

# CARNEGIE COUNCIL *for Ethics in International Affairs*

## The Unprecedented Jihadi Threat in Europe

Public Affairs

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### Transcript Introduction

**JOANNE MYERS:** Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Joanne Myers, director of Public Affairs programs, and on behalf of the Carnegie Council I'd like to thank you all for joining us.

Our speaker this evening is Jean-Pierre Filiu. Professor Filiu is a well-known historian and Arabist who is currently teaching Middle East studies at Sciences Po. He is also the author of the recently published book *From Deep State to Islamic State: The Arab Counter-Revolution and its Jihadi Legacy*.

He will be speaking to us this evening about the jihadi threat in Europe. This topic is one that our speaker is quite familiar with, not only because he has been researching and writing about radical movements for a very long time, but the fact is he resides in Paris and has spent time living in the Middle East in Syria, Tunisia, and Jordan. He has had a front-row seat to all this activity. These factors have brought him much closer than most to understanding and experiencing the threats at hand.

If you've been living in France or other European countries this past year, you have been living a year under a cloud of danger. Jihadis, whether veterans of war in [Syria](#) and [Iraq](#) or home-grown militants who have been trained to wage attacks inspired by [ISIS](#) (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), have demonstrated that if you are well-trained and equipped you can disturb Western democracies, making them succumb to fear.

With these latest assaults, it is indisputable that these jihadis now pose the gravest danger to Western security and freedom, threatening the very foundation on which national and international peace and stability have rested for decades.

Many of us in the West seek answers to the lingering questions: Why is prevention from these attacks so elusive? What motivates these jihadis? Wow did the radicalization come about? How is France dealing with its large Muslim population? And, last but not least, will these attacks ever end?

After listening to Professor Filiu examine the global threat posed by these extremists, I know we will all have a much better understanding of what inspires these young men and women to act so horrifically.

Please join me in giving a very warm welcome to our guest this afternoon.

Professor Filiu, thank you so much for joining us.

### Remarks

**JEAN-PIERRE FILIU:** It's a great pleasure and honor to be here speaking at the Carnegie Council about a topic that we chose months before the [black Friday](#) that left 130 dead in the city of Paris, because I was already envisioning this threat as unprecedented—therefore the title—and as I was

discussing with Joanne before we went down to this auditorium, this was of course a terrible night for everybody, that November 13. But, because I had been warning about such things happening, I wouldn't say it wasn't worse for me, but I had to admit that after 20 dead and after being sure all my loved ones were safe, I switched off, because I knew the toll would increase, I knew nothing could be done about it, and I knew another day would come where we would need to face this enemy in the eyes.

So why unprecedented? Basically because we let it grow to an unprecedented level. The title is about Europe, and I will mainly focus on Europe. But if anyone in this room believes the threat is contained and limited to Europe, I can explain in the Q&A session how wrong this assumption could be.

It is a global threat. At this very moment, [ISIS](#) is recruiting probably 100 people a week from all over the world, including this very country. I don't think there is one country member of the United Nations that has no members in ISIS. So it is not a European problem, it is not an Arab issue; it is a global threat and global challenge.

I had the privilege 30 years ago of meeting the first [jihadis](#) ever in [Afghanistan](#), where I was doing humanitarian work in the resistance-held part of the country, where some Arab "volunteers" were already sneaking in. There were not many, but they were already very disturbing characters.

At that time—you know Afghan people are very warm and hospitable people, when you don't bomb them or occupy them—I spoke very little of the local Dari or Panjshiri dialects, just enough not to get caught in the different checkpoints, but not enough to have a conversation. So, kindly, they introduced me to the local imam who spoke Arabic, and after that introduced me to all the Arabs who were coming in in force. Because I was in a strategic valley, the Kunar Valley, that is now a jihadi hotspot, I met a lot of them.

It was in 1986. Fortunately for me and for my career, I never meet either [bin Laden](#) or [Zawahiri](#), but I heard about them. But what is more important is that I spoke with those people—I insist it was 30 years ago—and I came to the conclusion we were not living on the same planet. I insist on that, because that's what makes them so modern. They live in a second life, they have a second life, and they want our life to be annihilated. They want their life to be the only life left. It's as simple as that. So the idea is, "Oh, if we do that, maybe they will react." No, they will come after us anyway, no question of that.

