Artur WEJKSZNER[1]
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland
ORCID: 0000-0002-7638-9708

DOI : 10.14746/ps.2025.1.25

INDIVIDUAL JIHADIST TERRORISM. AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED EXAMPLES OF JIHADIST TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The terrorist threat in the European Union over the past decade has been linked to the activity of two competing terrorist networks: the first – historically older, more extensive, and moderately radical, associated with al Qaeda (Wejkszner, 2017), and the second– relatively anarchistic and hyper-radical, operating through the Islamic State (Wejkszner, 2016). Particularly dangerous emanations of the latter network's activity include the operation of small terrorist cells or individuals. In the latter case, both media reports and the growing number of academic analyses refer to the activities of so-called lone wolves or individual terrorists. But is this the right approach? Do young individuals, almost exclusively male, embarking on the path of terrorism meet the definitional requirements for being called individual terrorists? The situation is further complicated by the somewhat different approach of jihadists themselves to defining terrorism and identifying the essence of its various varieties. An example of this situation is their use of the term "individual jihadist terrorism," which this article attempts to define.

The problem of "individual jihadist terrorism" (analyzed especially in the context of the activity of the Islamic State in the EU) is a truly new research problem that has only become a subject of academic interest in the last decade. Within the broader scientific achievements relating to the main problems analyzed in this article, a large number of materials dealing with individual terrorism or terrorist radicalization should be mentioned, authored by: O. Malik (2000), C. L. Ruby (2002), P. D. Williams (2008), R. Spaaij (2012), R. Pantucci (2011), A. P. Schmid (Schmid, 2011 and 2013), M. Sedgwick (2010), D. Della Porta (2006), Q. Wiktorowicz (2004), S. Helfstein (2012), as well as C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko (2008; 2014) and A. Wejkszner (2018). The bibliographic database on the terrorist activity of the Islamic State is very extensive, and new publications are being gradually created analyzing many different aspects of the functioning of this terrorist organization.

The primary research goals of this article include analyzing the similarities and differences between two tactics: the terrorism of so-called classic individual terrorists and

individual jihadist terrorism and identifying the extent of cooperation with the Islamic State by terrorists involved in carrying out attacks on the territory of the European Union (due to the historical factual basis existing even before Brexit). The following research hypothesis was adopted in this article: the tactical solutions used by jihadists (especially those associated with the Islamic State) in the analyzed attacks are not an example of promoting the classic tactics of individual terrorism, but rather "individual jihadist terrorism" (formulated and popularized by Abu Mus'ab al-Suri), which means the involvement of individuals (rarely small groups of jihadists) in terrorist activity carried out for the benefit and thanks to the most often indirect support (rarely operational or often propaganda and media) of the existing network structure of the jihadist movement (in particular the Islamic State).

If the classic term "individual terrorist" refers to a person who has no direct or indirect ties to any terrorist structure (Alaokc, 2017: 6–7), this is certainly not the case with the tactics promoted by jihadists. It seems unjustified to also use the term "stray dog," used in reference to individual jihadist terrorism by Anglo-Saxon researchers (Jenkins, 2011), among other reasons due to the abstract and ahistorical nature of this approach. It would be more appropriate to use the term "lone jihadist," denoting a participant in a jihadist movement linked to other jihadists by various ties, most often ideological rather than institutional.

Key concepts frequently used by researchers on this topic include jihadism, Qaedaism, the Islamic State, individual terrorism, individual jihadist terrorism, radicalism, and radicalization (including jihadist radicalization). According to J. M. Brachman, the term jihadism refers to the way of thinking presented by radical Islamists, which involves a selective approach to the term "jihad" (understood in this case as the use of violence for self-defense) (Brachman, 2009: 4–5). This concept was popularized in Western scholarships only in the late 20th century. It is an Islamist, Salafi ideology based on nostalgic references to the origins of Islam and contemporary Muslim resentments related to both colonial and postcolonial times. Qaedaism is one of the most radical versions of Jihadist ideology. Its supporters focus on defending, primarily through violence, traditional Islamic values constituting the Islamic community (*ummah*), achieving the creation of an Islamic state (caliphate) in which the free practice of Islam would be possible, and uniting all Muslims within the above-mentioned state, which would have a global reach (Wejkszner, 2017: 82–85).

