something small. The real

<sup>326</sup> “Two held after London ricin find had come from France, say investigators,” *Agence France-Presse* 08 January 2003, via FBIS; “Terrorist Cell Dismantled in France Reportedly Planned Russian Embassy Attack,” *Le Monde* 29-30 December 2002, via FBIS.

<sup>327</sup> Melissa Eddy, “Four Algerians sentenced in French bomb plot,” Associated Press 10 March 2003, via <http://www.sacbee.com/24hour/world/story/800326p-5705786c.html>; Paul Harris and Wazir, Burhan in London, Kate Connolly in Berlin, “Observer investigation: Christmas shoppers were the target for a massive blast planned by bin Laden's terror network. Drug deals paid for the operation. But a single error alerted MI5,” *The Guardian* 21 April 2002 <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/islam/story/0,1442,688014,00.html>.

slaughter is yet to come). German security officials believe the IBDA-C does not have the capacity to launch massive attacks in Germany.<sup>328</sup>

#### 11.4.9 Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group

Al-Jamiyya al-Islamiyya al-Muqatila fi'l-Maghrib, GICM, is a Moroccan Salafi-Jihadi group, which according to the U.S. State Department's Patterns of Global Terrorism, wants to replace the Moroccan Monarchy with an Islamist state based on al-Sharia. According to the same source, radical Islamists returning from Afghanistan established the movement in the late 1990s. The movement is believed to support al-Qaida's "global jihad". The movement cooperates extensively with other radical movements originating from North Africa, such as the GIA/GSPC, Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, Tunisian Fighting Group and the multinational al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra. It is also believed to maintain networks and structure in Europe.<sup>329</sup> The name of the group has not surfaced when gathering information about the foiled terrorist plots in post-millennium Europe. However, we have seen several examples that Moroccan Islamists have been arrested suspected of staging attacks in Italy, the U.K. and against the tourist resort of Costa Brava in Spain. Several Europe-based radical Islamists, some of Moroccan descent seem to have been involved in the Casablanca operation on May 16, 2003, which has been blamed on the alleged splinter group from the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group, al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya. The investigation of the Madrid operation has tied one of the main suspects, Jamal Zougam, to the Moroccan Islamist Combatant Group, al-Salafiyya al-Jihadiyya, and possibly also to al-Takfir wa'l-Hijra.

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<sup>328</sup> "Terrorkrieger in Deutschland: Das richtige Schlachtfest kommt noch," *Der Spiegel* 07 December 2003 <http://www.spiegel.de/sptv/magazin/0,1518,276131,00.html>; "Tyrkisk terrorgruppe rekrutterer i Tyskland," *Jyllands-Posten* 30 November 2003 <http://www.jp.dk/udland/tema:fid=9850/>.

<sup>329</sup> *Patterns of Global Terrorism* (2002) <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2002/html/19977.htm>.

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