What was already very impressive—I don't even mention the fact that when I came home I was 25 and I wrote a long paper about the international jihadis in Afghanistan. Everybody said, "What are you talking about? It's not a topic. It's not a subject. Nobody is interested. The Soviets are coming out of Afghanistan. It's a done deal." And it was a done deal obviously.

So those people founded [al-Qaeda](#), in the last months of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, as a clandestine outfit that was bound together by the absolute allegiance to one leader, who was the founder, Osama bin Laden.

Al-Qaeda means a base. It's a base in the true meaning of the base. I am not very good at mathematics, but I know geometry. It is the territorial base. That means that you have to have a strong, well-protected safe haven somewhere. Basically they don't care. It could be anywhere. Then they will explain that it is written in the scriptures and blah, blah, blah. But they don't care. Then they had the database of the volunteers in Afghanistan. That was how it was started. ISIS is so dangerous because it is a successful al-Qaeda that has learned from all the mistakes and failures of the mother or matrix organization.

So a territorial base and transnational networks, this is the way it works. When you hear people here

and there say, "Oh, we'll reduce their base. They are losing. They are losing"—no, because they are expanding the other transnational database at the same time, and maybe they are expanding it faster because they are losing their territorial base. It's called dialectics. It's not one way. It's complex. So far, they have been the only ones to master these dialectics to their own profit.

So al-Qaeda developed, until it struck this city on this tragic 9/11, after which not only America but the whole world behaved according to the magnitude of the threat, which means a unanimous Security Council resolution based on [Chapter VII](#). (I am just back from the United Nations, so I revised my reading of "the classics.") From then on, a coalition—obviously U.S.-led because of the terror attacks—that struck at the heart of the terror organization, the territorial base, in order to dismantle the transnational networks.

If you went after the transnational networks without hitting the territorial base, it could go on, like my good friend [David Ignatius wrote](#) this morning in the *Post*, for decades. So we can't afford it. We can't afford to live with these threats for decades because this would be like acid on our way of life and our democratic institutions. We cannot. Ethics is the name of the game. Morally speaking, we have to defeat them before they strike us too hard and too deep. There is no alternative.

So in 2001, America and the whole world, including France—at that time I was advisor to the [prime minister](#)—did what was appropriate to confront this threat and [struck](#) at the heart of the terror planning, which was in the city of Kandahar in Afghanistan.

But we were at that time reasonable or smart enough to rely on a local force, called the [Northern Alliance](#), in order to fight on the ground this enemy. Thanks to this resolute action, we avoided a second wave of attacks that was planned in the aftermath of 9/11, including against the U.S. Embassy in Paris, and the whole Concorde Square most probably; the Strait of Gibraltar; Singapore; and various others. If it would not have been for that action, the campaign would have gone on.

As you know, unfortunately, instead of focusing on al-Qaeda, the global "[war on terror](#)" was launched. I don't say this because I want to reopen French-American wounds and things like that. But I am sorry to say that we were right and the then American [administration](#) was wrong. The problem is that everybody is paying the price, you and us—and of course the people in the Middle East, starting with the Iraqi people, that were certainly liberated from one of the worst [dictators](#) in history but plunged into [chaos](#) and [civil war ever since](#), with that [invasion](#) opening the Middle East to al-Qaeda while al-Qaeda was going down the drain after the fall of the [Taliban](#) regime.

So not only did this global war on terror not stop the terror, but it fueled the terror and it brought the terror to the very heart of the Middle East, which constituted from this time on a game-changer—I know you like this expression in this country—but a game-changer for the worse, because the invasion of Iraq profoundly destabilized the security of the European continent, with the terror attacks in [Madrid](#) in 2004, terror attacks in [London](#) in 2005, and the creation of [al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb](#) through the networks of the North African volunteers who had joined the anti-U.S. jihad in Iraq.

Long before the [Charlie Hebdo attack](#) of last January, I had written a chapter in an edited volume published by Columbia University Press about the global terrorist threat after 9/11, where I was describing the Iraqi networks in France. Though the Iraqi networks in France are hard-working today, the survivors also masterminded the terror attacks in France during the last year, because they are some kind of role models, because they met Zarqawi, they fought in [Fallujah](#), they fought the Americans; some of them were maimed, one lost an eye, another one lost a leg; they had been jailed in France and been released, because at that time jihadi organizations—you could be jailed but it was not considered as a direct threat on national security. So after five, six, seven, eight years they were released, because they had never committed a terrorist act in France; and they regrouped in what is today ISIS, which is the continuation of the [Iraqi branch of al-Qaeda](#) that was established in the

aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

The character who established this al-Qaeda branch and who has a very lasting influence on ISIS today was a Jordanian jihadi called [Abu Musab al-Zarqawi](#), because he came from the city of Zarqa. The guy was a criminal. He was probably tattooed all over his body. I don't know exactly when because there are limits to academic expertise—he got these tattoos off. But when he got them off he became a jihadi. He brought to the jihadi world, if I may say, his expertise in crime.