The term "Islamic State" is used in this article as the proper name of a specific structure that exemplifies both a terrorist organization and a proto-state. However, it also has historical connotations. The term "Islamic state" can be understood in at least two ways. Historically, it denotes a state structure created by followers of Islam. One of its classic emanations was the caliphate. The term has been appropriated in contemporary times by radical jihadists fighting for the restitution of the classical Islamic state as the proper name for an entity established in Iraq and Syria. Jihadists are participants in a growing radical Islamic social movement.

A social movement, in the classical sense, primarily denotes a distinct social process composed of mechanisms that cause actors participating in collective action to engage in conflictual relationships with a clearly defined opponent; they become part of dense, informal networks; and they share a distinct, collective identity (Porta, Diani,

2015). The primary goal of social movements is to affect social change. Conflict should be understood as an oppositional relationship between actors, within which an attempt is made to gain control over a given factor (for example, to achieve political advantage) and demands are made of the opponent. If these demands are not met, there is a threat of action unfavorable to the given party (Porta, Diani, 2015). At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s in the Middle East, thanks to the growing popularity of jihadist ideology, the foundations of a social structure began to form that can be called the Salafi global jihad movement. The ideological bonding of this movement is Salafi ideals, particularly the apotheosis of global jihad. This term is increasingly used to refer to the broadly defined Jihadist movement, which arose under the leadership of Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, Usama ibn Ladin, and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Over the next three decades, the movement evolved into its current form. Contrary to popular belief, it is not internally homogeneous. It comprises al Qaeda, its affiliated regional structures, as well as organizationally independent structures that autonomously pursue identical goals to other participants in the movement. An example of such a fully autonomous structure within the movement is the Islamic State. The Islamic State can, and even should, be analyzed through the lens of terrorism theory and treated as a *sui generis* terrorist organization. Considering the findings of terrorism theorists to date, a terrorist organization should be understood specifically as a group of at least three individuals united by a common goal, methods, and modus operandi. The goal of such activity is primarily political (and involves, for example, destabilizing or overthrowing the socio-political system), and the methods of operation involve the use of various forms of violence against civilian targets (e.g., individuals or civilian infrastructure) (Wojciechowski, 2013: 69). Furthermore, a terrorist organization possesses an internal structure (built on a hierarchical, network model, or various mixed variants of these models), which allows it to effectively pursue strategic goals using its own resources (human, organizational, financial, etc.). Sebastian Wojciechowski has identified several levels of analysis of the essence of terrorist organizations. Two of these are noteworthy: the organizational structure level and the social movement level. In the former case, the universal aspect of a terrorist group's internal organization should be emphasized. Regardless of the actual organizational model (in practice, these are almost always some variants of the hierarchical-network model), two structural elements can be distinguished in such a structure: leadership and executive. In other words, within each structure, one can distinguish a leader (or leaders) and subordinate executors (fighters or "soldiers") of his (or her) decisions (Wojciechowski, 2013: 71–72). Before the creation of the Islamic State and the declaration of the caliphate, the pre-existing structures operated based on the paradigm of a terrorist organization. More precisely, al Qaeda in Iraq was already part of a structure commonly referred to as the global al Qaeda network or the Salafi global jihad movement. After the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq, and especially the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, only the group's external relations changed. In other words, it gained full autonomy in determining and implementing its strategic and tactical goals. Following the emergence of the structure known as the Islamic State, proto-state structures began to function alongside the terrorist organization. From a Muslim perspective, the rise of the Islamic State and the announcement of the reactivation of the caliphate appear to be a significant, perhaps even groundbreak-

