

# THE JIHAD

## AGAINST SPAIN

ORIGIN, EVOLUTION AND FUTURE  
OF THE ISLAMIST THREAT



Strategic Studies Group





# THE JIHAD

## AGAINST SPAIN

ORIGIN, EVOLUTION AND FUTURE  
OF THE ISLAMIST THREAT



Strategic Studies Group GEEs



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE BY IGNACIO COSIDÓ .....	5
PRESENTATION .....	9
<b>1. EUROPE’S FIGHT AGAINST ISLAMIST TERROR .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1. BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>12</b>
1.1. The islamic roots of the threat to Europe.....	12
1.2. The political history of the threat to Europe.....	16
<b>2. JIHAD COMES TO EUROPE.....</b>	<b>19</b>
2.1. The establishment of europe’s jihadi networks .....	19
2.2. Islamist violence turns on Europe - The ‘Al-Qaeda Era’ 2000-2012 .....	22
2.3. More Dangerous Than Ever - The Islamic State Era And The Threat Europe Faces Today .....	27
<b>3. EUROPE’S RESPONSE TO THE THREAT FROM RADICAL ISLAM.....</b>	<b>31</b>
3.1. Europe’s challenge in conceiving the threat it faces .....	31
3.2. Europe’s challenge in implementing effective counter-terrorism policies.....	35
<b>2. SPAIN: HISTORY, EVOLUTION, AND CHARACTERISTICS OF JIHADISM IN SPAIN.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>2. ORIGINS OF JIHADISM IN SPAIN: FROM 1995 UNTIL MARCH 11 .....</b>	<b>40</b>
2.1. Algerian networks in spain.....	40
2.2. Al-Qaeda central and Spain.....	42
2.3. Terrorist Plots Against Spanish Interests .....	43
<b>3. EVOLUTION OF JIHADISM FROM MARCH 2004 TO DECEMBER 2013...</b>	<b>45</b>
3.1. Algerian networks after March 11 .....	46
3.2. “Iraqi” networks on spanish soil .....	47
3.3. Non-linked actors: independent cells and “Lone Wolves”.....	49
<b>4. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>50</b>

3.	<b>THE THREAT OF THE ISLAMIC STATE FOR OUR COUNTRY .....</b>	53
1.	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	53
2.	<b>A PANORAMIC VIEW OF WHY SPAIN IS AN OBJECTIVE FOR ISIS JIHADIS .....</b>	55
3.	<b>NETWORKS AND INDIVIDUALS LINKED TO SYRIAN CONFLICT.....</b>	57
3.1.	Jihadi militancy via internet .....	62
4.	<b>THE DIMENSION OF THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORIST FINANCING..</b>	66
5.	<b>TERRORIST PLOTS AND ATTACKS AGAINST SPAIN .....</b>	67
5.1.	The importance of Spain as origin and destination for Jihadis .....	70
5.2.	Spain's geographical situation.....	72
6.	<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	74
4.	<b>THE JIHADIST THREAT IN THE MAGREB AND THE SAHEL .....</b>	75
1.	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	75
2.	<b>THE JIHADIST THREAT IN EGYPT AND THE MAGHREB.....</b>	75
2.1.	Egypt .....	76
2.2.	The Maghreb and Algeria .....	77
2.3.	The Maghreb and Tunisia .....	80
2.4.	The Maghreb: Libya.....	83
2.5.	Morocco.....	85
3.	<b>THE EVOLUTION OF THE SAHEL THREAT .....</b>	87
3.1.	Mali and Mauritania.....	88
3.2.	Nigeria .....	91
3.3.	Niger.....	91
4.	<b>OBSTACLES TO DEFEAT THE SALAFI-JIHADIST THREAT .....</b>	92
	<b>CONCLUSION: AND NOW WHAT? WE CAN AND WE MUST DEFEAT ISLAMISM .....</b>	95

# PREFACE BY IGNACIO COSIDÓ

Europe has become one of the main strategic objectives of jihadist terrorism. The brutal attacks in Paris, London, Brussels, Berlin, or Barcelona, part of a long list of minor attacks, clearly show the interest of Islamists to hit Europe.

The threat of jihadism in Europe responds to a double reason: The strategic interest of terrorists in our continent and the vulnerability to these attacks shown so far by the European Union. On the one hand, Europe is identified as a sum of democracies opposed by definition to totalitarianism on which the criminal dreams of building a universal caliphate rest. To the extent that several European countries are also involved in the fight against Islamist forces, from Syria to Afghanistan and the Sahel, Europe as a whole has become an enemy to beat. On the other hand, together with the security deficits that the European Union has demonstrated, the presence in Europe of a large Muslim community in clear expansion in our territory in which radicalization networks have taken root in several countries, turn the Old Continent into a field conducive to battle.

We are also facing a threat not only in the long term, but it also seems set to increase in the near future. The successive defeats of the self-styled Islamic State in both Syria and Iraq have paradoxically made Europe more valuable strategically and have freed resources to attack targets in our territory. In this sense, it is especially disturbing the specter of the possible return of foreign terrorists who left European territory to fight in that theater and who can now try to return to Europe with combat experience and even greater fanaticism. Their capacity for action, but, above all, influence and recruitment among young Muslims living in Europe, must be closely monitored and pursued.

Terrorism will therefore remain the main threat to security in Europe in the coming decades. The report that you have in your hands will undoubtedly contribute to a better understanding of the nature of this threat, its real dimension, and also some necessary reforms to tackle it more effectively.

It is important to have a clear perception of the threat to know what we are really facing. We Europeans have avoided for a long time any term that links this terrorism with Islamism or jihadism. We preferred to talk about international terrorism or simply about a terrorist threat. This GEES report specifically stresses the ideological-political dimension of this terrorism because it is an essential factor for developing a strategy to combat it.

Second, it highlights the complexity and multiple dimensions of this threat. For many years we focused our objective on defeating al-Qaeda. In recent years we have focused on defeating the Islamic State. In reality, all these organizations are merely instrumental in a fundamental movement that adopts multiple forms but maintains a unity of purpose: The establishment of a totalitarian regime based on a radical vision of Islam. Thus, we see large-scale attacks planned and executed by different terrorist organizations clustered around this movement. Actions are also carried out by individuals or small local groups after orders of those central structures. However, there are also cases of self-radicalization and these people act inspired by jihad, but without any direct relationship with these organizations. It is therefore necessary to give a comprehensive response to fight against jihadist terrorism in all its multiple dimensions.

The report also offers some measures necessary to counter this threat. It is necessary to strengthen judicial and police cooperation mechanisms in Europe, which have sometimes shown deficiencies. It is also essential to strengthen the external borders of the European Union to prevent people, or weapons, from entering a territory that has abolished internal borders. Above all, it is necessary to strengthen the resistance of our societies to the challenges of terror in order to prevent killers from achieving the ultimate goal of frightening our citizens in order to impose their objectives. We need a stronger Europe, stronger in the defense of its principles, assertive, and more willing to fight and win this battle.

The report covers Spain's situation in detailed fashion. The extensive historical analysis contained in these pages shows that the roots of jihadist terrorism in Spain are deeper than expected and that its first efforts go back to the 1980s in a still very young Spanish democracy. Later, our country was used as a logistic base for different Islamist terrorist movements, especially those linked to Algeria in the 1990s.

Nonetheless, there have also been multiple attacks and attempts neutralized by Spanish Security Forces for decades that are carefully described in these pages. The analysis of the March 11 attacks in Madrid—the deadliest attack of jihadist terrorism on European soil to date—is particularly interesting. The data provided in this report clearly points to a connection between these attacks with al-Qaeda and its political purpose.

From the March 11 attacks in 2004 to the Barcelona attacks in 2017, there is a long period in which the Spanish anti-terrorist strategy is particularly fruitful. Spain, that had fought for almost four decades until the defeat of the terrorist group ETA, had developed capabilities in the fight against terrorism that were lacking in other European countries not hit by terror. I think it is only fair to acknowledge here the efforts and excellence shown by the General Police Information Office of the National Police, the Information Headquarters of the Civil Guard and the National Intelligence Center, as well as the efficiency displayed by judges and prosecutors of the National Court in this fight.

Three are the fundamental pillars that have generated the multiple successes of our fight against jihadist terrorism during these years. In the first place, the reorganization of the operational capabilities used against ETA to fight jihadist terrorism, which includes not only the transfer of human resources but also the development of new methods and procedures along with important technological innovation. On the other hand, the reforms of the Criminal Code in 2010 and 2015 have allowed preemptive capabilities for our Security Forces to make preventive arrests and combat the growing activism of terrorists on the Internet. The excellent work of the Security Forces and the judicial rigor of judges and prosecutors have allowed preventive detention and subsequent prison sentences in more than 90 percent of the cases.

A second axis has been a cohesive intelligence community working in a coordinated manner. Cooperation between intelligence and police services is not always easy in the fight against terrorism. In Spain's case, I am aware that this cooperation between the CNI and the Security Forces has been effective and that the adequate coordination between the Civil Guard and the National Police has even resulted in some joint operations. The coordination with some autonomous police corps, as in the case of Catalonia, has been more difficult and remains as a pending issue for the future. The last attack in Barcelona revealed deficiencies in the coordination mechanisms. In any case, this question of cooperation between national police corps and other regional or local police is in fact an open question in other European countries.



Lastly, we must highlight Spain's effective international collaboration efforts in the fight against terrorism. For many years Spain has been one of the Community's partners promoting more European cooperation in the fight against terrorism. The arrest and delivery warrants or the joint investigation teams were Spanish initiatives that, especially after the 9/11 attacks, would become a reality. That EUROPOL's current director of the Center against Terrorism is a colonel of the Spanish Civil Guard is another example of the Spanish Security Forces expertise in this field. Now that the terrorist threat affects all European countries; there is a more multilateral leadership to promote new measures such as the integration of police information systems, the PNR, or the entry and exit log to our territory. Nonetheless, Spain must remain at the forefront of that leadership role.

Beyond the common security space that the European Union represents, our country has kept strengthened cooperation ties with other countries, from the United States to Mediterranean countries. It is necessary to highlight the excellent level of cooperation with the Kingdom of Morocco. The constant exchange of operational information and coordination has reached levels comparable to those with European Union countries. This cooperation has been vital to our effectiveness in the fight against jihadism. This strategic cooperation link between Morocco and Spain in the fight against terrorism may well be defined as a model of success for the entire Mediterranean region.

Despite our success over the years, the Barcelona attacks remind us that the jihadist threat to Spain is particularly intense at this moment. On the one hand, the experience of other countries shows us that second generations of immigrants are more prone to radicalization than the first ones. On the other hand, mentions of Spain in Islamist propaganda have grown significantly in recent months, including references to the "reconquest" of al-Andalus as part of the Caliphate they aspire to rebuild.

Despite all this, Spaniards are quite unaware of how serious the terrorist threat is. Even after the last attack on Las Ramblas, just over 15 percent of respondents showed concern for jihadist terrorism, according to the latest CIS Barometer of September 2017. It is also necessary to strengthen the defense of our democratic values in the face of terror and our determination to never give in to terrorists' blackmailing efforts. This report will undoubtedly contribute to all that, modestly but with rigor and courage, explaining to anyone who wants to read it the threat we face, how to fight it, and overcome it.

Terrorism is undoubtedly the main threat to the security of Spain and Europe. The media, social, political, and economic impact of each attack actually makes it a strategic threat for the entire European Union. Defending the life, liberty, and security of citizens is the first obligation of any democratic government. If the European Union fails in this task due to the fragility of its borders, the weakness of its police and judicial cooperation mechanisms, or its lack of determination to fight terror, the very survival of the Union will be seriously compromised. And what is more consequential, the freedom that defines us as a civilization would be seriously threatened.

IGNACIO COSIDÓ  
*Former Director of the National Police and Senator  
of the Kingdom of Spain*



# PRESENTATION

During 2016 and 2017, Europe has suffered five major terrorist attacks: The Brussels bombings in March 2016 (35 dead), the Nice attack in France in July 2016 (86 dead), the Berlin attack in December (12 killed), the Manchester attack in May 2017 (22 dead) and the Barcelona attack in August 2017 (13 dead). During 2016 and 2017, Europe has suffered five major terrorist attacks: The Brussels bombings in March 2016 (35 dead), the Nice attack in France in July 2016 (86 dead), the Berlin attack in December (12 killed), the Manchester attack in May 2017 (22 dead) and the Barcelona attack in August 2017 (13 dead). Nonetheless, in addition to these macro attacks, the European continent has continued experiencing a trend already seen in previous years: Islamic-inspired "small attacks". During 2016 and 2017, we have seen what could be defined as "microterrorism" — the type of attacks that some countries, such as Israel, have endured for years. Spain, France, Sweden, Germany, and Great Britain have endured this kind of attacks in recent months. In a few weeks we will find out the final number of casualties for 2017.

Spain had miraculously been spared Islamist attacks. In some cases, luck has prevented our country from suffering massacres such as the one in Berlin on December 19. In other cases, the work of our security forces, even via "preemptive detention" of suspects of radicalism, has aborted attempts at different levels of preparation.

This absence of imminent danger has given Spanish society the already-trending idea that it is possible to live on the fringes of the jihadist threat. In 2004, Spaniards perceived the March 11 attacks in Madrid, as a punishment — in some cases, as "fair" punishment for our country's foreign policy. Since then, Spain plays second fiddle abroad and, what is worse, a kind of taboo about the fight against terrorism has spread among the public, experts, and the political class, which obsessively tries to withdraw the issue of terrorism from political discourse. It is what happens with the anti-jihadist pact and the stubborn effort of the political class to avoid speaking about terrorism. However, we at GEES cannot think of another issue in more need to be more debated and in a more open way: Spain needs to hold an open debate about the origins, development, and ways to fight against this kind of barbarism. We must help alleviate what is lacking and promote a debate that should be public, candid, and open. We must speak about jihadism — and it should be profusely discussed. GEES contributes to this discussion and the fruits of this reflection are to be found here in this report.

This report reveals an uncomfortable truth: Spain is no longer the neutral base of operations that once could have been. Our country is, just as Germany, France, or Great Britain, a preferred target of terrorist groups, be it al-Qaeda, ISIS, or whichever comes later. Not only is Spain a terrorist objective for being a European country, there is also a specific reason: Islamism aims to integrate al-Andalus into its dreamlike caliphate, as shown by Islamist propaganda disseminated through Internet overseas and from Spain. In August 2017 ISIS reminded in a video its aspiration

that Spain be conquered by Allah's warriors and the Spaniards be punished for having expelled the Muslim conquerors several centuries ago.

Beyond this, we can say that there are more and more Islamists in our country willing to attack Spaniards. The dismantling of fairly large and individual cells when they were planning or preparing attacks on our soil is increasing: There is an upward trend and everything indicates it is permanent

This means that the possibility of more great-intensity attacks in our country is high in the short and medium term, Spain is in danger. In any case, the threat is increasing as the number of arrests also increases: 2015, 2016, and 51 arrested until the summer of 2017. Islamism has reached the heart of Europe, where Spain spiritually belongs, and is here to stay. This does not mean that we are not to fight against it, dismantle its cells, find its leaders, stop them, or kill them.

The first step, however, is to reach a correct diagnosis of the situation. That is the purpose of this report. For almost a year, national and international analysts and writers at GEES have contributed to this body of work. This report addresses the different areas in which Spain's security is at stake: The evolution of jihadism in Europe; the history in our own country; its evolution in North Africa and the current threat in our society.

We also provide the fundamental guidelines that, in our opinion, should be followed for a more effective fight against this threat, which, far from affecting just the security of Spaniards, threatens the very existence of our society.

# 1. EUROPE'S FIGHT AGAINST ISLAMIST TERROR

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. THE ISLAMIC ROOTS OF THE THREAT TO EUROPE
- 1.2. THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE THREAT TO EUROPE

## 2. JIHAD COMES TO EUROPE

- 2.1. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EUROPE'S JIHADI NETWORKS
- 2.2. ISLAMIST VIOLENCE TURNS ON EUROPE - THE 'AL-QAEDA ERA' 2000-2012
- 2.3. MORE DANGEROUS THAN EVER - THE ISLAMIC STATE ERA AND THE THREAT EUROPE FACES TODAY

## 3. EUROPE'S RESPONSE TO THE THREAT FROM RADICAL ISLAM

- 3.1. EUROPE'S CHALLENGE IN CONCEIVING THE THREAT IT FACES
- 3.2. EUROPE'S CHALLENGE IN IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE COUNTER-TERRORISM POLICIES

## 1. BACKGROUND

### 1.1. THE ISLAMIC ROOTS OF THE THREAT TO EUROPE

The threat of Radical Islam Europe faces predates the seminal events of 9/11 and the attacks on Madrid, London and subsequent attacks in Belgium, France, Germany, the UK, and Spain once again, as part of the more recent wave of Islamist terror. Yet it is only in the wake of the initial totemic attacks on the Twin Towers and associated targets that Western policymakers came to understand the potency of this threat as the paramount security challenge they face in our current era. **Since the emergence of this challenge, debates have raged in policy and public fora as to how to conceive and combat this threat accurately and conductively. This report will show it in the following chapters.** In this fight, clarity about the basic principles of this threat is a fundamental element, often tensely controversial, of a European response, which still remains lacking.

Since the advent of the campaign of Islamist terrorism against them, **European publics have become used to the mantra often voiced by political leaders in the wake of an attack that Islamist terrorism is ‘nothing to do with Islam.’ This is an obvious fallacy.**<sup>1</sup> There can be no doubt that the majority of Muslims in Europe and across the globe do not subscribe to the version of their faith that the Jihadi perpetrators propound - indeed, they are the main victims of their gruesome violence. Nor is it to deny the importance of a careful response, including responsible language that seeks to allow for the immense complexities Europe now faces in managing problems often euphemistically described as matters of ‘social cohesion’. Yet if we are to be successful in defeating the Islamists murdering Europe’s citizens—and putting in question the defense of European ideals in the face of their extreme violence—, we must take into consideration uncomfortable truths about the importance and centrality of Islamism in this problem.

One basic principle to explain the connection of the problem to Islam is that the jihadi terrorists threatening us specifically draw on Muslim holy scriptures to posit distinct, discernible, and cohesive ideological roots firmly based in Islamic jurisprudence. However disputed and debatable their claims may be since they compete with other theological interpretations, this construct about Muslim holy scriptures is a fundamentally important explanation for the potency of their project, associated narratives and actions. Hence, **the religious and ideological roots of the threat matter both in macro terms to conceive and understand the problem, and micro terms to fight it at a community and even individual level.** It would be an enormous mistake to overlook this factor.

For all the denominational complexity inherent to radical Islam’s panoply of movements, one can discern some foundational shared tenets and patterns when describing the religious and ideological source material that forms the background to the threat Europe faces. At the root of it, there are several fundamental principles that we will explain succinctly;

- Islam is the one true faith that will dominate the world;

---

<sup>1</sup> See for example ‘Please stop saying the Nice attacks have nothing to do with Islam’, *Daily Telegraph*, 15 July 2016, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/15/please-stop-staying-the-nice-attacks-arent-about-islam/>.

- Muslim rulers need to govern by the shari'a alone;
- Only the Qur'an and hadith contain the whole truth for determining the righteous life
- There is no separation between religion and the rest of life;
- Muslims are in a state of conflict with the unbelievers.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, there are discernible patterns of thought with the aim of mobilizing Muslims. For example, the **scriptural accounts of the Prophet Muhammad, as interpreter and implementer of the Almighty's will against a pre-existing, unacceptable state of immoral chaos** (known in Islamic terminology as *jahiliyyah*), which results in a state of war between Islam and its milieu. The interpretations of the nature of this religious conflict and the resultant duties on Muslims differ widely; however, the hardline interpretations of this basic dynamic are the ones with a discernible, religious, ideological and political progression as a series of fundamentalist reinterpretations of Islamic scripture through time, serving today as the basic fuel for the murderous hate facing Europeans.

This history of ideas of the various interpreters of Islam through the ages, be they theologians, political activists or both, is a specialist field of study to which the paper at hand is not the forum to do justice. Yet a brief overview of key transmissive figures illustrates the theological lineage that fuels the Islamists' narrative with its extraordinary potency and explains their actions: Crucial is **Ibn Taymiyya**, a 13th Century interpreter of the Koran frequently cited as inspiration by Islamists of all stripes for his emphasis on, as well as elucidation and expansion of, the concept of jihad (holy war), in particular taking in the need to fight both non-Muslim unbelievers, as well as Muslims who fail to partake in the fight. The much more widely known purveyor of 'Wahhabism' - Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab's puritanical vision contains several additional key tenets that drive Radical Islam to this day, namely, a desire to convert all Muslims to his beliefs, resorting to violence, including against other Muslims, to establish them and no tolerance for innovative interpretations of the Islamic holy texts. His alliance with the riches of the House of Saud would play a leading role in spreading the religious poison of 'Wahhabism' worldwide, including among Europe's Muslim communities.

While the early 20th century was dominated by modernists who ultimately created the nations of the Islamic world, the middle of the century saw the most important formulation of this legacy of hardline ideas into coherent beliefs about Islam, politics and warfare that further serve to underpin Islamist ideology. **Hassan Al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood**, not only identified Europe and the wider West as a threat but additionally revived the concept of a just and holy war on behalf of Islam that would proceed in stages until it had conquered the globe. **Sayyid Qutb**, the Brotherhood's most influential ideologue, is perhaps the most important modern transmissor of these ideas, providing the theological and ideological foundation for the Islamists threatening Europe today. Taking the premises of Wahhab as a starting point, Qutb asserted that **liberalism and**

---

<sup>2</sup> Habeck, Mary, *Knowing the Enemy* (New Haven, Yale, 2006), p.17.

**democracy are inherently false religions rather than just political ideas, that only sharia law can be a legitimate source of governance, and that thus both the ‘apostate’ leaders of Islamic countries and the unbelievers more broadly are legitimate targets for jihad.**<sup>3</sup>

Al Qaeda and the Islamic State - as well as the many other groups in the tradition known as salafi-jihadism, thus draw on this theological tradition for their murderous project. Al-Qaeda has historically placed a great deal of importance on explaining the religious foundation of its campaign against the West. Partially this is on account of its relative success, forcing it to account for the translation of its **foundational ideas of a pious Muslim life waging Jihad from the realm of faith to the realm of the realities of warfare and governance on earth.** The Islamic State has placed a lesser emphasis on detailed exposition of the religious foundations of its actions, partially since al-Qaeda firmly established the theological underpinnings of much of the jurisprudence related to the contemporary campaign of jihad against the West, but it too draws its legitimacy and broad blueprint for action from Islam. This is not only a vital explainer of the theological legitimacy and zeal inherent in the violence of these movements, but rather also visible when faith-based governance meets reality and questions of strategy arise.

The injunctions of Islamic law as applied by the jihadis is visible throughout the geographical theatres they control — **the violence takes barbaric forms because there are theological grounds to mete it out in precisely these ways, perhaps most prominently to Western minds in the form of beheadings.** Thus, for example, the Islamic State’s burning to death of the Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasabeh forced it to explain how this was compatible with the Islamic injunction against fire as part of punishments. More broadly, al-Qaeda in its current guise in Iraq has essentially argued the Islamic State applies the sharia overly zealously, arguing for a period of ‘education’ for the population before the application of the most brutal of the practices, thus fusing questions of theology and strategy.<sup>4</sup>

This application of theology through the lineage from Taymiyya to Wahhab, Qutb and al-Qaeda ideologues can also be seen in the destruction of the cultural heritage of Afghanistan by the Taliban and Syria by the Islamic State, both of which are a direct result of the injunctions about monotheism and the disallowal of other icons of worship Wahhab brought to Islamic fundamentalism.

**The theological lineage laid out above is vital as the base layer of analysis of the terror campaign against the West and Europe’s citizens, difficult though these drivers are to comprehend to our secular continent and its leaders.** Osama bin Laden drew on the example of Taymiyya as inciting the Muslim *umma* (global community) to jihad in his 1996 declaration of Jihad.<sup>5</sup> The Madrid bombers had Taymiyya on their computers, as did Theo Van Gogh’s murderer. The radical hate preachers examined below who were and are the deadly fuel of the Islamist menace Europe now faces have used Taymiyya’s justifying of Jihad in non-Muslim lands to sanctify the attacks on Europe

---

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp.17-39

<sup>4</sup> Maher, Shiraz, *Salafi-Jihadism, The History of an Idea* (London, Hurst, 2016), pp.209-210.

<sup>5</sup> Declaration of Jihad, August 23 1996, in Lawrence, Bruce, *Messages to the World, The Statements of Osama bin Laden* (London, Verso, 2005)



and the wider West. The threat to Europe is thus most certainly something to do with Islam. Islam is the fundamental—overriding—category that explains its potency, appeal, modes of operation and pool of recruits.

Conversely however, **it is also of utmost importance to understand that the normative values in classical Islamic jurisprudence can be harnessed to severely assault the theological authenticity and claims on exclusive truth the Islamists posit.** Traditional Islamic theological and legal thought offers interpretations that show the Jihadis' ideas and interpretations of the requirements of Islamic law to be outside the consensus derived by recognised interpretations of classical Islamic sources. Key jihadist tenets as transmitted through the theological chain described, including the duties related to governance by sharia alone and execution of holy war in the pursuit of this ideal until it is established across the globe, can be shown to diverge from classical and contemporary sources of Islamic law.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, as noted, **the majority of adherents of the Muslim faith subscribe to religious interpretations at odds with the Islamists - thus becoming a target for them.** However, any understanding of the threat Europe faces today must account for the fuel that Radical Islam draws from its religious foundations, since in order to put out a fire it is vital to understand what feeds it.

As such, much of the **misguided commentary from European policymakers denying the link to Islam stems not from some pretensions to expertise in Islamic theology but rather from concern for the aforementioned 'social cohesion'** and multiculturalism as well as for ill-conceived notions about defensive tactics. Yet, aside from the fact that this itself is a horrifically dangerous path to take with a public sophisticated enough to understand on a basic level that the denial of this link is untenable, the point here is not to adjudicate a debate about a link to religion - this is clear *a priori* even if posited as an illegitimate 'perversion' - but to allow definitional clarity between categories as relevant to the problem.

Having posited the importance of understanding the zeal, legitimacy and internal narrative cohesion that come from the religious underpinnings of the threat to Europe, it is worth adding that it would be complacent to assume that this is outclassed or even matched by the vague notions of Europe's decidedly un-muscular liberalism. But once this first principle is asserted, it is also important to acknowledge the clear distinction between radical Islam and the bulk of humanity of the Muslim faith. This distinction becomes more difficult than is generally allowed in the state of public debate in Europe today when conceiving of the sliding scale that exists within the faith, including as it has manifested in Europe—not least between those accepting a level of assimilation and in particular the containment of faith to the personal and private sphere, or sharing the public sphere without arousing conflict with non-Muslims—and those seeking to justify transformative political action based on religious tenets, resulting in an undeniable transformation of the public sphere in Europe when it comes to matters of Islam.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ali, Rashad, and Stuart, Hannah, 'A Guide to Refuting Jihadism: critiquing radical Islamist claims to theological authenticity', Henry Jackson Society, (2014), available at: [www.henryjacksonsociety.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/02/Refuting-Jihadism.pdf](http://www.henryjacksonsociety.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/02/Refuting-Jihadism.pdf).

**The question of the moderate majority looks rather different when considered from the point of view of Islamic blasphemy laws versus European liberal notions of free speech**, rather than from the point of view of a willingness to commit violence as a consequence of the answer.

However, a much more problematic dividing line - one we will come to see as foundational to grave policy mistakes - is to be found on what we have come to term as **the ‘extremist’ end of Islam in Europe**, namely the question of shades of Islamism, principally categories that allow distinctions between those who support similar end goals of various forms and extents of Islamic rule as an ideological project in the realm of politics and intellectual proposition, versus those who commit violence in its pursuit. As we will see below, **these distinctions have at times been utilised as part of flawed tactical concepts in defense of the West**. What is certain however is that no serious analysis can be based on anything other than the theological roots of the threat as a first principle. In fact, the murderers assaulting Europe have made unacceptable gains in raising the cost of discussing these first principles, and seen in a certain light can already claim a victory less gruesome than the slain bodies of Europe’s citizens, but perhaps more consequential in the longer term. There isn’t a cartoonist on the continent who doesn’t understand who the more zealous operator of the machine gun is in this battle of totalitarian theology against liberal ideals.

## 1.2. THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE THREAT TO EUROPE

The doctrines that the ideologues of radical Islam propound have not traditionally focused on Europe as an explicit target. **The duty to wage Jihad that emerges from the theological lineage discussed above largely focussed on fighting the ‘near enemy’ - i.e. leaders of Muslim states that failed to govern in accordance with the Islamist interpretation of sharia in their own countries**. But even where jihadi organizations seek to combat the ‘far enemy’, most prominently al-Qaeda, this generally refers to **a conspiratorial and antisemitic notion of a ‘Judeo-Crusader’ alliance waging war on Islam**, the roots of which are to be found in America, which is thus historically al-Qaeda’s preferred target. The story of radical Islam’s entry into and ultimately targeting of Europe is a much worldlier one, built on liberal, secular Europe’s complacency, Islamist opportunism and geopolitical developments.

**The immigration boom in the 1960s and 1970s in Europe**, fuelled by economic opportunity, past colonial links and resultant geopolitical shifts and the appeal of free and stable societies with the prospect of attaining a higher standard of living saw the import into Europe of Muslims of myriad denominations from a multitude of origins. These new arrivals often held on to particular versions of Islam as practiced in their location of origin, and sought to create a basis for religious communal life that would maintain their traditions. In due course, they developed the beginnings of religious and political institutions, including those that drew inspiration from religious doctrines and political events in their locations of origin.<sup>7</sup> **It was in this context and in the wake of Iran’s Islamic revolution**

---

<sup>7</sup> See for example Pantucci, Raffaello, *We Love Death As You Love Life, Britain’s Suburban Terrorists* (London, Hurst, 2015), pp.33-45 to illustrate the case for Muslim immigration to Britain.

**in 1979 that the ascendancy for political Islam in Europe set in.** Saudi Arabia, in reaction to Iran's Shi'a religious challenge, utilized its vast oil wealth to finance the spread of its Sunni Wahhabi inspired Islamic doctrine. Saudi money financed mosques all over the world, including across Europe, spread its religiously motivated charitable efforts and sought to take over the existing and emerging institutions of Western Muslim communities. The price was ideological affinity — to the extent of controlling the content of sermons.

Saudi Arabia was also the key facilitator for the Muslim Brotherhood's entry into Europe. The organisation had found a mutually conducive haven in the Kingdom following the crackdown on it in Egypt in the 1950s — Sayyid Qutb's brother wrote texts on Islam for the school curriculum in Saudi Arabia. **The Saudis gave Brotherhood leaders key positions in their European network of charities, and it was partially in response to the conducive terrain it found amid liberal European states that the Brotherhood set up an international arm.** Throughout the 1980s, Brotherhood affiliated - if not always explicitly so - organisations were set up in European countries, seeking to harness Muslim communities and present themselves as the legitimate face of Islam as an interlocutor with secular European state power.<sup>8</sup>

This expansion of Islamist activism in Europe would provide a fertile and virtually unchecked basis on which to proselytise in support of goals detrimental to European security, pursuing forms of political Islam that may not necessarily demand violence in the immediate here and now but greatly facilitate those who do. That is the background against which the jihadis menacing Europe today also began to establish their networks during this period.