Bin Laden was one of the 57 sons and daughters of [one](#) of the wealthiest Saudi businessmen. He studied business. He never completed his studies. But from Zarqawi's point of view he is bourgeois, he is a talker, he is not serious, he is living in the clouds. Zawahiri is a doctor. I won't insist on the irony of having al-Qaeda now led by a doctor. But they were bourgeois from the point of view of the rogue killer that was Zarqawi.

Zarqawi was the first one to behead a hostage in front of a video camera in May 2004. So it is nothing new. He chose an American hostage, a Jewish hostage, [Nicholas Berg](#), a contractor that he abducted in Baghdad. But he presented this horrible crime not as an aggression but as a response to, if you remember, the pictures of Abu Ghraib, the prison in Iraq where American servicemen and servicewomen [tortured](#) Iraqis. So what happened with [James Foley](#) and so many others is nothing new.

At that time, Zarqawi had a problem with bin Laden, who wanted him to stop this bloodshed, saying, "No, this is useless; it's too gory; we are jihadis; we have principles." He said, "No, no, this will work." And it worked. He became a big star in the terrorist underworld. Since America focused on him, he became the one everybody wanted to work with. That's the way it goes when you have occupation and insurgency. There is no way out.

Zarqawi was killed in June 2006. He was succeeded by twin leadership with an [Egyptian](#) sent by al-Qaeda and a [local Iraqi former officer](#) of the Saddam regime. They were both killed in 2010 and [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi](#) took over. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was detained in Camp Bucca in 2004. One day, I would really like to meet the officer who signed his discharge for good conduct. Really, I would like just to have a discussion with him. Apparently, from what I gather, he was released because every time there was a problem he would shout and everybody would listen. That would have made me slightly suspicious. But that's the real ground on which he was released.

Anyway, I don't think he is a leader now of ISIS. I think he is a front. He speaks good Arabic compared to the others, who are barely literate. He has a BA in sharia. Now he pretends he has a Ph.D. Now of course he is a [caliph](#), so why does he need a Ph.D.? But that is vanity of men.

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, when he took over, he was on losing ground because of the success—so I praise America when America is doing great—of the [surge](#). The surge was a very timely operation led by General [Petraeus](#), because instead of fighting everybody, it focused on al-Qaeda, and by focusing on al-Qaeda the way we should focus today on ISIS, it defeated them.

But all the former regime loyalists, FRL—I know you love these acronyms—who have joined the jihadi camp were ruthless executioners, [Baathist](#) officials, most them trained by the KGB, so they know everything about intoxication, manipulation, and all that—they could regain territory thanks to the sectarian policy of [Nouri al-Maliki](#) in Iraq and thanks to [Assad](#) helping them in [Syria](#), because he preferred to have jihadis confronting him than peaceful protesters, because when they are jihadis you can turn to the world and say, "I am the only one standing between you and those bad guys."

So I will just mention it. The more dictators you have in the Arab world, the more jihadis you will have. It is not the other way around. And it is not only a matter of ethics; it is also a matter of real realism, not

supposed realism, which is in fact far more unrealistic than anything you can conceive.

Moral attitude works. It is not a luxury. Ethics in international relations could be the answer to many of the challenges of today, including that one.

The organization was only a junior, minor partner in the Syrian Civil War and in Iraq until, in August 2013, after having pretended the [red line](#) should be enforced, the whole world stood still, despite the [gas bombings](#) of 1,500 Syrian women and men.

Again, ethics in international relations. By losing our ethical leverage, we lost part of the battle against the jihadis at that time, because the jihadi propaganda from then on said, "Look, they all agreed at the UN to let Syrian civilian Muslim women and men be gassed in the face of the world." That's when recruitment started to go sky high. For the first time in the three decades I have been following the jihadi underworld, they had the nerve to pretend they were doing it on humanitarian grounds.