ing, event. From an objective perspective, however, this activity aligns with activities undertaken over the past three decades by other jihadist groups. The Islamic State appears to be, despite its name and the declarations of the jihadists themselves and the opinions of a small number of researchers, merely a "proto-state" and, debatably, a "proto-caliphate." The Islamic State can be considered, at least in the period from 2014 to 2017, a proto-state. But how should this term be understood? The first part comes from the Greek language (from the word "protos" – first) and can be translated in many ways – for example, as "imperfect," "primitive," "earliest formed," but also "original" or "first of many." Each of these words, to a greater or lesser extent, relates to the second part of the term, namely the word "state," in the context of the phenomenon under analysis. The terminology used by the Islamic State (and its predecessors) closely aligns with Islamic tradition and does not differ from the practices of other jihadist groups. Terms such as "Islamic state," "caliphate," and "emirate" have appeared repeatedly in numerous concepts and implemented projects for establishing new political entities. Brynjar Lia noted that the original model of Islamic rule was a "small tribal emirate" (i.e., a system of government in which power is exercised by an emir (*amir*), a word that can be translated as prince, but also as leader or commander). Referring to the word "emirate," Lia cited connotations related to "a state at war," "a state waging jihad," "an Islamic state fighting in the name of the caliph and expanding its influence into non-Islamic areas" (Lia, 2015: 32). The historically positive connotations of terms such as "emirate" and "caliphate" may explain their current popularity. The history of contemporary jihadist proto-states is not long. The first of them began to emerge in the 1980s. Almost all of them are ephemeral, existing for only a few to several dozen months. Some of them did not even gain control over the territory, so their inclusion in this group may seem debatable. What do all these projects have in common? There are few key common elements, but they must be considered constitutive of all contemporary jihadist concepts of the Islamic state. The first is a territory inhabited by Muslims. The second element is the basing of the order established in this territory on the principles of Sharia law. The third is a conflictual attitude towards one's own neighbors and the resulting inability to establish and maintain any relations with them (as well as with other state entities). Finally, the fourth element is the rather fluid, if not conventional, borders of proto-states. Therefore, it can be concluded that proto-states operate outside the contemporary system of international relations, denying its existence, and refusing to recognize the formal legal order established after World War II. B. Lia takes a slightly different approach to the typology of factors constituting jihadist proto-states. In his opinion, four elements are crucial. Firstly: religious ideology – proto-states are always based on a strictly ideological project, referring to legal and religious (Lia, 2015: 35–36). Secondly: internationalism – proto-state projects are always internationalist in nature. They unite fighters of different races and nationalities sharing the same religious views under a common banner (Lia, 2015: 36). Thirdly: aggressiveness – jihadist ideology justifies, and even sanctions, the use of force against all enemies – internal and external (Lia, 2015: 36). And finally, fourthly: effective management – consisting in competent administration in the occupied territory, in particular the provision of all basic public services and the introduction of a restrictive justice system that guarantees obedience and safety of the communities