**The backdrop to the arrival of jihad in Europe can be found in political developments in the Middle East and Southwest Asia.** With the already noted Iranian Islamic revolution, a broader period of ascendancy for political Islam set in, the Saudi reaction aside. Middle Eastern regimes, burnt out on failed exercises in nationalism, socialism, pan-Arabism and other secular forms of primary political identity, became the subject of a **revival of Islamism inspired by the religious and ideological lineage** described in the previous section, which had in an earlier period lead to the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood and similar organisations. The core tenets of the outlook on Islam and jihad transmitted through the chain of theologians and ideologues described above now found their perfect target in the regimes leading the Middle East. **The response to such challenges on the part of the Middle Eastern rulers was brutal repression, and thus the effect was a steady stream of Islamists seeking refuge in Europe, which welcomed them with conducive migration and asylum policies.**<sup>9</sup>

Concurrently, **Afghanistan had become a focal point for jihad**, offering a theatre of war that would have grave consequences for the development of radical Islam in Europe. The war there served as a melting pot for Islamists from all over the globe that, despite their rivalries on the ground, followed the call to help liberate their Afghan brothers in droves. In this they were spurred by the religious legitimisation on offer from many leading sources of Islamic authority as well as by the prospect of fighting a secular superpower. The myth of the victory of the Afghan mujahideen over the Soviet

<sup>8</sup> Pargeter, Allison, *The New Frontiers of Jihad, Radical Islam in Europe* (London, I.B. Tauris, 2008), pp.23-24.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, pp.4-15.

superpower—in reality the ‘Afghan Arabs’ that joined the fight arrived towards the end and did no fighting that in any way shaped the outcome of the war—was nevertheless to become an intensely powerful driving force for these veterans of the Afghan jihad. **It was in the camps of Afghanistan and the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region (Af-Pak), that many of the connections that would later fuel the jihadi networks in Europe were forged.**<sup>10</sup>

Against this backdrop, al-Qaeda eventually grew out of **an alliance between Osama bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam**, a Palestinian who would prove a prominent ideologue and recruiter of foreign fighters for the Afghan jihad. The two men linked up in Saudi Arabia before setting up guesthouses and training camps in Afghanistan for Arab and other fighters. In 1987 bin Laden had separately formed al-Ansar as a special front and led its fighters in a victorious battle against Soviet Special Forces, the emergent myth of which both appeared to prove that a small band of believers could take on a superpower and enhanced his personal credibility as ready to sacrifice his wealth for a pious life in the service of Jihad. The gestation of al-Qaeda is complex, comprised for much of its history of a much looser network than is often portrayed. **The core of the organization would eventually have a hierarchical structure around the central leadership, shura (advisory) council, local chapters and an international wing, but its larger network was and remains a shifting network of connections of various strengths** affected by personal relationships, theological questions and matters of strategy and mutual benefit between nodes.<sup>11</sup> Here too the religious underpinning is crucial to understand the threat against Europe however, since it is central to al-Qaeda’s leadership in propagating the theological underpinnings of jihad developed by bin Laden together with Ayman al-Zawahiri that would eventually justify attacks on Europe. The principle tenet of this is a theological justification of indiscriminate violence by ascribing certain conditions to Europe that make its citizens valid targets in a strategic concept that emphasises the need to internationalise the jihadis’ holy war so as to stop the ‘far enemy’ of Western powers - the ‘Jews and Crusaders’ - who are propping up the ‘near enemy’ of the Arab regimes that stand in the way of the Almighty’s will and laws.

The cohesion of the network of like-minded groups and operatives centred around al-Qaeda that grew out of the Afghan jihad should however not be understated, despite its constituent groups and leaders being in and out of allegiance as well as fractious over matters of religion and tactics. For one, it fuelled the theological and ideological underpinnings of the revival of jihad across the globe, incubating, taking over or acquiring allegiance from fellow travellers as ‘concession holders’. **The Islamic State and the Caliphate in Syria would emerge out of al-Qaeda, eventually becoming a fierce enemy at war with al-Qaeda’s affiliate in Syria Jabhat al-Nusra, which would itself disaffiliate from al-Qaeda for tactical reasons in 2016.**<sup>12</sup> Thus, today two outgrowths of al-Qaeda are engaged in a vicious battle in Syria, premised largely on religious and tactical differences over how to achieve the same goal.

<sup>10</sup> Burke, Jason, *The New Threat from Islamic Militancy* (Vintage, London, 2015), pp. 40-41.

<sup>11</sup> Burke, Jason, *Al-Qaeda, The True Story of Radical Islam* (Penguin, London, 2004), pp. 5-10.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Al-Nusra Front cuts ties with al-Qaida and renames itself’, *The Guardian*, 28 July 2016, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/28/al-qaida-syria-nusra-split-terror-network>.

The second important factor, in particular when it comes to violence against Europe, is that **there was sufficient cohesion to build a network of affiliates and assert command and control within it to execute terrorist attacks on an unprecedented scale**, drawing on operatives working across continents, most famously the 9/11 attacks, but also involving multiple plots against European nations.

Al-Qaeda's initial focus was to conceive of the next stage of jihad following the Afghan war, though in the early 1990's the preference for most of the veterans of the Afghan jihad was to focus on the 'near enemy' and seek to depose the regimes of their countries of origin once the fighting in Afghanistan was over. **It soon became clear however that they would be unable to match their inflated expectations, built on the Afghan myths of battlefield success, in the face of the repressive security apparatuses that faced them at home.** Thus a wave of radicalized and battle-hardened jihadis went on to join the Islamists already making liberal and open Europe their home and to populate and propagate the initial organizing ranks of Europe's jihadi networks.

## 2. JIHAD COMES TO EUROPE

### 2.1. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EUROPE'S JIHADI NETWORKS

Against the background of an already expanding Islamist scene across Europe, the early 1990s saw the establishment of the first networks linked to al-Qaeda in Europe, comprised of veteran fighters, radical preachers and activists in several countries across the continent. As discussed above, **European countries offered favourable conditions for the Islamists, not only in the form of economic opportunities and social safety nets but also political freedoms and protection, including asylum and paths to citizenship.** A network of Islamist activists thus began to take root, ignored by the authorities who were largely oblivious to the potent religious poison underpinning their activities, which included preaching hate against the very nations that were offering them refuge and in many cases welfare payments.

During this initial period, **Europe was not a target for attack by these growing networks but rather a logistical backstop.** Most of the groups and circles that the jihadis created or joined still sought to fight regimes in their countries of origin, though the idea of the internationalization of jihad as promoted by al-Qaeda had begun to take root. Rather, Europe served as a logistical base, for propaganda, fundraising through donations and the proceeds of crime, recruitment, and the exchange of ideas about theology, strategy and planning.<sup>13</sup> The playbook followed by these jihadi agitators focused on establishing fora under the guidance of local charismatic leaders that would infiltrate or even take over mosques or meet in other suitable locations across the continent, in France, Spain, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. **Yet the most consequential location for the establishment of Islamist networks in Europe would prove to be in the UK, with**

---

<sup>13</sup> Nesser, Peter, *Islamist Terrorism, A History in Europe* (London, Hurst, 2015), pp.34-36.

## **London becoming an international hub of Islamic extremism unparalleled in the West, the consequences of which Europe suffers to this day.**

The development of London into a global hub for al-Qaeda and other Islamic extremists is a scandalous story of complacency and misguidedness on the part of the British authorities, whose lax approach to the threat **earned Britain's capital the moniker 'Londonistan'**. Abu Musab al-Suri, a leading al-Qaeda strategist, noted that for the jihadis London in the 1990s had become the new Peshawar — the hub of Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) on the border with Afghanistan where Al Qaeda and the new generation of jihadi organizations incubated for many years originally.<sup>14</sup> This space opened up by Britain's complacency allowed the flourishing of a chain of key figures of Islamic extremism, radical hate preachers the effects of whose words and organizations can be prominently traced through subsequent Islamist attacks on Europe.

**In 1993, Omar Abu Omar, a Jordanian Palestinian theologian of radical Islam better known as Abu Qatada** was granted asylum by the UK and, supporting himself through welfare payments, became a focal point for veterans of the Afghan jihad, who he urged to support Islamists in the Middle East, Bosnia, Chechnya, and Algeria.<sup>15</sup> In addition, he maintained a role as a key conduit to al-Qaeda in Afghanistan as well as its European cells, thus eventually becoming known as the organisations 'spiritual ambassador' to Europe.<sup>16</sup> Qatada's influence as a theologian of jihad was significant, beginning with a 1994 *fatwa* (religious ruling) authorizing attacks on women and children in the jihad being waged then in Algeria, as well as becoming the source of religious legitimacy for Osama bin Laden's interpretations of the Islamic injunctions proclaimed to support his vision and strategy for global jihad.<sup>17</sup>

**Abu Qatada's command of theology and resultant status among jihadis, coupled to his links to Al Qaeda and veterans of the Afghan jihad as well as other Islamists across Europe meant that he would go on to become one of the most dangerous drivers of the hate in Europe and wider afield from his base in London.**

Perhaps more famous in the public imagination is the hook-handed cleric and hate preacher **Abu Hamza**. A student of Abu Qatada, Hamza had an impeccable pedigree of gestation towards a leader of Radical Islam in Europe. Having been recruited to the cause of jihad by Abdullah Azzam himself in Saudi Arabia, Hamza lost both hands and an eye in the Afghan jihad, as well as fighting in Bosnia subsequently. Hamza utilised the important veneer of these experiences to great effect as a charismatic preacher of hate who would become one of the most notorious radicalizers in Europe. Taking over London's **Finsbury Park Mosque**— whose incumbent leaders repeatedly appealed to the British police and courts for help to no avail—Hamza practically turned it into an al-Qaeda outpost in the heart of London. **Jihadis from all over the globe would pass through the mosque, including those that would attack London in 2005**, and many more who were arrested for terrorist offenses both by the UK and other authorities. By the time he was forced out of Finsbury Park Mosque - only to

---

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p.37

<sup>15</sup> Pargeter, *The New Frontiers of Jihad*, p.51

<sup>16</sup> Nesser, *Islamist Terrorism*, pp.39-40.

<sup>17</sup> Burke, *Al Qaeda*, pp.184-185.

continue to preach in the street outside at gatherings attracting great media attention — Hamza had turned the mosque into a central hub of radicalization, turning scores of acolytes into Islamists committed to jihad, with his sermons and other material turning up in the possession of those planning and executing terror attacks across Europe.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly grave for Europe's future security was the appearance on the scene of **Omar Bakri Muhammad**. Having started out as a member of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, Bakri arrived in the UK following expulsion from Saudi Arabia. There, he had sought first to set up Hizb ut-Tahrir, an international organization devoted to the creation of an Islamic caliphate which, though proclaiming non-violent means, supports jihad and various extreme interpretations of Islam. When the leadership of Hizb ut-Tahrir was not extreme enough for Bakri, he founded al-Mouhajiroun to propagate his vision. **Upon being welcomed in by the UK, Bakri repaid the favor by exploiting its freedoms to replicate these efforts more successfully and become a key driver of radical Islam in Europe.** Under Bakri's leadership, Hizb ut-Tahrir propounded a more extreme outlook than previously prevalent amid UK-based Islamist groups. When this wasn't enough, Bakri again broke with the organization and reconstituted al-Mouhajiroun. Bakri built the latter into a paramount node in the European network of jihad, staging rallies and conferences in the UK that attracted Islamists from across the continent, recruiting scores of fighters for jihad abroad and building an aggressive media profile for the organization that made no attempts to hide its aims.

Bakri would flee Britain for Lebanon following the evident links of the perpetrators of the 2005 attacks on London to al-Mouhajiroun's activities, but his work was continued by his protege **Anjem Choudary**. Choudary became a highly recognisable proponent of radical Islam, touring mainstream media studios and organising demonstrations designed to garner coverage for the extreme views propounded there. His story is as perfect a demonstration of Europe's failures in the face of Radical Islam as any. **British authorities failed entirely to understand the nature of the threat facing them, in particular the radicalizing and enabling role the hubs created by these jihadi proselytizers would play.** For the longest time, the security services and commentators held a view that these were fringe figures, to be ridiculed rather than taken seriously.<sup>19</sup> Yet nothing demonstrates their deadly complacency better than the fact that Choudary's organization is linked to a quarter of all UK terrorism convictions.<sup>20</sup> Al-Mouhajiroun and various aliases thereof would be banned only in 2010 and Choudary would not be imprisoned until 2016.

---

<sup>18</sup> O'Neill, Sean, and, Gregory, Daniel, *The Suicide Factory, Abu Hamza and the Finsbury Park Mosque* (London, HarperCollins, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> 'For years we dangerously dismissed Anjem Choudary as a harmless, publicity-seeking buffoon', *The Sun*, 7 September 2016, available at <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1739800/for-years-we-dangerously-dismissed-anjem-choudary-%C2%ADas-a-harmless-publicity-seeking-buffoon/>.

<sup>20</sup> 'Revealed: terror map of UK', *Sunday Times*, 5 March 2017, available at <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/revealed-terror-map-of-uk-rdzmm8523>.

## 2.2. ISLAMIST VIOLENCE TURNS ON EUROPE - THE 'AL-QAEDA ERA' 2000-2012

The expanding network of Islamists across Europe may have originally been comprised of veterans of foreign wars in the Muslim world with their eyes trained on the regimes of their countries of origin, but given their deeply held antipathy to the West, innovations in jihadi theology and strategy making the 'far enemy' a legitimate and even primary target, in addition to religious legitimization for attacks against Europeans by jihadis now living among them, it is unsurprising that **Europe's folly in allowing entry to the purveyors of this murderous hate would eventually lead to deaths among its citizens.** The first country to suffer from Jihadi violence was France. Following the crack-down on Islamists in Algeria and subsequent cancelled elections, the **Armed Islamic Group**, known as the GIA emerged as a potent threat.

GIA's founders included members of al-Qaeda, though the relationship between the two entities would ebb and flow over time, and the organization operated training camps in Algeria while also training its fighters in jihadi camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan. It had support cells across Europe, delivering money, logistical help and recruits in a familiar pattern, while the aforementioned Abu Qatada served as a one of its key propagandists from London. **In 1995 it began a series of attacks on France and Belgium. These would prove to be the first deadly experience on European soil of a jihadi movement now focused on both specific aims in their own territories,** Algeria in this case, and an international strategy of violence, grounded in support networks in Europe at the same time as making it a target for atrocities.<sup>21</sup> **The 1985 attack against the El Descaso Restaurant in Spain** may have been the harbinger of this genuinely terrorist campaign.

Beginning in the early 2000s, the major threat to Europe would however come from al-Qaeda itself. Despite the already discussed definitional challenge in accurately describing the structure of the the networks that comprised al-Qaeda during this period it is nevertheless clear that, **no matter the specific nuances and shifting realities of the exact constellation, there was a discernable modus operandi to the structure of the threat.** Plots were conceived by, or in cooperation with and sanctioned by, al-Qaeda Central under bin Laden's authority, which would direct affiliates linked to varying degrees explicitly or by association to the organization. Generally they would be directed through key go-betweens between Al Qaeda central in Af-Pak and Europe. **The European affiliate cells were the ultimate executors of the operations and were themselves hierarchical operations to an extent.** Senior figures connected to al-Qaeda in Europe would employ a level of autonomy in directing subordinate networks of cells towards the broadly agreed goals of specific operations. Usually **the pattern followed would include authority and some element of command and control from al-Qaeda in Af-Pak, recruitment in Europe, training in al-Qaeda camps in Af-Pak, logistical support and preparation on a pan-European basis through affiliate operatives and networks, and either disruption by the authorities or a successful attack.**

A good illustration of this modus operandi is the plot uncovered in late 2000 to **attack a Christmas market in Strasbourg, France.** The plot was directed by a former GIA fighter, Abu Doha, who had become an al-Qaeda affiliate and whose network spanned the UK, Germany, France, Italy, and other

---

<sup>21</sup> Nesser, Peter, *Islamist Terrorism, A History in Europe* (London, Hurst, 2015), pp.67-72.



European countries. A top-down process of recruitment, radicalization, and training saw European recruits sent to Afghanistan to train in the camps established there. Operational execution took place across several European countries, with Doha controlling the operation from London and serving as the conduit to al-Qaeda as well as providing funding, while networks across Italy, Belgium, and Germany helped with logistics, such as the acquisition of weaponry or fielding of personnel with relevant bomb-making experience. The cells were organized internally in a hierarchical manner, and worked in a deliberate fashion as part of a compartmentalized but clearly discernible structure with links to al-Qaeda.

A similar network dismantled just under a year later displayed these key characteristics again. In the case of the terrorist plots aimed at France and Belgium directed by Djamel Beghal, the link to al-Qaeda among his operatives was even stronger, and the pattern was the same. **Hierarchical, top-down recruitment, radicalization, foreign support from and training in Afghanistan**, a local affiliate in the form of Beghal linked to al-Qaeda via one of its high ranking members by the name of Abu Zubaydah. Well versed in Europe's jihadi scene, Beghal had been known to French authorities both for his activities with the GIA and as a radical preacher. After moving to the UK, he established links with Abu Qatada in London, and subsequently came to be in charge of a network of cells operating across European borders as an al-Qaeda affiliate tasked with attacking U.S. targets in Europe, in line with al-Qaeda's strategic goals against the 'far enemy'. Shortly after the network was dismantled by U.S. and European security services, America was hit with the biggest terrorist attack ever perpetrated on September 11, 2001. Given the modus operandi outlined above it should be no surprise that an al-Qaeda cell based in Hamburg, Germany as part of a similar structure had a leading role in their perpetration.<sup>22</sup>

After 9/11, with the invasion of Afghanistan to deny al-Qaeda the safe haven the Taliban had been offering bin Laden, and subsequently the 2003 Iraq War, the dynamics around Islamist inspired terrorism in Europe changed. **Western powers clamped down significantly on Al Qaeda and affiliated groups, both in their safe havens and amidst the operators that they could identify in Europe.** For its part, al-Qaeda gained a new generation of recruits rooted in Europe, who, inspired by the veterans of jihad, were ever more responsive to the expanded notions of Europe as a legitimate target that al-Qaeda expounded following the invasion of Iraq. Yet the modus operandi of the attacks remained largely similar. Though al-Qaeda didn't take credit for the Madrid attacks despite some links between the organization and those responsible, these, as well as the London bombings of March 2005, their failed copycat attacks a few days later, and a plot to bomb airliners uncovered in 2006 all had the same hallmarks.

In the case of these latter attacks the go-between with al-Qaeda was a British-Pakistani by the name of Rashid Rauf, who recruited and handled the plotters. They operated in the same milieu of radical Islam in Europe, received training in bomb-making from al-Qaeda in Waziristan and operated within a hierarchical and deliberate structure that saw them carry out their attacks according to a precise plan, including a test run. This was also the hallmark of another unsuccessful earlier attempt by Al Qaeda to explode truck bombs in London.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, pp.90-112.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, pp.168-198.

European security services were not idle in response to these atrocities, Britain cracked down on 'Londonistan' to an extent, arresting Abu Qatada and ultimately deporting him, as well as working to disrupt the jihadi networks described above and similar ones. **Finsbury Park Mosque was raided several times and closed before reopening under more moderate management.** This pressure was having an effect all over Europe, forcing Islamists underground and, coinciding with the rise of new technologies, increasingly moving their activities online. One of the effects of this new environment was to push jihadi activity into Europe's periphery, which had traditionally both had less extensive Islamist networks than Western Europe as well as played a less prominent role in the strategy and propaganda of al-Qaeda.

An example of a plot that combines these elements was the dismantling in 2005 of the network known as '**Al Qaeda in Northern Europe**', based in Scandinavia. Its members used social media and online fora for propaganda and organisation. They issued threats against Europe in the name of al-Qaeda but it is unclear whether their plots were aimed at Denmark or Bosnia, where Islamists with links to the network were also arrested. Danish police arrested members of the network in Copenhagen after they initially came to the attention of the security services when visiting London to meet Omar Bakri, and subsequently maintained this relationship.<sup>24</sup> This shows that the function of the key radicalizing figures still mattered to an extent in the formation of these networks, including in Scandinavia itself, where extremist cells would form around radicalizers extolling and recruiting for jihad in the familiar format of a charismatic leader forming a group of jihadis around him and then linking up with other cells within the country in question and across European borders. The online component of the Scandinavian network heralded developments that would vastly increase the importance of the internet to the threat picture from jihadis Europe was confronted with.

Al-Qaeda's threats against the West had made little reference to Europe prior to the buildup of the 2003 Iraq war, but increasingly began to threaten specific European nations **from late 2002, with bin Laden and al-Zawahiri issuing a string of statements threatening the U.S. and her allies, including the UK, Norway, Germany, and France.** As the war in Iraq progressed, Europe once again became a logistical base for Jihad. Support and recruitment networks were soon uncovered by the security services in Italy, Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, the UK and across Scandinavia.

Recruits would be funneled to Iraq via neighboring countries, and **Europeans were disproportionately represented among suicide bombers,** made jihadi cannon fodder on account of their lack of language skills or prior fighting experience.<sup>25</sup> This may be one reason why the foreign fighter count was kept relatively low in comparison to later developments when the Islamic State would make the opportunity for statebuilding a key part of its attraction. Nor did the European Jihadis who made it to Iraq pose a threat to Europe in the way those that would later join the Islamic State do today.

---

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 202-206.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p.134

The overwhelming majority of serious plots against Europe followed the modus operandi described above even once the Iraq war and attendant European jihadi effort had commenced. This would generally involve some form of al-Qaeda oversight and direction, recruitment and logistics support across Europe, training abroad, all loosely connected through people, cells and organizations affiliated to al-Qaeda to varying degrees, but sufficiently for the exercise of some form of effective command and control. Crucially, the plots would remain connected to the al-Qaeda Af-Pak operation, rather than to the jihadis in Iraq, for their training and instruction requirements. Indeed, research from the UK shows that **a foreign link - fighters having trained abroad or fought in previous jihadi conflicts - has a disproportionate role in the most serious plots Europe faces.** Of eight major terror plots planned or carried out between 1999 and 2010 in the UK, 41 percent of the participants had experience of combat abroad and / or foreign terrorist training camps, a far higher proportion than among those arrested for lesser Jihad related offenses, for example in the realm of different forms of support or dissemination of propaganda, making clear the importance of the foreign link to the more ambitious attacks.<sup>26</sup>

Yet the effects of the West's campaign against the jihadis both in Afghanistan and in the Af-Pak border region—working in tense and complicated cooperation with Pakistan's then President Pervez Musharraf—as well as the disruption of attendant jihadi networks in Europe would begin to manifest from the middle of the decade. One overarching resultant factor was **the ever increasing importance of on-line activity and communication as already seen in the case of the Scandinavian jihadis above.**

An early indication of the much greater effects of disruption and the increasing importance of online communication came in 2005, when British authorities disrupted a network plotting attacks in which it appeared the conspirators had never met.<sup>27</sup> Jihadi use of the internet did not stop at communication or the dissemination of propaganda. Al Qaeda soon understood that if it was to withstand the heavy defensive blows meted out by the West against its Af-Pak bases, Iraqi affiliates and European network, it would have to find a less structured modus operandi. Thus the groundwork was laid for a change in approach, born out of necessity that would result in new dynamics emerging, many of which still make up the hallmarks of the threat from jihadis Europe faces today.

This new modus operandi moved away from direct links with command and control as seen in the networks described above, and began to rely more on the dissemination of propaganda online to inspire jihadi terror attacks, enabled by the increasing additional availability online of specific relevant know-how that anyone who knew where to look could acquire and operationalize. Abu Musab al-Suri, a key al-Qaeda operative and strategist who participated in the Afghan jihad before spending considerable time in Europe as a propagandist for jihad as well as being a roving 'Ambassador' of sorts for al-Qaeda across its network of jihadis and to the Taliban in Afghanistan, first called for a strategic doctrine of 'decentralized' jihad.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Stuart, Hannah, 'Understanding CAGE: A Public Information Dossier', The Henry Jackson Society, March 2015, available at: <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/04/Understanding-CAGE.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Clutterbuck, Lindsay, 'An Overview of Violent Jihad in the UK', in, Ranstorp, Magnus, ed., *Understanding Violent Radicalisation, Terrorist and Jihadist Movements in Europe* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2010), p.154

<sup>28</sup> Nesser, *Islamist Terrorism*, p.35.

However it was the hate preacher and al-Qaeda propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki's online magazine *Inspire* that would help operationalize the concept for al-Qaeda's jihad against the 'far enemy'. Al-Awlaki had been a preacher in the U.S. at a mosque attended by two of the 9/11 hijackers before moving to the UK, where he was revered as one of the key voices of salafi-jihadism in the West, before ending up in Yemen under the protection of al-Qaeda's local affiliate, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). From Yemen he not only directed plots, including dispatching the so-called 'underwear bomber' Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab who tried to detonate a bomb sewn into his underwear on a flight bound for Detroit, but also began producing and disseminating *Inspire* to great effect. The publication covered everything a would-be jihadi might need, from theological legitimation to rousing propaganda and strategic justifications for action.

Crucially, it included the means for action, in particular bomb-making instructions that were designed to be followed by non-experts utilising domestically available means. **The message was clear — jihad was viable and necessary at home for European Islamists and should be carried out without the inherent risks of detection of the previous mode of organization that included travel to training camps and larger cell structures.** The effect was clearly discernible in Europe, not least in the UK where in late 2010 police acted against a network of Islamists as part of a wider operation against British Islamists of a South Asian background, some of whom were associated with al-Mouhajiroun and its aliases. The arrests were instigated when intelligence revealed that one node of the group had been discussing how to build a bomb as per instructions found in *Inspire*.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the publication's influence in spreading the call and means for individual terrorism among jihadis is hard to overstate and can be seen in the attack profiles Europe now faced. By some estimates the percentage of plots carried out by jihadi terrorists working without external support rose from 12 percent before 2008 to nearly 40 percent for the period of 2008-13.<sup>30</sup>

Yet it was another terror incident in the UK that would be the clearest harbinger of the way the threat of jihadi attacks in Europe would morph both on account of the defensive action taken by the West abroad and European countries domestically, as well as developments in salafi-jihadism. On May 14, 2010 a young British woman of Bangladeshi background, **Roshonara Choudhry, who was seemingly well integrated, studying at King's College in London and volunteering in a local Islamic school, stabbed British Labour MP Stephen Timms at a constituency surgery.** Inspired by Abdullah Azzam and Anwar al-Awlaki, whose video sermons she had watched obsessively prior to her attack, Choudhry became a forerunner to the 'Lone Wolves' European publics would hear so much about before long. Radicalized largely via material available online, and inspired to act by the same without a clear link to any specific organization or cell and picking an easily accessible target in her immediate surroundings for an unsophisticated attack, Choudhry would become an early example of a new threat constellation from radical Islam for Europe.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Pantucci, *We Love Death As You Love Life*, pp.277-282.

<sup>30</sup> Nesser, *Islamist Terrorism*, p.253.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 282-284.

### 2.3. MORE DANGEROUS THAN EVER - THE ISLAMIC STATE ERA AND THE THREAT EUROPE FACES TODAY

It was also in 2010 that **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi** became the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, which had had a long history of tense relations with al-Qaeda's central leadership previously when it was headed by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The latter had nevertheless been successful in establishing al-Qaeda as a formidable force in the Iraqi Sunni Islamist insurgency, until the troop surge under U.S. General Petraeus in 2007 curtailed al-Qaeda in Iraq. **At the end of that year, the U.S. began to withdraw its troops, amid an ill-conceived strategy** that would, with significant culpability on the part of the grave sectarian bent of the politics exercised by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, subsequently leave space for the jihadis to reassert themselves. Al-Qaeda had come to dominate the movement then known as the Islamic State of Iraq by the time al-Baghdadi took over. He proceeded to terrorise the perceived enemies of a religiously governed territory, foremost among whom were the Shi'a of Iraq as well its politicians and Sunnis who cooperated with them. Al-Baghdadi won his claim to leadership by being ruthlessly capable in the pursuit of jihad. He appointed key former military and intelligence officers who had served under Saddam Hussein to the ranks of the Islamic State of Iraq and began freeing al-Qaeda members from Iraqi prisons, thus fuelling the capabilities of his war machine from top to bottom.

**He then began moving into Syria, exploiting the civil war there to develop a strategic base and a powerful cause for recruitment.** The differences with al-Qaeda Central over strategy and tactics would mean that by 2013 the Islamic State and al-Qaeda, the latter in the form of Jabhat al-Nusra, were killing each other on the battlefield in Syria. In 2014, al-Baghdadi would proclaim the Caliphate of the Islamic State, declaring himself Caliph, again overcoming theological and strategic challenge from al-Qaeda Central through the sheer force of his victories on the battlefields in establishing and growing the territory under his control. These events would have a profound effect in reshaping the jihadi threat to Europe's homeland.<sup>32</sup>

The concept that al-Baghdadi would pursue with the Islamic State and the declaration of the Caliphate is a markedly different one from al-Qaeda's. The theological end goal is the same, but the strategy practically diametrically opposite. **While al-Qaeda was for a deliberate and incremental approach in fighting jihad to create the conditions that would herald the re-establishment of the Caliphate, the reality is that salafi-jihadism, for all its deep theological roots, still plays off against the historical context and conditions it encounters, in particular as shaped by war.** Thus the innovation that the Islamic State brought to the mobilizing call for jihad cannot be overestimated. Al-Qaeda had essentially operated in what was a theologically justified defensive posture—the 'Jews and Crusaders' that controlled the world through the 'far enemy' America were at war with Islam, executed in part by propping up the 'near enemy' of Middle Eastern regimes—which called for violent action in defense of Islam but implicitly put victory and the ultimate subjugation of the globe to Islam in a far away realm that was not relevant to the fight at hand at present.

Yet, as the Arab Spring unfolded and descended into the bloodbath of the Syrian civil war subsequently **capably exploited by al-Baghdadi**, al-Qaeda's vision couldn't compete and its pronounce-

---

<sup>32</sup> Byman, Daniel, *Al Qaeda, The Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 166-168.

ments became increasingly about merely maintaining relevancy to the global jihadi movement. **The Islamic State however proffered the salafi-jihadi dream immediately.** Instead of waiting for nebulous conditions and moving from jihadi theatre to theatre, the Islamic State offered an opportunity to put the entire theological basis for the jihadi project into practice in the here and now. The attraction of this would prove immense, not least to European jihadis who flocked to the new caliphate in droves.

These so-called foreign fighters became part of an entirely new and more potent *modus operandi* for radical Islam, with grave effects for Europe's security. **The Islamic State put the foreign recruits to effective use** in the formidable propaganda machine that it built, refining and professionalizing its capabilities to eventually produce material of impeccable production values through a network of media operatives under its central command. This would not just showcase the extreme violence, sending a message of conquest, success, order, and the 'purity' of its Islamic vision - and thus ironically fulfil Osama bin Laden's injunction that people will want to bet on the 'strong horse' — but **the Islamic State would also intersperse this with statebuilding elements that would prove an immensely powerful attraction to Islamists everywhere** by offering an opportunity to partake in this ostensibly blessed project.

**The Islamic State proclaimed it a religious duty not just for fighters, but for doctors, scholars, engineers, people with 'administrative experience', to join in the building and expansion of the caliphate.**<sup>33</sup> Foreigners were urged to take their whole families to follow the Islamic State's call, and the opportunity to partake in the project of state-building, and thus in the fulfillment of a religious obligation, also explains the unprecedented participation of women in supporting the Islamic State. In previous jihads, women had at best played a supporting role to husbands fulfilling the obligation to fight. **In the caliphate they would have a direct role in installing the Almighty's will on earth.** Indeed, the latest figures from the UK show that the number of women convicted for Islamism-inspired terrorism offenses has almost tripled in the last five years, as compared to the preceding 13.<sup>34</sup>

The theme of religiously obliged statebuilding coupled to ever more proficient propaganda is also encapsulated in the Islamic State's publication - its slicker version of al-Qaeda's *Inspire*, called *Dabiq*, after a Syrian town prevalent in jihadi apocalyptic prophecy— which it began to publish once al-Baghdadi declared a caliphate. **It made plain the religious obligations on Muslims to come and join the fight, repeating calls for fighters and others required for state building** to move to the territory and join the Islamic State. Notably, the publication was produced in English first, and translated into several other European languages. The Islamic State propaganda, not least in the form of high profile beheadings of Western hostages, was not only aimed at Western audiences, but rather also designed to attract jihadis resident in the West, with its compelling production values that fit into the modern-media frames of reference that the new generation of salafi-jihadis in Europe would recognize.

---

<sup>33</sup> Berger, J. M., and, Stern, Jessica, *ISIS, The State of Terror* (London, William Collins, 2015), p.86.

<sup>34</sup> Stuart, Hannah, *Islamist Terrorism, Analysis of Offences and Attacks in the UK (1998-2015)* (London, Henry Jackson Society, 2017), p. viii.

**One crucial element of this was the Islamic State's unprecedented and extensive use of social media.** The organization would come to have a significant presence on YouTube and Facebook, but in particular on Twitter, where its official and semi-official representatives, as well as swathes of supporters both inside the caliphate and in Europe, would use the platform to effectively spread its message. Injunctions to join the Islamic State from those already in the territory would be interspersed with its media wing's messaging, and for a period a supporter based in Gaza was successful in building and deploying a smartphone app called 'The Dawn of Glad Tidings', which was essentially a twitter bot designed to improve the Islamic State's propaganda reach on the service — a computer program utilizing algorithms to harness and vastly amplify pro-Islamic State Twitter accounts.<sup>35</sup>

**The result of these developments for the threat Europe faces from radical Islam today was to combine the previously established modus operandi of the threat—European jihadis training abroad and returning to carry out or oversee attacks as conceived by a Jihadi organisation they are directly affiliated to to varying degrees—with a potent intensification of al-Suri's concept of 'decentralized' jihad.** The former types of operation were overseen by Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, the Islamic State's spokesman and head of its external operations wing, with a key figure in the Islamic State plots against Europe being Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who would first travel to Syria in 2013 and later return to Europe and be connected to a number of terrorist plots.