So what ISIS has learned from al-Qaeda, and the fact that it is far more dangerous than al-Qaeda today, while we are still talking about a coalition with the [Russians](#), to stop bombing the people who could attack ISIS, and things like that, is pretty simple: al-Qaeda was always depending on the Taliban, whether yesterday in Afghanistan or today in Pakistan. ISIS is its own master. When they come to a place, they eliminate any competition and they have a totalitarian outfit that runs the whole population.

Second, this part of the world is far more attractive and symbolic to Muslims worldwide than Afghanistan, which was—in fact they called it *Khorasan*—"Okay, you mentioned it a little in the scriptures, but it's a sideshow." *Bilad al-Sham*, greater Syria and, in a lesser way, Iraq are key to the narrative of the end of times in Islam.

I wrote a book, [Apocalypse in Islam](#). I was hoping this would be for academia. Unfortunately, it is now all over their propaganda. They are describing what will go on, saying, "This is a battle of the end of times." They even have the names of the places written in the prophecies. I won't go into it, but this is very crucial.

By the way, this battle will not be limited to Syria. According to their plan, it will all end up in Jerusalem. Betting, like the current Israeli government, on jihadis killing [Hezbollah](#), and you can sit and watch until the end of the game with all the bad guys destroying each other, is a very short-sighted policy. You can see it already with ISIS recruiting people in the very state of Israel.

But what is more important is accessibility. I am 54. I am not especially fit, especially after a few days of New York, good food, trying to survive the cold. But believe me, I could be in jihadi-land back in Paris in 36 hours, and I don't have an organization behind me. If I had an organization behind me, I could go back in 24 hours and know where to pick up guns, phone cards, accomplices, cash, the whole lot, which is exactly what happened in, not in 24 hours but it was a matter of days. No security services in the world know how to handle such quick turn-arounds, because they need time to identify. If they don't catch them at the border or before the action, it is impossible. It is too quick.

The same way today, radicalization can be a two-week process. Before your time, you had signs. Now they don't care about signs. They live in the second life. The second life is there on Facebook, on Instagram, on Snapchat—I don't even know the names. But they know it; they are always there.

Their goals—because it's really like a cult. So it's not a problem of Islam, because basically, when they join ISIS, they join the chosen ones. ISIS explains that they are the chosen ones since they are part of the elite who will fulfill the prophecy and accomplish and eventually win the battle of all battles.

I have a friend. He created three different profiles on Facebook and he was recruited the first time in



48 hours, the second time in 72, the last time in a week, with a different pitch each time—humanitarian if he looked like a softy, revengeful if he looked like an angry young guy.

You know there are a lot of converts. In France probably 25 percent, 30 percent, of the jihadis are converts. But you have also a specificity in France, more than in other countries, a number of females. Very often they are far more extreme than the boys.

I have been advocating for a long time—and of course it didn't make me very popular—for treating female jihadis not as victims but as full criminals the way they are. We know that in some recent attacks—I don't want to go into details—female jihadis were on the initiative.

Now in Europe, approximately, you have all together 5,000 jihadis in Syria. It's crazy. How could we let this happen? Even 500 was too many. It's 5,000. How are we going to cope with that?

Okay, we can be as short-sighted and ideological as the Russians and say, "Okay, we have 4,000 jihadis—they have 4,000 jihadis—and we going to keep them over there." That's what the Russians believe. In fact, they hope ISIS will stay reasonably strong in order to keep on attracting jihadis from Russia, which is the craziest thing I ever heard.

But you cannot discuss with people with an ideology. You couldn't discuss with a neoconservative because they had a vision of the global war on terror. You cannot discuss with a Russian about their own global war on terror because this is what started last September, and it's a disaster. I consider there is a direct connection between the start of this global war on terror by Russia and the Paris attack, because the global war on terror with Russia ignited the jihadi dynamics even further. And what is worse, those plans and this campaign are blessed by the Orthodox Church of Russia. So it makes the whole jihadi narrative of the [Crusades](#) relevant.

And by the way—I'm sure Mr. [Putin](#) must be aware of that, so I can give him the benefit of the doubt—in the prophecies it is said that the [Roum](#) will attack, and the Roum are the Orthodox, they are not just Romans. So it was the Byzantine at the time of the prophet, and now it is the Russians. So the script is going on. According to them, there is no reason for it to stop.

So, contrary to a certain vision, it is not France that is in proportion most affected by the recruitment. It is far more Belgium, Denmark, and in a certain way Great Britain. But that doesn't mean a thing, because it could happen anywhere. It could have happened on New Year's Eve in Munich. It could have happened in Brussels immediately after the Paris attacks.