living in each area (Lia, 2015: 36). It seems that the formal declaration of the creation of an "emirate," an "Islamic state," or a "caliphate" has symbolic significance in this case and is merely a call for broader public support for a project that cannot count on such support due to its inherent conflict-prone nature. Proto-states are born during conflict, and so far, none of them has embarked on the path to building lasting state structures. This stems from a lack of pragmatism on the part of their creators, which is understandable, particularly given the ideological (if not utopian) purity of the project they seek to implement. Paradoxically, however, jihadist strategists treat these proto-states (this is particularly evident in the case of the emirates) as the ultimate and yet transitory outcome of their actions. The radicalism of their creators prevents the evolutionary building and strengthening of their structures and the broadening of the social base necessary to achieve the goal of unifying the entire *ummah*. It is worth noting, however, that the Islamic State, since its proclamation of the caliphate, appeared to be an example that largely meets the conditions outlined above. Beginning in June 2014, and especially in 2015, its territorial reach was gradually expanded, creating new administrative units and strengthening the instruments used to manage them. A simultaneous battle was waged against both external and internal enemies, attempting at all costs to create the belief that the Islamic State was a permanent entity, systematically built based on a generally outlined plan. The neologism "proto-caliphate," although already in scholarly circulation, is not a very accurate term to capture the essence of the newly established entity. The prefix "proto," as mentioned above, can be understood as "first," "imperfect," or "primitive." However, when combined with the word "caliphate," it devalues the very idea of an Islamic state and is not only ahistorical but also methodologically incorrect. It is, of course, debatable whether the Islamic State is another caliphate (but certainly not the first) in the history of Islam, but it is difficult to agree to the use of terminology that offers little in the way of descriptive information. The origins of the Islamic State (understood as a terrorist organization, not a proto-state) date back to the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries and are closely linked to the expansion of al Qaeda terrorist cells into Iraq. Among the pioneers of this activity is Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was actively involved in building a terrorist network in the above-mentioned country as early as the 1990s (Brisard, 2005: 16). The Islamic State was established on June 29, 2014. It was announced that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was to head the new structure. The document confirming this event highlighted the historical, religious, and political dimensions of this decision, calling on all Muslims to pledge allegiance to the caliph. In ar-Raqqa and other cities controlled by the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, the declaration was enthusiastically received (Roggio, 2014). Competing Jihadist groups reacted lukewarmly or ignored it altogether. Two days later, al-Baghdadi issued a public address to all Muslims, effectively a declaration of the goals the new caliph would face (al-Baghdādī, 2014). One of the key long-term strategic aspects of the Islamic State's policy was the conquest of the entire Western world ("Rome"), the destruction of the democratic order, and the establishment of Sharia law in its place. In the shorter term, a key responsibility of the new caliphate was to unite the Islamic ummah within a single state and liberate all persecuted Muslims from foreign domination. This was confirmed on July 4, 2014, in al-Baghdadi's special address at the mosque in ar Raqqah. He reiterated that the primary goal of re-

storing the caliphate was to unite the entire ummah. Over the next several dozen months, the Islamic State was forced to fight for survival on multiple fronts. Areas occupied by the jihadists in Iraq and Syria, especially those of strategic importance (oil fields, important cities and communication routes, drinking water resources), became targets of attack by their enemies. Beginning in the second half of 2015, the Islamic State (IS) found itself in retreat. The key defeats for its fighters were the loss of Mosul in July 2017 and ar Raqqah in October of the same year. The jihadists responded to their defeats in the Middle East with an intensified terrorist campaign, particularly in Europe, which involved the widespread use of individual jihadist terrorism tactics.

In the case of the definition of terrorism, the proposal formulated by Alex P. Schmid deserves special attention, according to which "terrorism is a disturbing method of repeated acts of violence, adopted by individuals, groups or state entities operating most often in a clandestine manner, chosen for criminal or political reasons, whereby – unlike assassination attempts – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The direct victims of violence are usually chosen randomly, blindly (targets resulting from the circumstances) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from the target population and they serve as carriers of the message. The threat and the violence-based communication process between the terrorist (organization), the (threatened) victims and the main targets are used to manipulate the main target (community or communities), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands or a target of attention, depending on whether the perpetrators in a given situation are mainly seeking intimidation, coercion or propaganda" (Schmid, Jongman, 2005: 28). In Polish scholarship, one of the most well-known definitions of terrorism is that of Sebastian Wojciechowski, according to which terrorism is: "a variously motivated form of political violence (or the threat of its use) undertaken by individuals or a group of individuals, carried out in violation of the existing legal order, resulting in physical, psychological, material, or other losses, and carried out using various means and methods. It is aimed at a direct target(s) (e.g., persons representing a given state) or an indirect target(s) by means of which the perpetrator(s) wishes to achieve the final effect" (Wojciechowski, 2013: 52). Individual terrorism should be understood as terrorist activity by individuals who have no ties to any terrorist organization. Jihadists, on the other hand, promote a derivative of this term in the form of "individual jihadist terrorism," interpreting the above definition broadly. In their opinion, this concept covers the activity of individuals or small groups of people who act against the enemies of Muslims (and therefore use the so-called praiseworthy terrorism).