These included Mehdi Nemouche's attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May 2014, a terrorist cell disrupted by authorities in Verviers, Belgium in January 2015; attempted attacks on churchgoers in Paris in April 2015; on train passengers between Amsterdam and Paris in August 2015; as well as the Paris attacks of November 2015 and Brussels airport attack of March 2016. The latter attacks proved the potency for mass-casualty operations against Europe by the Islamic State, organised through the 'traditional' type of Jihadi network - training in territory controlled by jihadis outside of Europe, embedded in logistical support within Europe, and striking in a pre-planned and effective manner for maximum damage.<sup>36</sup>

**Yet the Islamic State would prove even more dangerous to Europe than just by means of terrorists with direct links to it.** Al-Adnani summed up this doctrine in September 2014, with a call seeking to inspire indiscriminate attacks, asking jihadis "wherever you may be" not to let the battle against the anti-Islamic State coalition pass them by and urging them to "kill the disbeliever in any manner or way however it may be", whether civilian or military and without seeking advice or guidance from anyone.<sup>37</sup> As a result the threat from those not directly linked to the Islamic State but inspired by its propaganda has increased exponentially. **Between the declaration of the Caliphate in June 2014 and August 2015, Europe saw 13 plots targeting seven different countries.** Among these were the attacks in Denmark by Omar Abdel Hamid el-Hussein on a free speech event and a synagogue

---

<sup>35</sup> Berger, and, Stern, *ISIS*, p.148

<sup>36</sup> Simcox, Robin, 'The Threat of Islamist Terrorism in Europe and How the U.S. Should Respond', *The Heritage Foundation*, Backgrounder No. 3142, 1 August 2016, p.3.

<sup>37</sup> Berger, and, Stern, *ISIS*, p.96

and the killing spree by Amedy Coulibaly who murdered five people over two days in Paris.<sup>38</sup> This threat is additionally intensified by two further dangers generated by the religious and propaganda appeal of the Islamic State to European would-be jihadis. On the one hand, while the numbers are difficult to establish accurately, it is clear that many hundreds of European jihadis at minimum went to fight with the Islamic State, and that hundreds are already back in Europe. **Jihadis trained by the Islamic State, who hold European passports are a serious threat, one that will increase as the territory of the Islamic State's caliphate is re-conquered.** But on the other hand, once European countries started taking measures to prevent their citizens from travel with the intention of joining the Islamic State, some of the potential jihadis, following Adnani's injunction, instead carried out attacks in their countries of residence. **All of the above factors thus combine to make the threat picture from the Islamic State exceptionally grave for Europe at present.**

Worse, though the main jihadi threat to European security currently comes from the Islamic State, **al-Qaeda remains a potent concern too.** Despite its strategic decision not to focus on Europe at present, the attack on the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*, a satirical magazine that had published cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, ordered by al-Qaeda Central's leadership and executed by two French jihadis who had trained with al-Qaeda abroad, AQAP in this case, shows that the organization retains the capability to direct attacks and could choose to make it a priority again. This is a particular concern on account of its rivalry for the leadership of the global cause of jihad with the Islamic State, the success of whose proclaimed caliphate has badly dented al-Qaeda's standing and may lead it to seek to replicate a terrorist spectacular on a Western target so as to re-establish its credibility as a leading implementer of the Almighty's will in front of the jihadi believers.<sup>39</sup>

Against this backdrop, with reports of new attacks or potential attacks making headlines on a weekly basis across the continent, **it is not difficult to see that Europe today faces a graver threat from jihadi terrorism than at any time in the history laid out above.** Europol calls it the most significant terrorist threat in a decade, while Britain's Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation calls it the worst for a generation.<sup>40</sup> Political leaders and security agencies across the continent are warning their citizens to be vigilant in the face of the imminent risk of attacks, both small-scale and mass casualty. In fact, the level of attacks is now so intense that a conceptual reconsideration is required: Europe is experiencing a low-level Islamist insurgency throughout the continent, with attacks now so frequent that new ones are likely to occur before this document is published. More recently, the terrible predictions about our own security have come true with the terrorist attacks in Barcelona and the London Underground, although the plethora of attacks across Europe is now such that a "small" attack, for example, against a soldier in France, is hardly considered news today. In the face of such a grave threat from radical Islam, it is thus vital to thoroughly examine European responses and assess their adequacy.

---

<sup>38</sup> Simcox, *The Threat of Islamist Terrorism in Europe*, p.4.

<sup>39</sup> Burke, *Islamic Militancy*, p.218.

<sup>40</sup> Europol's European Counter Terrorism Centre Strengthens the EU's Response to Terror, Europol Press Release, 25 January 2016, available at <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/europol%E2%80%99s-european-counter-terrorism-centre-strengthens-eu%E2%80%99s-response-to-terror>, and, 'Terror Chief: Threat is Worst for a Generation', *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 February 2017, p. 1.



### 3. EUROPE'S RESPONSE TO THE THREAT FROM RADICAL ISLAM

#### 3.1. EUROPE'S CHALLENGE IN CONCEIVING THE THREAT IT FACES

As evidenced in the section above, **any legitimate study of the nature of the threat Europe faces and what might constitute conducive responses thereto must accept the inherent connection of the threat to matters of religion.** While a sophisticated exploration of the relationship between theology, ideology, history, and strategy that comprise the background to the threat is of course fundamental to an accurate understanding, too often the first principles have been misunderstood, buried under a plethora of assumptions premised on European worldviews and self-delusions.

**The scale of the threat does not necessarily lie in the question of the immediate deaths that it generates.** Misguided claims about numbers of Europeans drowning in their baths or dying in road accidents as against those killed by terrorists miss the point entirely. Not only is there a fundamental difference between accidental harm and harm generated by a totalitarian political project fueled by theology drawn from one of the great world religions, but **such 'feelgood' delusions, while intended to demonstrate the lack of a necessity for alarm, make plain the complacency that still exists among too many of those shaping European politics and policies.** It was this complacency that must answer for much of the danger Europe is having such immense trouble fending off today. Nor do the numbers tell even part of the full story. For who can quantify the way Europe has changed in the realm of ideas and freedoms, and will continue to change. Who could argue that the number of deaths accurately reflects the feeling millions of Europeans have experienced, of seeing their cities in lockdown while paramilitary and military forces hunt those seeking to murder them indiscriminately and with biblical gruesomeness?

Those anxiously awaiting the restoration of normal life in their homes in Europe's capitals during these Islamist sieges mostly grew up in the age of Fukuyama's 'End of History' as Europeans who were told nothing of the cost of the defense of their values and security by their leaders - much less of the security America exported to them. Instead European publics and many of their leaders would often turn on Europe's closest ally, and live by ideas that constitute fantasies about the world - Hobbesian as it is, not in a natural state of international peace as Europeans like to imagine it, broken only by a few more obstacles to be tackled with development aid and latterly hashtags and profile pictures. Such populations and their leaders—populating the most secular continent on earth—have great trouble conceiving of the religious fire that fuels the threat that faces them.

Burnt out on the moral weight of their crimes, perceived and unbearably real, during the previous century, **Europeans thus learned the wrong lessons, and misapplied their values to allow the seed of this new menace entry.** The importance of the religious and ideological background to the threat is reflected in two ways;

- **First, Europeans misconceived of the original wave of Islamists that entered the continent as oppressed minorities** deserving of asylum, welfare and protection of their rights. A gigantic misguided human rights industry, together with a left ready to embrace parts of radical Islam, subsequently spent years preventing Europeans from staring the hatred they had imported and allowed to flourish in their midst in

the eye. It took root, in small numbers, and effectively got to work exploiting the very European values so often cited as reasons for inaction or even avoidance of the accurate assignment of blame. It is not difficult to imagine future generations wondering how it was possible for European countries to invite in and partially fund the networks of radical Islam, in the same way today's generations wondered why it took previous generations so long to see their own time's totalitarian threat with clarity until it was very late.

- **Second, the misconception doesn't just stop at opening the door to the threat. It further is reflected in deeply problematic ways in the history of Europe's response.** Misconceptions, intellectual cowardice, a lack of imagination, inertia and above all the terrified fear of giving offense, not least in the face of assaults by suicide and machine gun, mean that, no matter how these weak policies were dressed up, European responses have often been at best ineffective and at worst counterproductive. Only in response to the growing deadly clarity in the wake of 9/11 and the subsequent attacks on European capitals did the responses begin to more realistically reflect the full scope of the threat Europe faces from radical Islam.

In many ways however, even to this day it can be very difficult to be sufficiently clear about the complex nature of the threat and its relationship to difficult topics such as religion, immigration and integration, freedom and asylum. **Too much thought leadership within Europe still devotes its energies in ever more desperate ways to deny the problems that European populations can see with their own eyes.** The media are blamed—long before Donald Trump's fake news—for being irresponsible, the ostensible far-right backlash is focused on, 'good news' stories about integration are highlighted, a whole industry of 'radicalisation' experts assures there are processes and procedures to follow.

Yet in reality it was always clear that as mainstream politicians failed to accurately conceive of and take robust action against the threat, unsavory alternatives would emerge, as they now have across Europe. European leaders can hardly complain about the appearance of these actors on the political scene, when they have for years pursued failed policies that had little effect other than dissimulation. When confronted with aggressive religious totalitarianism, the multicultural ideology of victimhood fostered by European leaders became paralyzed, failing to take action and even enabling the Islamist assault on its ostensible core values. Worse, **by refusing to acknowledge the religious nature of the threat, Europe misconceived of the threat and required response by, ironically perhaps, totally failing to understand that dangerous ideas kill.** As a result there was an abominable failure on the part of the European response to understand that what it faced was a murderous theology that was spread "across a continuum of religious thought which acts as a recruiting agent for violence".<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Phillips, Melanie, *Londonistan, How Britain is Creating a Terror State Within* (London, Gibson Square, 2006), p. 275.

The effects of this grave misconception can be seen across the continent, but a particularly good case study for it is the development of British counter-terrorism policies. As described, **Britain** in many ways is immensely culpable for allowing London to become a dangerous global hub of salafi-jihadism. The country meets both criteria described above;

- **First, it failed to recognize the threat, allowing it to take root, and subsequently it sought to tackle it under the imagined premise that only those engaged in violence constitute the danger posed by radical Islam.** As a result of decades of conducive immigration, asylum and welfare policies, coupled to this failure to even remotely conceive of the threat, Islamist networks, ranging from the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb-ut-Tahrir to those supportive of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, were able to set up in amongst Muslim immigrant communities in Britain.
- **Second, what happened next was a calamitous effort informed on the one hand by the restrictive viewpoint of the intelligence community—which justifiably approached the problem from a narrow perspective that was prone to focus on those that were directly committing violence, considering concerns about an ideological backwater feeding this danger as matters of ‘social engineering’ outside of their remit or concern—and on the other hand by misguided officials and policy-makers who believed that you could work with so called “non-violent extremists”—i.e. individuals and organizations with views deeply antithetical to the values and national security of the UK, such as deep hatred for the West, democracy, human rights, equality before the law, not to mention openly sexist, anti-Semitic, and homophobic attitudes—and use them to combat the jihadis threatening Europe.**

As a result, Britain handed out hundreds of thousands of pounds of taxpayer money to the very Islamists feeding the threat.<sup>42</sup> It was not until 2011 that Britain’s then Prime Minister David Cameron acknowledged that the approach had led Britain this far was untenable. In a seminal speech, he laid out the problem succinctly:

*In our communities, groups and organisations led by young, dynamic leaders promote separatism by encouraging Muslims to define themselves solely in terms of their religion... .. You might say: as long as they’re not hurting anyone, what’s the problem with all this? I’ll tell you why. As evidence emerges about the backgrounds of those convicted of terrorist offences, it is clear that many of them were initially influenced by what some have called ‘non-violent extremists’ and then took those radical beliefs to the next level by embracing violence. And I say this is an indictment of our approach to these issues in the past... .. So first, instead of ignoring this extremist ideology, we – as governments and societies – have got to confront it, in all its forms... .. Whether they are violent in their means or not, we must make it impossible for the extremists to succeed. For gov-*

---

<sup>42</sup> ‘Islamist hatemongers funded by the taxpayer with money earmarked for schools’, *Daily Mail*, 8 June 2011, available at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2000492/Theresa-May-admits-63m-terror-fighting-fund-GIVEN-extremist-groups.html#ixzz4buFpfK8a>.

*ernments, there are obvious ways we can do that. We must ban preachers of hate from coming to our countries. We must also proscribe organisations that incite terrorism – against people at home and abroad. Governments must also be shrewder in dealing with those that, while not violent, are certainly, in some cases, part of the problem. We need to think much harder about who it's in the public interest to work with. Some organisations that seek to present themselves as a gateway to the Muslim community are showered with public money despite doing little to combat extremism. As others have observed, this is like turning to a right-wing fascist party to fight a violent white supremacist movement... ..At the same time, we must stop these groups from reaching people in publicly funded institutions – like universities and prisons. Some say: this is incompatible with free speech and intellectual inquiry. I say: would you take the same view if right-wing extremists were recruiting on campuses?<sup>43</sup>*

Cameron had thus correctly identified the problem of a narrow focus on violent jihadis that failed to understand the above mentioned continuum of religious thought that acts as the recruiting agent for violence against Europe. His government excluded Islamists uncondusive to the public good in important ways and additionally brought in more effective measures to compel public bodies such as universities - long resistant to fighting Radical Islam on their campuses - as well as schools and prisons to act. This work falls under part of the British counter-terrorism strategy known as 'Prevent'.

**The Prevent strategy** is another interesting case study in the fallout from the UK's failure to curtail radical Islam early and effectively. The struggles the British government faces over this entirely reasonable and responsible effort to spot those on the path to religious or other forms of extremism at an early stage, utilizing conducive societal touchpoints, has been intense, with the program incessantly branded as an assault by the government on British Muslims by the very Islamists it seeks to curtail.<sup>44</sup> In this, building on the head start the British state had afforded them, they have enjoyed significant success, at the very least making these obvious, necessary policies, which any normal citizen would demand if they did not exist, a matter of 'controversy'. The impact is worst in Muslim communities, where Islamists have managed to run a successful campaign demonising the very policies designed to protect mainstream Muslims.

**Advocacy groups peddle Islamist propaganda under the guise of human rights**—for example claiming that the British government policies must be resisted because they include removing British Muslims' children from their parents for the act of attending anti-war demonstrations—an obvious lie.<sup>45</sup> Worse, Islamist organizations such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir and others with similar goals continue to have an overly prominent role in the public debate, with too many parts of the British government still overly cautious in clamping down on their propaganda.

---

<sup>43</sup> 'Full transcript, David Cameron, Speech on radicalisation and Islamic extremism, Munich, 5 February 2011', *New Statesman*, 5 February 2011, available at <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/02/terrorism-islam-ideology>.

<sup>44</sup> Khan, Sara, *The Battle for British Islam* (London, Saqi, 2016), p. 115.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 98.

For example, on the night of the Paris attacks of 2015, a who's who of Islamists organised an event to propagate their views which would lead one local newspaper to write that 'radical Muslims are descending on sleepy Bedford'. Nor is Britain the only country where the radicals are making too much headway on the marketplace of ideas - in the Netherlands they can be said to be winning,<sup>46</sup> while France and Germany struggle to contain the messages of groups with views detrimental to their national security and social cohesion.

### 3.2. EUROPE'S CHALLENGE IN IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE COUNTER-TERRORISM POLICIES

The specific focus of the British Prime Minister's call and subsequent efforts to tackle radical Islam in prisons is also a welcome but urgent task. **Prisons have become intensely-problematic breeding grounds for jihad in the UK, France, Spain, and elsewhere across Europe**, both as venues for proselytizing, but also as meeting places for individuals that would later engage in terrorism. This reveals a wider and immensely important challenge most European governments are still struggling to meet. Where state institutions are concerned, in particular those where vulnerable subjects are present, such as in schools or prisons, or sectors where there is traditionally hostility to more restrictive government requirements such as in academia or the technology industry, government has generally failed to produce the kind of personnel that is able to rise to the challenge sufficiently. Such a sweeping assertion is of course unfair to the many exceptionally dedicated and capable operatives, who do understand the full threat picture of jihad for Europe and devote their lives to combating it, not least in the intelligence services.

Yet it is also valid as a general concern that **the civil service personnel across European countries is ill equipped to fathom and counter the threat from the Islamists. Government generally entails a slow, undynamic and rigidly managed process, not always carried out by the most passionate workers. Radical Islam is nimble and utterly devoted.** As a result, ministers and government institutions have found it challenging at times to implement measures to curtail the Islamists, such as in the case of the UK's charity commission seeking to shut down organizations funneling money to jihadis abroad or the case of British schools taken over by Islamists with a sectarian religious agenda — a problem the State continues to struggle to contain to this day.

There are also several clearer cut challenges to consider, **intelligence cooperation** being one such area. It is abundantly clear that to beat the threat Europe faces from Jihad, good intelligence cooperation—on a domestic inter-agency basis and on a cross-border basis—is a vital pre-requisite. Yet this has been a serious challenge both internally for European countries, with Germany for example engaging in a difficult debate over the changes its interior minister wishes to make to the way the security apparatus works between the state and the Federal Republic level, as well as on a pan EU level, where efforts by Europol to leverage the bloc's intelligence prowess more effectively have run into difficulties in terms of member buy-in and the preference for bilateral relations among EU states.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Bakker, Edwin, 'Islamism, radicalisation and jihadism in the Netherlands', in, Ranstorp, Magnus, ed., *Understanding Violent Radicalisation, Terrorist and Jihadist Movements in Europe* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2010), p. 185

<sup>47</sup> Simcox, *The Threat of Islamist Terrorism in Europe*, p. 7

In some cases, such as Belgium, the problem is so bad that '[a]bsurdly, for a Belgian police officer to find out what Belgian intelligence knows about a threat, he or she sometimes needs to learn it from the UK police, who learn it from UK intelligence, who learn it from Belgian intelligence.'"<sup>48</sup>

That said, other challenges have been met more successfully. In general, heavy investments across Europe have been made in intelligence apparatuses dealing with counter-terrorism and most of the countries of Western Europe have built a domestic defense doctrine that **combines existing police with newly created units, and in some cases military assets, into new constellations able to effectively fend off a roving terrorist attack** with multiple perpetrators attacking and besieging inhabitants in different areas of a city for a prolonged period of time, such as what happened in Mumbai, India. **Administrative measures designed to constrain both travel abroad and proselytizing domestically have been brought in with some success** and it is clear that bilateral and multilateral intelligence and police cooperation has improved despite ongoing challenges on the EU level.

What these challenges and successes lay out clearly is that for Europe to successfully fend off the threat from radical Islam—unprecedented in severity as its leaders insist again and again—it must clamp down relentlessly on the theologically grounded ideology propagating it, constraining the space for action on the part of those who support it more effectively. **Radical Islam's enablers**, for too long the beneficiaries of lax societies in Europe, unaware of the danger and misguided in the application of their ostensibly liberal values, **must be curtailed**, through confident clarity about the 'rules of the game' in Europe, even on difficult issues that have too often been shied away from over concerns of giving offense or upsetting 'social cohesion'. There is nothing wrong with describing the jihadis as akin to the Nazis in the underlying totalitarian severity of their vision and the resultant need to defeat them.

That this might be controversial, even after a British prime minister and others have made this case, says more about Europe's ongoing failure to rise to the threat amidst it, than the undoubted accuracy of the comparison. The question is whether Europe will finally be able to take off its blinkers, drop its euphemisms, and act vigorously to combat the menace of radical Islam. **Never again should there be an Islamist on welfare, claiming a violation of their 'human rights'**. The rights of the majority, including the majority of Muslims, and the defense of Europe, its citizens, its values and its allies should be the only concern on the mind of European policymakers. For if they don't act effectively, others, of more unsavory means, may yet grab the political reins from them and satisfy Europe's citizens' clamor for action to protect them from the barbaric violence being meted out by radical Islam.

---

<sup>48</sup> EU Referendum: The Debate Around Counter-Terrorism, *BBC News Online*, 22 February 2016, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-35600736>.

## 2. SPAIN: HISTORY, EVOLUTION, AND CHARACTERISTICS OF JIHADISM IN SPAIN

1. INTRODUCTION
  
2. ORIGINS OF JIHADISM IN SPAIN: FROM 1995 UNTIL MARCH 11
  - 2.1. ALGERIAN NETWORKS IN SPAIN
  - 2.2. AL-QAEDA CENTRAL AND SPAIN
  - 2.3. TERRORIST PLOTS AGAINST SPANISH INTERESTS
  
3. EVOLUTION OF JIHADISM SINCE MARCH 2004 TO DECEMBER 2013
  - 3.1. ALGERIAN NETWORKS AFTER MARCH 11
  - 3.2. “IRAQI” NETWORKS ON SPANISH SOIL
  - 3.3. NON-LINKED ACTORS: INDEPENDENT CELLS AND “LONE WOLVES”
  
4. CONCLUSION

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As in the rest of Europe, the nature of the jihadist threat in Spain has changed in recent years. **One of the key factors to answer both questions is its morphology, the way in which the jihadist militancy is structured and organized.** From this point of view, the level of threat is greater and more credible inasmuch as groups and individuals are present on Spanish soil, linked to terrorist organizations with the ability and willingness to attack in Europe and in our country.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, the activity of the logistics networks of these organizations with a agenda, regional and external to the European Union as well as spread throughout the conflict zones of the Islamic world, involves the existence of small groups and lone militants hostile to Spain: This entails a comparatively minor security problem in the short term, which excludes the immediate perpetration of attacks, but not the creation of structures that could lead to attacks later on.

In order to provide an X-ray of jihadism's organizational structure in Spain, this report analyzes the results of more than one-hundred anti-terrorist operations between 1995 and 2016. In between that period, on March 11, 2004, the Madrid attacks against four commuter trains took place and cost the lives of almost two-hundred people. Ten years later, a new milestone took place with the evolution of the jihadist militancy in Spain, which has entailed an exponential increase in anti-terrorist operations, mostly directed against networks supporting the self-proclaimed Islamic State as well as individuals who wanted to join it by going to Syria and Iraq, but also against individuals willing to commit attacks in Spain.

The current analysis is divided into three periods:

- 1) The period prior to the 2004 Madrid attacks;
- 2) The decade after the Madrid attacks, between 2004 and 2014;
- 3) The boom period of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq from 2014 until the end of 2016.

The police operations in Spain are a sufficiently-representative sample (very close to full universe) of the operations carried out against jihadist terrorism, although, of course, **such operations con-**

---

<sup>1</sup> About the importance of large organizations in the preparation and coordination of terrorist plots, see: Lorenzo Vidino (2011), *Radicalization, Linkage and Diversity. Current Trends in Terrorism in Europe*, Santa Barbara: RAND; Lorenzo Vidino (2009), The Hofstad Group: The New Face of Terrorist Networks in Europe, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 32, pp. 1-17; Marc Sageman (2009), "Confronting al-Qaeda: Understanding the Threat in Afghanistan", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 4, 4-25; Marc Sageman (2008), *Leaderless Jihad. Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania; Bruce Hoffman (2008), The Myth of Grass-Roots Terrorism, *Foreign Affairs*, 87, pp. 133-138; Marc Sageman and Bruce Hoffman (2008), Does Osama Still Call the Shots? Debating the Containment of al Qaeda's Leadership, *Foreign Affairs*, 87, pp. 163-166.; Raffaello Pantucci (2011), *A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorist*, London: The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence; Peter Neumann, Ryan Evans & Raffaello Pantucci (2011), Locating Al Qaeda's Center of Gravity: The Role of Middle Managers, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 34, pp. 825-842; Javier Jordán (2015), Incidencia del terrorismo de inspiración yihadista en Estados Unidos y Europa Occidental: un análisis comparado, *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 37, pp. 89-117.



stitute only the “visible part” of jihadist activities throughout the period studied. The arrests, the number and characteristics of the operations constitute a reliable sample of the jihadist networks’ behavior in Spain. Nonetheless, at the same time, it should be noted that a significant proportion of those arrested for jihad in Spain have ultimately not been convicted of terrorism. This circumstance has taken place frequently after the Madrid attacks for two reasons;

- **Urgency has led to a preemptive police approach** to avoid the completion of new terrorist actions, or possible attacks.
- **The intensive use of preemptive detention is justified due to the lack of adaptation of Spanish Criminal Law to match the peculiar nature of jihadist activism.**<sup>2</sup> This issue has been largely solved with reforms of the Spanish Criminal Code, first in 2010 and later in 2015, which were preceded by two European Union Council Framework Decisions: 2002/745/JHA and 2008/919/JHA of 28 November 2008. It is probable that a good part of the persons acquitted would have been convicted if the Framework Decisions had been in force.

**It is also appropriate to distinguish between linked and non-linked actors.** “Linked actors” refers to the cells that, according to police or judicial sources, had some kind of ties with a larger organization. Taking into account the high number of cases that make up the sample, it is not possible to study in depth the nature of this linkage. On the other hand, the informal ties that exist among militants of various groups, as well as the inclusion of global jihadism elements in the political agendas of organizations such as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM), or the Pakistani Taliban Movement (TTP), explain that there are connections of the same cell to diverse organizations in several cases.

In regards to “non-linked actors,” it is important to distinguish between independent cells and individual or single actors, popularly known as “lone wolves.” Independent cells are groups of individuals that are not linked to a higher organization, although some of its members have weak relationships with members of linked cells, or some of them were even former members of an organization. This would be the case of the cell dismantled with Operation *Nova* in the fall of 2004, which allegedly had the National Court (*Audiencia Nacional*) in Madrid among its targets.

Some of its members had belonged to the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in the 1990s and had maintained ties with cell members linked to organizations, including the one that executed the Madrid bombings.

**“Lone wolf” refers to individuals who, after going through a process of radicalization, decide to commit a terrorist attack by themselves.** In some cases, they are socially unfit or exhibit psychiatric problems, e.g., the individual who was arrested for having a car packed with gas cylinders and pyrotechnic material in Gerona in October 2007.<sup>3</sup> This is a common feature with lone wolves. However,

<sup>2</sup> Fiscalía General del Estado (2012), *Informe 2011*, Madrid: Ministry of Justice, p. 309.

<sup>3</sup> “Juzgan a un enfermo mental que la Audiencia Nacional pensaba que era un terrorista”, *El Punt*, 30 March 2009.

in the case of violent actions with a political purpose, these are considered terrorist acts due to their etiology.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. ORIGINS OF JIHADISM IN SPAIN: FROM 1995 UNTIL MARCH 11

Throughout the 1980s, various unrelated plots and attacks took place in Spain carried out by extremist groups with Arab roots. **Among them, the attack in 1985 against *El Descanso* Restaurant, near the Torrejón air base, which killed eighteen Spaniards, stands out: It is the first Islamist attack on Spanish soil.** Subsequently, in 1989, a Hezbollah cell in Valencia intending to attack in Europe was disrupted. Six years later, the first detention took place, from which a continuous link could be established with salafi-jihadism: On March 11, 1995, exactly nine years before the Madrid bombings. On that day, the police detained Ghebrid Messaoud, an individual linked to the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA), as he prepared to leave Barcelona with a suitcase loaded with weapons.<sup>5</sup> From that year on, there were successive operations against GIA networks on Spanish soil.

The first thing detected when examining this period is **the linkage of all the supposedly unconnected individuals and groups with higher organizations: With the Algerian GIA, with its successor the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), with the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM) and with al-Qaeda Central.**

Until the mid-2000s, the jihadist militancy in Spain was linked exclusively around these large organizations. Despite the existence of non-linked individuals and groups who sympathized with salafi-jihadism, the step to collective action required the encouragement and support of these large organizations (though, in a seemingly-paradoxical way, participation happened through the informal ties of friendship and kinship.) This circumstance is common for the rest of Western Europe, where, until 2004, there were very few cases of individuals or groups actively involved in salafi-jihadism without being linked to the larger terrorist organizations.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.1. ALGERIAN NETWORKS IN SPAIN

**The six anti-terrorist operations carried out during the second half of the 1990s were linked to the GIA.** All of them were directed against individuals and cells dedicated to logistics: mainly financing, falsification of documents, as well as arms and human trafficking bound for Algeria. In no case was it detected any terrorist operation in Spain planned by these groups. However, since

---

<sup>4</sup> Raffaello Pantucci, *A Typology of Lone Wolves*.

<sup>5</sup> “La policía cree que los integristas utilizan España como vía de paso de armas a Argelia”, *ABC*, 15 March 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Javier Jordán (2012), Analysis of Jihadi Terrorism Incidents in Western Europe, 2001–2010, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 35, pp. 382-404; Petter Nesser (2008), Chronology of Jihadism in Western Europe 1994-2007: Planned, Prepared, and Executed Terrorist Attacks, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 31, pp. 924-946; Lorenzo Vidino (2011), *Radicalization, Linkage, and Diversity. Current Trends in Terrorism in Europe*, pp. 12-13, Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

the beginning of the new century there has been a change in trends, both in Spain and other European countries. It is the moment when these countries become direct targets. This is mainly due to three reasons:

1. **The Islamist leadership position achieved by bin Laden and al-Qaeda** as a result of their success attacking New York and Washington in 2001;
2. **The growing presence of al-Qaeda networks on European soil**, which is also noticeable in the 9/11 attacks.
3. **The transmission of a globalist vision of militants passing through the training camps of Afghanistan**, even though such camps were not under the direct control of bin Laden's organization.

Al-Qaeda's influence was particularly noticeable among some GSPC operatives in Europe who had gone through training camps in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Georgia, and Chechnya, and that collaborated with al-Qaeda.<sup>7</sup> The consequence of all these factors was that **several Algerian networks began to plan terrorist attacks on European soil as a contribution to the al-Qaeda-led strategy characterized by first seeking to defeat the far enemy.**<sup>8</sup> Consistent with its recent history (the GIA bombing campaigns in 1995 and 1996), the GSPC focused not only on the United States, but also on France and other European countries.

In Spain, the establishment of GSPC networks was weak compared to neighboring France. The change in the political agenda of these Algerian networks only materialized through **linking some cells settled in Spain** with other cells involved in terrorist projects abroad. In particular, we highlight the following:

- The arrest of Mohammed Bensakhria in June 2001, who was linked to **a cell based in Frankfurt** that wanted to plant a bomb in the Christmas market near the Strasbourg Cathedral (France).<sup>9</sup>
- **Operation Fox**, which took place in late September 2001 in several Spanish provinces against a group of Algerians linked to the network of Djamel Beghal, who was arrested in Dubai in July 2001. Beghal's network was dismantled in September 2001 when it was planning to carry out attacks in France and Belgium. Among the possible targets were the U.S. embassy in Paris and the American airbase Kleine Brogel in Belgium.<sup>10</sup> Nizar Trabelsi, the suicide bomber who was to perpetrate the attack, was arrested in Belgium on September 13, 2001. Two months earlier, Trabelsi had been in Spain in the company of members of the Algerian network dismantled in Operation Fox.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Petter Nesser (2011), Ideologies of Jihad in Europe, *Terrorism & Political Violence*, 23, pp. 173-200.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> "Bensakhria tuvo ayuda de simpatizantes de un grupo escindido del GIA argelino", *ABC*, 24 June 2001.

<sup>10</sup> "Six Guilty of Targeting U.S. Embassy in Paris", *The Washington Post*, 03/16/2005.

<sup>11</sup> "La Policía desarticula en España una célula antiterrorista islámica relacionada con Osama Ben Laden", *Oficina de Relaciones Informativas y Sociales del Ministerio del Interior*, 26 September 2001.

Also, the Algerian cell in Spain had kept contact with the network led by Tunisian Essid Sami Ben Khemais, dismantled in Milan in January 2001, when it was planning an attack against the U.S. embassy in Rome.<sup>12</sup>

- **Operation Lago**, executed in several towns in Catalonia in January 2003. An Algerian cell, led by Mohamed Tahraoui and linked to a jihadist network dismantled in Courneuve and Romainville (France) in December 2002, was arrested while planning to attack targets not defined in Paris.<sup>13</sup> In turn, the network established in France had also been linked to the Frankfurt cell and, thus, to Mohamed Bensakhria, too.<sup>14</sup> In the end, although the cell dismantled in Operation *Lago* was convicted, the Spanish jury tossed the charges initially presented for lack of evidence regarding the preparation of an attack against the American naval base in Rota.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.2. AL-QAEDA CENTRAL AND SPAIN

In the first period analyzed in this study, one can notice the existence of networks linked to al-Qaeda Central that also supported terrorist operations outside Spain. In addition, these are two operations led by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM), as the head of the organization's external operations. To be more specific:

- **Abu Dahdah's network** (Operation *Dátil*): The group, mostly made up of Syrians and Moroccans, was led by Imad Barakat Yarkas (a.k.a. Abu Dahdah). Abu Dahdah had been in contact with Mohamed Atta since the early 1990s and had links with the Hamburg cell.<sup>16</sup> According to the 9/11 Commission's Report, there is no evidence that the Abu Dahdah cell helped to finance the attacks, although it found proof that Abu Dahdah's cell had transferred several amounts of money to Syrian-German Mamoun Darkazanli. Darkazanli was imam of the al-Quds mosque, frequented by Atta, and was in contact with members of the Hamburg cell.<sup>17</sup> Yet Spain's law enforcement agencies are convinced that Abu Dahdah's cell—and in particular one of its most prominent members, Moroccan Amer Azizi—provided logistical support for the meeting between Mohamed Atta and Ramsi Binalshib in July 2001 in order to discuss the final details of the terrorist operation.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Juzgado Central de Instrucción No 1, *Sumario No 3/04. Sentencia*, February 7, 2007: 27-29; "France jails 25 for Chechen terror plot", *Al Jazeera*, 14 June 2006.

