

Terror Bombing in Brussels and Paris: Europe's “Islamist Legionnaires” Come Home to Fight

By [Prof. James Petras](#)

Global Research, April 08, 2016

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [AFGHANISTAN](#),
[CRIMINALIZE WAR](#), [IRAQ REPORT](#), [SYRIA](#)

Image: Professor James Petras

The terror bombings in Paris and Brussels have raised a cacophony of voices, ranging from state officials, Prime Ministers and Presidents, to academics, journalists and media consultants. Tons of ink and print have focused on the psychology, networks and operations of the alleged perpetrators – radicalized young Muslim citizens of the EU.

Few have examined the long-term, large-scale policies of the EU, US and NATO, which have been associated with the development and growth of the worldwide terror networks. This essay will discuss the historical links between Islamist terrorists and the US-Saudi Arabian-Pakistan intervention in Afghanistan, as well as the consequences of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq. In Iraq, the US implemented a deliberate policy of destroying all secular state structures and promoting the Balkanization of the country via ethnic-religious and tribal wars – a policy it has followed in subsequent areas of intervention.

The last section will focus on the US-EU-Gulf Petrol-Monarchy proxy invasions and ‘regime change’ bombings of the secular republics of Libya and Syria with the further cultivation and growth of international Islamist terrorism.

Historical Origins of International Islamist Terrorism: Afghanistan



Osama bin Laden with President Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski

In 1979, President James Carter and his National Security Chief, Zbigniew Brzezinski, launched *Operation Cyclone*, a major Islamist uprising against the Soviet-aligned secular Afghan regime. The US coordinated its campaign with the rabidly anti-Soviet monarchy in Saudi Arabia, which provided the funding and mercenaries for 'international jihad' against secular governance.

This brutal campaign 'officially' lasted 10 years until the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. It produced millions of casualties and decades 'blow-back' when the CIA-Pakistani-Saudi trained Arab mercenaries (the 'Afghan-Arabs') returned to their home countries and elsewhere. The US intelligence agencies, Special Forces Commands and military directorates (especially Pakistan's ISI intelligence service) trained and armed terrorists with US-Saudi funding. The American covert financial contribution mushroomed over the years rising to over \$670 million dollars a year by 1987. Tens of thousands of Islamist mercenaries and adventurers were recruited from the Middle East, North Africa, the Gulf States, the Soviet Union (Chechens), Yugoslavia (Bosnians and Kosovars), China (Uigurs) and Western Europe.

With the defeat of the secular regime of President Najibullah in 1992, the Islamists and tribal factions then fought among themselves, converting Afghanistan into the world's best-equipped training ground for International Islamist terrorists. Eventually, the Pashtun-based Taliban faction (with Pakistani arms and support) prevailed and established an extreme Islamist regime. The Taliban, despite its rhetoric, settled down to consolidating their brand of '*Islamism in one country*', (1995-2001), a largely nationalist project. In its quest for respectability, it successfully destroyed the opium poppy fields, earning the praise of US President GW Bush in spring 2001. It also hosted a variety of Saudi princes and warlords, eventually including the jihadi-internationalist Osama bin Laden, who had been driven from

North Africa.

Following the terrorist attack on the US in September 2001, US and NATO invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 and overthrew the nation-centered Islamist Taliban regime. The subsequent chaos and guerrilla war opened up a huge new inflow and outflow of thousands of international extremists who came to Afghanistan, trained, fought and then departed, fully prepared to practice their terrorist skills in their countries of origin in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

The US interventions and invasion of Afghanistan provide some of the context for the subsequent bombings in Europe and the US. The Islamist 'returnees' to Europe and elsewhere had received funds from Saudi Arabia and training from the CIA and Pakistani intelligence. They began their work among a very 'available' constituency of potential recruits in the marginalized Muslim youth of the ghettos and prisons of Europe.

The Middle Period: the US-Zionist Invasion and Destruction of Iraq

The turning point in the growth and internationalization of Islamist terrorism was the US invasion, occupation and systematic reign of terror in Iraq. Largely under the guidance of key US Zionist policymakers (and Israeli advisers) in the Pentagon, State Department and the White House, the US dismantled the entire secular Iraqi army and police forces. They also purged the administrative, civil, educational, medical and scientific institutions of nationalistic secular professionals, opening the field to warring Islamist tribal factions. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians were killed and millions fled in a regime of ethnic cleansing – which the Washington touted as a model for the rest of the Middle East. However, thousands of experienced, but jobless Iraqi military officers, who had survived the US-orchestrated purges, regrouped and eventually joined with tens of thousands of nationalist and internationalist Islamist extremists to form ISIS. Their motives were arguable less ethno-religious and more related to revenge for their displacement and the destruction of their own society.