I have been warning against a European 9/11 since the spring of 2014. Why? Because in 2014 a guy that I had heard about—I didn't know at that time that he was the guy who tortured some of my friends in Syria—a French jihadist called [Mehdi Nemmouche](#) attacked the Jewish Museum in Brussels, killing three people, with one person dying from his wounds. He was then arrested in Marseilles. But everything was already there. He had a cache in the Molenbeek neighborhood in Brussels, which is now known as being a hotbed for jihadi activism. He had entered through Germany, but, because we didn't have our act together as Europeans, he could move freely from one country to another. But fortunately, the guy was a coward. Instead of going out [Scarface](#)-like in Marseilles, he was arrested. He could have killed dozens of people.

Then we had *Charlie Hebdo* and [Hypercacher](#) [Kosher Jewish superette]. Always connect the dots. There is no *Charlie Hebdo* without Hypercacher; there is no Hypercacher without *Charlie Hebdo*. It's not a question of freedom of expression or anti-Semitism. What they want is to trigger a cycle of sectarian strife in France against the Muslims, or between the Muslims and the other.

Fortunately, they have been defeated so far. But they are still there. And the problem is not in Europe;

the problem is over there.

I will end up on a rosy note before the Q&A session: It's easy to defeat them. They know their vulnerability, and they believe we know them, or they believe we will act accordingly. So I [suggested](#) on Politico's website—it's already more than a month ago—to target Raqqa the way we targeted Kandahar in 2001. Raqqa is where ISIS was proclaimed; it's a main hub for foreign jihadis on Syrian land. That doesn't mean the end of the story, but that means at least we significantly disrupt the terror planning.

So far, anything we have done has not affected the core operatives, the territorial base and the horizontal base.

It could be done in a matter of weeks, not a matter of years. But for that, one also has to understand that you need people on the ground that are neither NATO nor Russian. Otherwise this is a prophecy, this is the Crusades, and it will make them stronger. So it will not be only the question of insurgency or resistance versus occupation, but it will be playing to their narrative.

The other thing they wanted to trigger in France with the Paris attacks was dragging us on the ground. That would be the worst thing to do.

Now I will just share with you an experience and end with that. Do you really believe a fighter who has survived five years of hell in Syria is in need of some training?

President [Obama](#), when [chatting](#) with [Tom Friedman](#) in August 2014, very disrespectfully treated the Syrian resistance, saying, "You can't make a liberation army with former farmers, former doctors, and former professors." Mr. President, how did this country get its [independence](#) if it was not with former farmers, doctors, and professors?

[Lafayette](#) didn't train and equip militias in Canada before infiltrating them into Pennsylvania. He worked with the people who wanted their country to be free first from the [dictator](#), [just like Syrians want to be free from] Bashar al-Assad, who has killed a minimum of a quarter million of his own citizens, and of course from ISIS. Those people are to be trusted. They are not angels. They are not devils either. They are patriots and revolutionaries who want to end this tragedy. And by the way, if they end this tragedy, that is most of the threat that will be handled accordingly by the local people because they don't want those foreign jihadis around, the same way that the Afghan people were the first ones to go after the al-Qaeda people in Kandahar, not Delta forces.

So there is a way out. But we have to understand that anything we do here on this side of the ocean is pointless if we don't handle the threat at its very source. I do believe—and I have been very forceful about it—that not only this battle is to be waged as early as possible, but it could be won in a matter of, let's say, months and certainly not years.

Thank you very much.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. A fascinating talk. I'm James Starkman.

The word jihad does mean holy war, does it not? And is the genesis of jihadism a strict orthodox interpretation of the [Quran](#) whereby the infidel is to be eliminated or killed? Furthermore, does the Sunni world really regard the Shia world as infidels; is that also a source of the 14 centuries of strife between those two views of Islam? And finally, do political events, such as the Iraq War, the American invasion—has that really brought jihadism to a level that it never attained in prior centuries?

**JEAN-PIERRE FILIU:** In the Quran, jihad is barely mentioned. It is the same pattern, *jahada*, but it is not jihad. This pattern is mentioned 30 times: 10 times peacefully, because jihad means the effort you

achieve in order to reach a goal; 10 times militarily; and 10 times both.