<sup>14</sup> "La Policía detiene a 16 presuntos terroristas islámicos vinculados con Al Qaeda" *Oficina de Relaciones Informativas y Sociales del Ministerio del Interior*, 24 January 2003.

<sup>15</sup> "Spanish court convicts 5 Algerians of terrorism", *CNN International*, 09 February 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Juzgado Central de Instrucción No. 5, *Sumario No. 35/01. Sentencia 36/05*, 26 September 2005: 97.

<sup>17</sup> The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, July 22, 2004: 499; Juzgado Central de Instrucción No. 5, *Sumario No 35/01. Sentencia 36/05*, 26 September 2005: 409.

<sup>18</sup> Fernando Reinares (2012), The Evidence of Al-Qa`ida's Role in the 2004 Madrid Attack, *CTC Sentinel*, 5, p. 2.

- **Abu Dahdah constitutes a good example of a middle manager**, in other words, an intermediate cadre of the organization between high-ranking al-Qaeda leaders and grassroots militants.<sup>19</sup> Abu Dahdah kept a large number of international ties with radicals established in the United Kingdom (including Abu Qatada), Belgium, Germany, Syria, Jordan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Indonesia. In Spain, in addition to the members of his cell in Madrid and Granada, Abu Dahdah was in contact with members of the Algerian networks, specifically those dismantled in Operation *Appreciate* (April 1997) and Operation *Fox* (September 2001).<sup>20</sup>
- **Pakistani Ahmed Rukhsar**, a less important figure compared to Abu Dahdah's network and **arrested in Logroño in March 2003, collaborated with al-Qaeda Central by transferring funds to the organization from his *hawala* shop**. Together with Rukhsar, a non-Muslim Spanish businessman was arrested for making money transfers following the indications of members of al-Qaeda in Pakistan, among them, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. One of those transfers was used to finance the bombing of a synagogue in Djerba (Tunisia) in April 2002, which killed 21 people. Both Rukhsar and the Spanish businessman, Enrique Cerdá, were sentenced to five years in prison for collaboration with a terrorist organization in May 2006.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.3. TERRORIST PLOTS AGAINST SPANISH INTERESTS

In the last years of this first period of study, there were several attack attempts on Spanish soil, or against Spanish interests, by jihadist groups based in Spain.

**Amer Azizi intended to carry out an attack in Spain after his return from the training camps in Afghanistan in early summer 2001.** As mentioned earlier, Azizi was a prominent member of Abu Dahdah's network, closely linked to al-Qaeda. Azizi was unable to carry out his deed because the network was dismantled in November 2001. He managed to escape and met with al-Qaeda members in the tribal areas of Pakistan. An American drone killed him alongside Hamza Rabia in the early morning of December 1, 2005, in the midst of the war against terrorism. **He was the head of al-Qaeda's external operations at the time of his death.**

Al-Qaeda's chronicler, Abu Ubaidah al Maqdisi, tells in a biography spread on several radical websites in 2009 that Amer Azizi intended to attempt against the "crusaders" in the "usurped lands" of al-Andalus.<sup>22</sup> **These attacks were totally disconnected from any presence of Spanish troops in Is-**

<sup>19</sup> Peter Neumann, Ryan Evans, and Raffaello Pantucci (2011), Locating al-Qaeda's Center of Gravity: The Role of Middle Managers, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 34, p. 829.

<sup>20</sup> Statements by Commissioner Rafael Gómez Menor before the Parliamentary Commission on the Madrid bombings, 25 October 2004.

<sup>21</sup> "Un empresario español, condenado a cinco años de prisión por financiar a Al Qaeda", *El País*, 11 May 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Fernando Reinares and Ignacio Cembrero, ¿España fue blanco de Al Qaeda antes del 11-S?, *El País*, 11 September 2011.

lamic lands, since the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq had not yet occurred. The explanation may be found in the adoption of a markedly-globalist agenda by Azizi and, probably, members of Abu Dahdah's network.

**One case was the attacks in Casablanca (Morocco) on May 16, 2003.** The *Casa de España Restaurant* was among the targets; twenty people died in the attacks, three of them from Spain. Although the direct collaboration of jihadists living in Spain has not been proven in the Casablanca bombings, a **number of Moroccan individuals from Abu Dahdah's network**, including Moroccan Jamal Zougam, were linked to jihadist groups in their country of origin and, in particular, to Mohammed Fizazi. This person was a radical preacher who, between 1999 and shortly before 9/11, preached in the al-Quds mosque in Hamburg that, as aforementioned, Mohamed Atta used to attend. Fizazi was convicted for the Casablanca bombings in August 2003.<sup>23</sup>

Moroccan Mustafa al-Maymouni, who had been recruited by Amer Azizi in Madrid, created two cells in Kenitra and Larache (Morocco) after Azizi's departure and the arrest of Abu Dahdah. Maymouni frequently traveled to Morocco, but generally lived in Madrid. In Spain, along Moroccan Driss Chebli, Maymouni led a group of individuals who had frequented Abu Dahdah's network, but had not been arrested for lack of incriminating evidence.<sup>24</sup>

At a meeting held in Istanbul in February 2003, the leaders of the GICM, the GICL, and a Tunisian jihadist group agreed under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's group that the cells of their respective organizations should attack in their countries of residence, with special attention given to Morocco and Spain. **Maymouni was entrusted with the mission of preparing one terrorist attack in Morocco using the support infrastructure in that country.** However, he was arrested by Moroccan security forces in May 2003.<sup>25</sup>

All leads to the Madrid attacks on March, 11, 2004. Following the arrest of Maymouni—and of Driss Chebli in June of that same year in Spain because of his former ties to Abu Dahdah's network—Tunisian Serhane Al Fakhret, Maymouni's brother-in-law, became leader of the group based in Madrid. Serhane kept email contact with Amer Azizi, who belonged to the al-Qaeda external operations committee in North Waziristan.<sup>26</sup>

**Diverse small groups of radicals based in Spain converged for the preparation and execution of the Madrid attacks.** The main catalyst was **Serhane's group**, joined by some Algerians (one of them, **Allekema Lamari**, who had been arrested in Operation *Appreciate* in 1997) as well as other Moroccans led by **Jamal Ahmidan**, a radicalized drug trafficker who facilitated the purchase of explosives in exchange for drugs.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Yassin Musharbash and Andreas Ulrich, The Hate Preacher Who Lost His Venom: Infamous Islamist Imam Forswears Terror, *Der Spiegel*, 29 October 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Fernando Reinares (2012), The Evidence of Al-Qa`ida's Role in the 2004 Madrid Attack, *CTC Sentinel*, 5, pp. 2-3.

<sup>25</sup> Auto de Procesamiento, Sumario 20/2004, April 10, 2006, p. 1354; Fernando Reinares, 11-M: La conexión con Al Qaeda, *El País*, 17 December 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Fernando Reinares (2012), The Evidence of Al-Qa`ida's Role in the 2004 Madrid Attack, *CTC Sentinel*, 5, pp. 2-3.

<sup>27</sup> Javier Jordán, Fernando M. Mañas & Nicola Horsburgh (2008), Strengths and Weaknesses of Grassroot Jihadist Networks: The Madrid Bombings", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 31, pp. 17–39.

The end result was a network linked to the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group and al-Qaeda Central through Amer Azizi. Coordination with al-Qaeda Central can also be detected in the public guidelines: On April 3, the terrorist cell led by Serhane issued a statement ending a truce — a truce that the cell had not called. Indeed, the Abu Hafsa al-Masri Brigades, who had claimed the authorship of the Madrid bombings in a statement sent to *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper, sent a new statement on March 15 (the day after Spain's general election) to the *Al-Hayat* and *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspapers. **In this last communiqué, the Spanish people were offered a truce in the hope that the new socialist government (PSOE) kept its policy of withdrawing Spanish troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.**

The statement said that the leadership of the organization ordered its cells in Europe not to perpetrate new attacks until the end of the truce. This statement was also posted on the *Global Islamic Media Center* website and was downloaded to one of the laptop computers of the network's members led by Serhane in Madrid.<sup>28</sup> Subsequently, **since the decision of Prime Minister Rodriguez Zapatero's government was to withdraw the troops from Iraq but keep those in Afghanistan, Serhane's group placed an explosive device on a high speed train (AVE) linking Madrid and Seville.** That same day the nucleus of the cell was discovered and surrounded by the police in an apartment in the town of Leganés, near Madrid. After a siege of several hours, the terrorists committed suicide by detonating explosives that also destroyed the apartment where they were, also killing a Spanish policeman.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, one should mention **Operation Aguardulce**. It consisted of the arrest of an Algerian in August 2003 linked to Abderrazak Mahdjoub. The latter is an Algerian with German nationality and resident in Hamburg who acted in Europe as the middle manager of Ansar al-Islam (later al-Qaeda in Iraq) and who had also been in contact with Mohamed Atta's cell. The man arrested in Spain was allegedly collaborating with Mahdjoub in the preparation of an attack in Costa Brava in Catalonia. However, no explosives or weapons were found that could lead to an impending plot.<sup>30</sup>

### **3. EVOLUTION OF JIHADISM. FROM MARCH 2004 TO DECEMBER 2013**

Our second period of study begins with the Atocha bombings and the police response to the attacks. **In the weeks immediately following the attacks, more than a hundred people were arrested, many of whom were later released without being charged.** In addition, in the months and years after, there were new counterterrorist operations linked to the Madrid bombings. In most of them, the detainees had played a minor role in the terrorist plot, linked mainly to facilitating the departure from Spain of the plot's actors. This was the case of the following police operations;

- *Saeta* (April 2005),
- *Sello I* and *Tigris* (June 2005),

---

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 97-98.

<sup>29</sup> “La noche de los suicidas en Leganés”, *El País*, 5 May 2004.

<sup>30</sup> “Detienen el Lloret de Mar a un presunto miembro de un grupo argelino radical”, *El País*, 6 August 2003.

- *Chacal-Génesis* (January, 2006),
- *Suez* (November 2006),
- *Sello II* (January 2007)
- *Rizo* (March 2007).

In three of them, *Tigris*, *Chacal-Génesis* and *Sello II*, in addition to arresting people allegedly linked to the Madrid bombings, two networks that recruited and sent volunteers to Iraq were dismantled. We highlight the following aspects;

- **First, police operations more than doubled:** Forty-eight compared to sixteen between 1995 and the March 11 attacks (including in those sixteen operations the dismantling of the March 11 network in March-April 2004).
- **Second, the large organizations continued to be very present** (Thirty operations with links to one organization versus eighteen operations against non-linked actors); however, between 2008 and 2013, non-linked actors were predominant.

### 3.1. ALGERIAN NETWORKS AFTER MARCH 11

From a historical perspective, networks linked to Algerian organizations (mainly GIA, GSPC, and finally al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM) have been a permanent reality over the past two decades. **These networks show a remarkable capacity for regeneration, noticeable in the links between some operations and others over an extended period of years.** There is also their ability to establish links with cells linked to other operations — in particular with the GICM, al-Qaeda Central, and al-Qaeda in Iraq (later, the Islamic State of Iraq).

The most salient about the Algerian networks since 2004 is the change in their agenda. In only one of the anti-terrorist operations (Operation *Gamo* in November 2005,) security forces accused detainees of plotting an attack in Spain: **The members of the group were attempting to illegally acquire explosives used in quarries in exchange for drugs to attack in Madrid.** A similar method was used in the attacks of March 11, 2004.<sup>31</sup> However, after three years, those involved in the plot were released because the evidence presented was insufficient.<sup>32</sup>

**In all the other operations, the dismantled cells were engaged in the recruitment and funding of the GSPC/AQIM,** by sending money or goods to the organization in Algeria. The recruitment activity was particularly active in the years when the jihadist insurgency against the Allied Forces in Iraq was in full swing. However, with the Bush administration's launching of the surge starting at the end of 2007, there was a progressive loss of strength of the then Islamic State of Iraq. As a con-

<sup>31</sup> “El juez envía a prisión a cuatro de los 11 detenidos por financiar a un grupo islamista”, *El País*, 29 November 2005.

<sup>32</sup> “Los detenidos en la última operación contra el terrorismo ‘yihadista’ en Alicante están libres”, *La Verdad*, 3 February 2008.



sequence, AQIM's recruitment in Spain also decreased, although it cannot be said that it has been completely interrupted.<sup>33</sup> AQIM's logistical activity has continued until recent as evidenced by Operation *Ventanar* in November 2009, the dismantling of a network in Pamplona in September 2011, or the arrest of two individuals in April 2013 in Zaragoza and Murcia who had entered in contact with AQIM via Internet and one of them was planning to go to the training camps in the Sahel.

As it is well known, Ayman al-Zawahiri made public the GSPC leader's oath of allegiance to Osama bin Laden in September 2006 and the GSPC changed its name to al-Qaeda in the Maghreb in January 2007. Since then, there has been an increase in the threatening exhortations against France and, to a lesser extent, against Spain.<sup>34</sup> The hostility against our country was justified among other reasons by our alleged "occupation" of the cities of Ceuta and Melilla in North Africa. A detail also mentioned by Ayman al-Zawahiri in September 2007.<sup>35</sup>

However, in terms of facts and not just words, AQIM did not end up getting seriously involved in any terrorist plot in Spain, despite having operating cells in our territory. In general terms, a similar situation can be seen in the rest of Western European countries. The only two plots with a link to AQIM are those with Kamel Bouchentouf and Adlène Hicheur, detained in France in May 2007 and October 2009 respectively. In both cases, there was no trajectory of relationship with AQIM, yet both individuals contacted the organization via Internet, with no record of face-to-face meetings with AQIM's operatives in Europe.<sup>36</sup>

This fact suggests that AQIM was more interested in maintaining its logistical infrastructure in Europe and Spain rather than in engaging—or endangering—it in the preparation of terrorist plots in these countries. This could be a strong indication that the organization was prioritizing its interests in Algeria and the Sahel above the globalist agenda of al-Qaeda Central, though it would have certainly internationalized the selection of terrorist targets in that regional area.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.2. "IRAQI" NETWORKS ON SPANISH SOIL

Between April 2004 and October 2008, Spanish security forces carried out thirteen operations against jihadist networks dedicated to recruiting, funding, and sending volunteers to Iraq. The analysis of these operations reveals the following data;

---

<sup>33</sup> Brian Fishman (2009), *Dysfunction and Decline. Lessons Learned from Inside Al Qa'ida in Iraq*, West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, p. 16.

<sup>34</sup> Manuel R. Torres (2011), The Evolution of the Discourse of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Themes, Countries and Individuals, *Mediterranean Politics*, 16, pp. 279-298.

<sup>35</sup> Manuel R. Torres (2010), The Road to Media Jihad: The Propaganda Actions of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, *Terrorism & Political Violence*, 23, pp. 72-88; Guido Steinberg & Isabelle Werenfels (2007), Between the 'Near' and the 'Far' Enemy: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb" *Mediterranean Politics*, 12, pp. 407-413.

<sup>36</sup> "Lorry driver convicted of al Qaeda ties", *France24*, 01/23/2009; "Le physicien franco-algérien Adlène Hicheur condamné à quatre ans de prison ferme pour terrorisme", *Le Monde*, 4 May 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Jean-Pierre Filiu (2009), Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Algerian Challenge or Global Threat? *Carnegie Papers*, No. 104, pp. 8-9.

**The Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group devoted most of its resources to supporting jihad in Iraq and links to the GICM surfaced in nine out of those thirteen operations.** In other words, the insurgency in Iraq became the GICM's *raison d'être* in Spain. As aforementioned, the GICM's leaders had a close relationship with the al-Zarqawi-led group in Iraq, as their meeting in Istanbul in February 2003 evidenced. At that meeting, they agreed on the perpetration of attacks in the countries of residence of their cells with special emphasis on Morocco and Spain. That is what happened on May 16, 2003 and March 11, 2004 respectively.

In December 2004, Spanish security forces disrupted a new plot linked to the GICM in the province of Barcelona — Operation *Contera*. The detainees tried to get two-hundred kilos of Semtex through a trafficker from Eastern Europe to attack in Spain.

However, from then on, **the GICM networks in Spain focused exclusively on logistical tasks supporting the insurgency in Iraq.** In seven out of the thirteen operations, the link with Ansar al-Islam/Al-Qaeda in Iraq is explicit, but in six of them, the link with the GICM is simultaneous. In all cases, the networks linked to al-Zarqawi's organization were dedicated to logistical tasks (financing, recruitment, and falsification of identity documents.) In only four cases (detentions in Bilbao in May 2004, in Operation *Chacal* and Operation *Satén* in January 2006 and February 2007 respectively, and in Operation *Tala* in May 2007), the GSPC/AQIM appears to be linked with logistical networks of support for the Iraqi insurgency. This fact would reinforce the hypothesis about the primacy of regional over globalist interests in the agenda of Algerian networks. Something that stands out even more if compared to the GICM support for the Iraqi cause.

The last police operation in Spain against a network linked to the then insurgency in Iraq took place in October 2008 (Operation *Amat*). This coincides with the decline experienced by the Islamic State of Iraq in those years<sup>38</sup> with the implementation of the surge by the Bush Administration in that country.

As we will see in the analysis of the third phase in the evolution of jihadism in Spain, **the armed conflict in Syria has provoked a new exodus of volunteers joining jihadist organizations with presence in that country and in Iraq.** This new trend became noticeable at the end of this second period when, in June 2013, Spanish security forces arrested eight persons in Prince Alfonso, a Ceuta neighborhood, accusing them of recruiting volunteers to join jihadist groups in Syria — Operation *Cesto*. The group was responsible for sending at least eight young residents of that neighborhood; three of them died in Syria, according to both their families and anti-terrorist sources.<sup>39</sup>

After the dismantling of the March 11 network, al-Qaeda Central only shows up in relation to a terrorist attack plot to be carried out in Spain. It was dismantled in Operation *Cantata* by Spain's Civil Guard (*Guardia Civil*) in January 2008, which resulted in the arrest of fourteen Pakistani nationals, also linked to the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The terrorists plotted to attack Barcelona's metro system and were sentenced by the National Court (*Audiencia Nacional*) in December 2009.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Brian Fishman, *Dysfunction and Decline*, p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> José María Irujo, "Guerreros de Ceuta", *El País*, 24 June 2012.

<sup>40</sup> Juzgado Central de Instrucción No 2, Sumario 26/2008, Sentencia, 11 December 2009.

### 3.3. NON-LINKED ACTORS: INDEPENDENT CELLS AND “LONE WOLVES”

As previously mentioned, one of the main revelations in this study’s second period is the dismantling of small groups, even lone actors not linked to a higher organization. There are eighteen cases that can be classified as follows:

- **Seven independent cells with violent plans. The first was dismantled in Operation Nova in October 2004.** Although some of the detainees had ties to the GIA, one cannot say that the new cell they had created was part of a higher organization at that time. Then came Operation *Contera* in December 2004, in which the detainees allegedly tried to acquire two-hundred kilos of Semtex from a foreign trafficker (They were initially linked to the GICM; however, it does not seem to be the case).<sup>41</sup>
- **In March 2005, the Civil Guard arrested two prisoners in Ceuta’s jail for allegedly trying to attack a ferry that links the city to the peninsula.**<sup>42</sup> In December 2006 the police dismantled a cell in El Príncipe neighborhood, also in Ceuta, that allegedly planned attacks in Spain (Operation *Duna*). No explosives or evidence were found in either case regarding an imminent terrorist attack under way.<sup>43</sup> The fifth operation was the arrest of a person in Tarragona in March 2009 linked to a cell dismantled in Morocco that supposedly attempted to attack in that country. In June 2012, police arrested in Melilla two members of a radical salafist group who had murdered two young men in Morocco, one of them had been a member of the group and at the time of his death was involved in a love relationship with another former follower of that extreme movement.<sup>44</sup> Finally, in August 2012, two Chechens and a Turkish national were arrested. Although the information published after their arrest was linked to al-Qaeda Central, their connection with the organization was later questioned; however, for analytical purposes, we include them in this category.
- **Six cases of small cells, even lone actors, dedicated to the spreading of jihadist contents on Internet, but quite amateurishly:** Operation *Jineta* and Operation *Nazarí* were carried out in March 2007 and February 2009 respectively; the arrest of two young Moroccans in Seville in July 2011; the case of a Cuban-born youth arrested for the same reason in Mallorca in September 2011; Operation *Kafka* in April 2013 and Operation *Kartago* in June of the same year.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> “Los islamistas de Barcelona querían comprar 200 kilos de explosivo Semtex”, *ABC*, 17 January 2005.

<sup>42</sup> “Dos presos de la cárcel de Ceuta, detenidos por su presunta relación con el terrorismo islamista”, *El Mundo*, 23 March 2005.

<sup>43</sup> “Garzón dice que la célula islámica de Ceuta pretendía atentar contra el puerto y el ferry”, *Europa Press*, 16 March 2009.

<sup>44</sup> “La policía detiene a dos ‘takfiris’ como presuntos autores del brutal asesinato de dos melillenses en Marruecos”, *El País*, 27 June 2012.

<sup>45</sup> “La Guardia Civil detiene a dos personas por enaltecimiento y apología del terrorismo islamista”, *Oficina de Relaciones Informativas y Sociales del Ministerio del Interior*, 13 March 2007; “La Policía Nacional detiene en Granada a dos personas por la edición y difusión en Internet de videos de contenido yihadista”, *Oficina de Relaciones Informativas y Sociales del Ministerio del Interior*, 17 February 2009; “Dos detenidos por presunta apología del terrorismo islamista”, *ABC*, 1 July 2011; “Cinco tunecinos detenidos en Barcelona en una operación contra el islamismo radical”, *RTVE*, 12 June 2013.

- **Three so-called ‘lone wolves’ with intentions to attacking in Spain.** The first one was a Moroccan arrested by the *Mossos d’Esquadra* in Gerona in September 2007, coming from Toulouse (France). In the car, he carried several containers of butane gas and pyrotechnic material, as well as a text of the Islamic Army of Iraq praising martyrdom.<sup>46</sup> The second one was also a Moroccan arrested in Cadiz in August 2011 when he was looking for ways to poison water tanks. This person also ran an amateur jihadist website. He expressed on Internet his intention of carrying out an attack and he requested help in one forum to perpetrate the terrorist action. This lack of professional expertise facilitated his arrest.<sup>47</sup> The third one was also a Moroccan, Mohammed Echaabi, arrested in Valencia in February 2013 and who allegedly had the intention to carry out an attack against an Arab country official in Spain.<sup>48</sup>
- **Two individuals “professionally” dedicated to the management of forums widely followed by sympathizers of jihadism.** In August 2010, Faiçal Errai, a young Moroccan, was arrested in a village of Alicante accused of being one of the administrators of the forums *Ansar al-Mujahideen Network* and *Ansar al-Jihad Network*.<sup>49</sup> In March 2012, Mudhar Hussein Almalki (a.k.a. The Librarian) was arrested in Valencia and accused of running the *Ansar al-Mujahideen Network*. Almalki dedicated between 8 and 15 hours a day to the management of the forum where communiqués by al-Qaeda Central, AQIM, and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula were published.<sup>50</sup>

## 4. CONCLUSION

The transitional analysis shows that **the nature and intensity of jihadist militancy in Spain is closely linked to the progression of the large jihadist organizations** and the changes taking place in their political agendas, both in Europe and the Middle East. In other words, although in a good number of cases individuals have joined the militancy when they were already living in Spain (and from that angle, it could be considered “homegrown” militancy,) their activity is conditioned by events taking place outside Spain’s borders: The GIA’s strength and the civil war in Algeria in the 1990s; the rise of al-Qaeda Central and support for the globalist cause through logistical activities and plot preparation since the early 2000s; support for jihad in Iraq from 2004 until 2008; the exclusively-logic support to AQIM since its name change in early 2007; and large-scale support for the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq since 2013.

---

<sup>46</sup> Personal interview of the author with a *Mossos d’Esquadra* officer, October 2007.

<sup>47</sup> “El presunto ‘yihadista’ detenido en Cádiz planeaba envenenar depósitos de agua de complejos turísticos y viviendas”, *El País*, 20 August 2011.

<sup>48</sup> “Detenido en Valencia un “lobo solitario” islamista acusado de planear atentados”, *El País*, 8 February 2013.

<sup>49</sup> Juzgado Central de Instrucción No 2, Diligencias Previa 120/09-F, Auto de prisión, 31 August 2010: 1.

<sup>50</sup> “Un detenido en Valencia por supuestos vínculos con Al Qaeda”, *El País*, 27 March 2012.

**It is therefore to be expected that jihadist activity in Spain in the coming years will continue to be affected by the degree of strength of the large organizations in the Middle East and Africa.** Activity in Spain is thus closely associated with political stability in the countries with Islamic majorities with a special mention to Syria, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Algeria, Pakistan, Egypt, and Yemen.

It is true that independent cells and lone actors are becoming a permanent phenomenon on the map of jihadism in Spain and it is probable that one of them will carry out a successful micro-terrorist attack someday: For example, the murder in London of British military officer Lee Rigby in May 2013, followed by the assault against a French military officer within days. This type of attack has been replicated since 2015 as seen with the murder with a knife of a French priest in Normandy perpetrated by two Islamists in July 2016, or the attacks against Belgian police officers in Brussels in October 2017.

**The danger of micro attacks exists and it is persistent.** Beyond the action of fairly isolated individual actors, the most serious and potentially more lethal terrorist projects—gauged by the degree of completion of the terrorist operation, or by a judicial sentence—have been exclusively the work of cells linked to a large jihadist organization. It is the case of the 2004 Madrid bombings, the placement by the same group of an explosive device on the Madrid-Seville high-speed train tracks a few weeks later, and the plot against Barcelona’s metro system in January 2008 (Operation *Cantata*).

From this point of view, **it is the large organizations that, by acting directly, can turn jihadist terrorism into a strategic threat for Spain.** It is strategic because of its consequences in terms of mortality, social and political impact, as well as economic effects since the Spanish tourism sector has so far benefited from the insecurity in North Africa and the Middle East since the beginning of the Arab revolts.<sup>51</sup> The change in the political agenda of the self-proclaimed Islamic State, which had rhetorically encouraged attacking Europe, but had not coordinated any terrorist attacks until the highly-lethal Paris attacks in November 2015, constitutes a clear warning and a real danger for Spain. **Macro attacks on Spanish soil cannot be ruled out.** Actually, the odds of that happening are very.

---

<sup>51</sup> Maribel Núñez, “La Primavera Árabe ha desviado a España más de seis millones de turistas”, *ABC*, 2 April 2015.



### 3. THE THREAT OF THE ISLAMIC STATE FOR OUR COUNTRY

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Some on European soil compare the threat level that the various salafi-jihadist groups represent for their countries depending on the attacks these groups have perpetrated in recent years; gauging it this way makes it hard to overcome the 260-death “threshold” mostly perpetrated by the Islamic State in France between 2015 and 2016. Others gauge it by using indicators such as the number of nationals or residents who have migrated to jihadist fighting lands in recent years and, once more, those to be found among member states of the European Union (EU) are from France or Belgium.

However, if one uses as a reference element both the number of anti-terrorist operations carried out and the number of detainees in these operations, regardless of the judicial results that ultimately derive from such preventive operations, Spain occupies the top place among the other European countries. **This also means that Spain should be placed among the countries most potentially threatened by salafi-jihadist terrorism** and, within this list, threatened by the most lethal actor inside and outside Europe, the Islamic State, as we saw in August 2017 with the terrorist attack against Barcelona.

We will see in this analysis how Spain’s prominence here can be explained both in terms of the importance of the number of detainees in preventive operations as well as the consequences of its particular geographical position as the only European country having terrestrial borders with North Africa.

**The armed conflict in Syria has gradually found echo in jihadist milieux in Spain.** The gradual nature of this process is explained by the progressive “jihadization” of the conflict. Social protests in March 2011, parallel to others taking place in other countries of the region, were met with a brutal response from the Bashar al-Assad regime. The opposition answered back and the process of political change degenerated into a spiral of violence where groups, from different stripes and enormously fragmented but opposed to the regime, started gaining control of entire neighborhoods and populations.

In this chaotic context, the first jihadist groups began to operate in the country, at least since the summer of 2011. **In January 2012, the creation of the al-Nusra Front was officially announced and, in the spring of 2013, there was a confrontation between this organization and the then Islamic State of Iraq, which was renamed as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS).**

Over the following year, this organization became the most powerful within the jihadist and Syrian insurgency map. As it is well known, once these positions in Syria were strengthened, ISIS started an offensive in the Sunni triangle of Iraq by the spring of 2014, which allowed the organization to

gain control of Mosul and proclaim the beginning of an alleged caliphate in June of that year,<sup>1</sup> and that until the end of 2016 has not been put in danger by the complex coalition of ISIS enemies in the region that has managed to reduce in half the territory occupied by this organization and to take away the control of Mosul from ISIS.

News emerged in 2012 about the first cases of individuals from EU member states, both nationals and residents, being recruited in an increasingly important number by jihadist groups especially active in chaotic places, such as Syria and Iraq. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, the predecessor of ISIS) and Jabhat al-Nusrah, the al-Qaeda franchise in Syria, were the most dynamic players at that time. From those days until December 2016, 204 was the number of Spaniards — nationals or residents— who had answered the jihadist invitation to go to that combat zone, a number far removed from those of France, Belgium, Germany, or the United Kingdom; however, it is disturbing in any case.<sup>2</sup>

We will analyze next the reason for the importance of Spain in this process, the multiple police operations carried out, the enforcement process taking place in Spain as well as in other countries in terms of updating the legal apparatus necessary to fight against a type of terrorism that permanently mutates, the interaction between Spain and its geographic environment, and all these steps are necessary to reach conclusions about the nature of the threat and its future prospects.

**Spain is central to the analysis of the jihadist threat for Western European countries since it continues being the country enduring the most lethal attacks so far: 191 killed in the 3/11 attacks in 2004, followed in order of importance by the 130 casualties in Paris on November 13, 2015; Spain is also the country that has recently suffered a major terrorist attack in Barcelona in August 2017.** The symbolism of the jihadi instrumentalization of the al-Andalus myth, which will be analyzed in the next section; and the multiple anti-terrorist operations carried out on Spanish soil, which will be reviewed starting from 2012.<sup>3</sup> In that year, there were five operations that resulted in eight arrests; in 2013, there were eight operations that resulted in 20 arrests; in 2014, there was an increase totaling 13 operations that resulted in 36 arrests; in 2015, when the national terrorism alert was raised from 4 to 5, there were 36 operations that resulted in 75 arrests; and in 2016 there were 36 operations that resulted in 69 arrests.

**During the first six months of 2017, there have been 27 operations that resulted in 37 arrests, reaching 51 in August.** The number of arrests is significant; therefore, concern is growing as messages from ISIS—in particular due to its ideologue Abu Muhammad al-Adnani's insistence in

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Lister, *Profiling the Islamic State*, Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper, No. 13, November 2014; Nelly Lahoud, "Metamorphosis: From al-Tawhid wa-al-Jihad to Dawlat al-Khilafa (2003-2014)", Bryan Price, Dan Milton, Muhammad al-'Ubaydi, Nelly Lahoud (2014) (ed.) *The Group That Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of The Islamic State*, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, pp. 11-12; Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan (2015), *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, New York: Simon & Schuster.

<sup>2</sup> See the official figures in U.S. Department of State: *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016*, Washington DC, Bureau of Counterterrorism - U.S. Department of State Publication, July 2017, p. 153.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the al-Andalus myth, see ECHEVERRÍA JESÚS, C.: *El estandarte de Al Ándalus: intensidad y extensión de la instrumentalización yihadista hoy*, Madrid, Instituto de Seguridad y Cultura, Informe nº 2, June 2017, [www.seguridadycultura.com](http://www.seguridadycultura.com).