The term "radicalism" denotes an attitude associated with promoting drastic, uncompromising changes, especially in the socio-political sphere. For Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, radicalism means illegal and violent actions (McCauley, Moskalenko, 2009: 240). Their opposite is peaceful activism. Jonathan Githens-Mazer disagrees with this approach, understanding radicalism as "a collectively defined but individually felt moral imperative to participate in direct action" (Sedgwick, 2010: 483). According to this researcher, it is irrelevant whether these actions are legal or not. The antonym for the term "radicalism" in this case would be "apathy," not activism (Sedgwick, 2010: 483). Radicalization is an individual or collective (group) process of socialization of young people (sometimes religious converts) towards the

use of violent tactics in an ongoing conflict, including destructive actions aimed at destroying a political opponent (e.g., through suicide bombings). This process is often associated with the emergence of a sense of relative deprivation, alienation in a new environment (because of, for example, migration), or existential doubts. It is also often associated with the need to search for meaning, belonging to a (subcultural) community, and striving for purity (conversion) of a vulnerable individual or (small) group (Gill et al., 2022: 2–3). The radicalization process can be short or long, which is closely related to the number of connections the radicalizing individual has with the current order. It can also have many layers (groups within a population, generations, cliques of spiritual sympathizers) and take many forms (socio-cultural, religious, ideological, political) (Schmid, 2011: 678–679).

According to a widespread view, particularly in the media (including social media), individual terrorism currently poses one of the most serious security challenges in the European Union. Several terrorist attacks in the last decade were carried out by individuals who were believed to act entirely independently, guided by their own beliefs and goals. However, individual jihadist terrorism does not necessarily imply activity completely detached from the interests of a specific community. It is merely a tactical guideline suggesting the most effective way to prepare and conduct asymmetric warfare in a war zone. From its inception, the Islamic State (IS) has been remarkably proactive in expanding its influence across EU member states. Countries with large Muslim diasporas and relatively open to migration flows were particularly important to the organization. It inherently engaged in both propaganda and recruitment efforts, aimed at encouraging, mostly young individuals, to embark on a path of terrorist activity. The primary targets of this activity were Europeans who actively or passively supported the anti-Muslim actions of their governments. The tactics promoted by IS, appear to be most effective from a purely operational perspective. In this case, it involves operating alone or in small groups, utilizing commonly (or relatively easily) available jihadist weapons (motor vehicles, small arms, bladed weapons, and explosives). These tactics were quickly accepted and adapted to local conditions and operational capabilities.

The analysis of the conclusions presented in the remainder of the article was based on case studies of Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, Anis Amri, Adrian Russell Ajao, and Salman Ramadan Abedi (Wejkszner, 2018). Considering the available factual data, it is worth noting several key aspects connecting the perpetrators of the four terrorist attacks. The conclusions presented below are divided into three important parts: the first, concerning conclusions related to the analysis of the perpetrators' biographies; the second, relating to the process of their radicalization; and the third, closely related to the operational aspect of terrorist activity (i.e., the terrorist attack itself). A detailed analysis of the biographies of the four perpetrators (Table 1) leads to several fundamental conclusions. All the attackers (except for the terrorist from London) were immigrants who came to Western Europe for economic reasons rather than for safety. Their biographies reveal no prior episodes related to succumbing to Islamist influence. They were generally irreligious (except for the Manchester attacker). It is highly likely that they only became radicalized in Europe, as evidenced by their sudden attachment to traditional values and religious ritualism, which contradicted their previous behavior. The psychological profiles of the attackers are similar. Virtually all of them

exhibited psychological problems (depression, a tendency to violence), which to some extent translated into antisocial (criminal activity) and self-destructive (alcoholism, drug addiction) behavior. The perpetrators, except for the London attacker, also shared a young age and relatively high IQ. Some of them even pursued higher education, but for various reasons, they did not complete it.