The deliberate US (Zionist)-EU-Saudi strategy to divide and conquer Iraq initially involved working closely with Sunni feudal tribal leaders and other extremists to counter the rising power of pro-Iranian Shia. They promoted a policy of fragmenting the country with the Kurds dominating in the North, the Sunnis in the center and the Shia in the south (the so-called Joseph Biden-Leslie Gelb Plan of national dismemberment and ethnic cleansing). The rationale was to create a weak central authority completely under US-EU tutelage and loose group of fragmented subsistence fiefdoms in what had been the most advanced secular Arab republic.

Despite pouring billions of dollars in arms from the US to create a puppet-colonial Iraqi 'national army', the Saudis and Israelis pursued their own policy of financing sectors of the Kurds and violent Sunni opposition – with the latter forming the original mass base of ISIS.

As the US-client Shia regime in Baghdad focused on stealing billions while killing or exiling hundreds of thousands of educated Sunnis, Christians and other secular Iraqis from the capital, the morale of its US-puppet troops plummeted. With the entire experienced and nationalist Iraqi officer core purged (slaughtered or driven into hiding), the new puppet officers were cowardly, corrupt and incompetent – as openly acknowledged by their US 'advisers'. ISIS, meanwhile had acquired hundreds of thousands of US weapons and was

financed by the Shia-hating Saudi Royal Family and other Gulf Monarchs. Armed Sunnis soon launched major, lightning-quick offensives under the leadership of ex-Baathist army officers, supported by thousands of terrorists, suicide bombers and foreign mercenaries. US and European '*military experts*' expressed '*shock*' at their effectiveness.

ISIS routed the Baghdad-controlled army, their US advisers and Kurdish allies from northern Iraq, capturing major cities, including Mosul, thousands of productive oil wells and drove their forces to within a few dozen kilometers of Baghdad. Territorial conquest and military successes attracted thousands more Islamist volunteers from the Middle East, Europe, Afghanistan and even North America. ISIS provided the military training; Saudi Arabia paid their salaries; Turkey purchased their captured oil and antiquities and opened its borders to the transfer of jihadi troops and weapons. Israel, for its part, purchased captured ISIS petrol at a discount from corrupt Turkish traders. Each regional player had its snout in the bloody trough that had once been Iraq!

ISIS successes in Iraq, led it to expand its operations and ambitions across the border into Syria. This occurred just as the US and EU were bombing and destroying the secular government of Colonel Gadhafi in Libya, in another '*wildly successful*' planned campaign of '*regime change*' (According to US Secretary of State Clinton as she gleefully watched the captive wounded Gadhafi '*snuff film*' by unspeakable torture - '*WE came and HE died*').).

The chaos that ensued in Libya led to an exponential growth of extremist Islamist groups with tons of weapons of '*liberated*' Libyan weapons! Islamist terrorists in Libya gained territory, took over oil wells and attracted '*volunteers*' from the marginalized youth of neighboring Tunisia, Egypt, Mali and as far away as Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. Flush with more guns, money and training. Many graduates went on to Syria and Iraq.

The Contemporary Period: EU-US-Turkey-Saudi-Israeli Sponsored War in Syria

In 2011, as ISIS rolled across the Iraqi border into Syria and terrorist Islamist bands seized cities in Libya, the US-EU-Turkish-Saudi and Israeli regimes financed and armed Islamist (and the mythical '*moderate*') forces in Syria to overthrow the nationalist-secular Syrian regime of Bashar al Assad.

Thousands of Islamist extremist volunteers heeded the call (and the fat paychecks) of the Saudi regime and its Salafist propagandists. These constituted the Saudi Royal Family's own '*Foreign Legion*'. They were trained and armed and shipped into Syria by Turkish intelligence. The US armed and trained hundreds of its own so-called '*moderate rebels*' whose fighters quickly defected to ISIS and other terrorist groups turning over tons of US arms, while the '*moderate rebel leaders*' gave press conferences from London and Washington. ISIS seized swaths of Syrian territory, sweeping westward toward the Russian naval and air bases on the coast and upward from the south, encircling Damascus. Millions were uprooted and minority populations were enslaved or slaughtered.



The news of ISIS territorial gains with their plundered oil wealth from sales to Turkey and the flow of arms from Saudi Arabia, the EU and the US attracted over 30,000 'volunteer' mercenaries from North America, Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

These new terrorists received military training, including bomb making and logistical planning in Syria. Many were citizens of the EU, Islamist extremists, numbering over five thousand. These young fighters trained and fought in Syria and then returned to France, Belgium, Germany and the rest of the EU. They had gone to Syria with the tacit support and/or tolerance of their own European governments who had used them, rather than NATO troops, in the US-EU campaign of 'regime change' against Damascus.

The European governments were sure they had *'their'* Muslim recruits under control as they joined the US in a reckless policy of overthrowing independent secular governments in the Middle East and North Africa. They happily encouraged their marginalized young Muslim citizens to flock Syria and fight. They hoped they would remain in Syria (fighting on the ground or buried under the ground). Officially, EU leaders claimed to support *'moderate rebels'* (the bland term Western media used to sanitize Islamist terrorists) fighting the Assad 'dictatorship'. European regimes were not prepared to detain the battle hardened 'returnees', who had been trained in Iraq and Syria. These young European Muslims (children of immigrants or converts to Islam) had been heavily indoctrinated and incorporated into international terrorist networks. They easily melted back into their marginalized European urban ghettos - beyond the control of Europe's bloated intelligence services.