September 2014 and May 2016, inviting his followers to attack the homeland—will undoubtedly increase the level of threat for our country. Al-Adnani was killed in Aleppo on August 30, 2016; however, his message is still alive in the networks and is continually brought up.<sup>4</sup>

**The reforms of Spain’s criminal law, both in 2010 and particularly in 2015, have allowed the addition of crimes such as collaboration with individuals who, in turn, contribute to the activities of terrorist organizations;** self-indoctrination, or the possession and dissemination of material that serves this purpose; traveling to areas controlled by terrorist organizations in their support; among others. The issue of possession and dissemination of material in electronic format is important because more than 35 percent of detainees in Spain since 2013 had been recruited via Internet; this recruiting trend is only increasing.<sup>5</sup>

Between June 26, 2015—the day on which the national terrorism alert was raised to 4—and December 2016, the State Security Forces and Corps (*Fuerzas y Cuerpos de Seguridad del Estado*, or FCSE) arrested 177 suspected terrorists, out of whom 90 percent are either in preventive detention or their cases have received final judgment.<sup>6</sup> After the attacks in Barcelona in August, the possibility of raising the alert level to level 5 was considered, although the government decided not to do so due to domestic politics.

## 2. A PANORAMIC VIEW OF WHY SPAIN IS AN OBJECTIVE FOR ISIS JIHADIS

The number of threats against Spain reached its peak in 2016 and included references to al-Andalus, happening right after a year such as 2015 when ISIS raised its claims regarding al-Andalus about a dozen times.<sup>7</sup> **It is relevant to emphasize the importance of 2015 since it was the year when the group showed its greatest vitality following the announcement of the creation of the caliphate embryo during the summer of 2014** as well as the launching of offensives on various fronts by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s followers in the following months.

In addition, we must emphasize their past deeds, specifically, the Madrid attacks of March 11, 2004—the most lethal terrorist attack on European soil until now with 191 casualties—since these attacks have a stimulating effect on some jihadists and their groups. In fact, **there was an intense wave of activities led by ISIS on social media in October 2016, where its followers were invited to emulate the Madrid attacks** and, for a few hours, ISIS provided a detailed publication (*Book of Terror*, a very didactic, 2000-page document). This triggered the arrest of a Moroccan national, Zoubair

<sup>4</sup> See Al-Adnani’s messages in EUROPOL: *Changes in modus operandi of Islamic State (IS) revisited*, The Hague, EUROPOL Public Information, 2017, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Regarding the modification of the Criminal Code, see Centro Memorial de las Víctimas del Terrorismo: *Balance del Terrorismo en España 2015*, Vitoria, Cuadernos del CMVT nº 1, February 2016, p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of State: *op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>7</sup> CMVT: *op. cit.*, p. 37.

Ajanan, in Aranjuez by the National Police Corps (CNP) on November 30 of that year since he had shown excessive interest for the 3/11 model.<sup>8</sup>

The year 2017 began with a direct reference in January by Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's emir, in which he denounced the occupation/usurpation by Christian Spain of the North-African cities of Ceuta and Melilla.<sup>9</sup> He did it in an audio recording, urging to seize Ceuta and Melilla from the infidels and their apostate allies, comparing the situation of both Spanish autonomous cities with the occupation of Palestine, Kashmir, the Caucasus, or Turkestan (in reference to Xinjiang, the Chinese region with a Muslim majority.) Al-Zawahiri's address, the first one since September 2015, was interpreted as his attempt to take over ISIS's equally forceful discourse. Although our analysis will primarily focus on the threat by ISIS, we must not overlook al-Qaeda since both of these apparent rivals are the two most potent expressions of the salafi-jihadist threat.

**At the beginning of 2017, *Rumiyah*, ISIS's main magazine, highlighted in its English version the prominence of Abdallah ibn Yassin, founder of the Almoravid dynasty. He had invaded al-Andalus in the Middle Ages, coming from North Africa to straighten up Islam and restrain the Christians.** In the ninth issue of *Rumiyah*, published in April 2017, Sheikh Abul Hassan al-Muhajir wrote *The Ruling on the Belligerent Christians*, in which he reminisces Spain ruled *Taifa*-style in a page in which **the Alhambra of Granada appears in terms of al-Andalus splendor.** The author says that the *taifas* were a deplorable example of *fitna* (division) within Islam and that it should serve as a lesson today so that Muslims do not repeat the mistake that allowed the advance of Christians and the decline of Islam in the Iberian Peninsula during that era.<sup>10</sup>

At the end of March 2017, *Amaq*, the agency used by ISIS to tout its initiatives, launched a Spanish-language channel on *Telegram*; in addition, the *Al Haqq* agency, of the same group and with the same goal of disseminating doctrinal English-only content, also launched a channel in Spanish on *Telegram*, a Twitter account, and a website. It is also important to highlight that three Spanish jihadis, who included the term *al-Andalus* in their noms de guerre, died in 2016 in Syria and Iraq — two were linked to al-Qaeda and one to ISIS: Abu Nur al-Andalusi, Zakariya al-Andalusi, and Abu Usama al-Andalusi.<sup>11</sup>

The Department of National Security warned in its 2016 report that Spain has been directly threatened by ISIS on social media, which serves a recruitment tool, and that ISIS is looking for Spanish translators to spread its propaganda among Spanish speakers. In addition, two maps were published on the **Ministry of Interior's** website in October 2016. The maps show the places where jihadists had been arrested between 2012 and that month.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, Melchor: "Detenido en Aranjuez un 'lobo solitario' admirador de los atentados del 11-M", *Diario de Navarra*, 1 December 2016, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> "El máximo líder de Al-Qaeda llama a reconquistar Ceuta y Melilla", *Diario de Navarra*, 8 January 2017, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> See Centro de Análisis y Prospectiva (CAP) de la Guardia Civil: *Yihad: Un análisis de Rumiyah n° 9*, 2017, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> CMVT: *Balance del terrorismo en España 2016*, Vitoria, Cuadernos del CMVT n° 3, April 2017, p. 38.

<sup>12</sup> CMVT: *Balance del terrorismo en España 2016 op. cit.*, pp.99-100.

In those four years, the Ministry gathered information that included among other interesting data: In the first place, out of the 186 persons arrested, one third of the arrests happened in the autonomous region of Catalonia — by provinces: 50 in Barcelona, 6 in Girona, 3 in Lleida, and 3 in Tarragona. The Community of Madrid is in the second place with 26 arrests. The autonomous city of Ceuta is in third place with 24 arrests. The autonomous Community of Valencia is in fourth place with 18 detainees and the autonomous city of Melilla is in fifth place with 10 detainees. In that period, there were also 10 detainees in the autonomous Community of Andalusia and 7 in the Basque Country.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, in the last report published by the **European Anti-Terrorism Center** under the European Police Agency (EUROPOL) on December 2, 2016, France and Belgium are identified as the main jihadist objectives while acknowledging that the threat affects the entire European Union.<sup>14</sup>

However, it is from 2014, and especially from 2015, that we are witnessing an exponential increase in the number of anti-terrorist operations related to Syria and, in particular, to the Islamic State. It is so to the extent that **it is appropriate to establish a third period in the history of jihadism in Spain given the magnitude of the numbers and the specificity of the dismantled networks.** This expansion is characterized by a clear rebound in jihadist activity. It also shows that there is an increase in individuals and small groups linked to an organization, in this case, linked mostly to ISIS. Linked to this rebound, there is a boom of activities, which include plans to attack in Spain.

### **3. NETWORKS AND INDIVIDUALS LINKED TO SYRIAN CONFLICT**

Within this category, one finds several possibilities. In all of them, the preemptive nature of Spain's anti-terrorist policy is noticeable, with a clear intention to neutralize the threat before it takes shape, with the risk that the courts will subsequently reject the evidence.

**First, it is the issue of arresting returning individuals after fighting in Syria.** These are people in which radicalization, expert knowledge, and socialization in violence are presumed, which leads to their immediate detention, as soon as they step on Spanish territory, or when news of their presence in our country is available. That was the case of Abdeluahid Sadik Mohamed from Ceuta, detained in January 2014 at Malaga's airport after returning from fighting in the ranks of ISIS in Syria and Iraq.<sup>15</sup> Also, Abdelmalek Tanem, a French citizen of Algerian background, detained in Almería in April 2014 after fighting with the al-Nusra Front.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Algerian Ouagueni Karim was arrested in July 2015 at El Prat airport (Barcelona) on his return from fighting in Syria. In this case,

<sup>13</sup> MACÍAS, C.S.: “Un tercio de los detenidos por yihadismo fueron en Cataluña”, *La Razón*, 19 October 2016, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> See EUROPOL: *Changes in Modus Operandi op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> “Detenido en Málaga un yihadista español considerado muy peligroso”, *El País*, 5 January 2014.

<sup>16</sup> “La Guardia Civil detiene en Almería un yihadista que acababa de regresar de Siria”, *El País*, 30 April 2014.

he was identified due to a search and capture warrant issued by Belgium.<sup>17</sup> In 2014, a total of fourteen returnees were arrested, although one of them did not come from Syria, but from Mali.<sup>18</sup>

If, as we have already seen, it has been a priority to prevent somewhat radicalized individuals from attempting to attack the homeland, or from trying to travel to conflict areas, there is even more concern for the returnee — in other words, the radical who comes back from a conflict zone with acquired knowledge and the aura of combat. It is especially concerning since the attack on May 24, 2014 by 29-year-old Franco-Algerian Mehdi Nemmouche against the Jewish Museum in Brussels, which defined such a profile as a real threat. Let us not forget that this attack came two months before the self-proclamation of the Caliphate by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi at the Great Mosque of Mosul.<sup>19</sup>

**The Nemmouche case** is also particularly important for Spain, since the investigation initiated after getting the weapon used in that attack, which was found on the terrorist when he arrived by bus to Marseille, allowed the CNP to intervene in March 2017 under Operation *Portu*, in which they found a spectacular arsenal in three Spanish provinces (Biscay, Cantabria, and Gerona) that could have supplied both jihadis and the organized crime.<sup>20</sup>

In April 2016, 28-year-old Moroccan Ali Afarkhane, a farmer in Padilla de Arriba, Burgos, began a trip to Syria via Turkey. He was arrested in Gaziantep and deported to Spain on May 4 where he was released. On September 26, he was arrested in Valladolid and Judge Eloy Velasco sent him to prison.<sup>21</sup> On September 26, 2016, the CNP arrested one more Moroccan jihadist in Murcia, accused of facilitating a second travel attempt to the detainee in Valladolid.<sup>22</sup>

Nonetheless, the most important cell supporting ISIS until now was dismantled by the CNP two days later, on September 28, 2016, culminating with arrests in Spain (two in Barcelona and one in Melilla) and in two other European countries (one in Belgium and one in Germany).<sup>23</sup>

On December 28, 2016, the Civil Guard arrested two Algerians in two different localities of La Coruña and two Moroccans in the Andalusian city of Almería — all of them accused of being part of a human trafficking network that might have been used by the ISIS terrorists that attacked in Paris on November, 13, 2015. This operation adds an interesting angle with the possibility of ex-

<sup>17</sup> Alfonso L. Congostrina, “Detenido un presunto yihadista en el aeropuerto de El Prat”, *El País*, 7 July 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Jesús Duva, “70 españoles combaten en las filas del Estado Islámico en Siria”, *El País*, 2 January 2015.

<sup>19</sup> KARMON, Ely: “Europe Slowly Waking Up to Islamist Terror”, *The Israel Public Diplomacy Forum Newsletter*, August 2016, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> DE LAS HERAS, Ainhoa: “Decomisadas 11.500 armas para los yihadistas y el crimen organizado”, *Diario de Navarra*, 15 March 2017, p. 5. About Nemmouche’s attack, see GUNARATNA, Rohan: “Global Threat Forecast”, *UNISCI Journal*, Issue 43, January 2017, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> BALÍN, M.: “Procesan a un agricultor de Burgos que ‘quiso’ ir al Daesh”, *Diario de Navarra*, 31 January 2017, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> “Detenidos dos yihadistas que se instruían para atacar”, *Diario de Navarra*, 27 September 2016, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> The five detainees—four Spaniards and one Moroccan—ran the Facebook page “Islam en Español”, which, under the guise of being a tool focused on religious issues, served as the largest ISIS recruiting platform in Spanish. See SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: “Cae la mayor red de captación de yihadistas hispanohablantes”, *Diario de Navarra*, 29 September 2016, p. 6.

ploring the existence of links between trafficking networks and terrorist infiltration, regardless of the fact that, today and based only on this case, the burden of proof is not strong enough to confirm such a relationship between these two criminal enterprises.<sup>24</sup>

On January 13, 2017, the Civil Guard in Figueras arrested a Dutch jihadist linked to ISIS, who was on a search warrant issued by the Netherlands as a returnee from Syria. Also in January 2017, the CNP arrested a Moroccan national in San Sebastián, who recruited for ISIS and was **considered part of a cell with at least two other Moroccan returnees** from Syria and Iraq, but arrested in Morocco and France. The Moroccan Territorial Security Directorate (DGST) assisted in this arrest.<sup>25</sup>

On February 14, 2017, two jihadists were arrested, a 44-year-old Algerian in Bilbao by the CNP and a 33-year-old Moroccan in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria by the Civil Guard.<sup>26</sup> On February 15, a Moroccan returnee from Syria was arrested by the CNP in Vitoria as well as the Spanish widow of a jihadi in Alicante. The latter, **Dolores Hidalgo, the widow of Moroccan jihadi Mohamed Belguin Ikhilaz, who died in Syria in 2014, was planning to move to the Caliphate with her four children and look for a new husband among the mujahideen or jihadist warriors.**<sup>27</sup> Judge Ismael Moreno sent the detainees in Bilbao and Las Palmas to prison on February 16, charging the first accused for being part of a terrorist organization, for indoctrination and glorification and the second accused for involvement in terrorist training and glorification.<sup>28</sup>

On April 5, 2017, a 19-year-old Moroccan woman, resident in Spain, was arrested by the Catalanian police corps, *Mossos de Esquadra*, in Tarrasa (Barcelona), accused of attempting to recruit other women to join ISIS and also for encouraging them to have children for the Caliphate.<sup>29</sup>

In Malaga, on June 30, 2017, the Civil Guard arrested Syrian-born and Danish national Ahmed Samsam, aged 29. **An expert in making explosives, he was looking for weapons and bulletproof vests in Spain to supply ISIS.** He had fought for ISIS in Syria for two years and was considered a highly dangerous returnee with a warrant for his arrest issued by Denmark on June 15.<sup>30</sup>

Assia Ahmed Mohamed, aged 27 and **widow of the ISIS terrorist known as *The killer of Castillejos or Kokito, Mohamed Hamdouch (alias Abu Tasmin al-Maghrebi)***, arrived in Spain on July 11, 2017, handed over by Turkish authorities who had arrested her in 2016 when she was trying to return to Europe. She and another widow, 22-year-old Fatima Akil Kaghmich (wife of terrorist Mourad Kadi)

<sup>24</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: “Desmantelada la trama española de la masacre yihadista de París”, *Diario de Navarra*, 29 December 2016, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> “Detenido en San Sebastián un captador de combatientes para el ISIS”, *El País*, 16 January 2017.

<sup>26</sup> AYACHE, Mallak: “Un Algérien soupçonné de liens avec Daech arrêté en Espagne”, *TSA-Algérie*, 16 February 2017. This Algerian citizen, Samir Mahdjoud (aka Sami Menardo) had been indicted by Judge Baltasar Garzón in 2005, along with six other North Africans accused of financing al-Qaeda in Iraq, but were acquitted by the National High Court in 2007 for lack of evidence. See SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: “Detenidos dos yihadistas en Las Palmas y Bilbao”, *Diario de Navarra*, February 15, 2017, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: “La viuda detenida en Alicante buscaba otro marido terrorista”, *Diario de Navarra*, 16 February 2017, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> “Prisión para los dos yihadistas detenidos en Las Palmas y Bilbao”, *Dario de Navarra*, 17 February 2017, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> “La yihadista de 19 años, a disposición de la Audiencia”, *Diario de Navarra*, 7 April 2017, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> “El sirio detenido en Málaga buscaba armas”, *Diario de Sevilla*, July 4, 2017, p. 3.

were arrested in December 2016 on the Syrian-Turkish border. Now they must appear before Judge Pedraz.<sup>31</sup>

Preemptive detention of people intending to join the Islamic State is also important. Comparatively, Spain is one of the European countries less affected by the phenomenon of foreign volunteers who have gone to Syria, counting them by the dozens, rather than by the hundreds, of known individuals who have left their borders to fight in Syria.<sup>32</sup> In other cases, the police have arrested people about to join the Islamic State: In November 2016, a Palestinian was detained at Barajas airport when he was going to take a flight to Syria.<sup>33</sup> The detainee had previously tried to enter Syria long before, but he was returned to Spain by Turkish authorities. **The reform of the Spanish Criminal Code in March 2015 has favored this type of operations since it explicitly turned into a crime any terrorist forays abroad, both to destabilize institutions in other countries as well as for training purposes.** It also penalizes those who travel with the purpose of recruiting or providing support.<sup>34</sup> This legal modification has provided new tools to the nation's security forces and has resulted in several police operations. For example, in March 2015 at Barcelona's airport, the Civil Guard arrested Moroccan Samira Yerou, who had been intercepted in Turkey when she intended to join the Islamic State.<sup>35</sup>

That same month, the Civil Guard also arrested four members of the same family in Badalona (Barcelona), whose two youngest children, 16-year-old twins, were about to leave for Syria to join the ranks of ISIS. Their brother, Yassin Atanji, had already died the previous year fighting in Syria.<sup>36</sup> Nadia Ataich Fernández and Ahmed Debza, a Spanish citizen and her Moroccan husband living in Melilla, were also arrested in Turkey when trying to join ISIS in April 2015.<sup>37</sup> In October of the same year, a Spanish woman convert was stopped at Madrid's airport, coming from Huelva, who after experiencing a process of self-radicalization via Internet, was trying to join the Islamic State.<sup>38</sup> In September 2016, another jihadist detained by Turkish authorities attempting to enter Syria was arrested in Valladolid on his return from that country.<sup>39</sup>

**The third type of operations has focused on those who promote and facilitate the venture to combat Syria.** In the sample of our study, there are cases in which the detainees tried to join the Islamic State; and, in three cases, the al-Nusra Front. There are several aspects that we find striking;

---

<sup>31</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: "Turquía entrega a la viuda de un sanguinario yihadista español", *Diario de Navarra*, 12 July 2017, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> "La Guardia Civil detiene a un yihadista en el aeropuerto de Barajas", *El País*, 27 November 2016.

<sup>34</sup> María Ponte, "La reforma de los delitos de terrorismo mediante la Ley Orgánica 2/2015", *Análisis GESI*, November 2015.

<sup>35</sup> "Detenida en Barcelona una marroquí que quería viajar a Siria a combatir", *ABC*, 7 March 2015

<sup>36</sup> Jorge A. Rodríguez y Alfonso L. Congostrina, "Detenida una familia que enviaba a sus hijos menores a la yihad en Siria", *El País*, 31 March 2015.

<sup>37</sup> "Los dos detenidos en Turquía, 'plenamente integrados' en el Estado Islámico", *El Confidencial*, 18 April 2015.

<sup>38</sup> "Detenida en el aeropuerto de Barajas una española que iba a unirse al Estado Islámico", *El Confidencial*, 20 October 2015.

<sup>39</sup> "Detenido en Valladolid un yihadista que fue a Siria para volver a Europa a atentar", *El País*, 26 September 2016.

- **One of them is that several networks had specialized in attracting women.** It is clearly a new development in the history of contemporary jihadism that had only focused on the recruitment of men to combat until now. The recruitment of women is also happening in other European countries and is related to the political project that the Islamic State wants to put into practice as a territorial entity and for which it needs jihadi “settlers,” both men and women.

Some examples of women recruitment networks in Spain are found in a dismantled network in Ceuta, Melilla, Barcelona and Castillejos (Morocco) in December 2014<sup>40</sup>; The one about an 18-year-old girl detained in Gandía for the same cause in September 2015<sup>41</sup>; the one of another network dismantled in several localities of Spain and Morocco in October 2015<sup>42</sup>; and the arrest in April 2016, in Operation *Sable*, of a woman who traveled to Morocco and had contact with terrorists who had fought in Syria.<sup>43</sup>

- **A second aspect to highlight is that, in several cases, those who recruited or volunteered had been professional military personnel in the Spanish Army.** At the moment, they are anecdotal cases, but they warn of a problem associated with second-generation immigrant jihadists, who, because of their Spanish nationality, can be integrated into the Armed Forces. In May 2014, security forces dismantled a recruitment network in Melilla, which had sent four former Spanish soldiers and one former police officer to fight abroad. Unlike the other cases, the initial destination was not Syria but Mali on this occasion.<sup>44</sup> There, they fought in the ranks of the jihadist group MUJAO and marched to Syria/Iraq from the Sahel, where they joined the ranks of the Islamic State. Another case was the group coordinated from Syria by Zakaria Said Mohamed, a former Spanish soldier belonging to the Regiment of Engineers in Melilla, who had gone to that country to join the Islamic State.<sup>45</sup> This network was dismantled in Melilla and in the nearby Moroccan town of Nador in September 2014.<sup>46</sup>
- **Third, there are operations against logistical support networks to the Islamic State,** which are more relevant from 2015 and 2016. The salient part here is the January arrest of seven people in Alicante, Valencia, and Ceuta, who were part of a logistical network that, under the front of organizing humanitarian aid, would deliver arms, money, and even uniforms to ISIS and al-Nusra. Containers were discovered in the

<sup>40</sup> “Siete detenidos por captar a 12 mujeres para el Estado Islámico”, *El País*, 16 December 2014.

<sup>41</sup> “Detenida una joven en Valencia por actividad y apología yihadista”, *El País*, 5 September 2015.

<sup>42</sup> “Desarticulada una red de yihadistas en España que enviaban mujeres a Siria e Irak”, *El Confidencial*, 4 October 2015.

<sup>43</sup> “Detenida en Algeciras una pareja que iba a unirse al Estado Islámico”, *El Mundo*, 16 April 2016.

<sup>44</sup> Paqui Sánchez, “Al menos 6 detenidos en una operación contra el terrorismo yihadista en Melilla”, *El Mundo*, 30 May 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Jose María Irujo, “El EI proyecta secuestrar a narcos para financiar la yihad en España”, *El País*, 24 October 2014.

<sup>46</sup> Jorge A. Rodríguez, “Detenidos 9 supuestos yihadistas ligados al Estado Islámico en Melilla y Nador”, *El País*, 26 September 2014.

ports of Algeciras with more than 20,000 combat uniforms, camouflaged under second-hand clothes for Syrian refugees.<sup>47</sup>

- **Finally, one last aspect to highlight is that most of this kind of anti-terrorist operation has taken place in two very specific regions of Spain: Catalonia and the Spanish North-African cities of Ceuta and Melilla.** The role of Catalonia is no surprise, since it is the region of Spain where more anti-terrorist operations have been carried out by far in the two decades covered in our study — a sign that Islamist radicalism has taken root in certain sectors of the Islamic community in that Spanish region.<sup>48</sup> Andalusia, Madrid, and localities in the Ebro Valley are next in the level of importance.

**It is striking the iteration of operations in Ceuta and Melilla** during this third period. It is fundamentally due to two factors;

- **On the one hand, the proximity to Morocco** and the ease of contact with jihadist networks operating in that country. This fact explains that, between the years 2014 and 2016, joint police operations of Spain and Morocco's forces have kept recurring. This is an unprecedented event that reflects police cooperation between the two countries in the face of a shared threat (Morocco has more than 1,000 foreign volunteers in Syria and Iraq).
- **On the other hand, the second reason is the existence of a second generation of Muslim immigrants in Ceuta and Melilla, which has no comparison elsewhere in Spain.** Muslim immigration to both cities has intensified since the early 1980s, while in the rest of Spain was since the late 1990s.<sup>49</sup>

### 3.1. JIHADI MILITANCY VIA INTERNET

A second group of operations carried out during this period targeted individuals or small groups that distribute jihadi propaganda through forums and social media, in many cases related precisely to the Islamic State;

- **In several cases, the individuals or the dismantled groups combined their propaganda via Internet with recruitment efforts to send men and women to places in conflict,** in particular to Syria, but also to Mali and Libya in some cases. For example, that was the case of Operation *Javer* in May 2014 in Melilla, part of the virtual platform *Sharia4Spain* that changed name later to *Millatu Ibrahim Spain*.<sup>50</sup> There is also Op-

<sup>47</sup> “La policía interviene 20,000 uniformes destinados al Estado Islámico”, *El Mundo*, 3 March 2016.

<sup>48</sup> Fernando Reinares y Carola García-Calvo (2015), Terroristas, redes y organizaciones: facetas de la actual movilización yihadista en España, *Documento de trabajo del Real Instituto Elcano*, 17, pp. 10-11.

<sup>49</sup> Luis De la Corte (2015), ¿Enclaves yihadistas? Un estudio sobre la presencia y el riesgo extremistas en Ceuta y Melilla, *Revista de Estudios en Seguridad Internacional*, 1(2), pp. 1-34.

<sup>50</sup> Fernando Lázaro, “España ha detenido a 47 radicales islámicos en sólo un año”, *El Mundo*, 11 January 2015.



eration *Azteca*, which consisted of dismantling a Melilla recruitment network to send volunteers to jihadist groups in Syria led by Spanish convert Mustafa Maya Amaya.<sup>51</sup>

Enrollment and radicalization by others as well as the novel concept of self-indoctrination introduced in the most recent reforms of Spain's Penal Code are among the most frequent activities and answer for most of the preventive police operations to date.

Always going from past to most recent events, it is important to point out the arrest of Moroccan Mounir Mourabeti in 2015, accused of disseminating via Facebook comments as well as providing help and content materials in support of ISIS. His case has set a new legal precedent in terms of jurisprudence since the National High Court's (Audiencia Nacional) sentence against him established that, after serving his prison sentence, he will be expelled from the country. In addition to being an illegal resident for years, his jail sentence for glorifying jihadist terrorism indicates incompatibility with national values; the Supreme Court upheld the National High Court's decision and dismissed the defendant's appeal.<sup>52</sup> Also in 2015, one more Moroccan national was arrested on August 4 of that year in Germany and extradited to Spain. Ayoub Moutchou, 23 years old, was sentenced on February 21, 2017 by the National High Court to eight years in prison for terrorist recruitment and self-indoctrination.<sup>53</sup>

In March 2015, underage twin brothers along with their mother, Rhimou Benyouseef, were arrested in Badalona, where they had been registered residents for ten years. She was accused of radicalizing the minors. One year later, on December 12, 2016, Judge Santiago Pedraz released her on bail because he considered as insufficient the evidence presented by the prosecution.<sup>54</sup>

On October 25, 2016, two Moroccan imams were arrested by the Civil Guard in Ibiza for **radicalization and activities in support of ISIS** carried out with children at Maslid el-Fatah, facility registered as religious center in the town of Sant Antoni de Portmany, 17 kilometers from Ibiza.<sup>55</sup>

In San Sebastián, Moroccan Mohammed Akaarir was arrested on November 30, 2016 in the first decision rendered by the National High Court for **the crime of self-indoctrination for terrorist ends**. The National High Court's Third Chamber for Criminal Matters sentenced him to two and a half years for his intense activity going from February 2015 to March 2016, in which he engaged in a media jihad in support of ISIS. The convicted man had been arrested on April 5, 2016 and released on bail. He will also be expelled from Spain for six years.<sup>56</sup> Expulsion from the national territory is a penalty that had been previously applied to the 21-year-old Moroccan who confessed being the

<sup>51</sup> José María Irujo y Jesús Duva, "La red islamista desarticulada envió a "decenas" de muyahidines a Siria y Libia", *El País*, 14 March 2014.

<sup>52</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: "El integrismo es incompatible con el arraigo en España, dicta el Supremo", *Diario de Navarra*, 13 April 2017, p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> "8 años de cárcel a un joven que captó a mujeres para ir a Siria", *Diario de Navarra*, 22 February 2017, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> BALÍN, Mateo: "Libre la madre de los gemelos acusados de yihadismo", *Diario de Navarra*, 13 December 2016, p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> SÁIZ.PARDO, M.: "Los imanes detenidos en Ibiza radicalizaban a niños en un centro autorizado por Justicia", *Diario de Navarra*, 26 October 2016, p. 6.

<sup>56</sup> BALÍN, M.: "Primer condenado en España por hacer la 'yihad mediática'", *Diario de Navarra*, 2 December 2016, p. 5.

author of the attacks against two churches in **Ribera of Navarre**—five attacks in one week of September 2016 against churches in Ribaforada, Fontellas, Tudela, and Ribaforada again—led to his expulsion the following month; this sort of penalty has now been applied again in 2017 as aforementioned.<sup>57</sup> Another Moroccan, 29 years old, and also in Navarre, was sentenced on October 29, 2016 by Pamplona's Criminal Court Number 1 to a year and a half in prison for hatred — the uploading of an anti-Semitic video.<sup>58</sup>

The penalty of expulsion was also applied in the fall of 2016 in two cases, and it is important to highlight that the Supreme Court's Chamber for Contentious Administrative Proceedings gave the green light to the exile of individuals with jihadist profiles in January 2017, even for people who had been acquitted or that their cases filed never made it to court. The Ministry of Interior has expelled more than a hundred non-sentenced alleged jihadis since the 3/11 attacks, as it was the case of Algerian Nouh Mediouni arrested in April 2013. He was accused of being part of the “Anghala” cell of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); however, after ten months in prison, he was released by Judge Pedraz on February 4, 2014 since there was no incriminating evidence. The Secretary of State for Security decreed his expulsion from Spain on February 26, 2014; his lawyer appealed and the case went to the Supreme Court.<sup>59</sup>

On November 30, 2016, three individuals were arrested in Spain for having ties to ISIS: One in Irún, one in Aranjuez, and one in San Sebastián.<sup>60</sup> In Irún, Moroccan truck driver Allal El-Mourabit, who was Vitoria resident captured in Irún, was stopped shortly after entering the country in his truck. He kept in contact with ISIS in Germany, where he continuously traveled for work-related reasons, and his arrest is one more phase of Operation *Barrad* against a cell that became radicalized in a Pamplona teahouse and that was under surveillance since 2013. A 30-year-old Moroccan, Amine Bouyardane, had been detained in Calahorra by the Civil Guard, on October 26 and both individuals were part of the same cell. A year earlier, on December 1, 2015, the Civil Guard had arrested 32-year-old Moroccan Salim Aghmir in Pamplona before his moving to Syria to join ISIS and he has been in prison ever since. On the same day, November 30, the CNP arrested a Moroccan in San Sebastián accused of propaganda activities over the Internet.<sup>61</sup>

On November 19, 2016, the CNP arrested two Moroccans: 26-year-old Fouad Bouchihan in Roda del Ter (Barcelona) and 19-year-old Ilyass Chentouf in Madrid — both had intense activity on social media and were sent to prison by Judge Carmen Lamela.<sup>62</sup>

On December 16, 2016, Daniel Fernández Aceña, who had been sentenced in the 1990s for one murder against the Armed Liberation Groups (GAL) in France, was arrested on suspicion of jihadist

<sup>57</sup> MANRIQUE, Jesús: “El juez expulsa a Marruecos al autor de los ataques a iglesias de la Ribera”, *Diario de Navarra*, 9 October 2016, p. 19.

<sup>58</sup> “18 meses de cárcel por colgar un vídeo antisemita”, *Diario de Navarra*, 21 October 2016, p. 21.

<sup>59</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: “Las expulsiones sumarias, una nueva arma legal contra la yihad”, *Diario de Navarra*, 8 January 2017, p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> “Detienen a tres presuntos yihadistas”, *20 Minutos*, December 1, 2016, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> “Detenido en Irún un camionero marroquí que residió en Barañáin”, *Diario de Navarra*, 1 December 2016, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> “La juez envía a prisión a los dos yihadistas detenidos el pasado sábado”, *Diario de Navarra*, 22 November 2016, p. 6.

threats in Segovia, since, after converting to Islam, he would have become radicalized during his travels to Afghanistan, Syria, and Palestine in the summer of that year.<sup>63</sup>

On January 10, 2017, Hamed Abderrahman Ahmed (aka Hamido), from Ceuta, was sentenced to two years in prison by the National High Court's First Chamber for Criminal Matters for the crime of glorifying terrorism, but was acquitted of the charge of collaboration with ISIS.<sup>64</sup> Hamido is the only Spanish national who was in Guantanamo and two operations were carried out against him and his network in Ceuta in 2016. He was arrested in Ceuta on February 23 of that year, with two of his followers in the autonomous city and one more follower was arrested in Nador. Another group took over the then dismantled cell and its participants were also arrested on November 9, 2016. This cell of four individuals included a woman who had been previously arrested in January 2015 trying to reach Syria from Turkey, where the Civil Guard located her and requested her extradition. The CNP accused her of having been commissioned by ISIS to recruit “Cubs for the Caliphate” (*Ashbal al-Khilafa*) and to keep regular contact with ISIS cadres in Mosul, Ramadi, and Raqqa.<sup>65</sup> Such efforts to recruit children link these operations with the one launched in Ibiza against two indoctrinators arrested on October 25, 2016 in Sant Antoni de Portmany, as aforementioned.