So let's forget the Quran. I know that a lot of people in this country bought the Quran after 9/11. Better buy it for other reasons. I don't recommend buying it, by the way. But if you buy it, it is not to understand what is going on. It is a holy book, so it is something different. It's another dimension. As a secular Frenchman, that is not the territory I'm comfortable treading upon.

But what is sure is that when I said jihadism, the jihadis were born the way I described to you three decades ago. Let's not give them the victory of pretending they are the descendants of one of the world's priceless realizations. Yesterday I was at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and I saw pottery coming from Raqqa in the 12th century. Those people have nothing to do with that. They know only about modernity in the worst sense of the word. And by the way, they could destroy this heritage, and they have been [doing it](#) today again.

During the 14 centuries of Islam, if you add all the time when Shias and Sunnis were at war, it could make one century. Again, this is very modern, and it is basically a conflict between two countries who happen to be theocracies, who are the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

But global jihad, which means that you can strike Manhattan or the [Bataclan](#) or Jalalabad or Istanbul or Jakarta, is something that was born yesterday. In Islam jihad is always connected with a territory and a population, either when you are in expansion to conquer and submit this territory and population; or if you are in regression, which has been the case since the 18th century, to defend this territory and population.

What the global jihadis are doing is that they disconnect their fight from the territory and the population because, as I told you, they have a base which could be anywhere, which is why now—because they believe we are stronger and more resolute than we are. They believe we are going to strike them in Syria, so they are moving a lot of their people to Libya. I can tell you, Libya is absolutely irrelevant by any Islamic standards. It doesn't even appear in any of the scriptures; at least Khorosan did.

Where do they put them in Libya? Strangely enough, in [Qaddafi's](#) hometown. The same way as the Saddam people went jihadi overnight, now the Qaddafi people are all jihadi because of the way they settled their account with the [revolution](#) and they take revenge on the West for [helping](#) the revolution.

So it is very down to earth. But of course they put a lot of pretense around it. Why I am talking about an unprecedented threat is because before we had—which is why we had this discussion between France and America—a long history of Iranian state-sponsored terrorism against France, a long history. But this is state terror. You know how to deal with that.

Accordingly or not accordingly—you know, tit for tat, or shadowy war; call it whatever—this is something totally different. Indonesians wake up one day with people [attacking](#) a Starbucks in the middle of Jakarta. How do you deal with that? You can do whatever you want in Indonesia, as long as you have people from Indonesia who are in Syria and want to show that they are the best of the best and that, according to what the *caliphs* said, and so on and so forth, they have to strike their own country. It's like taking the ocean with a bucket. It's impossible.

That is why I insist on the fact that the threat has to be dealt with at the source, which is basically Syria, because very few foreign jihadis go to Iraq now. Now Iraq is basically a Sunni-Shia-Kurdish war that doesn't attract a lot of the foreigners. The foreigners want to fight "the Crusaders," or "the Jews and the Crusaders," which is why they are longing for a grand offensive by Western troops, and which is why we should never give them this privilege.

So if we cannot go on the ground and we want them to be defeated, the only alternative is to have



Arab Sunni allies defeat them. If you take Shia, like in Iraq, you will have a big communique by the Pentagon telling you, "Ramadi has been conquered," and then you will read a little piece of news in *The New York Times*, three lines saying, "Oh, there are still skirmishes. Seven hundred jihadis are still in Hamadi." Wow! And this is a liberated city?

So it will never end. If you use Shia against Sunnis in this intense but very modern and very contemporary conflict situation, you only add fuel to the fire. If you use Kurds against Arabs, it is the same. So you have to have Arab Sunnis.

And by the way, if you are talking about Raqqa, if you are talking about all those places, basically the local population feels occupied and oppressed by the jihadis, which is why are they bringing so many European jihadis because some of them are among the most stupid on Earth. They are really—I don't know how you say it in English—they have a peanut as a brain. And they don't speak a word of Arabic, and they have been attracted to that.

I read all their papers. Their basic pitch is: "Come. You can steal, rob, rape, get away with it, and have a big gun." A lot of people find it attractive, I'm sorry to say. But those people, if one day a decent Arab Sunni local alternative received an air cover, which means that the Russians stop bombing them as a prerequisite, and has decent weaponry, they can take them out very quickly. When Kandahar fell, it fell in a matter of days.

**QUESTION:** Hi. I'm Kristen Kaufman.

If you look at the birth rates of the Muslim community in Europe, it's substantially higher than that of the non-Muslim community in Europe, coupled with this influx of migrants and the fact that that community is not integrated at all, even the children of immigrants. I just wanted to know the role that you felt that was playing in recruiting jihadis and if any initiatives were being done to help integrate that population more.

**QUESTION:** Thank you very much. Catherine Dumait-Harper, former representative to the UN of MSF/Doctors Without Borders.

To come back to your comments about Arab countries, not European, NATO, or Washington fighting in Syria, today there was a meeting in Paris where our defense minister [Carter](#) was there. None of the nine Arab countries were invited. There were only the seven countries, I believe, of the coalition. Does that make sense to you?

My second question is if you could comment on the Saudi support for ISIS.

**JEAN-PIERRE FILIU:** If you say Saudi government, not only is the Saudi government not supporting ISIS, but it is fighting itself an existential threat for their own regime. But you have a very strong Saudi component in ISIS, certainly. So ISIS is a major domestic threat now for Saudi Arabia.

I have been a diplomat for 20 years. I don't know who made the invitation list today in Paris, so I cannot comment on that. What is sure is that Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, and others, that were in the beginning very much involved in the coalition, are now far more focused on [Yemen](#). I won't teach you anything as Doctors Without Borders, because your facilities were [struck](#) in a horrendous way in that country, like you were [struck in Afghanistan](#) in the same horrendous way.

You know, I don't know where you get those figures about the birth rates with Muslims because statistics according to religion in France are illegal. It's illegal. We are religion-blind in France. But sociologists tell you, first, that—we just say "we love love" in France. I wouldn't use a more direct—but let's say sexual interaction is very active in France. So the idea that you can say one community is

having a higher birth rate than another community does not make sense statistically.

Anyway, like all immigrants, they make more children in the beginning and then they make as many children as the rest of the population. It's common everywhere. It has nothing to do with Muslims or others.

Integration—I do believe integration is over. It's already done. But it was done in a way that is not accepted by a significant sector of—I don't know how to call them because I am the son of immigrants myself—of the people who believe they are in the indigenous population, which in France is complicated because one French person out of four has a foreign grandfather or grandmother. So identifying the "local" population from the "non-local" is not always feasible.

So it's not a question of demographics. It was never a question of demographics. It's a question of a common destiny. I can tell you, I was really afraid after the Paris attacks, the last ones, that there would be a backlash. Not only was there not a backlash, but there was all over France demonstrations of solidarity that were absolutely unprecedented when it comes to that.

But I will then tell you two figures, which I don't usually use but I think it's timely to use them now. Ninety percent of the spontaneous tips to the security services regarding jihadis come from the Muslim community. Sixty percent of the jihadis are denounced to the authorities by their own families.

So the idea that one group is there and it is a breeding ground for terrorism against the majority group is exactly what the jihadis want us to believe. Every time we fall into this trap, we give them victories.

I don't say it easily, but my intuition is that the next terror wave will be the work of converts. So what will we say, they have high fertility rates? They are not integrated? No, no, no.

I was discussing with Joanne that spontaneously parents call me because they hear me on media. I can tell you they come from all walks of life and they don't come from the ghettos. Otherwise they wouldn't have heard me on [France Culture](#), and they wouldn't call me because their daughter at a posh *lycée* in Paris is apparently turning jihadi. They come from all backgrounds—Catholic background, Jewish background, atheist background. So the idea that the onus is on the Muslims is already over.

We have a famous saying in France about the [Ligne Maginot](#). You know we built a very big Ligne Maginot between the [First World War](#) and the [Second World War](#), and the Germans just went the other way, and we got stuck at the Ligne Maginot.

So if we still look at this phenomenon with the goggles of 9/11 and al-Qaeda, we are lost. But if we anticipate and we accept that they are part of our modernity, the most vicious part of our modernity, and they have to be dealt with in a modern and ethical way, then I am confident we can win this battle.

**QUESTION:** Don Simmons.

It seems to me that, if possible, the Syrian Civil War should be put on pause so that all the parties involved in that region can concentrate on defeating and destroying ISIS. Do you think that would be feasible; and, if so, what would be the diplomatic strategy of the European Union and the United States to bring it about?

**QUESTION:** Yoram Kinberg.

What advice would you give to the next president of the United States in terms of what can we learn from the European experience towards issues that will be in the [elections](#)? Should we allow [Syrian refugees](#) to come—I'm sure you follow some of it—is the United States going to be like Paris any time

soon, etc.?