Table 1

Comparison of key aspects of the biographies of the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks in Nice, Berlin, London and Manchester

Key aspects	Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel (Nice)	Anis Amri (Berlin)	Adrian Rusell Ajao (London)	Salman Ramadan Abedi (Manchester)
Immigrant	YES	YES	NO	YES
No previous Islamist episodes	YES	YES	YES	NO
Criminal offender	YES	YES	YES	NO
Alcoholic	YES	YES	YES	NDA
Drug addict	YES	YES	YES	NDA
Psychological problems	YES (depression, tendency to aggression)	YES (tendency to aggression)	YES (tendency to aggression)	YES
Primary attitude towards religion (Islam)	Indifferent	Indifferent	Indifferent	Positive
Age of the attacker	31	24	53	23

Legend: NDA – no data available.
Source: Wejkszner, 2018: 188.

Considering the period preceding the Jihadist radicalization process, it should be noted that each of the later attackers had at least one episode involving breaking the law. This tendency and socialization toward violence experienced during adolescence later significantly influenced the process of their jihadist radicalization, significantly facilitating it or shortening the period between absorption of the idea and terrorist activity. The radicalization paths for the identified attackers varied (Table 2). Analysis of the available data leads to the conclusion that in most cases, this process unfolded dynamically, lasting from several to a dozen or so months. Only in the case of the London attacker was this period relatively longer (although it cannot be ruled out that the final stage of this process – the one related to the decision to use force – was quite short). Attempting to answer the question of the mode of radicalization can be somewhat difficult, as it is impossible to definitively determine which stimuli had a key influence on this process. What is certain, above all, is that all the attackers demonstrated significant, even above-average, activity in the virtual world. They were particularly interested (as manifested in their so-called cognitive openness) in jihadist propaganda promoted by the Islamic State. At least one of the perpetrators underwent a process of self-determination. In the case of the others, their views and behavior were influenced, most often indirectly, by representatives of the Islamic State (Wejkszner, 2018: 188–189).

Table 2

Comparison of the dynamics of the radicalization process of the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks in Nice, Berlin, London and Manchester

Key aspects	Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel (Nice)	Anis Amri (Berlin)	Adrian Rusell Ajao (London)	Salman Ramadan Abedi (Manchester)
A fast, dynamic process	YES	YES	NO	YES
Self-radicalization	NDA	NO	YES	NO
Contacts with the Islamic State	Possible	YES	NO	Possible
Activity in the virtual world	YES	YES	YES	YES

Legend: NDA – no data available.
Source: Wejkszner, 2018: 190.

In the case of terrorist acts, several important elements that connect all four cases analyzed in this work are noteworthy (Table 3). All analyzed acts were terrorist in nature (the perpetrator was an individual acting for political reasons, the use of violence was directed against civilians, and the act was planned, calculated, and premeditated).

Table 3

Comparison of the characteristics of the terrorist attacks in Nice, Berlin, London and Manchester

Key aspects	Attack in Nice	Attack in Berlin	Attack in London	Attack in Manchester
Planned, prepared, and deliberately carried out	YES	YES	YES	YES
The attack targeted civilians	YES	YES	YES	YES
The political motive for the attack	YES	YES	YES	YES
The type of attack	Use of a car and small arms	Use of a car and small arms	Use of a car and bladed weapons	Suicide terrorism (explosive device)
Modus operandi promoted by the Islamic State	YES	YES	YES	YES
Maximizing the number of casualties	YES	YES	YES	YES
Likely participation of other people at some stage of the operation	YES	YES	NO	YES

Source: Wejkszner, 2018: 190.

The attackers' chosen modus operandi was consistent with the Islamic State's popular modus operandi. This was evident both in the choice of weapons (motor vehicles, small arms, melee weapons, and explosives) and in the desire to maximize the psychological impact of the attack (which was linked to the desire to maximize the number of casualties). Another key finding seems to be that in most cases, the involvement of third parties (including, presumably, representatives of the Islamic State) cannot be ruled out (and can even be confirmed circumstantially).

Therefore, considering the previously adopted definition of the term "individual jihadist terrorist," according to which an individual engages in support of, and mostly through indirect support (rarely operational, often propaganda and media) the existing

network structure of the jihadist movement (in the analyzed cases, the Islamic State), it should be stated that, with the exception of one case (the London attacker), most cases strictly fit this form of asymmetric activity. In the case of Adrian Russell Ajao, however, it cannot be ruled out that he maintained electronic contact with Middle Eastern jihadists. He may also have meet them during his stay in Saudi Arabia (although Saudi authorities have initially ruled out such a possibility). However, all the cases examined largely meet the definitional requirements assigned to the term "individual jihadist terrorism" (as promoted by al-Suri, for example).

REFERENCES

Alakoc B. P. (2017), *Competing to Kill: Terrorist Organizations Versus Lone Wolf Terrorists*, "Terrorism and Political Violence", Vol. 29, Issue 7; DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2015.1050489.

al-Baghdādī A. B. (2014), *A Message to the Mujahidin and the Muslim Ummah in the Month of Ramadan*, Al-Hayat Media Center, https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/bitstream/handle/10066/14241/ABB20140701.pdf?sequence=1 (September 2025).

Brachman J. M. (2009), *Global Jihadism. Theory and practice*, Routledge, London–New York.

Brisard J.-C. (2015), *The Paris Attacks and the Evolving Islamic State Threat to France*, "CTC Sentinel", Vol. 8, Issue 11, November–December, https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-paris-attacks-and-the-evolving-islamic-state-threat-to-france/ (September 2025).

Gill P., Corner E., McKee A., Hitchen P., Betley P. (2022), *What Do Closed Source Data Tell Us About Lone Actor Terrorist Behavior? A Research Note*, "Terrorism and Political Violence", Vol. 34, Issue 1, DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2019.1668781.

Helfstein S. (2012), *Edges of Radicalization. Ideas, Individuals and Networks in Violent Extremism*, The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, New York, https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/CTC_EdgesofRadicalization.pdf (September 2025).

Jenkins B. M. (2011), *Stray Dogs and Virtual Armies. Radicalization and Recruitment to Jihadist Terrorism in the United States Since 9/11*, RAND, Occasional Papers, https://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP343.html (September 2025).

Lia B. (2015), *Understanding Jihadi Proto-States*, "Perspectives on Terrorism", Vol. 9, Issue 4, https://pt.icct.nl/article/understanding-jihadi-proto-states (September 2025).

Malik O. (2000), *Enough of the Definition of Terrorism*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London.

McCauley C., Moskalenko S. (2008), *Mechanisms of Political Radicalization. Pathways Toward Terrorism*, "Terrorism and Political Violence", Vol. 20, Issue 3; DOI: 10.1080/09546550802073367.

McCauley C., Moskalenko S. (2014), *Toward a Profile of Lone Wolf Terrorists: What Moves an Individual. From Radical Opinion to Radical Action*, "Terrorism and Political Violence", Vol. 26, Issue 1; DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2014.849916.

Porta D. D. (2006), *Social movements, political violence, and the state. A comparative analysis of Italy and Germany*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Porta D. D., Diani M. (2015), *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*, Oxford University Press.

Roggio B. (2014), *ISIS announces formation of Caliphate, rebrands as 'Islamic State'*, Threat Matrix, 29.06, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/06/isis_announces_formation_of_ca.php (September 2025).

Ruby C. L. (2002), *The Definition of Terrorism*, "Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy", Vol. 2, Issue 1, DOI: 10.1111/j.1530-2415.2002.00021.x.

Schmid A. P., Jongman A. J. (2005), *Political Terrorism. A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, & Literature*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick–London.

Schmid A. P. (2011), *The Routledge handbook of terrorism research*, Routledge, London–New York.

Schmid A. P. (2013), *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review*, ICCT Research Paper, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, https://icct.nl/sites/default/files/import/publication/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013_2.pdf (September 2025).

Sedgwick M. (2010), *The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion*, "Terrorism and Political Violence", Vol. 22, Issue 4; DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2010.491009.

Spaaij R. (2012), *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism: Global Patterns, Motivations and Prevention*, Springer, Dordrecht.

al-'Ubaydi M., Lahoud N., Milton D., Price B. (2014), *The Group That Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State*, The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, New York, https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CTC-The-Group-That-Calls-Itself-A-State-December20141.pdf (September 2025).

Wejkszner A. (2016), *Państwo Islamskie. Narodziny nowego kalifatu?*, Warszawa.

Wejkszner A. (2017), *Globalna sieć Al-Kaidy. Nowe państwo islamskie?*, Warszawa.

Wejkszner A. (2018), *Samotne wilki kalifatu?, Państwo Islamskie i indywidualny terroryzm dżihadystyczny w Europie Zachodniej*, Warszawa.

Wiktorowicz Q. (2004), *Joining the Cause: Al-Muhajiroun and Radical Islam*, Paper presented at "The Roots of Islamic Radicalism" Conference, Yale University, (8–9 May, 2004), https://securitypolicylaw.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Wiktorowicz.Joining-the-Cause.pdf (September 2025).

Wojciechowski S. (2013), *The Hybridity of Terrorism. Understanding Contemporary Terrorism*, Logos, Berlin.

Zelin A. Y. (2014), *ISIS Has Declared the Creation of Provinces in Several Arab Countries*, "Business Insider", 14.11, http://www.businessinsider.com/aaron-zelin-isis-declared-provinces-in-arab-countries-2014-11 (September 2025).

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes a relatively new form of Islamic terrorist engagement in asymmetric warfare against the West. The main manifestation of this activity is so-called individual Jihadist terrorism. It differs tactically from the classic tactics used by so-called individual terrorists. Individual jihadist terrorism involves the involvement of individuals (rarely small groups of jihadists) in terrorist activity carried out on behalf of, and most often through, indirect support (rarely operational, often propaganda and media) of, the existing network structure of the jihadist movement. The key characteristics of this phenomenon were identified based on a detailed analysis of terrorist attacks carried out in selected European Union countries: France, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

Keywords: individual terrorism, jihadism, Islamic State, European Union

INDYWIDUALNY TERRORYZM DŻIHADYSTYCZNY. ANALIZA WYBRANYCH PRZYKŁADÓW DZIAŁALNOŚCI TERRORYSTYCZNEJ DŻIHADYSTÓW W UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ

STRESZCZENIE

W niniejszym artykule analizie poddano relatywnie nową formę zaangażowania terrorystów islamskich w asymetryczną walkę z Zachodem. Głównym przejawem tej aktywności jest tzw. indywidualny terroryzm dżihadystyczny. W taktycznym wymiarze różni się, od klasycznej taktyki stosowanej przez tzw. terrorystów indywidualnych. Indywidualny terroryzm dżihadystyczny polega bowiem w szczególności na zaangażowaniu pojedynczych osób (rzadko małych grup dżihadystów) w aktywność terrorystyczną realizowaną na rzecz i dzięki najczęściej pośredniemu wsparciu (rzadko operacyjnemu, często zaś propagandowo-medialnemu) istniejącej sieciowej struktury ruchu dżihadystycznego. Najważniejsze cechy tego fenomenu zostały określone w oparciu o szczegółową analizę zamachów terrorystycznych przeprowadzonych w wybranych państwach Unii Europejskiej: we Francji, Niemczech i Wielkiej Brytanii.

Słowa kluczowe: terroryzm indywidualny, dżihadyzm, Państwo Islamskie, Unia Europejska

Article submitted: 04.07.2025; article accepted: 19.09.2025.