A February 2017 CNP report describes how a 41-year-old Moroccan, arrested in Vitoria, was a veteran of Chechnya and Syria — working first for Jabhat al-Nusrah and then for ISIS. He moved around Vitoria with a good security detail and recruited several people to go to Syria — the last one was **a Tolosa resident in 2015 who ended up joining ISIS**.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the Civil Guard arrested two Moroccans, aged 25 and 27, accused of indoctrination and enrollment via Internet, successfully recruiting several people willing to move to the Caliphate.<sup>67</sup>

On March 24, 2017, the National High Court ordered provisional detention without bail for three Moroccan men charged for practicing jihadism, one in Roda de Ter (Barcelona) and one in Benetússer (Valencia).<sup>68</sup>

On April 26, 2017, the CNP arrested in Ceuta a 29-year-old Spaniard, a.k.a. *El Veneno* (The Poison), for being a member of ISIS. His wife and three other individuals **had been arrested in November 2016, all four accused of radicalizing and indoctrinating minors**. The arrest of *El Veneno* took place in the El Príncipe neighborhood.<sup>69</sup> Two more arrests were simultaneously done related to this arrest in Ceuta: One in Teulada (Alicante) and another one involving three individuals in Tétouan (Morocco). They were all accused of having ties to ISIS.

---

<sup>63</sup> BALÍN, M.: “Prisión para un condenado de los GAL por vínculos yihadistas”, *Diario de Navarra*, 16 December 2016, p. 5.

<sup>64</sup> “Absuelto de colaborar con EI”, *Diario de Navarra*, 11 January 2017, p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: “La célula de Ceuta captaba niños para convertirlos en ‘carne de cañón’”, *Sur*, 10 November 2016, p. 34. See ECHARRI, Carmen: “Una operación del CNP en Ceuta se salda con cuatro yihadistas detenidos”, *El Faro de Melilla*, 10 November 2016, p. 21.

<sup>66</sup> DOMÍNGUEZ, Florencio. “Amenaza permanente y cercana”, *Diario de Navarra*, 24 May 2017, p. 20.

<sup>67</sup> “Dos detenidos en Badalona por captación de yihadistas”, *20 Minutos*, 8 February 2017, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> “El juez envía a prisión a los yihadistas detenidos en Barcelona y Valencia”, *Diario de Navarra*, 25 March 2017, p. 5.

<sup>69</sup> ECHARRI, C.: “Detenido un vecino de Loma Colmenar acusado de radicalizar a jóvenes vulnerables”, *El Faro de Ceuta*, 27 April 2017, pp. 1-3.

At the beginning of July 2017, a 31-year-old Moroccan man was arrested by the Civil Guard in Operation *Tahmil* in the Madrid town of Collado Mediano, accused of propaganda work on the Internet and social media that included terrorist manuals.<sup>70</sup> This operation was coordinated with EUROPOL and was based on research initiated in late 2015 regarding the dissemination of ISIS propaganda via mobile apps. Finally on July 12, 2017, the CNP arrested a Spaniard, of Palestinian descent, in Hospitalet (Barcelona) for glorifying terrorism and integration into a terrorist organization.<sup>71</sup>

#### 4. THE DIMENSION OF THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORIST FINANCING

A network established in Melilla by Danish Kenneth Sorensen, alias Abdulmalik al-Dinmarki, was dismantled on July 9, 2016. Since his arrival in Melilla in 2009 and after his trips to Yemen and Egypt, he had created this dense network of companies in Denmark that defrauded tax authorities and suppliers.<sup>72</sup> **On May 30, 2014, a terrorist network that recruited and indoctrinated radicals and then sent them to Mali** was dismantled in Melilla; a following operation on September 26 also allowed Morocco to make arrests in Nador. This operation discovered links with Mali and Syria; however, they are more attributable to al-Qaeda than to ISIS and that must be emphasized here for reasons previously mentioned.

On March 15, 2017, the Civil Guard arrested in Santa Coloma de Farners (Gerona) Mohammed El Jelaly, the last of the El Jelaly brothers from Tangier residing in Spain since 2000 and linked to ISIS. The Civil Guard arrested two of his brothers, Abdelhak and Omar, aged 33 and 22, in July 2016; they had all collaborated with ISIS focusing on funding activities, but without losing sight of the fact that their brother Bachir died fighting for ISIS in Palmira before the end of the year 2015.<sup>73</sup>

Melilla's Civil Guard announced on June 23, 2017 the dismantling of a complex business network primarily dedicated to jihadist financing. It had tax-evaded nearly eight million euros in recent years through 24 Danish shell companies with subsidiaries in Melilla run by local front men investigated since 2012. This network had sent at least ten jihadis, from Spain, Denmark, and Germany, to conflict areas. The leader is a Danish national born in Tensamane (Morocco).<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> "Otro detenido por difundir propaganda yihadista", *Gente*, 1 July 2017. See: SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: "Las aplicaciones para móvil del Estado Islámico llegan a España", *Diario de Navarra*, 5 July 2017, p. 5.

<sup>71</sup> "Un detenido por enaltecimiento y apoyo a yihadistas", *20 Minutos*, 13 July 2017, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> "El danés que emprendió la Yihad en Melilla", *El Mundo*, 10 July 2016.

<sup>73</sup> "El yihadista de Gerona es hermano de tres yihadistas", *Diario de Navarra*, March 16, 2017, p. 4. SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: "Un yihadista detenido en Gerona tenía tres hermanos terroristas en el Estado Islámico", *Norte de Castilla*, 16 March 2017, p. 29.

<sup>74</sup> "Detenido en Melilla yihadista por la captación y envío de combatientes", *La Vanguardia*, 23 June 2017.

## 5. **TERRORIST PLOTS AND ATTACKS AGAINST SPAIN**

Finally, among the operations carried out in this third period of the study, there are five in which **the police accused the detainees of having planned attacks in Spain**. In view of the data, we can say that it reveals increasing activity in number and intensity in recent years. The main operations are as follows;

- **In January 2015, police arrested two sets of brothers in Ceuta who owned firearms, trained with them**, and had access to more weapons through the black market. They adopted security measures for their trips and phone communications.<sup>75</sup> In March of the same year, the police detained two more individuals in El Príncipe neighborhood in Ceuta, linked to the January detainees who also allegedly intended to attack on Spanish soil.<sup>76</sup>
- In April 2015, the Catalan autonomous police arrested eleven persons; several of them were Spanish converts, including their leader, who intended to attack. **Among their plans was the possibility of kidnapping a police officer of the autonomous region to behead him in front of a camera, thus echoing the practices of the Islamic State.**<sup>77</sup> In August, Spanish and Moroccan police arrested fourteen individuals in several locations in both countries accused of recruiting and sending volunteers to the ranks of ISIS, as well as for preparing terrorist attacks in Spain and Morocco.<sup>78</sup>
- In November 2015, the police arrested three Moroccans in Madrid. They had access to the illicit arms market and allegedly **intended to attack in the Spanish capital on behalf of ISIS**. They were avid consumers of the group's propaganda.<sup>79</sup>
- The activity has been even bigger the following year. During 2016, the dismantling of terrorist cells with plans to execute them in the medium or long term in Spain has continued unabatedly. In February, a cell was dismantled in Ceuta and Nador, made up of 4 jihadists who, in addition to recruitment work, sought followers to attack both in Spain and Morocco.<sup>80</sup>
- For its degree of coordination with ISIS it is worth noting the arrest of two terrorist cells in Spain (Ceuta and Alicante) and Morocco (Tétouan and Castillejos) in October 2016. The four detainees, all Moroccan, had sworn allegiance to ISIS and kept a constant relationship with leaders of the group. A month later, in November, two very

<sup>75</sup> José María Irujo, "Detenidos cuatro yihadistas en Ceuta "dispuestos" a atentar", *El País*, 24 January 2015.

<sup>76</sup> "Detenidos en Ceuta dos yihadistas "listos para atentar", *El País*, 10 March 2015.

<sup>77</sup> "Los once detenidos por yihadismo tenían la intención de atentar en Cataluña", *El Confidencial*, 8 April 2015.

<sup>78</sup> Patricia Ortega, "Los 14 yihadistas detenidos planeaban 'masacres' en Marruecos y España", *El País*, 25 August 2015.

<sup>79</sup> "La voluntad de atentar en Madrid de los miembros de El detenidos precipitó la operación policial", *ABC*, 3 November 2015.

<sup>80</sup> *El País*, 23 February 2016.

**active persons on Internet and ready to attack on Spanish soil** were arrested in Madrid and Barcelona.<sup>81</sup>

- Lastly, on Christmas 2016, the police arrested two jihadis in Madrid dedicated to ISIS propaganda and dissemination of threats against Spain. Police seized ammunition for submachine guns while assuming that **these jihadis had some knowledge of the use of weapons**. In late 2016 and early 2017, this operation was still open.

The Civil Guard arrested two jihadis in Ceuta on January 13, 2017 under Operation *Jabato I*, for hiding a submachine gun and three machetes in a hideout. They were suspected of having undergone a long process of radicalization and the Civil Guard investigated whether they were linked to another hideout, also found in Ceuta on April 7, 2016, in which weapons were found for the first time since 3/11.<sup>82</sup>

On May 8, 2017, a joint operation of the CNP and the Moroccan intelligence service successfully arrested three jihadis in Salou, Badalona and Tangier. The arrested had expressed their intentions to die as jihadis, and, on May 23 of the same year, Abdessamad Ghailani Hassani, a 43-year-old Moroccan arrested in Madrid and ready for suicide according to Judge Fernando Andreu, was sent to prison along with another detainee arrested in the operation, 22-year-old Moroccan Zouhair Terrach.<sup>83</sup>

On June 21, 2017, the CNP arrested 32-year-old Moroccan Rachid El Omari in downtown Madrid, on Calle Divino Vallés 14; he is one of the most dangerous jihadis arrested in Spain in recent years. Having detected his rapid process of evident radical indoctrination since his return from Morocco in March, he sought to organize a massacre inspired by the attack on the Manchester Arena that had caused 22 deaths and 59 wounded on May 22. Having obtained a warrant, the CNP and the Civil Guard monitored his movements; he was finally sent to prison by Judge Ismael Moreno for affiliation to a terrorist organization, terrorist indoctrination and glorification of terrorism. He was in possession of 27 manuals from ISIS publishing company, *al-Himma*; one of them was titled *Combatant Inghimasi and Suicide Operations*, which **prepares jihadis to take the step towards martyrdom**.<sup>84</sup> Mohammed Chaou and his own brother, Mustapha El Omari, aged 38 and 33, were also arrested.<sup>85</sup>

A four-Moroccan ISIS cell was dismantled in Inca (Majorca) on June 28, 2017; among its other objectives, and according to Judge Pedraz, were to stab pedestrians in the Town Hall Square.<sup>86</sup> This

<sup>81</sup> *El País*, 19 November 2016.

<sup>82</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: “Los dos yihadistas arrestados en Ceuta tenían en un zulo un subfusil y tres machetes”, *Diario de Navarra*, 14 January 2017, p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> “Cárcel para los dos yihadistas”, *Diario de Navarra*, May 26, 2017, p. 6, and “España mantiene su nivel de alerta pese a la riada de detenciones”, *Diario de Navarra*, 24 May 2017, p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: “El juez sostiene que El Omari buscaba organizar una matanza en Madrid”, *Diario de Navarra*, 24 June 2017, p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> DOWSETT, Sonya: “Spain arrests ‘highly radicalised’ Moroccan with suicide bomb manual”, *Reuters*, 21 June 2017.

<sup>86</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: “La célula de Mallorca planeaba un apuñalamiento masivo en la plaza de Inca”, *Diario de Navarra*, 1 July 2017, p. 5.

dismantled group on the island of Majorca is of added interest due to its European projection through a Moroccan imam established in Birmingham, Tarik Chadliouli, as we will see in the next section.

Finally, on the afternoon of August 17, Moroccan **Younes Abouyaaqoub drove a van on Barcelona's Las Ramblas, killing 14 people and wounding 130 more.** Abouyaaqoub fled the attack on foot; he then killed another person in order to steal the victim's car and escape. Four days later, the police killed him in Subirats, a town near Barcelona, when he was trying to find support to escape.

Some hours after the attack in Barcelona, five men, members of the same terrorist cell, pointed their vehicle against pedestrians in Cambrils, a town near Barcelona. One woman died and six others were injured. The five terrorists were shot dead by the police. The night before the Barcelona attack, there was an explosion in a house located in the town of Alcanar that destroyed the property and killed two members of the terrorist cell, including the imam believed to be the mastermind of the attack. The accidental explosion aborted the original plot: To drive trucks loaded with explosives and gas containers to attack tourist centers in Barcelona, especially La Sagrada Familia.

On October 25, 2017, the police arrested Abdelouahid Bourass in Madrid, after he reportedly traveled to Morocco and began taking **self-protective and security precautions in his communications, which would possibly imply a potential threat to attack shortly.** The police thought he was “in a borderline situation”.

We find similar elements in all these cases that should be profiled;

- **None of them fits the profile of single actor, of “lone wolf”;** they acted instead in relatively organized cells or groups, even with direct contact with ISIS and other groups.
- In all the cases, they are **small groups** of no more than a dozen members;
- **he attacks were to be committed with firearms or bladed weapons to which the group could have access in the black market; there are no records that any attack would be carried out with explosives.** This eliminates that excess of complexity that has favored detection and dismantling in time on other occasions, or that has made unfeasible the culmination of the project due to a lack of expert knowledge.<sup>87</sup>
- **They were terrorist plots devised by the group itself,** which did not follow direct orders from the Islamic State, although there was an operational link with the group in all cases and they were sympathetic to ISIS anyhow.
- **None of the members of the alleged plots was a returnee from a conflict zone;** however, they have been radicalized and organized on Spanish soil, in many cases in relation to Morocco.

---

<sup>87</sup> Javier Jordán (2015), Incidencia del terrorismo de inspiración yihadista en Estados Unidos y Europa Occidental: Un análisis comparado, *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, 37, pp. 89-117.

## 5.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF SPAIN AS ORIGIN AND DESTINATION FOR JIHADIS

Out of the 30,000 foreigners who might have joined ISIS during these years, 5,000 would be Europeans and 204 of them would be Spaniards until December 2016.<sup>88</sup> These numbers, combined with those of illegal firearms that may be circulating in European countries and the ability of terrorists to make explosives with freely accessible products, allow us to assume the existence of capabilities and intentions, and, when both coincide with the opportunity factor, attacks take place with different levels of lethality.<sup>89</sup>

According to EUROPOL, 718 people were arrested in anti-jihadist operations in the European Union during 2016 — four times more than in 2012. This European police agency registered in the same year up to 142 attempts, out of which 47 were completed. This activism left 142 dead and 379 wounded. If we go to the specific case of Spain, **as of December 31, 2016, there were up to 204 individuals who had traveled to the Middle East: 20 percent were Spanish nationals**, 65 percent were Moroccans, and the remaining 15 percent included other nationalities. While 45 may have died in a combat zone, there are 30 returnees and 25 of them are in prison.<sup>90</sup>

In line with our research, there is nothing better than to illustrate these general numbers with concrete examples of people who have tried to reach the lands of the Caliphate from Spain with more, or less, success.

Since Franco-Algerian Nemmouche killed four people at the Jewish Museum in Brussels on May 24, 2014, security forces and European intelligence agencies have increased their focus on returnees.

A year later, in August 2015, Ayoub El Khezzani, originally from the north of Morocco and living legally for a while both in Algeciras and Madrid, **took the Thalys train that connects Amsterdam with Paris with the intention of carrying out a massacre. Fortunately, he was stopped by U.S. military personnel** traveling on the train, but the ease with which he had accessed the train carrying an AK-74 assault rifle, 270 bullets, and a gun was a big eye opener.<sup>91</sup>

Moroccan Samira Yerou was arrested on December 23, 2014 in Turkey while traveling with her 3-year-old son from Barcelona to Syria to join ISIS. She was extradited on March 17, 2015 and accepted on November 10, 2016 a reduced five-year prison sentence, a 15-year ban, and 10 years probation for membership of a terrorist organization imposed by the National High Court. The 35-year-old woman and Rubí resident (Barcelona) became quickly radicalized and had regular contact with two important ISIS women according to the Civil Guard: Alhan Al Nadar and Sana Al Karama.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> DWORKIN, Anthony: *Europe's New Counter-terror Wars*, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) Policy Brief, October 2016, p. 5.

<sup>89</sup> In 2014, the European security forces notified EUROPOL about the interception of more than 50,000 illegal firearms. See: "Terrorismo. El mercado negro de armas y la Yihad", *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior*, 23 February 2015, p. 3.

<sup>90</sup> U.S. Department of State: *op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>91</sup> GUNARATNA, R.: *op. cit.*, pp. 109-110, y BARRENECHEA, Luisa: "Yihadismo de origen marroquí", *Esglobal*, 13 April 2016, p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> ZANI, Denise: "Cinco años de prisión para una yihadista arrepentida que intentó ir a Siria", *El País*, 11 November 2016, p. 27.



On October 11, 2016, four members of two jihadist cells were arrested in Spain and Morocco: The CNP arrested two on October 10 in Spain, one in Gijón and another in San Sebastián; on October 11, two were arrested in Spain (Ceuta and Altea) and two in Morocco (in Tétouan and Castillejos). The detainees in Gijón and San Sebastián were, respectively, Abdellah Ouelji Lafsahi and Yassin El Mehdi, aged 34 and 20, who were planning to join ISIS.<sup>93</sup> **These were ISIS cells deployed between Spain and Morocco and with connections in Syria and Iraq. They moved fluidly between the two countries and also connected easily with the conflict zone.**<sup>94</sup>

The Civil Guard arrested Spanish-Palestinian Muthanna Zakarna Zakarna at Barajas airport on November 27, 2016. This resident of Vecindario (Gran Canaria) tried to travel to Syria to join ISIS. He had previously been arrested in July 2016 on the Turkish border with Syria and deported to Spain, but he made one more attempt, this time from Jordan, and was arrested in November 2016. The Civil Guard was investigating him since 2014. His departure to Jordan was detected in November 2016 and facilitated his arrest in the Arab country.<sup>95</sup> The National High Court sent him to prison on December 28, 2016.

**Spain's special geographical location, as a bridge and crossing point between the rest of Western Europe and the Maghreb, has long been a determining factor in relation to the country's vulnerabilities,** both by the dimension of the terrorist threat and by illicit trafficking of all kinds. Some recent arrests on our soil illustrate the density of the issue and the difficulties that security forces and intelligence agencies have to overcome in order to neutralize the threats.

On January 18, 2017, 26-year-old Moroccan El Mehdi Kacem Khoyi was arrested in San Sebastián, accused of being an ISIS liaison in Europe and was sent to jail the following day for **glorification of terrorism, indoctrination and collaboration in terrorist activities**; he was also charged for planning a chain of attacks in Paris on December 1.<sup>96</sup>

The aforementioned arrest of four Moroccans on June 28, 2017 in Inca (Majorca) facilitated the discovery of the **connection among these people, those involved in the November 2015 attacks in Paris and an ideologist established in the United Kingdom.** This cell dedicated to recruitment and indoctrination in Inca was created by Tarik Chadlioui, the imam who, in the suburbs of Paris, radicalized Ismael Omar Mostefai, one of the terrorists who died killing in the Parisian nightclub *Bataclan* on November 13, 2015 in an attack where 89 people died. The imam was arrested in Birmingham at the request of Spain's National High Court while a sixth member of the cell, a 28-year-old Moroccan, was simultaneously arrested in Dortmund, Germany.<sup>97</sup> The four Moroccans

<sup>93</sup> "Detenidos dos yihadistas a punto de pasar al Califato", *Diario de Navarra*, 12 October 2016, p. 6.

<sup>94</sup> ORTEGA DOIZ, Patricia: "Detenidos 4 miembros de dos células yihadistas en España y Marruecos", *El País*, 12 October 2016.

<sup>95</sup> "Detenido un español deportado por Jordania que quería entrar en Siria", *Diario de Navarra*, 28 November 2016, p. 4.

<sup>96</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: "Prisión para el yihadista detenido en San Sebastián", *Diario de Navarra*, 19 January 2017, p. 5.

<sup>97</sup> Imam Chadlioui preached in Antwerp (Belgium), at the Luce de Courcouronnes mosque on the outskirts of Paris and, in 2015, he went to Palma de Mallorca before settling in Birmingham. See SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: "El imán de la célula de Mallorca radicalizó a un terrorista de Bataclán", *Diario de Navarra*, 29 June 2017, p. 5.

were sent to prison on June 30 and the rationale for their arrests was backed with solid arguments that were added to the attack plan against the most crowded place of the Majorcan locality.<sup>98</sup>

The Inca arrests show the connections in Belgium and France, but also the existing ones in Morocco, which are so central to the study of the jihadist threat against Spain. **Morocco dismantled a major jihadist cell in 2008 that interacted with Belgian-Moroccan Abdelkader Belliraj's cell in Belgium:** The embryo of a transcontinental network that soon became dense as seen in the attacks against France and Belgium in 2015 and 2016, which also illustrates the Euro-Maghreb connection of jihadist terrorist networks.<sup>99</sup>

It is interesting to highlight that, in terms of relationships among terrorists acting between two or more European cities, the Mossos de Esquadra arrested nine people linked to jihadist terrorism and drug trafficking in different locations of the province of Barcelona on April 24, 2017 under Operation *Apolo*; three of them were linked to the perpetrators of the Brussels bombings carried out on March 22, 2016 that killed 35 and injured more than 300 people. Two of the arrested, Mohamed Lamsalak and Youssef Ben Hammou, would end up in prison.<sup>100</sup>

## 5.2. SPAIN'S GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION

Always in relation to Spain, we should recall that **13.4 percent of identified Moroccan jihadis come from the Tétouan region and that the former capital of the Spanish Protectorate is, along with Castillejos, a town adjacent to Ceuta that lives in osmosis with the autonomous Spanish city.** For example, Abdelaziz El Mahdali, the chief terrorist of the Aleppo region who died in combat against the Syrian Army in March 2014, was from Castillejos.<sup>101</sup> Between July and December 2014, the CNP and its Moroccan counterparts carried out four operations: *Azteka*, between March and July, resulting in nine arrests (one in Morocco and eight in Spain); *Bastion* in August, resulting in nine arrests (all in Morocco); *Firewell* in September, resulting in nine arrests (one in Spain and eight in Morocco); and *Kibera* in December, resulting in five arrests in Spain and two in Morocco — all these operations were against ISIS networks.<sup>102</sup>

On December 12, 2015, the Civil Guard arrested Youssef Mohammed Tuileb in Ceuta, who created a network in the city dedicated to recruiting girls between the ages of 13 and 14 in order to send

<sup>98</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: “La célula de Mallorca planeaba un apuñalamiento masivo en la plaza de Inca”, *Diario de Navarra*, 1 July 2017, p. 5.

<sup>99</sup> GUTIÉRREZ, Óscar: “Abdelhak El Kayam, director of the Moroccan Central Bureau of Judicial Investigation (BCIJ): “La colaboración entre España y Marruecos ha permitido desmantelar células yihadistas en Melilla”, *El País*, 5 May 2016.

<sup>100</sup> REINO, Cristian: “Detenidos en Barcelona tres yihadistas vinculados a los atentados de Bruselas”, *Sur*, 26 April 2017, p. 7, and “Prisión para dos de los yihadistas de Barcelona por su relación con los ataques de Bruselas”, *Sur*, 28 April 2017, p. 39.

<sup>101</sup> BARRENECHEA, L.: *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>102</sup> ORTEGA DOLZ, Patricia: “España actualiza su relación con Marruecos en la lucha antiterrorista”, *El País*, 30 March 2016.

them to areas controlled by ISIS in Syria and Iraq.<sup>103</sup> He carried out his recruitment effort at Ceuta's Islamic Cultural Center Imam Warsh and his arrest was the first that verified the Caliphate's attempt to recruit Spanish girls. In addition, it was also discovered that the Tuileb group was part of a larger network dismantled in 2013 that extended to Castillejos and that tried to send a new contingent to grow an ISIS brigade in Syria named Tarik Ibn Ziad.

ISIS called for attacks against **Spain's tourist interests in Morocco** on July 27, 2016; in September of that same year three people who embraced ISIS's ideology were arrested in Tangier and M'diq. Nonetheless, if the traditional origin of Moroccans linked to ISIS and other jihadist terrorist groups was the northern part of the country, with its epicenter in Tangier, Tétouan and Martil, the most recent trends point to the existence of candidates throughout the territory, as warned by Abdelhak El Khayyam, head of the BCIJ created in 2015 to lead the fight against jihadism. Salé, along with Rabat, is a central point today and, moving southward, a four-man ISIS cell was dismantled in Essaouira on June 22, 2017 while they were preparing attacks against tourist interests according to the BCIJ; in March a two-man cell had also been dismantled in Casablanca.<sup>104</sup>

We should put some emphasis on relevant jihadi leading figures from Morocco, in particular the recidivists, since police and intelligence initiatives do not cease in their effort to track current and future jihadi activism. On the one hand, we point out that, on September 28, 2016, the National High Court's First Chamber for Criminal Matters sentenced Lahcen Ikassiren (a.k.a. Hassan), leader of the al-Andalus Brigade and former Guantanamo detainee to 11 and a half years in prison for recruitment, indoctrination, and dispatch of combatants to Syria. A 183-page ruling details how some of the nine defendants had even planned their departure from Spain to Syria.<sup>105</sup> On the other hand, Spain deported Youssef Belhadj to Morocco in February, after having served a 12-year sentence for the Madrid 3/11 attacks. He is considered here as the mastermind of 3/11 and has pending charges in Morocco for terrorism.<sup>106</sup> Most recently, on May 31, 2017, the CNP arrested in Madrid 47 year-old Abdelilah El Fadual El Akil, born in Tétouan, wanted in Morocco, and sentenced to nine years in prison for the 3/11 attacks - although the Supreme Court acquitted him later. He used to live in Parla and, since May, there was an international warrant for his arrest issued by Morocco.<sup>107</sup>

Morocco, just as Spain, has in place intense preventive work that pays off in dismantling many cells; however, it has also suffered cruel attacks on its soil. It had to endure suicide terrorism in May 2003 (45 dead) and April 2007 in Casablanca as well as in Marrakech in April 2011, and knife attacks against tourists—three Dutch injured in Casablanca in October 2016 and two Germans injured in Fez in November 2015—in application of the most innovative attack tactics that ISIS, among other terrorist groups, encourage their followers to execute.<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: "La Audiencia sienta en el banquillo al captador de niñas del Daesh", *Diario de Navarra*, 24 July 2017, p. 5.

<sup>104</sup> "Maroc: démantèlement d' une cellule jihadiste à Essaouira", *Jeune Afrique*, 23 June 2017.

<sup>105</sup> SÁIZ-PARDO, M.: "Cae la mayor red de captación *op cit*, p. 6.

<sup>106</sup> "El cerebro del 11-M, expulsado de España", *20 Minutos*, 23 February 2017, p. 8.

<sup>107</sup> "Detenido en Madrid a petición de Rabat un marroquí que fue absuelto en el 11-M", *El País*, 1 June 2017.

<sup>108</sup> "Morocco's Jihadist Paradox, Unraveled", *Security Weekly*, 20 October 2016, pp. 1-2.

In any case, Morocco is not the only country of origin for Maghreb jihadis detected on Spanish soil — although they are the most important community of this nationality or origin. On July 5, 2017, the CNP arrested in Melilla an Algerian, wanted by his country's authorities for membership of a terrorist organization and INTERPOL had issued an international warrant for his arrest.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Although the number of casualties in European countries such as France, Belgium, Germany or the United Kingdom during the last two years, or the number of nationals or residents of those countries traveling to conflict areas such as Syria or Iraq, could lead us to believe that it is other countries the ones threatened by jihadist groups, the fact is that countries such as Spain have reasons to be concerned. In reality, this analysis seeks to show that the jihadist threat—always the combination of capabilities and intentions against the background of the opportunity factor—exists everywhere and that the one we can detect in Spain is extensive, although the preventive application of several State tools has hitherto made possible its neutralization.

**The multiple arrests, characterized as early or preemptive, have played a central role in such preventive work.** More than 90 percent of the 691 people arrested for jihadism in Spain after 3/11 and until the spring of 2017 have been charged with counts of glorifying terrorism, which has made it easier for our FCSE to be able to confront jihadists in preventive terms. Such criminalization foils the efforts to indoctrinate without restrictions from platforms such as the Internet and, in short, allows fighting against terrorists whose membership in organizations such as ISIS or al-Qaeda is very difficult to prove in court given how diffuse this sort of terrorism and its actors are.

The profile of the many detainees in the many anti-terrorist operations during the last two years **shows the increasing presence of returnees**—one of the most concerning issues today and in the next few years—and individuals interacting dangerously in other geographical scenarios. These geographical scenarios include not only countries in the Middle East but, above all, many in Europe and the Maghreb, where terrorist activism is increasingly intense.

The evolution of actors—such as ISIS, now decimated in its main launching theater in Syria and Iraq thanks to the war effort against it, but also against al-Qaeda and its franchises—; to consider the jihadist battlefield as universal, which is the call that has always been there, but that today is more pressing; and the dangerous, increasingly-present instrumentalization in jihadist propaganda of the al-Andalus myth are three factors that keep on making the threat against Spain an important one.

Lastly, on the one hand, the terrorist groups' appeal to their members and followers to use a panoply of attack tactics, ranging from the most elaborate and sophisticated to the most rudimentary while, on the other hand, we see the high level of motivation that these terrorists display will continue to push Spain's FCSE to keep up with their preventive or preemptive operations at a good pace.

## 4. THE JIHADIST THREAT IN THE MAGREB AND THE SAHEL

### 1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the fall of 2016, North Africa and the Sahel—the two regions closest to Spain—remain very affected by the dissemination of jihadist terrorism ideology. To this considerable legacy in terms of national and regional classic terrorist actors, we must add **the dynamization of the threat due to at least two relatively recent events:**

- **The Arab revolts**, starting in the fall of 2010, with different scenarios in the area studied (Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya)
- **The expulsion from al-Qaeda’s womb of what soon became the Islamic State (ISIS)**, a jihadist actor with an important dynamic in the region covered.

The region’s traditional terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb Lands (AQIM), survive today with national presence and dangerous interrelationships among their cells in North Africa, the Sahel and several countries in Western Europe, as studied in the chapter of this report dedicated to Spain. In turn, **these networks have become increasingly global** if we consider that countries such as Tunisia or Morocco are important suppliers of combatants for groups such as ISIS or the al-Nusra Front. Libya—and to a lesser extent, Egypt—also offers a suitable battlefield for jihadist ideological guidelines.

As for **the Sahel, and in particular the Western Sahel, from Mauritania in the west to Chad in its most eastern side, the already traditional instability of this region has sharply deteriorated in recent years, due to the combined effect of the Arab revolts.** These revolts led to the collapse of the Libyan state, as well as the strengthening in Nigeria of a traditional jihadist group known as Boko Haram.<sup>1</sup>

Both processes of deterioration lead to the present situation analyzed in this chapter, both in terms of present and foreseeable future projection. For Spain, the evolution of these scenarios is of paramount importance: Morocco, Algeria, and Mali represent the main sources of risk for Spain at the present moment.

### 2. THE JIHADIST THREAT IN EGYPT AND THE MAGHREB

This section will cover the existing jihadist threat, both in regards to terrorist activism and the dynamics of radicalization, doing it country by country and in terms of current affairs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cummings, Ryan, and Piper, Nick. “Analysis: No country in the Sahel and Maghreb is immune from Al Qaeda contagion”, *Daily Maverick* (South Africa), 25 May 2016.

## 2.1. EGYPT

It is worthwhile to analyze a couple of issues regarding Egypt and the link with the terrorist evolution in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania, or Morocco. Egypt has endured jihadist terrorism since ancient times; however, the situation has worsened due to the Arab revolts and increased insecurity in two neighboring areas:

- In the east, especially from the Gaza Strip to Syria and Iraq, with the Islamist activity of ISIS and Hamas.
- In the western and southern areas of the west, with the deterioration of the situation in Libya and in the Sahel strip.

Hundreds of soldiers and policemen have violently died in several parts of Egypt, particularly in the Sinai Peninsula, first at the hands of the Ansar Bait al-Maqdis group, and later on with greater lethality after its transformation into Wilayat Sinai, the province of the Islamic State in Sinai. The operations in the Sinai are ongoing, but, in spite of mounting terrorist casualties, the Egyptians have not been able to put an end to attacks and incidents. The last episode was the attempted attack on November 2, 2017 against an Egyptian checkpoint in northern Sinai. The Egyptian aviation took part in the operation against the jihadists that killed a dozen jihadis.

In the last years, three highly lethal attacks stand out showing the determination and the capabilities of the terrorist group:

- The shootdown of a passenger airliner belonging to the Russian jet operator Kogalymavia, on October 31, 2015, which killed 224 people traveling from Sharm el-Sheikh to St. Petersburg.
- The killing of eight police officers in an ambush against a camouflaged police vehicle in the southern Cairo suburb of Helwan on May 8, 2016.<sup>2</sup>
- The attack against a Coptic Christian bus in May 2017, which killed 28 people south of Cairo.

Christians and Egyptian religious minorities are precisely one of the preferred targets of jihadism. **This aggressiveness against Christians living in the region repeats the pattern of Syria and Iraq, where there is a religious cleansing that has become a standard in all those places where Islam achieves some social control.** From this point of view, the survival or annihilation of the Coptic Christian population in Egypt, the government's ability to guarantee this group's security, and the leeway for jihadist activity is a good thermometer to measure the capacity for Islamist destabilization in the country.

---

<sup>2</sup> Wilayat Sinai killed 15 policemen in an attack near the El-Arish, the capital of this Egyptian province in March 2016; in August 2015, the group abducted a Croatian oil worker near Cairo and beheaded him. See more: "Egypt: eight police killed in attack on outskirts of Cairo." *The Guardian*, 8 May 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/08/egypt-eight-police-killed-in-attack-on-outskirts-of-cairo>

It reminds us that the value of Egypt lies in being the geographical link between the terrorists of the Middle East (Al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Islamic State) and the jihadists of the Maghreb and the Sahel. **Egypt's southeast constitutes, together with the Sinai, a blind spot for the security of the country, where Libyan instability converges with great spaces that are difficult to defend.** The clash in Wahat on October 20, 2017 between jihadis from Libya and Egyptian security forces produced almost forty casualties among them.

Egypt is also a Muslim country of enormous symbolic value, the homeland of the Muslim Brotherhood and a long-time Muslim power. The government of al-Sisi came to power the day when Islamist Morsi was deposed in 2013, and since then, the Egyptian State is in a constant struggle against the Islamists — those inside the country, outside the country, and in the confluence of both.

## 2.2. THE MAGHREB AND ALGERIA

The Maghreb is the Arab, Muslim and African sub-region that Spain and Western Europe find immediately on their southern border. This border area **suffers most acutely in economic terms in the world; two aspects are characteristic of this region: Political disintegration and the persistence of an intense terrorist threat for over two decades.** In the case of Spain, the border also becomes terrestrial when reach the boundaries of Ceuta and Melilla, the two Spanish enclaves in Morocco.

In regards to the Strait of Gibraltar, one of the key access points to the Mediterranean, its traffic of more than 71,000 ships a year, half of them large oil tankers, has made it one of the most vulnerable ports and historically threatened by al-Qaeda, which already tried to attack ships in transit on that route in 2002.<sup>3</sup>

At least in terms of mortality, **Algeria** has suffered the salafi-jihadist offensive more than any other North-African country. If in Egypt, jihadists were able to assassinate in 1981 the head of State, Anwar el-Sadat, the same happened in Algeria with the assassination of President Mohamed Boudiaf in 1992. The other countries in this report have also endured terrorist activism and the growth of this threat inside and outside their national borders.

At the opening of a new session of the UN General Assembly in September 2016, the minister of Maghreb Affairs, African Union, and the Arab League, Abdelkader Messahel, said that **the terrorist threat has not weakened in this region, but has instead spread to other countries.**<sup>4</sup>

The news in Algeria related to terrorism in recent months have to do with the location and elimination of terrorists as well as the destruction of their infrastructure, rather than with attacks that once were so frequent and deadly. Attacks keep on taking place here, though more sporadically.

<sup>3</sup> “Marruecos desmantela un grupo de Al Qaeda que planeaba atentados en el Estrecho”, *El País*, 11 June 2002.

<sup>4</sup> “La menace terroriste n’a pas faibli mais s’est étendu à d’autres pays”, *Algérie360.com*, 22 September 2016, <http://m.algerie360.com>.

The cleansing operations have intensified both by the very dynamics of the anti-terrorist fight lasting two long decades and by the alarming emergence of an ISIS embryo in Algeria that authorities seek to eliminate.

The elimination of up to eleven terrorists in the d'Errich forest in the Bouira region in May 2016 should be highlighted in terms of operations. It was a long and complex operation. Pursuing former elements of AQIM's *katibas* (or phalanxes) al-Farouk and al-Ghoraba, the military attempted to eliminate Sheikh Abdelhakim, a former deputy to the emir of the al-Farouk katiba, who left to join Jund al-Khilafah, the antenna of the Islamic State in Algeria. Previously, Algerians had already completed the military offensive launched since the fall of 2014 against Abdelmalek Gouri (whose *nom de guerre* was Abu Suleiman), leader of Jund al-Khilafah and his successor Bashir Othman al-Assimi. The authorities tried to avoid the establishment of Wilayah al-Jazair of ISIS by leaving the armed embryo leaderless.<sup>5</sup>

The military operation also sought to eliminate the main preacher of Jund al-Khilafah, Abderrahmane al-Motawakil: One of Abdelmalek Gouri's attachés and one of the murderers of the French mountain guide Hervé Gourdel. Jund al-Khilafah announced its start with the abduction and murder of that French hostage in the Djurdjura National Park on September 21, 2014.<sup>6</sup> **The emir of Jund al-Khilafah had sworn allegiance to ISIS that same month of September and stated that the beheading took place in retaliation against France for its bombing of Iraq.** In an audiotape, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had accepted the Algerian group as a member of the Islamic State in November 2014, thereby formally establishing Wilayah as province of ISIS in Algeria.

The importance of the military effort deployed to eradicate both **Jund al-Khilafah and AQIM elements in the northern part of the country** can be seen in the deployment of more than 1,400 troops, including elements of the SSI (*Sections de Sécurité et d'Intervention*) and members of the National Gendarmerie headed by Major General Menad Nouba. At the helm of the operation and on the ground was the Head of the First Military Region, Major General Nouredinne Haddad.<sup>7</sup>

- **The problems are still concentrated in Kabylie**, in an area where terrorist activity and cleansing operations are led by the Army.<sup>8</sup> They are recurrent. Earlier this past September, a bomb blast killed an army officer in that region. In June, also in Kabylie, in the Jijel region, the army eliminated two terrorists and their shelters, as well as two more on September 24.<sup>9</sup>
- **In the Medea region**, near Algiers, eight terrorists were killed in a military operation in mid-June this year.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Fedjkhi, Amar. "Bouira: Fin de l'opération de ratissage à Errich", *El Watan*, 30 May 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Ghanem-Yazbeck, Dalia. "Obstacles to ISIS Expansion", *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 1 September 2016, <http://carnegie-mec.org/2016/09/01/>

<sup>7</sup> It was actually the largest military operation done by the First Military Region that includes Algiers and its surrounding regions since 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Azzouzi, Hafid. "Quatre terroristes éliminés à Azeffoun", *El Watan*, 8 October 2016.

<sup>9</sup> "Deux terroristes neutralisés et des armes saisies à Jijel", *El Watan*, 14 June 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Markey, Patrick. "Algerian troops kill 8 Islamist militants south of capital: Ministry", *Reuters*, 19 June 2016.



- **In Batna**, five terrorists were killed on September 29 and an important arsenal was seized.<sup>11</sup>
- **2017 ends with the deployment in Illizi, on the border with Libya, of 50,000 soldiers** to prevent jihadist infiltration from Libyan territory.

As we see the army intervenes nonstop in various localities in the north of the country, and, in addition to the localities aforementioned, it has deactivated up to thirteen handmade bombs during 2015 and 2016 in distant places such as Tizi Uzu, Chlef, and Constantine.<sup>12</sup>

**On the other hand, the threat continues in the country's deep south.** The attack on the Tiguentourine gas plant in the In-Amenas province bordering Libya took place in January 2013. It will be further discussed in the next section on the Sahel, but it is important to point it out here since we should not forget that the jihadists tried to repeat a similar attack against gas installations in March 2016, also prepared from Libya as the Tiguentourine attack was.

The geographical expansion of terrorists on Algerian soil is notorious. According to the Ministry of National Defense, **out of the 304 terrorists eliminated until May 2016, 74 belonged to Jund al-Khilafah and the rest to AQIM.**<sup>13</sup> As for the combatants sent by ISIS to Syria and Iraq, the Algerian regime estimates that between 200 and 500 Algerian nationals have gone to join combat there.

Compared to the Tunisian and Libyan cases that will be covered below, many consider that the poor establishment of ISIS in Algeria is due to both the combined effect of the Algerian experience in the fight against terrorism and society's prevention efforts after so many years of suffering at the hands of jihadist groups, or because of AQIM's competition. To sum up, and taking into account both the terrorist challenge (covered here) in addition to the instability in neighboring areas of Algeria, we realize that Algerian authorities must deal with scattered and sustained threats across the country: 1<sup>st</sup> Military Region (Blida-Algiers-Kabylie), 5<sup>th</sup> MR (Jijel) with clashes against terrorists, 2<sup>nd</sup> MR (Tlemcen, bordering Morocco), 4<sup>th</sup> MR (El Oued, bordering Tunisia and Libya), and 6<sup>th</sup> MR (Tamanrasset, bordering Mali and Niger) with clashes against terrorists and traffickers. They all are and will continue to be exposed to a high-level threat in the coming months and years.

In September 2017, the eastern part of the country experiences the infiltration of dozens of members of the Islamic State from Tunisia, **reinforcing the idea that the stability of the Libyan-Algeria-Tunisia axis constitutes a totality, which feedbacks into the parties.**

---

<sup>11</sup> "Jijel. Destruction de trois abris des terroristes", *Liberté*, 25 September 2016, www.liberte-algerie.com; "Terrorisme: 5 terroristes abattus à Batna", *El Watan*, 29 September 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Tiguarfa, Assia. "Quatre éléments de soutien aux terroristes arrêtés à Annaba", *Tout sur l'Algérie (TSA)*, 8 September 2016.

<sup>13</sup> "Un terroriste éliminé près de Tipasa", *Le Soir d'Algérie*, 25 September 2016. Armed with an AK-47 and several handmade explosives, this terrorist was killed in this tourist resort located 80 kilometers west of Algiers, just a month after another jihadist terrorist was also neutralized with identical weaponry (AK-47s and hand grenades) but this time in Batna, an important locality in eastern Algeria.

As a corollary regarding Algeria, we must add the alarming reality about the mobility and visibility of jihadis in Algeria's political and social arenas. There is a growing sense of impunity that the victims of terrorism feel after the Civil Harmony Law first and later the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, both approved under the presidency of Abdelaziz Bouteflika in 1999 and 2005 respectively. They have allowed many terrorists to gain their freedom and move arrogantly on the streets. More recently, they can be seen participating in television debates, the press, and on social media.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.3. THE MAGHREB AND TUNISIA

Anti-terrorist operations and now-sporadic but intense attacks until 2015 illustrate the level of the terrorist threat in Tunisia. **The alarming aspect in the case of Tunisia is the existence of a large number of Tunisian nationals who are currently fueling ranks and projects of jihadist groups such as ISIS.**<sup>15</sup> In a country of 11 million people, 5,000 to 7,000 Tunisians have traveled to Syria, Iraq, or Libya with the intention of fighting and/or living in the lands of the Caliphate. This is a disturbing fact, both for Tunisian authorities and neighboring countries since the return of these terrorists generates a major security problem.<sup>16</sup>

Most of the arrests take place in regions such as Kasserine and Tataouine.<sup>17</sup> Some have had a bad outcome, such as the case of the one in Tataouine in May 2016 when four police officers died along two terrorists.<sup>18</sup> Yet operations have also affected the capital and its surrounding areas.<sup>19</sup>

Terrorist activism in Tunisia has seen intense moments **between 2012 and today, with its epicenter in 2015 when the country suffered three major terrorist attacks.** Jihadis in Tunisia have benefited from the combined effect of several realities. The first one was the initial chaos generated by the revolts against the regime of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, which marks the origin of what has been called the “Arab Spring.” As a direct consequence of this chaos, Ennahdha **Islamists have seen their influence grow**, first in the political arena and then in government. After winning by a simple majority in the general elections of 2011, Ennahdha took a position and, after assuming power, created a combined environment of permissiveness for jihadist actors of different persuasions and of inhibition to their growing activism inside and outside the country.

One of the emblematic figures of this movement was Abu Iyad al-Tunisi, a.k.a. Saif-Allah Benahsine, a jihadi imprisoned since his extradition to Tunisia from Turkey in 2003 and who was freed

<sup>14</sup> “Charte pour la paix et pour la réconciliation nationale. Les familles des disparus réclament l’abrogation du texte”, *El Watan*, 29 September 2016.

<sup>15</sup> In 2015, 72 people died in three major terrorist attacks — 50 of them were foreign tourists.

<sup>16</sup> “Tunisie. Près de 2000 jihadistes empêchés de rejoindre des zones de conflit”, *El Watan*, 10 May 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Three were detained in Oued Nekrif, near Tataouine and one in Sbeitla, between September 21 and 24. See: “Three takfiris arrested (Interior Ministry)”, *Tap.Info.Tn*, 24 September 2016, [www.tap.info.tn/en/Portada/](http://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portada/)

<sup>18</sup> One of the terrorists in Tataouine was a suicide bomber who killed the four officers and the other was shot during the operation. The other two terrorists killed were going to be detained in Mnilha. See: Bobin, Frédéric, “En Tunisie huit morts dans des opérations antiterroristes”, *Le Monde*, 11 May 2016.

<sup>19</sup> “Cuatro policías mueren en Túnez durante una redada antiyihadista”, *El País*, 11 May 2016.

as so many others in 2011 during the political revolts. He was the founder of Ansar al-Sharia, a group that soon became violent, both in the streets and in the mountains, and particularly in the Mount Chaambi region, bordering Algeria. In regards to this armed activism, both here and in other scenarios, it is also important to mention Katibat Uqba ibn Nafi (KUIN), a group linked to AQIM, thus close to al-Qaeda, that was already active on Tunisian soil and that took advantage of the chaos to increase its presence and violent activism.<sup>20</sup>

2012 was a year of armed clashes in the western region of the country: The number of arrests of Tunisian nationals who began to travel abroad to fight as jihadists, both Libya and Syria, skyrocketed. In 2013, the situation worsened due to the assassination of two leftist activists by jihadis: Choukri Belaid in February and Mohammed Brahim in July. Also in July, eight soldiers were savagely killed in Mount Chaambi, five of them beheaded, and Ennahdha's own government was forced to outlaw Ansar al-Sharia, with whom it had hitherto been so compliant. **There were also three attempted attacks on tourist interests in 2013:** One in Sousse, a second one in Monastir in July, and a third one on Djerba Island in December. These attacks may have been unsuccessful; however, they showed the jihadist determination to hit a strategic sector of Tunisia — something they would finally achieve in 2015.

Faced with such a challenge that erupted in protests of some segments of the population and amid growing international concern, the Islamist authorities were forced to take action, albeit timid at the beginning. To stop the flow of fighters going abroad, travel was banned — Tunisian authorities believed they stopped about 12,000, an alarming number. Also, a fence was built on the border with Libya since, in addition to the 3,000 Tunisian nationals already in Syria and Iraq, 1,000 up to 4,000 more would swell the ranks in Libya.

The major terrorist attacks launched in 2015—two against tourist interests and a bloody suicide bombing in its capital, Tunis, against a bus full of soldiers in the fall—marked a before and after that would also effect changes in the political realm. This was a year in which the announcement about the creation of Jund al-Khilafah Tunisia in a copycat effort of the attempt by ISIS in neighboring Algeria was alarming. The attack launched against the Bardo National Museum in March resulted in the deaths of 21 tourists and the June 26 attack at Port El Kantaouri, near Sousse, resulted in 38 casualties.<sup>21</sup>

**Whatever the extent of the jihadist threat on Tunisian soil, it is in relation to its ability to recruit and circumvent the increasing control of the authorities.** In addition, the geographic closeness to Libya is a permanent reality: Libya's evolution has influenced and will continue to influence Tunisia's security.<sup>22</sup> It is worth remembering how **the jihadist attack against the Tunisian city of Ben Gardane** on March 8, 2016 was largely due to effective actions against jihadist groups in the Libyan village of

---

<sup>20</sup> Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed, and Moreng, Bridget. "Tunisian Jihadism after the Sousse massacre", *CTC*, 22 October 2015, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/tunisian-jihadism-after-the-sousse-massacre>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> "Tunisia fears return of its terrorist nationals once Sirte has fallen", *Libya Herald*, 7 October 2016.

Sabratha.<sup>23</sup> A group of 200 jihadists attacked the Tunisian city beginning with the ambush of a military barrack and a police post and then sowing terror in the streets for three days, killing 53 people. Adel Dhandri was one of the terrorists detained in Mnilha, 12 kilometers from the capital, in May 2016 in an operation in which two of his comrades died; he was one of the attackers of Ben Gardane, a town located more than 800 kilometers from Mnilha, which reflects the mobility of terrorists throughout the country.<sup>24</sup>

**In Tunisia, as in Algeria and in the cases of Libya and Morocco, it is important to pinpoint Islamists who, by offering a less radicalized image, participate in the political process, or their social and political activities are tolerated.** Such Islamists usually play a role in terms of interconnection or complicity that often serves to advance jihadists or, at least, not to be persecuted and decimated as it would be necessary.

The new government of Tunisia, led by Prime Minister Youssef Chahed, has several Ennahdha ministers. Although the liberals of Nida Tunis won the 2014 general elections, with the often-called anti-Islamist President Béji Caid Essebsi at the helm, the truth is that Ennahdha came in second, remains the well organized and disciplined party that it has always been, and takes good advantage of its presence in Parliament and public life, in addition to the benefits it reaps due to internal disension in Nida Tunis. As a result, after the elections, Nida Tunis and Ennahdha sealed an agreement, which gives the Islamists great leverage on Tunisian politics and in society.<sup>25</sup> **The Ennahdha congress held in May 2016 in Hamamet has consecrated “the abandonment of religious activities (Dawa or preaching) to focus on politics,” but the party has not renounced to remain connected to the Muslim Brotherhood’s cross-border movement.** Ennahdha has been formally linked to that movement since 1979, the year in which the Egypt-based group propitiated Ennahdha’s establishment as the Brotherhood’s antenna in Tunisia.<sup>26</sup>

The announcement of the first cruise arriving with tourists to the port of La Goulette, the *MS Europe* with 300 passengers mostly German in the first week of October 2016, followed by a second one in January and chartered by a Swiss company, **transmits a sense of stability and confidence.** It is about overcoming the justified fear among tour operators around the world after 59 tourists were killed in the attacks in 2015.<sup>27</sup> In any case, the persistent threat on Tunisian soil and the persistence of violence in Libya are realities that we must keep on factoring in; especially when the modus operandi

<sup>23</sup> See: “Second Weapons cache found in Ben Guerdane”, *Agence Tunis Afrique Presse*, 9 March 2016; and “Tunisia. We Won Ben Gardane Battle but War Continues”, *Middle East Monitor*, 9 March 2016.

<sup>24</sup> “Mnihla (Tunisie). Deux terroristes tués et 16 arrêtés”, *El Watan*, 12 May 2016.

<sup>25</sup> González, Ricard. “Islamistas y conservadores ganan presencia en el Gobierno de Túnez”, *El País*, 28 August 2016, pp. 6.

<sup>26</sup> This debate will certainly continue as with other Islamist groups in the Maghreb. In Tunisia, Mohamed Hentati, president of the Association of Imams, threatened to assault Parliament before the expected introduction of legal reform to make men and women equal in matters of inheritance. See: Nesrouche, Nouri: “En Tunisie, le romantisme révolutionnaire cède au réalisme de la crise”, *El Watan*, 19 June 2016.

<sup>27</sup> “Tunisia welcomes first cruise ship since last year’s terror attacks”, *The Guardian*, 7 October 2016, [www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/07/](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/07/)

of European jihadism, the stabbing, has also appeared in Tunisia, with the attack on two policemen next to the parliament on November 1, 2017.<sup>28</sup>

## 2.4 THE MAGHREB: LIBYA

**The greatest threat is now concentrated in Libya**, and although some of it has been decimated in recent months, it is also remarkable to observe in terms of structural contradiction that many of those fighting against the Islamic State on Libyan soil, with its epicenter in Sirte, are also jihadists.

We should remember that the jihadist presence in Libya is old—it was the most organized and active opposition against Muammar Gaddafi—and it seized best the opportunities that the Arab revolts presented here in February 2011. Trends from abroad regarding penetration of currents such as ISIS or the interaction of Libyan terrorists in other settings such as Tunisia, Syria, or Iraq, has put **entire parts of Libya in the hands of these actors for a long time**. Derna was first, between 2013 and 2014; then, since 2015, the city of Sirte, which had a population of more than 80,000 people and Gaddafi's birthplace, fell under the control of ISIS.

**The interrelationship between Tunisia and Libya, both in terms of flows of combatants and training and activism is remarkable.**<sup>29</sup> As we saw earlier, the U.S. bombed ISIS positions in the Libyan city of Sabratha in March 2016 since it had become a stronghold in the Tripolitania region. Many Tunisians and jihadists from other countries trained there and the immediate effect was the attack against two-hundred jihadists in the Tunisian city of Ben Gardane.<sup>30</sup>

**A relevant presence of jihadist actors can be found in both Derna and Benghazi, the capital of Cyrenaica.** The revolts there broke out on February 15, 2011. These players are part of structures such as the Shura Council of Mujahideen in Derna, or the Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries and the Benghazi Defense Brigades. Ansar al-Sharia, an organization with the same name as the Tunisian group and with antennas in several Libyan localities, along with the aforementioned actors and others, several militiamen of the city of Misrata, and elements close to the Grand Mufti Sadiq al-Ghariani constitute a radical Islamist profile denominated the “Third Force”.<sup>31</sup>

Enemies of the Government of National Accord (GNA) and its armed wing, the Libyan National Army (LNA), are currently **the tools used by the international community to try to rebuild the Libyan State and put an end to the Islamic State**. These jihadi actors reflect the chaos in which the Maghrebi country has plunged. Although some of these groups, and in particular the Misrata militias, fight against the Islamic State in Sirte, the fact is that many of them cooperate with the same

<sup>28</sup> “Dos policías atacados junto al Parlamento de Túnez, *El País*, 1 November 2017. [https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/11/01/actualidad/1509564465\\_176907.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/11/01/actualidad/1509564465_176907.html)

<sup>29</sup> “IS Bardo massacre mastermind reported killed in Sirte battle”, *Libya Herald*, 29 May 2016.

<sup>30</sup> See: “The U.S. Targeting ISIS in Libya”, *NARCO Analysis*, 2 August 2016, <http://northafricarisk.com/analysis/2016-08-02/>

<sup>31</sup> “Three LNA operatives kill in Derna”, *Libya Herald*, July 2, 2016.

ISIS in other Libyan theaters, especially in Benghazi. At the beginning of August, a suicide truck bomb killed one-hundred soldiers in this city.<sup>32</sup>

It is important to refer back to **Ansar al-Sharia, a group with several locations**, interrelated with its Tunisian namesake, and considered as terrorist since 2013, since it is dramatic that these actors are getting stronger in Libya at the same time that there is an ongoing effort to eradicate the presence of the Islamic State. This group is still a powerful player in the Cyrenaica region.<sup>33</sup>

Other radical Islamist actors are gaining ground while the presence of the Islamic State in Sirte was apparently being eradicated in early October due to the combined effect of U.S. intervention with fighter-bombers, UAVs, and armed helicopters as solicited by the GNA and systematically maintained since August 1, and Libyan ground activists including LNA troops under the name of Bunyan Marsous and Misrata militiamen, among others, while other radical Islamists make gains.<sup>34</sup>

The fight is fierce despite the fact that the U.S. is weakening with air attacks the positions of a highly motivated Islamic State.<sup>35</sup> It is also important to take into account the high price paid by those who fight on the ground in a theater of hard urban war: Since May when the offensive began, about 560 Misrata militiamen were killed and 2,750 were wounded. As a sign of the bitter resistance of the Islamic State, in mid-August a suicide bomber killed ten soldiers and a counterattack in the city with suicide bombers killed nine members of Bunyan Marsous and a Dutch photographer in early October.<sup>36</sup>

While the Islamic State can be partially decimated and its fighters expelled from both Derna and Sirte, **we should not think that the jihadist threat has vanished precisely because of the reasons previously mentioned.** It has just mutated, as we will see in other settings and in particular in Western Sahel.

Then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had submitted a confidential report to the Security Council last July—a partial version of the report was given to the media on May 19—speaking about 2,000 to 5,000 fighters after months of attempting to defeat, or at least expel, the Islamic State from its base in Sirte. And, above all, its redeployment to the south of the country and the consequences of its non-defeat for all the countries of the Maghreb, Egypt, or Mali, so it is important to dwell on some relevant details.

Southern Libya was and still is a sensitive area, both because of poor State presence, even during Gaddafi's days, as well as due to the tensions between Tuareg and Tubu actors and the overlap with

---

<sup>32</sup> "Army loses more men as Benghazi battle continues", *Libya Herald*, 23 August 2016.

<sup>33</sup> See: "BRSC statement suggests Benghazi Ansar leader may be dead", *Libya Herald*, 8 October 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Zaptia, Sami. "US airstrikes against IS in Sirte reach 74: Africom", *Libya Herald*, 22 August 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis, Aidan. "High toll for Libyan troops battling IS in Sirte", *Reuters*, 29 August 2016.

<sup>36</sup> "Sirte suicide bombers kills 10 as aid flows into liberated areas", *Libya Herald*, 18 August 2016 and "Bunyan Marsous forces in Sirte split last IS enclave", *Libya Herald*, 8 October 2016.

the many existent hinders in security-related issues, particularly illegal trafficking.<sup>37</sup> The Libyan southern region is a huge territorial extension that shares 982 kilometers of border with Algeria, 1,055 kilometers with Chad, 383 kilometers with Sudan and 354 kilometers with Niger, the Tubu and Tuareg militias are the most characteristic actors, veteran terrorists as Iyad Ag Ghali or Mokhtar Belmokhtar are regulars in the area and everyone acknowledges the difficulties to control such territorial immensity.<sup>38</sup>

**Much has been said about the mobility of these terrorist actors throughout the region and in Libya.** An example is the case of Belmokhtar and his much speculated death in northern Tobruk in June 2015 during a meeting between AQIM and the al-Mourabitoun group, which arose from the merger of Belmokhtar's men with the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA) the previous year. The group may have been attacked by American UAVs.

## 2.5. MOROCCO

Regarding Morocco, the concern is twofold. Along the important diaspora of Moroccan or Moroccan jihadists in Syria and Iraq, we spotlight the dynamism of the more or less radicalized Islamist actors inside the country and the osmosis of radicalism and terrorism affecting Spain via the terrestrial borders of Ceuta and Melilla.<sup>39</sup>

The diaspora is important, just as in the Tunisian case, **since Rabat authorities have come to acknowledge that more than 1,500 Moroccan nationals have gone to Syria and Iraq.** About 250 of them have returned to the country and most of them have been imprisoned. More than 400 nationals have died in the past five years in those Middle-Eastern countries.

Morocco executes plenty of anti-terrorist operations and this preventive work certainly preempts attacks, especially if one takes into account the profiles of the detainees and the plans that authorities say are aborted with their operations. We spotlight in terms of immediacy the Central Bureau of Judicial Investigations (BCIJ) dismantling of a three-man cell “impregnated with Islamist ideology” in September 2016 who would prepare attacks in Tangier and M'diq.<sup>40</sup>

The threat to both Morocco and Spain is obvious, particularly if we look at the multiple arrests in Ceuta and Melilla as well as in Moroccan cities bordering Spain: Castillejos and Tétouan in Ceuta's

<sup>37</sup> Sebha, capital of the Libyan region of Fezzan, gives an idea of the prevailing insecurity: In that place, there have been 59 kidnappings in the first six months of this year and 10 people died violently on June 19. See: Ajmadin, Mustafa: “Criminal chaos in Sebha”, *Libya Herald*, 7 July 2016.

<sup>38</sup> McGregor, Andrew. “The strategic topography of Southern Libya”, *CTC Sentinel*, 25 May 2016, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-strategic-topography-of-southern-libya>

<sup>39</sup> It is important to highlight the considerable activism in the Spanish Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla, living in osmosis with the Moroccan immediate neighborhood and affected by the proliferation of jihadist ideology. See: “EEUU detecta una célula yihadista en Ceuta y Melilla”, *Estrella Digital*, [www.estrelladigital.es/articulo/mundo/](http://www.estrelladigital.es/articulo/mundo/), and Moroccan newspaper *Alousboue*, 22 September 2016.

<sup>40</sup> “Maroc: Démantèlement d’ une cellule terroriste”, *Tout-sur-l’Algérie (TSA)*, 21 September 2016.

case, and Nador in Melilla's case. It is estimated that 13.4 percent of Moroccan jihadists come from Tétouan, and the percentage rises to 30 percent if we include the adjacent regions to Ceuta.<sup>41</sup> The Islamic State's call on July 27 to attack Spanish tourists in Morocco was promoted in an elaborate speech evoking a distorted version of the history of al-Andalus, especially the Navas de Tolosa battle (1212). This entire situation is of particular concern for the authorities in both countries.<sup>42</sup> So is the emergence of a group calling itself Jund al-Khilafah, a franchise of the Islamic State also in Morocco, quite similar to the one analyzed in the case of Algeria: In early 2016, Moroccan security forces dismantled a cell of that group, but last May three Algerian members of Jund al-Khilafah were still free according to Moroccan security forces.

As for the political realm and the presence and performance of Islamist actors in it, the legislative elections held on October 7 have allowed the Islamists of the Justice and Development Party (PJD) to demonstrate their social clout, just as they did in the previous 2011 elections. **In addition, the Islamist breakthrough has not only been proven by the renewed and reinforced victory of the PJD, but also by the growing presence of salafists during the electoral campaign as increasingly influential social actors.**

As an example, the man heading the list of Istiqlal Party for the very tourist city of Tangier was an Islamist whom Spain had extradited to Morocco in 2003. Hicham Temsamani Jad was an imam in El Portillo (Toledo) and Spain extradited him to Morocco for its alleged relation with the Casablanca suicide bombings on May 16 of that year, which resulted in 45 casualties. **Temsamani has the same message of that time and what is aggravating is that he is not on the lists of the legal Islamist party, PJD, but the nationalist Istiqlal. It shows the osmosis effect among diverse conservative political groups and the Islamists.**<sup>43</sup>

The PJD includes salafists in its voting lists, such as Hamad Qabach, who heads the list for another important tourist city, Marrakech. In this particular case, the government successfully removed him from the list.<sup>44</sup> This and other cases show Islamism gaining ground in Morocco, a reality that will not necessarily contribute to ending the most radical Islamist groups, which are actually booming: **The PJD won the municipal elections in 2015 and controls important cities such as Marrakech, Tangier, Kenitra, Tétouan, Rabat, Agadir, Casablanca, and Fez.** In addition, the party has managed to increase the number of its parliamentary seats compared to the previous general elections in November 2011.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> "Inquietud en España por los movimientos del Daesh en el norte de Marruecos", *Diario de Navarra*, 31 May 2016, pp. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Sáiz-Pardo, Melchor. "El Daesh pone en su punto de mira a los turistas españoles en Marruecos", *Diario de Navarra*, 13 September 2016, pp. 5.

<sup>43</sup> Temsamani was acquitted by Morocco's justice system in 2005. In the PI lists of Tangier there are four more salafists rallying around Temsamani. See: "Estrellas electorales salafistas en Marruecos", *El País*, 21 September 2016, pp. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Peregil, Francisco. "Los islamistas marroquíes endurecen su pulso con el rey", *El País*, 21 September 2016, pp. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Aït Akdim, Youssef, and Bozonnet, Charlotte. "Après cinq ans de pouvoir, les islamistes remportent les élections législatives au Maroc", *Le Monde*, 10 October 2016.



The tension between the power of King Mohamed VI and the Islamists is visibly increasing and trending to be considered a source of instability in the Maghrebi country. Tension is palpable in the government between Mohammed Hassad, the Interior minister, who is considered to be the man of the King, and Mustafa Ramid, the Justice minister and a lawyer who traditionally defended jihadist prisoners, but who was left out last time from the process of organizing the general elections. The other source of permanent tension with the King is the Justice and Spirituality movement, the salafist movement founded by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. The group does not recognize the king as a spiritual leader and it has never participated in the election process, neither in 2011 nor in 2016.<sup>46</sup>

## 2. THE EVOLUTION OF THE SAHEL THREAT

At present the panoply of jihadist terrorist groups that France-led Operation *Serval* tried to eliminate from January 2013 continues to operate under the same guise: Partly decimated, deployed in an immense geographic territory, but more complex in military and political terms; the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Operation *Berkhane*, successor of Operation *Serval*, and the armed and security forces of other actors are trying to respond to the threat

One of the first features of this region, especially the Western Sahel from Mauritania and Senegal to Chad, is the lack of a clear line of separation between jihadist terrorists and criminals of a different profile, scope, and specialization. If this long strip of the Sahel has historically trafficked with slaves, ivory, gold, and salt, today human trafficking is a lucrative activity, which is also exploited by terrorists, along with arms, drugs, stolen goods, etc.

It is important at this point to remember the January 2013 attack against the Algerian gas plant in **Tiguentourine**, in the province of In-Amenas, designed by veteran Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a terrorist as much a drug dealer as a jihadist. Terrorist groups have been taking advantage of the abundance of light weapons found in the region to get stronger: From national arsenals and irregular groups that fought in the 1990s and 2000s in various conflicts in West Africa (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, etc.) to now in recent times taking advantage of the collapse of the Libyan State. This collapse has included, among other dire consequences, the loss of control over its well-stocked arsenals.

In more recent times, besides the multiple and intense flows of illicit trafficking, terrorists have also taken advantage of the booming industry of kidnapping, especially Westerners. The Algerian jihadists of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), successors of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and predecessors of AQIM, started the practice in 2003 and it became particularly troubling at the end of the past decade and the beginning of this one, later extending to more southern latitudes e.g. Nigeria and Cameroon at the hand of groups such as Ansaru and Boko Haram.

Historically speaking, the jihadist penetration in this area is not only a direct effect of the expansion of Algerian terrorist activism towards the south in the 1990s, but the ideological radicalization that

---

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

facilitates the path of transformation from radicals to terrorists has come more slowly through the *Dawa* (preaching) practiced by **ultraconservative Muslim groups throughout the West African region, from Iranians and Pakistanis in the 1980s to Qataris and Saudis in more recent times.**<sup>47</sup>

### 3.1. MALI AND MAURITANIA

AQIM, MOJWA, Ansar Dine, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), al-Mourabitoun, the Macina Liberation Front, and others are mostly jihadist groups (MNLA is not since it is nationalist, but some elements and factions have been interacting with other Tuareg actors who do embrace jihadism e.g. Ansar Dine) and the overlap of political, economic, and security problems with the terrorist threat continues to be a major headache for local authorities and foreign actors trying to contribute to the stabilization of Mali and the entire region. **They all operated and continue to do so in Mali, with a projection beyond the borders of this Sahelian country** whose armed forces suffered during 2015 up to 80 casualties at the hands of jihadists, a number that is already being surpassed in 2016.<sup>48</sup>

MOJWA established a strong presence in Gao, Ansar Dine in Kidal, and AQIM in Timbuktu throughout the nefarious year of 2012, but neither then nor today should we speak of closed circuits when referring to these or other jihadist terrorist groups in the region. Until 2011 and the outbreak of the Arab revolts, the dominant names here were AQIM in the Maghreb and the Sahel and Boko Haram in Nigeria. Nonetheless, **from the beginning of 2012 we began to hear about other groups—MOJWA, Ansar Dine and the MNLA—and thereafter more acronyms and names of groups emerged. Although they sometimes seem to quarrel heightening tensions and even clash among them, the truth is that they all constitute a diffuse but increasingly alarming threat** and frequently interact as we also saw in the case of jihadist violence in Libya.

Proof of the frequent interaction between groups is Belmokhtar's activism. In the summer of 2014, he led the split of his group "Those who sign with blood" from AQIM, merged with MOJWA and al-Mourabitoun emerged from here. This transformed the threat, making it more complex by adding new acronyms — and more lethal by revitalizing its activism in spite of the *Serval/Berkhane* military pressure. In this sense, we cannot declare victory when tensions and contradictions arise within these groups, such as the one detected in 2015 in al-Mourabitoun between Belmokhtar and Abu Walid al-Sahrawi, since they do not usually lead to debilitating divisions, but just to more complexity to analyze their evolution and to prevent their activism.

**The ethnic and communal complexity of the region is an added difficulty in the attempt to combat terrorist groups effectively and to implement de-radicalization initiatives.** Besides the role of the Tuareg, communities such as the Peul (or Fulani) or Songhai, who were historically excluded by

---

<sup>47</sup> As an example, let's remember the accusations of the mayor of Gao to the Red Crescent of Qatar, accused of having close relations with MOJWA terrorists.

<sup>48</sup> Villarino, Ángel. "Españoles en la guardia del muro en el Sahel (Senegal)", *El Confidencial*, 19 June 2016.

Bamako—just as the Tuareg—have also contributed and continue to nurture the ranks of jihadist groups as a way of responding to deep historical grievances.

This situation contributes to fracture more an enemy that is difficult to describe, classify, and prioritize. If MOJWA, active in Gao and Menaka, broke away from AQIM in 2011, it was largely because the Songur Maurites and Malians feel marginalized by the Arabs and Tuareg who dominate in AQIM. Besides, many Tuareg elements are closer to Ansar Dine, but, in the end and on the ground, we should not be surprised if these groups sometimes act in unison or support each other at different levels just as they run into tensions and conflicts among them at other times.

Algeria, one of the actors that has tried to contribute to the resolution of some of the tensions and conflicts contributing to the structural destabilization of the region, sponsored negotiations in 2015 that led to the signing of two consecutive agreements in Algiers: The **Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali** with the National Coordinator of Azawad on June 15 and with the MNLA on June 20. One year after the signing, it is very difficult to carry out. The violent death of Sheikh Ag Ausa on October 8, 2016, one of the main Tuareg leaders who signed the Algiers Agreements, when he was leaving the MINUSMA base at Kidal, further complicates a process that is already being undermined daily due to jihadist activism.<sup>49</sup>

Negotiating becomes increasingly difficult in the area when Morocco, that has already played a role since 2013 until today and also in Libya, irritates Algiers in the context of the ongoing tension between Algeria and Morocco — as when Algiers diplomatically commits to maintaining contacts with Iyad Ag Ghali and his Ansar Dine group to safeguard complex balances with their Tuareg partners.<sup>50</sup>

The reunification of al-Mourabitoun terrorists with AQIM has had its tragic result in the Western Sahel subregion with several attacks against hotels frequented by foreigners in Bamako and Sévaré in Mali and Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso. The attack against the Radisson Blu hotel in the Malian capital had an added symbolic effect since it is also the place that usually hosts MINUSMA staff.<sup>51</sup>

**Attacks against hotels and restaurants on urban settings began in March 2015 with Restaurant “La Terrasse” in Bamako.** It would continue with the Byblos Hotel in Sévaré, Mali, which resulted in 13 casualties in August 2015. The escalation continued with the attacks on Bamako’s Radisson Blu in November 2015, a few days after the Paris attacks on November 13, and the attacks against the Splendid Hotel and the adjacent Cappuccino Café, both in Ouagadougou on January 15, 2016 that resulted in more than 30 casualties. Then there was an attack against a Grand-Bassam beach resort, near Abidjan in the Ivory Coast that would result in 19 casualties on March 13, 2016. AQIM claimed responsibility for the attacks—although the the Macina Liberation Front also claimed responsibility for the Sévaré attack— and its expansion to Burkina Faso had begun months before the Ouagadougou attacks with an attack in the Oursi region, near the border with Mali in addition

<sup>49</sup> “Leader for former Tuareg separatist group killed in Mali”, *AP*, 8 October 2016.

<sup>50</sup> Abba, Seidik. “Comment Alger protege le djihadiste Iyad Ag Ghali avec aide de Paris”, *Le Monde*, 6 October 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Five MINUSMA contractors and four Malian soldiers died in the attack. See: Cummings and Piper. *Op. cit.*

to the abduction of a Romanian worker at the manganese mine near Tambao in August 2015.<sup>52</sup> **In June 2017, a resort on the outskirts of Bamako was attacked by jihadis, reaching a total of six casualties: In the attack a Spanish soldier on leave was involved.**

In relation to the extent of the threat to the Ivory Coast, we emphasize that there have already been violent activities since mid-2015 in the Ivorian regions bordering Mali, from Korhogo, Odi-enne, and Kouto before the bloody attack at the Grand-Bassam. Both AQIM and Ansar Dine had threatened the Ivory Coast for providing troops to MINUSMA and Ansar Dine proved its proximity clout to the Ivorian border with its July 2015 attack against the town of Fakola, on Malian soil but just 15 kilometers from that border. The threats of Ansar Dine against MINUSMA have resulted in attacks on several occasions, such as the one **in February 2016 that killed six** in one of the most lethal blows suffered by this UN mission — one of the most dangerous missions nowadays.<sup>53</sup>

The truth is that, in the case of Mali, the attacks are increasingly affecting the country's center and south now whereas they previously focused on the immense north. Not only Arabs and Tuareg are involved in the attacks since Bambara, Peul and Songhai already belong to the ranks of the various groups. Let's remember the mobility of all these communities since they extend along all these borders and produce a multiplying effect of family and group ties. The Malian State continues to suffer the structural problems that intensified insecurity at the beginning of 2012, for example, Malian armed forces have scarce human and material resources, among other needs. Note that **they still have only 15,000 troops to cover a huge territorial area**: 8,000 of them, more than two thirds of the Malian Armed Forces, have already received training in several rotations offered by the European Union Training Mission (EUTM-Mali) in Kulikoro.<sup>54</sup> The EUTM-Mali itself suffered its first jihadist attack in Bamako on March 21, 2016, in what was the third terrorist attack suffered in the capital in a few months, becoming a target of the attacks by many terrorist actors operating in the region — as the Malian Army and Security Forces, as well as the MINUSMA had endured in the past. Such attacks and the enduring threat throughout Mali's territory has made a growing number of neighboring countries uneasy, e.g. Senegal, a country considered stable until now, which is becoming increasingly concerned inside and outside its own borders.

Traditionally concerned for the huge clandestine emigration, both domestic and from other countries in the region, Senegalese authorities are increasingly concerned about the number of Senegalese nationals being radicalized and moving to Libya to join ISIS and other jihadist groups. There is also growing concern about destabilization from Mali and, among other things, this development has led to reinforcing security relations with both France and the United States.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Lebovich Andrew: "The hotel attacks and militant realignment in the Sahara-Sahel region", *Combating Terrorism Center (CTC)*, 19 January 2016.

<sup>53</sup> "Mali asegura haber detenido a un proveedor de armas a grupos terroristas", *Europa Press*, 9 May 2016; and "Mali: arrestation du numéro deux du groupe djihadiste Ansar Dine", *Le Monde*, 9 May 2016.

<sup>54</sup> Villarino. *Op. cit.*

<sup>55</sup> Senegal and the United States signed an agreement in Dakar on May 2, 2016, whereby the African country reinforces its military relationships. Senegal hosted the organization of the Flintlock '16 exercise in February 2016. See: "Sénégal: accord entre Dakar et Washington pour une 'présence permanente' militaire américaine", *Le Monde*, 3 May 2016.

### 3.2. NIGERIA

The expansion of the threat and its actors towards the south of Mali puts us in the southernmost area of the Western Sahel in line with the terrorist violence that another jihadist actor, **Boko Haram**, has been exerting for years. It has traditionally done so in northeastern Nigeria, but is increasingly acting in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, and its men were seen from 2012 in parts of Mali, such as Timbuktu, interacting with AQIM. Its loyalty to the Islamic State since March 2015, transforming itself into Wilayat Gharb Afriqiya or ISIS West Africa Province, has only yielded more terrorist strength. This dynamic has largely compelled both Nigerian authorities and neighbors of this great West African country to respond to this terrorist activism, having succeeded in recent months by partially decimating the group, although its actions and motivations remain intact.

It was Mohammed Yusuf, a preacher in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno, who founded Boko Haram in 2002. Yusuf was killed in July 2009 by Nigerian security forces. One of Yusuf's disciples, Abubakar Shekau, emerged as the leader of the group and still remains as such to these days. The fixation of ISIS and al-Qaeda with Boko Haram is also due to its ample merits in terrorist terms. In 2011, it organized two suicide bombings in the country's capital, Abuja, against the UN Headquarters and the Federal Police Headquarters as well as multiple attacks before and after them against military installations and Christians — all attacks followed al-Qaeda's traditional line. Since 2013, Boko Haram increases its attacks in northeastern Nigeria and in mid-2014 its ambitious offensive paid off with the occupation of cities and the takeover of vast territories.

During the last two years, leader Abu Bakr Shekau's fixation with suicide attacks in crowded places has caused the death of many Muslims and seems to have created rifts within the group and even with the Islamic State. In addition to this apparent rift in Boko Haram, led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi (Yusuf's son), against Shekau's blind violence, the fact is that the *ad hoc* coalition of bordering African states supporting Nigeria in its military efforts is succeeding at least in slowing down the group's territorial expansion and in partially reducing its lethality.<sup>56</sup> Nonetheless, Boko Haram's ability to create violence remains high both within Nigeria and in its immediate surroundings.

### 3.3. NIGER

The case of Niger is particularly delicate because it suffers from a pincer-like effect due to the threat of groups operating in the Western Sahel. In addition, Niger is enduring Boko Haram's strengthening, especially since more than two years now. That is why Niger just announced that the United States is building an important UAV base in Niger, intensifying a cooperation deal that both countries already had for this type of aircraft, and that, according to the media, will entail an investment of 50 million dollars.<sup>57</sup> The killing of 22 Nigerien soldiers on October 6, 2016 at a Malian

<sup>56</sup> Naranjo, José. "La coalición contra Boko Haram recupera un feudo terrorista", *El País*, 31 July 2016, pp. 10.

<sup>57</sup> Burke, Jason. "ISIS and Al Qaida turf wars in Africa may push fragile states to breaking point", *The Guardian*, 6 October 2016.

refugee center in Tazalit, in the Tahoua region, 300 kilometers northeast of Niamey, is the latest major attack. While the responsibility of the attack is not yet known, Niger has suffered, just as Chad and also Cameroon, important cross-border attacks by Boko Haram.<sup>58</sup> Niger contributes along with Cameroon, Chad, and Benin to the African *ad hoc* force that responds militarily against the expansion of Boko Haram throughout the Lake Chad region.<sup>59</sup>

In the Nigerien region of Diffa, which has been under a state of emergency since February 2015, there are now a quarter of a million refugees fleeing their country, Nigeria. Thus Niger is being increasingly affected in its own territory by the destabilization provoked by Boko Haram. In broader terms, according to data from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, **more than two million Nigerians from the northeast part of their country have been displaced and, due to its cross-border violence, Boko Haram has displaced a total of 2.7 million people in the Lake Chad region** — and the numbers are growing.<sup>60</sup>

Here again, as in the Western Sahel or in Libya, the rifts inside jihadist groups should not be seen as debilitating since they often serve both to add confusion and to rationalize the effectiveness of some combatant groups. That is the risk if Boko Haram splits since it could lead to al-Barnawi's more efficient group leadership in the fight against the Nigerian State and its neighbors.<sup>61</sup>

#### **4. OBSTACLES TO DEFEAT THE SALAFI-JIHADIST THREAT**

The salafi-jihadist threat that we have described in terms of current events is omnipresent throughout an enormous geographic area, compartmentalized in states that have often been unable to control their own territory; moreover, they have been affected by external events such as the Arab revolts in particular. This has only added difficulties since it has weakened state structures and invigorated terrorist actors.

1. **There are multiple jihadist actors who have not been defeated until now in spite of a variety of efforts**, both national and multinational, against them. These are actors that incorporate local agendas and support that vary from place to place;
2. **There is a huge geographical dispersion of terrorist actors**: From Egypt to Morocco, in North Africa, and from the Western Sahel to Nigeria including the Lake Chad region. The geographical extension in sparsely populated areas is very broad.

---

<sup>58</sup> The perpetrators were, according to witnesses, a group of 30 or 40 heavily-armed men speaking Tuareg. See: "Brèves, Niger", *El Watan*, 8 October 2016; and "At least 22 Niger soldiers killed in a attack on refugee camp", *Reuters*, 7 October 2016.

<sup>59</sup> "Boko Haram kills 5 in Niger Republic", *Sabarareporters*, 4 September 2016, <http://sabarareporters.com/2016/09/04/>

<sup>60</sup> UNHCR spokesman Adrian Edwards explained the gravity of the situation at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on May 24. See: "Security and humanitarian situations worse in Diffa, Niger, as Boko Haram continues attack in the region", [www.unhcr.org/uk/news/briefing/2016/574418af7/](http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/briefing/2016/574418af7/)

<sup>61</sup> Zenn, Jacob. "Making sense of Boko Haram's different factions: Who, how and why?", *Africanarguments*, 20 September 2016, <http://africanarguments.org/2016/09/20/>

3. **These are groups interacting with illicit trafficking networks that have existed in this immense region for a long time;** they exploit the weaknesses and contradictions that characterize the states of these regions. They obtain resources and external support in this way.
4. These groups take advantage of **the dynamization of the problems due to the Arab revolts and the collapse of the States** in terms of security and border control. In other cases, the structural weakness of states facilitates such freedom of action.
5. **They feel stimulated by the call to combat of groups such as the Islamic State or al-Qaeda** and this allows us to conclude that the salafist jihadist threat is to be found in North Africa and the Western Sahel, with expansion into Nigeria and the Lake Chad region — an area suitable to maintain and project this activism in the coming years.





## CONCLUSION: AND NOW WHAT? WE CAN AND WE MUST DEFEAT ISLAMISM

Jihadism is a phenomenon, not necessarily ephemeral, or one that will disappear spontaneously. Throughout these pages we have been able to trace its history and activity on European soil and in our own country, Spain. It has theological and ideological roots that escape the will of Westerners: How will the threat disappear if Islamism still claims the invasion of Spain in 611? This means that **if there is something that should now be clear to us is that the holy war that fundamentalist and political Islamism has declared against us is not due to circumstantial reasons or actions that we should regret.**

Being at war is bad; however, it is much worse if someone declares war on you, if you are attacked, but you do not want to fight back — the tendency to attack precisely those who understand what is all about is even worse. American president George W. Bush was widely criticized for considering the 9/11 attacks an act of war and not simply criminal attacks. For many years, his vision of waging war on terrorism was misinterpreted and ridiculed by Europeans — until France suffered the *Bat-aclan* attack in Paris with jihadis acting as real commandos and creating horror wherever they went. François Hollande, France's president at the time, made Bush's phrase his own: "We are at war." No one protested then a declaration that was arriving a decade and a half later compared to the one by the American president.

The problem is that the French or Belgian gesture of sending more fighter-bombers to pummel enclaves of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria conveyed to citizens the image of a distant war fought on the enemy's soil and far from the daily travails of our societies. However, as we know all too well, unfortunately, it is not quite like that: **The war against jihadism has a fighting component abroad, but it also has a domestic front fought on our own soil.** The shootings, the vehicle-ramming attacks, the throat slashings are increasingly frequent on our streets.

One can say the same about current European political leaders and what used to be attributed to the military: Preparing to fight the next war as they fought the last. We should be aware that it is our first and greatest mistake. Every war is different, but this one is absolutely different. **The jihadist-style war is something new to all of us.** Worse yet, due to a well-intended but suicidal desire to exonerate Muslims who legally or illegally are among us as well as seeking to hide their own mistakes, European political elites are embarking on a **negationist offensive** with the sole purpose of confusing their citizens and halt any global response to jihad.

**Therefore, the attacks of isolated individuals are always treated as matters of mental problems, even though they were committed to the cry of "Allah is the greatest."** Time and time again we see how the media and the police hide the identity of the assailants when they are Muslim immigrants or refugees. Instead of protecting their citizens, anything goes if it serves the purpose of defending the concept that Islam is not the problem since it is a religion of peace; that the cold-blooded jihadists

have nothing to do with true Islam and, thus, politicians can continue defending their open-door policies for everyone who wants to come to Europe.

However, this ostrich policy can be detected in the waves of Muslim immigrants coming from the South. The open-border policy has ushered a sad era for Europe: More street attacks, more dead citizens, the army deployed in the streets of many countries — and the certainty that there are thousands of jihadists free among us with the capabilities to prepare and execute the killings of innocent European citizens. Just observe the pace of major attacks in 2017: Travelers on German trains (March), tourists in Westminster (March), customers or policemen in the center of Stockholm and Paris (April), young people attending a concert in Manchester (May), tourists in Barcelona (August). Or add the attacks with wounded or frustrated attempts at the last moment throughout the continent. The conclusion is that the measures are not enough and, with the current policies, Islamic terrorism is here to stay indefinitely.

Nonetheless, it does not have to be that way. A change of direction, based on the following points, is not only beneficial, but necessary:

**The first thing to recognize is that we are actually immersed in a non-traditional and unconventional war**, in which there are sides with enemies— the jihadists and those who support and help them inside and outside of our societies—and good guys — most of us and not just a few countries inside and outside the Muslim world who resist the jihadist wave. Refusing to acknowledge that we are at war does not mean we are not at war: **One does not choose which war to wage or when to do it. That is chosen by the enemy, and in this case, our enemy has it clear.** In this sense, the obsession to separate Islam from crimes committed in the name of Islam has no effect in the fight against terrorism. We must recognize that they are Muslims, in the name of Islam, and they have declared war on us.

Secondly, we must understand that **this war that we are forced to fight is not going to be won exclusively in distant lands; it is waged in a spatial continuum that goes from our neighborhoods to Raqqa and Tehran.** To the foreign front and to the military operations beyond our borders, we must now add—for the first time since World War II—a domestic front.

The battlefield has also invaded our streets, albeit with unconventional attacks such as knifing or mowing down people with trucks and vans. Terrorism is a tactic at the service of a higher objective—a holy war against us, the infidels—and terror can be delivered without resorting to car bombs. While you read these lines, there are people in our cities fantasizing or planning to kill you. All of it is part of a perfectly rational strategy to chip away the European morale and, on the one hand, change its foreign policy towards the Muslim world, and, on the other hand, advance an agenda of Islamization and radicalization on Western soil.

It is important to emphasize that the attacks that we have been suffering on European soil cannot be explained away with arguments about the **mental imbalances of the perpetrators**, unless one is willing to admit that Islam is the most-prone-to-madness religion; yet the attacks can only be explained within the concept of a generalized and global offensive. They are part of the same war. War entails a state of exceptionality in which, unfortunately, the privileges and tranquility that peace affords us are lost.

Therefore, acting as if we were in a state of peace simply disturbed from time to time is a very serious error: Only by admitting that we are in times of war, of a new war, we will be able to understand that it is necessary to apply protection measures that would not have justification in times of normality and peace. **The logic of war is very different from the logic of peace, and the logic of jihad in Europe is different from any peace, or even war, that we Europeans have ever experienced before.** Not even the conquest of Spain in 711, the taking of Constantinople in 1453, or the siege of Vienna in 1529 brought the jihad to Europe as it is doing it today.

Thus, for example, according to the statements of Europol's director, Rob Wainwright, **there are around 5,000 militarily-trained jihadists in Europe.** The European Union's counterterrorism coordinator, Gilles de Kerchove, told a Spanish newspaper after the August attacks in Barcelona that there are more than 50,000 radical Islamists on European soil. It is the kind of numbers that turn next to impossible the monitoring and control tasks of police and intelligence services. The serious issue here is that these numbers have been generated in the last decade, while measures were being put in place to curb the threat and European countries intensified their efforts against it. From this point of view, **if a small army has been created in recent years ready to attack European cities from within, the current fight against terrorism is failing.** If you really want to prevent new attacks, you have to consider other measures.

This requires strengthening and giving the required importance to citizenship and residence in Europe. They should be revalued, be open to those who respect them, and be absolutely denied to those who fight against them. All those who are involved in jihadist attacks, either directly involved or as support, should automatically be deprived of their European nationality and, once they serve their sentence, they should be expelled from Europe. Moreover, given the social and family support that jihadis usually receive, these deportation measures should be extended to the terrorists' family circles as a punitive but also deterrent measure. To attack Europe comes at zero cost for the jihadi and his milieu — that must change. Linking nationality to legality is the best way to induce cooperation from relatives and close friends in the identification of radicalization processes and to dismantle the physical and human infrastructures that nourish them.

Certainly, these are exceptional measures, which in normal times would be clearly interpreted as unfair; however, we find ourselves in a situation of exceptionality. How to tackle a problem like Molenbeek, where “innocent” family members and friends shelter and collaborate with the terrorists who then attack throughout Europe?

**In the same way, it is impossible to diminish the terrorist threat on our soil if it does not come along with measures to put an end to the most important breeding ground in recent years: Uncontrolled immigration to Europe.** It serves no good purpose to stop a jihadi, only to allow entrance to others, be it illegally or via the refugee/migrant flows. For social peace, respect for the rule of law and, above all, national security, we should not only stop the EU's open-door migration policy established in 2015, we must also reduce the number of immigrants who have arrived in Europe in the last two years. That is only possible by beginning with those involved in armed actions, here or in third countries; then with those who commit crimes on our soil; and end with those who do not find work and a place in our society. The most basic measure against the radical Islamist is to deport him: The farther away his ideas and strategies are from European soil, the safer Europe will be.

**On the other hand, as Israel’s experience teaches us, in the face of low-intensity attacks, there is nothing better than quick action by the State’s security forces — or the armed forces.** They are a valuable resource that Europeans are reluctant to use, and when they do, it is done in a marred and sluggish way. That is illogical: If the jihad is in our streets, it is there where our soldiers must act, especially when the security forces are overwhelmed.

**Europe would have to change its rules of engagement to authorize the lethal use of weapons and to legally protect soldiers and agents.** In the face of a jihadist who openly wields a knife, but who can hide an explosive belt, shooting to kill is not only advisable, it is a deterrent for all those young radicals not all too sure about wanting to die if they do not have time to kill others before. It is not just to shoot in legitimate self-defense: There is a big difference in their Islamist conception of what a martyr is. If terrorists want to attack, let them know that they will not make it out alive. This deterrent is also for all those who are not entirely convinced to sacrifice their lives and are faced with the prospect of losing it as soon as they go into action.

This policy obviously requires the introduction of numerous changes — starting with our mentality and following with the legal protection for agents and military people in action. In the United Kingdom, police officers generally go unarmed, which entails great vulnerability, not only for them, but for the citizenry. Faced with jihadism, an unarmed police officer is not a police officer. And the same goes for the police in general when there are obstacles to eliminate a terrorist: They can generally shoot only when it is too late.

**When military forces are sent to patrol streets or infrastructures, they are almost never granted the right to shoot except in cases of self-defense.** They are under the same restrictions placed on the police, thought and carried out in times of peace, without the jihad loose in our streets. Moreover, police due process guarantees and restrictions on the use of force, designed for common criminals or even “ordinary” terrorists, are used by jihadism to put an end to the society that defends those same guarantees and restrictions to use force. **All that must change** if they really want to be agents of prevention and protection.

Let us analyze one more thing. In case of a terrorist attack, the police currently advise to “run, hide, tell,” which makes sense if you face a group of terrorists armed with firearms and explosives. However, this policy is not very useful in front of an attacker with a knife or a truck. In these cases, the State has problems detecting and neutralizing terrorists, but given the lethal limitation, it is also an objective available to well-trained citizens. It makes no sense that a jihadi simply armed with a knife or a “domestic” weapon can sow panic among hundreds of adult citizens that only know how to run away at the same time. Here again, deterrence is fundamental: When the terrorist discovers that his victims may be his executioners, he thinks twice. How many victims can be avoided if we follow the example of Spanish Ignacio Echeverría, who used a scooter against a poorly armed terrorist, in each attack? In the face of certain attacks, citizens can be the best anti-terrorist weapon, if they are well prepared.

The State has the obligation to prepare its citizens for contingencies such as this one, when a group can confront a single terrorist much more effectively and with lower risk than trying to escape separately and waiting for the police to arrive. **Personal protection techniques should be part of the**

school curriculum, given that the State is powerless in putting an end to terrorism and well-trained citizens could neutralize a poorly-armed terrorist..

The only way to defeat the radicals is to fight the processes of radicalization on our soil. **Not only do we have to exert control in a much more intrusive and permanent way than today in places of worship, legal and illegal mosques, and their spiritual leaders.**

Much needs to be done, as the fiasco of the imam Abdelbaki Es Satty in the Barcelona attack shows. However, it is not only control, but consequences: The expulsion or deportation of radical imams or Islamic spiritual leaders is the only way to prevent them from traveling through the continent radicalizing young people. We must also fight against the different environments that serve to amplify the message of jihadism and the promotion of radicalization among young Muslims.

**It is essential to stop immediately disguised Islamization in the form of campaigns against xenophobia or religious discrimination.** It is important to halt the petitions to pass hate or anti-libel laws, even “religious freedom” because, as it has been proven, their real purpose is to reduce our freedom to criticize Islam. If these associations succeed in their campaigns, not only would it be impossible to criticize Islam as we do with Christianity, but **when that same criticism of Islam disappears, radical discourse will be the only dominant force.** The absence of criticism of Islam is jihadism’s first victory.

This reminds us of the need to understand jihad’s global character. In Spain we know all too well, unfortunately, that terrorism does not only consist of the members of an armed group, but that behind them there is an entire network that finances, supports, and legitimates them ideologically. We also know that only fighting against all their fronts is when you are in a position to prevail and win the battle. Well, it is the same thing with jihadism and we should apply the lessons we have learned in the Basque Country and the fight against ETA. The terrorist is the objective, but not only the terrorist. This war that jihadists have declared on us is more than a war waged by terrorists or militants. **It will only be defeated if we fight the Islamists at the same time we fight their ideology,** not only its tenets, but also the way it expands.

**In that sense, there is a new front where to present battle: The cybercaliphate.** Social networks are used to send the messages and to coordinate many of the jihadist activities. It is via online platforms where recruitment, inspiration, and encouragement reach our young in Europe. It is on the Internet where many find reasons and tools to become radicalized, from videos to websites and online magazines that connect Muslims from Raqqa, Casablanca, Stockholm or Zaragoza. Nonetheless, the cyberuniverse can also help our intelligence services, the police, and those who fight to put an end to jihadism. Naturally, **we must begin by demanding greater cooperation from large service providers,** normally, in the interests of user privacy and freedom of expression, **service providers, search engines, system manufacturers, and social networks allow channels of hate and connection among terrorists in a secure manner.** Then again, we return to the fact that something as valuable as privacy and freedom of expression is being used against privacy and freedom of expression: What is good for the citizens must not be good for the terrorists.

The progressive, albeit slow, fall of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has brought us **a false sense of security.** It is false because the loss of territorial control does not automatically mean the defeat

of ISIS, which will return to its origins as a terrorist group. However, there is more. During these years, the Islamic State has not only served as a magnet to attract tens of thousands of young people to the Middle East, eager to swell their ranks, but has inspired and radicalized so many others who have remained on our soil. **The return of European fighters and the lack of immigration control have only worsened our security.** For its part, the almost forgotten al-Qaeda, far from disappearing, remains an organization with the capacity to execute a massive attack again. Sunni jihadism is present across the arc of North Africa — our neighbors.

In conclusion, we at GEES believe that the Islamist threat to Europe not only is not subsiding, but that, in light of the data in this report, it is increasing. However, jihadism is not invincible. On the contrary, it can and must be defeated. Two basic principles that serve to guarantee victory must be developed.

On the one hand, **we must disarm jihadism, fighting the terrorists, their platforms, and, above all, their ideology, at the military, police, and cultural levels.** The States cannot lose sight of the global character of the threat, which goes beyond police or intelligence typology.

On the other hand, as in every war, it is a clash of wills. **We must rearm in order to be able to carry out our defense and combat.** Wars are won when the enemy becomes convinced that his goals are impossible to achieve. Jihadism sees us as easy prey because we are cowards, weak, and unstable. If we do not rearm ourselves, politically, institutionally, legally and, above all, morally, we will never get to that inflection point in which the terrorists realize that they cannot win because they will continue believing that they can subjugate us..

Only by being strong and showing our strength with exceptional but effective measures, we will put an end to this threat, which goes far beyond a truck bomb, or a multiple hit. Make no mistake, the jihadist objective is to dominate us and destroy our civilization. It is in our hands to thwart it, but that is only possible if, first, we are aware of the intrinsic.



*The Strategic Studies Group (GEES) is the oldest private and independent think-tank of Spain. Since 1987 has produced assessments and analysis and has advised different corporations, governments and media outlets inside as well beyond Spain. The reports, analysis, articles and events are prepared by specialists from different areas of research.*

*During the more than 30 years of existence, the Strategic Studies Group (GEES) has become an indispensable reference within the world of liberal-conservative ideas, specially in issues related to security and defense. The Strategic Studies Group (GEES) and its members are active members in several international initiatives and networks of think-tanks across the world, being considered globally as the most influential conservative center in Spain.*

VISIT THE STRATEGIC STUDIES GROUP:

<http://www.gees.org>

ON SOCIAL NETWORKS:



<https://www.facebook.com/grupoGEES>



<https://twitter.com/grupogees>

© 2018 GEES – Strategic Studies Group

