

Erick Stakelbeck: “ISIS has such command of social media, Facebook Twitter, Instagram, YouTube; they’re able to reach out and touch followers continents away. So ISIS has really raised the bar, number one: in their reach here in the West; and number two: in territory. ISIS has declared the Islamic State the caliphate which was the great dream of radical Islamists for centuries really. They have revived it. It's not much right now, it's a pittance compared to the caliphates of old, but you have to start somewhere, and ISIS has captured the imagination of radical Islamists around the world with the establishment of this caliphate. So you have the reach, the recruitment of Western Muslims, you have the social media mastery, you have the establishment of the Islamic State by ISIS, you have territory and really a standing terrorist army in the form of ISIS right now, and the richest terrorist movement in world history worth hundreds of millions if not in the billions of dollars. So ISIS is a different beast in many ways and the greatest threat we face from the Sunni wing of this global jihad.”

Erick Stakelbeck: “The difference between Al Qaeda and ISIS, is really ideologically not much of a difference at all. ISIS came out of Al Qaeda, there would be no ISIS without Al Qaeda; but what ISIS has done is they have taken the Al Qaeda blueprint and they have magnified it in a major way on a global scale. I would say the main difference between ISIS and Al Qaeda is the mastery of social media and messaging by ISIS. If you look at Al Qaeda videotapes, where it used to be Osama bin Laden tapes, where he's against a green screen, it's kind of grainy, the production values aren't that great. Then comes along ISIS with Hollywood-level production value. Some of ISIS propaganda videos look like a Hollywood action flick. They cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to make, and that's a key point because many of ISIS' western recruits are people who were raised here, they know our culture, they know our language and they know how to resonate with an English-speaking audience, And Al Qaeda at this point is just trying to catch up. But also, ISIS gives off the impression, even though they have taken some lumps, they have taken some hits in the Middle East and lost some ground, they give off the impression constantly of victory, that they are on the ascendancy, that they have the wind at their backs, they have momentum behind them, that they are a victorious movement. You want to be with the strong horse if you are in the world of radical Islam. When it comes to Al Qaeda, a lot of radical Islamists around the world say what have you done for me lately; but then you have ISIS, look, San Bernardino, Orlando, Nice France, Paris, Germany, we've seen attack after attack by ISIS on Western soil whether by ISIS members or ISIS sympathizers here in the West. So the more ISIS has success in carrying out attacks on Western soil the more it galvanizes their followers and there is an element here I call Jihadi Cool, where ISIS is using hip-hop in their propaganda videos. They know exactly how to resonate with young people using hip-hop. On Twitter, they will use Hollywood film references. All of the things that young people like ISIS will use that to resonate with them. There is also another element: in the 1970s if you were a troubled, disturbed individual, maybe you'd end up joining a cult, you would wind up at Jonestown. In the 1980s, maybe you would gravitate towards the darkest form of heavy metal music. Today, the darkest thing you can find is this world of radical Islam, and it's all at your fingertips on the web. So if you are a disturbed, lonely, troubled individual with a proclivity towards violence, you click online and you find an ISIS website or an ISIS Twitter account,

wow, it doesn't repel you, it actually attracts you. There is a troubling trend here in the West where there is a segment of our young people in the US, in Europe who are not repelled by what ISIS is doing, they are actually attracted to it, to the beheadings, the butchery, the dismemberments, they think it's kind of cool.”

Erick Stakelbeck: “I think one of the most eye-opening experiences for me in terms of the threat in Western Europe, the prevalence of this jihadist threat in Western Europe, in particular in Great Britain, was my interview with a man that many have called Great Britain's most hated man. His name is Anjem Choudary, the son of Pakistani immigrants, born and raised in Great Britain and turned to the world of radical Islam when he was in his 20s. He is actually a lawyer, got a law background, a well-spoken guy, very eloquent, obviously very British, born in that country, reared in that country, but vows to establish Islamic Sharia law in Great Britain, and he's very open and in a strange way I appreciate his honesty because I have interviewed some radical Islamists who they look like this, suit, tie western-educated, very well-spoken, with more of a subversive message and a stealthy kind of agenda I guess you would say, they want the same things that Anjem Choudary wants, Sharia law, Jihad, oppression of women, minorities, gays, Jews, Christians. They want all that too, but they won't tell you that upfront. Behind the scenes they are working towards it but they will give you a different message when they are on camera. Anjem Choudary on the other hand is very upfront about what he wants. He wants Islamic Sharia law for one and all whether we like it or not. He wants return of this Islamic caliphate, this great super state Islamic empire in the heart of the Middle East. He believes women should be fully veiled, including in Great Britain. Jews, Christians, no place for them in an Islamic society; apostates, people who leave Islam, should be killed, homosexuals should be killed. He was very open and almost proud of these beliefs on camera. It's rare that you find, in my experience, in the West a radical Islamic figure who was so open because many times they are concerned with obviously getting arrested for expressing these views, but Choudary eventually took it too far. The fact that Anjem Choudary was allowed to operate freely on British soil for at least 15 years expressing a pro-Al Qaeda, pro-ISIS message, establishing a recruiting network that stretched not only through Great Britain, radicalizing young people there, sending them to join ISIS, but he also had tentacles in other European countries, a true network in Western Europe, much of it coming from this man Anjem Choudary, he was allowed to do all of this for over 15 years on British soil. The fact that it took the Brits so long to lock him up and shut him down is very troubling, and it shows you how far behind the curve Britain and Western Europe really are. They have allowed this threat to metastasize, to fester for years, and they are just catching on now, and in many cases, it may be a bit too late.”