**QUESTION:** Simon Tschinkel.

My question is regarding funding of ISIS. Where do they get their funding from, and will global oil prices actually hurt how they get their funding?

**JEAN-PIERRE FILIU:** I will start with the last one because that's the easy one.

You know, we live in a world—and that's very unethical—where every time you have oil you can market it and every time you have cash you can buy weapons. So you can do all the things you want. I know in the UN they are very busy about it. In the financial war against terror, making big statements—"We are going to hit them in the wallet." It's good because then you are able to use those devices for drug dealers, traffickers, and things like that. But it won't kill ISIS, because by the time we get our act together they will have moved to something else. They are really modern. They are fearing we will attack Raqqa, they are already in Deir-ez-Zur; they are fearing that we will attack Syria, so they are moving to Libya.

Now they have a money problem, they have a budget problem, but they will find the answer. Their main resources are threefold:

- Oil—and part of it goes by truck to Turkey, but the other part goes by pipeline to Assad. But again, we are talking about a region where for 20 years, during the [sanctions—Oil-for-Food](#) I won't recall, a terrible time for French diplomacy—oil has been smuggled in and out of Iraq for the past two decades. So you have networks that are perfectly greasy, if I may use a metaphor. So it will keep on going. Of course, the fact that the price is going down is hurting them, certainly.
- You have antiquity smuggling. It's very important for them and it brings them a lot of cash, which is why they do destruction. They do destruction in order to market smaller pieces, and they advertise the smaller pieces.
- But the most important source of income is the racketeering of the local population. So if you really want them to be broke, let's liberate the local population. There is only one way I think to do it, by arming the people who have local connections in order to help them to liberate themselves from those occupying them.

The problem is not with the next president. The problem is what will happen before you have a next president. The idea that you can put the Syrian Civil War on hold or you can stop the volcano in the Middle East during your presidential campaign is something I would love to see, but it is not happening in the real world.

So you have the president you have now, who has decided that nothing will happen in the Middle East while he is there. Okay, I can respect this attitude from the intellectual point of view.

From the ethical point of view, with all the slaughters going on—I spoke about the gas bombing in August 2013—it is madness. You cannot expect such horrors to be committed on such a scale and keep on with "business as usual."

The thing will inevitably spill over. It spilled over to Europe—it is not enough. It spilled over to [San Bernardino](#)—it is not enough. Local groups, radicalized individuals—in 30 years with the jihadis, there is a character I never met, it's the lone wolf. Lone wolves never exist in jihadi reality. You have always a mastermind, a network, a provider, and so on and so forth.

At this very moment you have jihadi cells on U.S. soil. But the big man in the White House decided to say, "No, it's not true, it's not happening. This is for Europeans and Arabs. We are safe." Okay, I love

that, I wish that. But I don't see how it could be that way.

So not only will this be one of the major issues of the presidential campaign, but it should be addressed long before November 8 because the house is burning right now. When the house is burning, you cannot say, "Oh, stop the burning here on the first and second floors while we deal with the third floor."

So you cannot say, "We will put the Syrian Civil War on hold." It's impossible. It's an inferno over there, it's hell. What you can say is that you can stop fueling the civil war.

But that means having a serious talk with Mr. Putin, not telling him "bad boy, bad boy, bad boy." He is not a bad boy. He is a murderer, a mass murderer. It has been proved he killed a minimum of 1,000 civilians through his air strikes in the previous weeks.

This is fueling jihadi terror. It's not a problem even of human rights, but, as I was trying to explain, ethics works. If you have an a-ethical international affairs leadership—I wouldn't say unethical—then you have security problems. So it is not only a question of principles that are there that should be respected when you are trying to respect them. If you don't stick by them, if you don't uphold them, you pay the price.

I think that was a nice note to end this.

**JOANNE MYERS:** Thank you for a most sobering talk.

### **Audio**

"At this very moment, ISIS is recruiting probably 100 people a week from all over the world, including this very country. So it is not a European problem, it is not an Arab issue; it is a global threat and global challenge. That is why I insist on the fact that the threat has to be dealt with at the source, which is basically Syria."

### **Video Clips**

"At this very moment, ISIS is recruiting probably 100 people a week from all over the world, including this very country. So it is not a European problem, it is not an Arab issue; it is a global threat and global challenge. That is why I insist on the fact that the threat has to be dealt with at the source, which is basically Syria."

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