In practice, the EU regimes saw the thousands of Europe's Muslim youth flocking to Syria as an *'EU Foreign Legion'*, a glorified wastebasket for unemployed young thugs and ex-prisoners, who would advance NATO's imperial goals while solving the domestic social problem of the marginalized children of North African migrants. Europe's Muslim youth were viewed as convenient cannon fodder by NATO planners and the governments of France, Belgium and the UK. For public relations, it was better for these young men and women to die overthrowing the secular government in Syria than to send in European soldiers (white Christians) whose deaths would have domestic political repercussions.

The EU underestimated the depth of antagonism these 'volunteers' felt about US-EU intervention in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as their anger at Europe's continued support for Israeli land grabs in Palestine. In its racist arrogance, EU leaders underestimated the capacity of ISIS to indoctrinate, train and organize these marginalized kids from Europe's slums into effective international cells able to carry the war back to Europe.

The EU smugly overlooked the *active roles* of Turkey and Saudi Arabia who had their own independent, regional ambitions. Ankara and Riyadh trained and financed the 'volunteers', and facilitated their flow into Syria from camps in Turkey and Jordan. The wounded were treated in Turkey and sometimes even in Israel. Thousands, many EU citizens, would flow back into Europe or to their countries of origin in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Russia.

The EU had slavishly and blindly followed Washington's lead in all its Middle East wars. Now it is now paying a big price: Thousands of trained terrorists have returned; bombings and attacks on European civilians and civil structures have occurred, while the European government leaders trip over each other in a mad rush to dismantle civil and constitutional citizen rights and impose wide ranging police state measures (States of Emergency).

These new Saudi-funded terrorist recruits (Riyadh's Legionnaires) are active in all the countries where the US and EU have launched proxy wars: Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan . . . Turkey funds ISIS terrorists in Syria, Iraq and Kurdish territories to advance its own expansionist ambitions – oblivious to the clucking disapproval of EU leaders. Now Turkey receives over 6 billion Euro's from the EU in what amounts to blackmail: In return, Turkey will 'contain' the flood of regional refugees in barely disguised concentration camps out of European sight.

Conclusion

Ever since the US-EU policymakers decided to implement a war against Arab and West Asian secular nationalism in the Middle-East, Afghanistan, Iran and North Africa through serial '*regime change*' campaigns they have relied on Islamist Salafist mercenaries and volunteers to do most of the killing on the ground, while the West operates from the air. Washington and its NATO allies operated on the assumption that they could use and then discard their recruits, mostly from marginalized urban youth and criminal gangs, once they had served imperial military purposes. A few with requisite talent and ruthlessness could be turned into puppet '*leaders*' to unleash on the Russians and other '*obstacles*' in future engagements.

The EU-US totally misunderstood the volunteers' high level of independence, their organizational autonomy and their own understanding of the tactical nature of their alliance with Western imperialism. Islamist extremist leaders, like their Western counterparts, believe there are no permanent alliances – only permanent interests.

The EU and US have pursued a policy of overthrowing independent Muslim and secular Arab nations and returning them to the status of pre-independence semi-colonies. The rollback policy against secular nationalism (with its deep roots in the Dulles era) has extended from North Africa, through the Middle East to Southwest Asia. For its part, ISIS and its allies envision a return to a pre-colonial Islamic caliphate over the same lands and people to counter Western imperialism. Millions are caught in the middle.

ISIS views the Westernized secular elites in the Muslim countries as a fifth column for the spread of empire, while it has re-socialized and trained young Islamists from the EU to serve as networks of terrorists 'behind enemy lines' sowing mayhem in the West.

The political repercussions of this internationalized war are profound. Millions of civilians in the war zones have been and will be killed, uprooted and converted into desperate refugees flooding the EU. Police-state emergency rule, arbitrary searches, arrests and interrogations have become the norm in the highly militarized European airports, train and metro stations, as well as markets and cultural centers. The EU has increasingly undergone an '*Israelization*' of its society, with its population polarized and resembling Israel- Palestinian . . . its Muslim community marginalized and confined into little Gaza's.

In this charged atmosphere, Israeli high tech security companies and advisers flourish, mergers and acquisitions of police state technology multiply. Israeli Prime Minister Benny Netanyahu embraces the French Prime Minister Hollande in the club of electoral authoritarians.

Meanwhile the refugees and their children flow to and fro, the bombs come and go. We line up to place flowers on our latest dead and then pay our taxes for more wars in the Middle East. More young '*volunteers*' will become cheap fodder to fight in our wars; some will return and plant more bombs, so we can mourn some more at patriotic vigils -protected by armed battalions...

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Prof. James Petras](#), Global Research, 2016

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Prof. James Petras](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca