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Islamic Terrorism in the West and International  
Migrations: The “Far” or “Near” Enemy Within? What  
is the Evidence

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## **Abstract**

The primary aim of this paper is to enhance our understanding of the immigration-terrorism nexus at a time when the massive inflow of immigrants in Europe coincides with the rise of the so-called Islamic State and a spike of terrorist incidents on European soil driven by the war in Syria. The article goes on to survey theoretical contributions on immigration, security and terrorism and research evidence on whether terrorism is driven by recent immigrants or nationals. As an extension of this analysis, this paper also takes on a supplementary, related question: to what extent may the main terrorist threat to Western countries not actually come from immigrants or refugees, but rather from home-grown extremists inspired by the ongoing jihad in Syria?

## **Keywords:**

Immigration, threat, Islamic terrorism/Jihadism, Europe, securitisation, home-grown terrorism, ISIL, foreign fighters





Mass migration issues, the surge of refugees from war zones, and the Islamist terrorism threat have - at least since 9/11 – taken up outsized importance in European domestic politics. Immigration has since long often been perceived as a cultural, economic and physical security threat, also associated to the rise of criminal acts and terrorist activities. As of 2015, the three issues became even more intertwined. The deepening of the conflict in Syria and Iraq, and the Islamic State’s violence, produced a surge of refugees into surrounding countries, and an unprecedented exodus into Europe. Migration from Syria, Iraq, some areas in North Africa and Southwest Asia, has increasingly been seen as a Trojan horse enabling Muslim terrorists’ invasion of Europe.

The recent terrorist attacks in Europe brought to the fore the supposed link between migrants,<sup>1</sup> refugees,<sup>2</sup> and terrorists. They coincided with the assertion of one of the world’s most prominent terror groups – the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant –,<sup>3</sup> and the 2015 attacks in Paris, the worst attacks on France’s soil since the Second World War. These terrorist attacks are seen as clearly changing Europe’s refugee policies, and how the arrivals in Europe are perceived. Some have seized on these cases as evidence that migrants and militants can be indistinguishable. The attacks triggered a debate on the possible link between terrorism, immigration and refugee. The aim of the paper is to test the accuracy of that link. In order to engage in the debate, a preliminary and necessary conceptual démarche is to distinguish between the new waves of migrations, and the more ancient waves (1960-1970).

The growing numbers of migrants and asylum seekers fleeing turmoil in Africa and the Middle East poses complex challenges for European policymakers. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, terrorism has become much of a priority for governments in Europe, and the West in general. Migration and asylum policies have largely been the target of an intensified securitisation.

With concerns about Islamic terrorism looming widely across the continent, it remains unclear if political headwinds will facilitate immigration overhaul or the closure of EU borders. Due to its trans-border and trans-national characteristics, international terrorism has come to be seen as increasingly linked to international migration. There is anecdotal evidence that immigration might increase the risk of terrorism, as France’s firm belief that at least one Islamic State assailant may have entered Europe among the wave of Syrian refugees. In 19 December 2016, that assumption was confirmed, demonstrating, to many, the link between the migrant influx and terrorism, and the ease with which asylum-seekers with terrorist or criminal intentions can enter Europe and move freely within it: Anis Amri, a 23-year-old Tunisian and a failed asylum-seeker, drove a lorry into a crowded Christmas market in the heart of Berlin, killing 12 and injuring 56. ISIL released a video of Amri pledging allegiance to the group’s leader.

While several studies suggest that many transnational terrorists are, in fact, migrants to their host country, there is scant rigorous quantitative evidence on the relevance of recent migration dynamics in fostering terrorism. Once again, when addressing the link migrations-Islamic terrorism, one must clearly differentiate between the more recent migratory waves and the second-generation of Arab and Muslim immigrants in Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> A vital difference must be established between the recent European migrant crisis, which began in 2015 when rising numbers of people arrived illegally in the European Union (EU), travelling across the Mediterranean Sea or overland, through Southeast Europe, and Arab and Muslim immigrants who moved to Europe in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980.

<sup>2</sup> The terms migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers will be used interchangeably in this text, reflecting their use in the media and public discourse, although their meaning cannot be conflated. The refugee or asylum status may be granted to people who have been persecuted or fear they will be persecuted on account of race, religion, nationality, and/or membership to a particular social group or political opinion. Asylum seekers are in a country of asylum on a temporary basis, and cannot stay long-term. Only if the asylum application is accepted, are persons granted asylum status, receiving a temporary residence permit and certain entitlements. The terms migration and immigration will also be used in an interchangeable manner throughout this article.

<sup>3</sup> ISIL, also known as Islamic State.

Recently, International Relations scholars have started to look into the relationship between migration and security, that is, states' internal security and migration as a phenomenon affecting international security (Weiner, 1992/93; Guild, 2009). This paper does not have such a broad-based approach, focusing instead on a narrower issue: it will analyse the connection between immigration/migration and terrorism in the literature; secondly, it will review the available evidence on terrorist incidents perpetrated in Europe.<sup>4</sup> The time scope of the research focuses on terrorist incidents since 2014, when ISIL became the most potent terrorist group in the world, until late 2016.

As an extension of this analysis, this paper will also take on another related, crucial question: to what extent may the main terrorist threat to Western countries not actually come from immigrants or refugees, but rather from home-grown extremists, that is, from naturalised citizens, legal residents, and even converts?<sup>5</sup> The 2004 murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, and the July 2005 attacks in London represented a watershed moment in shifting the perception of the threat from global jihadism: it was not carried out by foreigners but, at times, by seemingly well-integrated European-born men of Arab origin. Borrowing the language of current jihadists, and twisting a bit its sense, the main threat may not come from the "far enemy" – immigrants –, but from the "near enemy" within – the radicalised, home-grown terrorists in Western countries. Additionally, it may be relevant to enquire into the appropriateness of the term home-grown to characterise the current wave of jihadist terrorism, as plots have revealed to have a nested character, blending and enmeshing the domestic and international dimensions. While often the cell make-up and the motivations may be local, the inspiration, ideological background, among other factors, may be related to the transnational dimension of current terrorist organisations.

The structure of this paper is as follows: the first section outlines a general picture of the current migration phenomenon in Europe, and the backlash in terms of political debate in major Western countries. Section two deals with the construction of the immigration issue as a security threat. Section three assesses the immigration-terrorism nexus at discourse and policy level following the 9/11. Section four discusses the evidence of whether Islamic terrorism is driven by immigrants or nationals. And the last sections analyse the prevailing trend of home-grown Islamic terrorism in Western countries after 2004, and, in particular in the aftermath of the rise of the foreign fighters' phenomenon.

Due to its trans-border and trans-national characteristics, international terrorism has come to be seen as increasingly linked to international migration. There is anecdotal evidence that immigration might heighten the risk of terrorism. Islamic State militants planned the November 2015 attacks in Paris from Raqqa's stronghold in Syria (AP 2015). The possibility was aired that at least one assailant may have entered Europe among the wave of Syrian refugees. The same group that was involved in the planning and organisation of those attacks, also planned the three 22 March 2016 coordinated suicide bombings occurred in Brussels: two at the Zaventem airport in, and one at Maalbeek metro station in central Brussels.

The number of international migrants - persons living in a country other than where they were born - reached 244 million in 2015 for the world as a whole, a 41 per cent increase compared to 2000, according to new data presented by the United Nations. This figure includes almost 20 million refugees (UN Department of Public Information 2016). Europe is facing the world's biggest refugee crisis since World War II. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), more than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe in 2015 (BBC News 2016), sparking a crisis as countries struggle to cope with the influx, and creating division in the EU over, if, and how best to deal with resettling people. As during previous refugee crises in the 1990s, the impact is concentrated

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<sup>4</sup> In this analysis, failed or thwarted plots are not taken in consideration, but plots where at least one person was injured, are taken into account.

<sup>5</sup> In the context of this paper, home-grown is taken to mean militants who were born and raised in the West: at the very least, it refers to people who lived most of their lives in a Western setting.

in a few countries, with entries being registered mainly via six EU nations: Greece, Bulgaria, Italy, Spain, Malta, and Cyprus. The vast majority arrived by sea, but many also made their way over land through Turkey, using the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes.

On top of that, the Paris (2015), Brussels and Berlin (2016) attacks generated a new wave of dread throughout Europe and beyond, regarding the alleged link between illegal migrants heading to Europe (Reuters 2015b), and a rising threat of Islamist terrorism. A passport found near the body of an ISIL suicide bomber in the 2015 November attacks in Paris, raised concerns that militants may be marching alongside the thousands of asylum seekers flocking into Europe. France's belief that Islamic State militants planned the attacks - and the possibility that at least one assailant may have posed as a Syrian refugee - are fuelling arguments over whether Europe is doing enough to protect itself from terrorists who might infiltrate the thousands of migrants arriving daily from the Middle East and elsewhere. There is no question that, on rare occasions, militants slipped through border controls with migrants. Moroccan national, Abdelmajid Touil - suspected of being involved in the March 2015 terrorist attack against the Bardo museum in Tunis that killed more than 20 tourists -, travelled to Italy a month earlier on a migrants' boat from Libya (Gaigi 2015).

Michele Coninx, the head of the EU's judicial co-operation agency, Eurojust, has warned that Islamic State terrorists are taking advantage of Western sympathy towards would-be asylum-seekers, and are sending trained operatives to Europe, hidden among migrants crossing the Mediterranean. The EU's top prosecutor stated that these smugglings are used to ensure infiltrations by members of the Islamic State, and are used to sometimes finance terrorism (Burman, 2015). Italy's intelligence services stated in their annual report to Parliament that there was a risk of Islamist terrorists infiltrating the flows of asylum seekers trying to enter Europe via the Balkans. It said that no evidence had yet been found of infiltration of migrants and refugees reaching Europe from North Africa, but added that there was a "more concrete" risk with the Balkans route. The report stated that the Balkans was the region of transit favoured by foreign fighters, with over 900 leaving from there, in order to reach theatres of war, and an area of "consolidated extremist situations" (ANSA 2016). Egypt's Ambassador to the United Kingdom (UK), Nasser Kamel, warned there is a new threat from migrants flooding from North Africa, now that ISIL controls the Libyan coastal town Sirte: "ISIS terrorists and bombers are continuously being smuggled across the Med - hidden among migrants" (Tomlinson 2015).

Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, stated there was a clear link between illegal migrants heading to Europe and a rising threat of terrorism, justifying his conservative government's tough anti-immigration stance (Feher 2015). More than 1,450 refugees per 100,000 of Hungary's local population claimed asylum in the first half of 2015. In Italy - a country which has long been on the frontline of mass migration -, the government is also facing greater criticism from anti-immigration parties, such as the far-right Northern League, whose leader, Matteo Salvini, has called for increased restrictions on migrants' entry, and the closure of European borders. Current Prime Minister, Paolo Gentiloni, stated there was a risk that terrorists could be among the waves of thousands of migrants who arrive in Italy: "There are considerable risks of terrorists infiltrating immigration [flows]" (Arun 2015).

The events have conspired to fuel a strain of nationalist parties across the EU that advocate for tougher immigration policies. France's National Front, which has been riding the anti-Islam wave for quite a while, recorded its highest level of votes in late 2015 in regional elections. In the UK, fear of immigration appears to have boosted the Leave campaign, which eventually led to Britain's exit from the EU in the June 2016 referendum. Even German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who initially argued for an open-door admissions policy towards refugees, was eventually forced to retreat, vowing to "drastically decrease" (Reuters 2015a) the number of refugees coming into Germany, re-imposing border controls. That policy is deeply unpopular among the German public and her own party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) (FT View 2015). In the wake of the 2016 Christmas terror attack in Berlin, Interior Minister, Thomas de Maizière, stated he wants to reinforce the central government's authority for deportations and to speed up the creation of a network of federal departure centres to be built in the vicinity of airports to get failed asylum seekers deported more quickly (Hall 2017).

In the U.S., the debate is especially heated among Republicans (Shabad 2015). Congressional Republicans actively worked to try to halt the Obama administration's plan to take in at least 10,000 more Syrian refugees in 2016 (Shabad 2015). After the November Paris terrorist attack, 31 U.S. states refused to accept Syrian refugees, despite the fact that all of the attackers were believed to be EU citizens. Shortly before taking office, U.S. President-elect, Donald Trump described Angela Merkel's stance on refugees a "catastrophic mistake" (DW 2017). He said that other EU countries would follow suit after the UK's Brexit because of immigration and that the consequences of her policy could be seen from the Berlin terror attack (DW 2017).

## Securitisation of Immigration

The securitisation of immigration has become a great concern in Western societies, especially after the 9/11. An emerging body of literature deals with the construction of security in relation to immigration, and with the nature of the framings politicians and the elites use to make issues intelligible as security questions (Huysmans and Buonfino 2008: 32). Analyses of migration and asylum policies have highlighted this intensified securitisation of migration, and especially of asylum seekers since 2001 (Buonfino 2004; Huysmans 2000; Guild 2003; Karyotis 2007). Many studies have explored the security logic of EU policies on migration and asylum; that it is the security rationale that served as the legitimising argument for adopting restrictive measures, by implementing stricter border control measures, and for cutting back the rights of third-country nationals (Huysmans 2000a; Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002; Tsoukala 2005). Systems for monitoring and gathering data on migrants have been harnessed as part of the anti-terrorism strategy of several countries and organisations (Boswell 2007: 606).

Academic contributions in critical security studies have shown that immigration is a threat to European societies, and has become a "new focus of insecurity" (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998; Buonfino 2004: 23-24; Tsoukala 2005). It is less clear however how the connection between terrorism and migration or asylum has been politically sustained, and what this tells us about how the political elite interprets insecurities in relation to migrants. In fact, as Karyotis and Skleparis have underlined, the dominant interpretation of migration as a menace is neither obvious, nor does it occur by default: "It is the outcome of a social construction process, mediated by language and social practices, where actors with vested interests are engaged in recurring framing conflicts about the correct or standard way to define the issue" (2013: 683-4).

Many of the non-militarised threats of the post-Cold War era are recognised as threats to societal norms and stability, by the Copenhagen School (or European School of Security). The work of the Copenhagen School, as far as securitising an issue is concerned, can be complemented by drawing upon the so-called Paris School approach, which may be better suited to analysing the securitisation<sup>6</sup> of asylum and immigration matters.

The Copenhagen School, led by Ole Waever and Barry Buzan, introduced the societal element in the study of security, linked with the concepts of weak and strong state, in a wider frame of security which comprises five "horizontal" aspects – military, political, economic, societal, and ecological. In order to discuss whether current migration policies have securitised migration, it is crucial to understand the construction of the issue specifically as a security concern. Copenhagen School scholars offer a useful mechanism to help understand how migration can be seen as a security threat. According to scholars, through discourse (what they refer to as the speech act), the securitising actor may frame the issue as one that poses "an existential threat" to the referent of security (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998: 24). It is through this process that the issue is moved from the domain of normal politics, "into the

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<sup>6</sup> The idea of securitisation was first articulated by Ole Wæver in the late 1980s (Wæver, 1989), and then further developed by himself in *Securitization and Desecuritization* (1995), and later on in a collaboration with Barry Buzan and Jaap de Wilde, in *Security: a New Framework for Analysis* (1998).

security realm by depicting it as a threat to key values” (Karyotis and Skleparis 2013: 684). The securitising move “takes politics beyond the established rules of the game, and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics” (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998: 23).

According to this current, “Security’ is thus a self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists, but because the issue is presented as such a threat” (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998: 24). Thus, “the actor has claimed the right to handle the issue through extraordinary means, to break the normal political rules of the game” (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998: 4). Besides political leaders and governments, the securitising actors include bureaucrats, lobbyists, and pressure groups (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998: 40).

In relation to international migration, the securitising perception refers to the ways in which members of a polity perceive their cultural, linguistic, religious, or national identity being threatened by immigrants. From this perspective, the national values, traditions and homogeneity of the social fabric of the receiving country are the referent objects under threat (Weiner, 1992-1993:103). Immigrants, whether legal or not, are seen as posing a challenge to the sense of identity of the receiving state, through their different language, culture, identity, or religion (Waever, 1993: 23). The new securitising “discourse consolidates categories of collective identification, thereby helping mobilize support for the relevant political community”, and more leeway for political action by policymakers, to limit and cut back on welfare extended to immigrants (Boswell 2007: 591, Huysmans 1995, 1998, and 2000). It also justifies a range of policies to control migration that would otherwise not have been considered legitimate and acceptable (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998: 24-25).

The concept of securitisation has been further developed by scholars, such as Didier Bigo and Jef Huysmans, who provided an enlargement of the concept, demonstrating how - besides becoming embedded in public discourses - it becomes institutionalised, and dictates bureaucratic practices. As Bigo has pointed out, there is a distinction between the respective levels of political discourse and practice (Bigo, 2002, 2005: 67-8; Huysmans, 2000; Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998). Drawing on the works of French scholars, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, Bigo goes beyond the speech act to stress the institutionalisation of the field of security (see Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998: 27): “This approach conceives that securitisation of immigration emerges not solely from successful speech acts of politicians, but also from a range of administrative practices such as population profiling, risk assessment, statistical calculation, category creation, proactive preparation, and the mobilization and habitus of security professionals” (Bigo 2002), which exert crucial influence over the formation of insecurity domains (Schlantz 2010: 6).

In their analysis of parliamentary debates in the UK in the 2000s - in which politicians related migration or asylum to (counter-)terrorism -, Huysmans and Buonfino concluded that the political discourse “extensively legitimates the need for governing a wide variety of practices and social relations by means of security policy techniques (i.e. surveillance of potentially dangerous people or possible free riders), and security offices (i.e. intelligence and police)” (2008:30). In a context of “unease”, the British political elite “sustains the professional legitimacy of security professionals and an expanding use of security knowledge, skills and technology in a variety of policy areas” (2008:30; Bigo 2002: 63).

Huysmans (2000: 752) has stressed that immigration has not always been perceived as a threat in Europe. In the post-war decades, immigration was actually encouraged in many European countries due to the need to secure an adequate and appropriate supply of foreign workers for the post-war reconstruction and industrialisation of the continent. However, when immigrant settlement became visible, the identification of immigration with a physical and existential threat became evident. In the 1970s, European countries which were a major destination of immigrants, started reasserting state control and introducing restrictive policies due to changes in the labour market, and in order to protect the social and economic rights of their domestic workforce (Huysman 2000: 754). With the kick-off of

the Europeanisation of migration policies in the 1980s, and the development of the internal market in the 1990s, immigration became increasingly perceived by the public as “a danger to public order, cultural identity, and domestic and labour market stability” (Huysman 2000:752).

Huysman demonstrates how migration policies within the EU were initiated on intergovernmental and bureaucratic fora (such as the Schengen Group), and were, in the 1980s, gradually incorporated into the constitutional structure of the EU following the Single European Act (1986), and the 1992 Treaty on European Union, which introduced a Third Pillar on Justice and Home Affairs (Huysmans 2000: 755). The Schengen Accords (1985), and the 1990 Convention Implementing the Schengen Agreement (CISA) - which gave European citizens and legal residents in the signatory states the right to free movement across borders -, shifted security debates on migration to the EU’s external borders. CISA explicitly connected immigration and asylum with terrorism and transnational crime (Huysmans 2000: 756; Bigo 1996).

The institutional discourse increasingly framed immigration as an issue of economic, social, and cultural (in)security. The growing politicisation of migration, and the linkage between migration and internal security sustained the emergence of a security continuum, in which migration was merged with cross-border criminality, such as drug trafficking and terrorism. The 1999 Tampere European Council approved the first five-year agenda to start the harmonisation of immigrant and asylum policies. The agenda, together with the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, can be considered as the basis of a common immigration policy (Pinyiol-Jiménez 2012). They consolidated the “intergovernmental securitarian legacy at the EU level” (Schlentz, 2010: 10), codifying the asylum-migration-security nexus in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

The various policy documents institutionalised the link between asylum, immigration, and security matters (Lavenex 2001: 136). Thus, the security continuum was solidified, that is, “an institutionalized mode of policy-making that allows the transfer of the security connotations of terrorism, drugs traffic and money-laundering, to the area of migration” (Huysmans 2000: 760).

The EU’s securitarian mind-set increasingly focused on creating flanking measures, such as heightened external border controls, and cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs matters, deemed necessary by the perceived security deficit stemming from the abolition of internal border checks (Schlentz 2010). In the wake of the September 11 2001 attacks against the U.S., terrorism has become a high priority for governments around the world. The linkage of immigration with organised crime and terrorism, became increasingly embedded in some conceptions within institutional discourse, the Media, and society as a whole. This idea was reinforced by the fact that the 9/11 was carried out by terrorist operatives from Saudi Arabia and the Middle East.

### **The Immigration-Terrorism Nexus Following The 9/11**

The securitisation of migration, and, in particular, its linkage to terrorism, has been firmly established in the discourse and in policymaking practice, and has been extensively researched and analysed by academics. The question that arises is whether the 9/11 has changed that trend: to what extent did that shocking event reinforce the migration-terrorism nexus, and affect the counter-terrorism agenda in order to justify strengthening anti-immigration measures? In the case of the United States, the link provided by the 9/11 attacks was quite obvious, as all of the attackers were Muslim, foreigners, and were in the U.S. on temporary visas (Gerstle 2004: 2).

Whether a new security agenda actually emerged in the wake of the 9/11, which translated into a new immigration paradigm, has since been debated. Some scholarly literature has explored the linkage between migration and security in order to identify the intensification of the ‘threat’, and the measures and public policy instruments related to that framing. In the case of the EU, several scholars came to the conclusion that the discourses that link migration to security have been bolstered in the aftermath

of the September 11 events. There are two currents of opinion regarding the debate on the framing of immigration within the discourse on security issues.

Huysmans (2000a: 752) observed that at EU level, immigration “has been securitized.” Echoing Huysmans, Kicinger (2004: 2-3) cited social stability, demographic concerns, risks to cultural identity, increasing levels of crime, and the threat to a generous and universal welfare state, as the core features of the immigration-security nexus.

Many studies have explored the security logic of EU policies on migration and asylum. To be sure, the political aftershocks following the events of 9/11 in the U.S., the Madrid bombings of 2004, and the 2005 London terrorist attacks have accelerated the securitisation of immigration (Alexseev 2005: 37). In looking into the migration-security nexus within the political, policy-making, and legislative domain, Schlentz concluded that the 9/11 resulted in an increased securitisation of asylum and immigration (Schlentz, 2010). Firstly, migration was conceptualised as a threat, and a possible link between asylum seekers and terrorism was contemplated. Explicit requests for the provision of sufficient safeguards against abuse of refugee status by potential perpetrators were made, denoting a qualitative change in the securitisation of asylum and immigration. Secondly, by being officially established that asylum is an unlikely means of entry for terrorists, and that the safeguards would rather need to be escalated against illegal immigration, a huge leap was made in the fight against the latter. The fight against illegal immigration was transformed into the central tenet of migration management in the EU, and became a top priority on the political agenda of the EU (2010: 29).

Pinyiol-Jiménez asserts that, at EU level, the nexus has been reinforced particularly after the 9/11, and that the approach adopted to tackle that challenge “initially focused on a military-based security approach” (2012: 2012): “In that sense, readmission agreements and fighting against irregular migration have been instruments developed further than others, such [as] visa facilitation or the promotion of legal migration channels” (2011: 2012). Saux has demonstrated how in Spain - following the 9/11 and 11-M attacks - the main newspapers show that immigration and crime are strongly connected (Saux 2007: 62).

An opposing current challenges this view, and suggests that ‘9/11 has by no means created a new security agenda’ (Bigo 2005: 72); that the security framing of asylum and immigration policies adopted thereafter followed the pattern of anti-immigrant rhetoric, and linkage with crime and terrorism, which had developed from the 1980s onwards (Bigo 2005: 72; Huysmans 2000; Huysmans 2006: 1), and that the 9/11 did not result in greater securitisation of asylum and immigration (Boswell 2007). Karyotis analysed the speech and practice of EU internal security, arguing that as far as migration policies, the 9/11 did not initiate the securitising trend, but continued the “dynamics that were already deeply rooted in the emerging European internal security regime” (2007: 1). However, there has been little systematic or rigorous analysis to decide between these competing claims.

Boswell argues that public debate on migration has remained relatively isolated from the anti-terrorist agenda, and “the main shift has occurred not so much in the area of migration control, where priorities and practices have by and large continued to develop along the lines already established before 9/11” (Boswell 2007: 601). In addition, she noted, migration was linked to terrorism only to the extent that it enabled the use of migration control policy tools for countering terrorism: “the linkage is evident in terms of the utilization of migration policy tools by agencies involved in counter-terrorism activities. Policy instruments such as databases providing information on foreign nationals, passenger information supplied by airline carriers, and checks at international borders have been harnessed in order to enhance the surveillance of suspected or potential terrorists” (Boswell 2007: 601).

The construction of the external dimension of an area of freedom, security and justice, further bolstered the ‘security continuum’ – as has been explained earlier -, a shared understanding of the complex of threats to the security of the EU. The ‘security continuum’, for example, makes a clear connection between illegal immigration, terrorism, asylum, crime rate, and ethnic clashes. It also

underlines the common, shared nature of these threats to the EU, and their external character in relation to the member states (Bigo 1996: 258—259).

Schlentz offers a detailed analysis of the effects of the 9/11 on securitisation of asylum, and immigration in the EU from 1992 to 2008 at supranational level, and sets forth two main claims. Firstly, he argues that the 9/11 did matter, for it reinforced the securitisation of asylum and immigration. Secondly, he contends that the escalated securitisation highlighted both qualitative and quantitative changes. The qualitative changes can be ascertained in the political discourse, in the output of asylum and immigration related policies and legislation, in the progressive tightening of borders, and in the multiplication of technological fixes and surveillance mechanisms (Schlentz 2010: 4). The quantitative changes can be disclosed “in the development of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (Bigo 2008: 91), in the establishment of a permanent state of emergency, in the amended use of and access to the technological fixes, elaboration of surveillance mechanisms, amended protection provisions, the highly politicized role of immigration in the external affairs of the EU, heavily restricted legal entry options, and the new salience of the fight against illegal immigration” (Schlentz 2010: 31).

Others have shown how the claim that immigration has been securitised post-9/11 falls short. By applying quantitative methods to measure the intensity of the security framing in EU legislation on immigration, Baele and Sterck conclude that Securitisation Theory scholars have not yet firmly established whether immigration has indeed been securitised at EU level. In fact, the claim may be overrated, as the securitisation of migration by the EU has been taken for granted. The evidence generated by the authors points in an altogether different direction: “while security concerns permeate from all immigration-related samples, immigration is far from being fully framed as a security issue” (2014: 1132). On a more nuanced analysis, the authors noticed “the saliency of the security framing in the European legislation is never sky high and varies widely across subfields”, such as asylum, external borders, illegal immigration, and legal immigration (2014: 1133). In fact, only “illegal immigration heavily relies on a security repertoire, much more than other immigration subfields” (2014: 1132).

Boswell showed in her 2007 paper that the securitisation of migration policies has not increased after 9/11, and argued that politicians have failed to use immigration as a political vehicle in the terrorism debate. The securitisation theory has thus failed to explain why the media and elites did not actually “mobilize support and legitimize more extensive powers for migrations control” (2007: 598). That is explained because of the fact that: (1) institutional interests and cognitive factors condition processes of securitisation, and its articulation at policy-making and administrative levels; (2) the profile of international terrorists that emerged did not match that of immigrants. What undermined the immigration-terrorism linkage even more, was the fact that in the post-9/11 years, European Muslim nationals were involved in terrorist attacks (2007: 598). By analysing parliamentary debates in the UK after September 11, Huysmans and Buonfino (2008) have shown that it is difficult in public discourse to maintain the linkage between terrorism and migration. It does not mean that migration and asylum are not securitised: asylum and immigration in general actually “featured significantly in the political framing of the problem of terrorism” (2008: 768). While it reveals that they are part of a security discourse in the public realm, the connection “is more multifaceted than simply suggesting that terrorism plays a major role in structuring these framings” (Huysmans and Buonfino, 2008: 767).

As shown by Huysmans and Buonfino (2008), in parliamentary debates in the UK after the 9/11, asylum and immigration in general “featured significantly in the political framing of the problem of terrorism” (2008: 7). The authors argue that there are at least two ways through which migration and asylum can be politically embedded within security debates (2008: 7). The first is what the authors refer to as the “politics of exception”, which, because it focuses on the state of threat for the life of the nation, it legitimises exceptional policies, justified by this menace. The second is labelled as ‘the politics of unease’. It deals with the sense of insecurity in a more diffuse way. It does not focus on existential threats to the state, but “connects a variety of different policy areas such as welfare



provisions, counter-terrorism, and illegal immigration through the discussion of policing technologies. It consists in integrating in the political debate (and in its opposition), a political discourse of safety and unease that links various forms of deviant and illegal practices to support the introduction of governmental technologies, such as identity cards” (2008:5). By gleaning from parliamentary debates, the only instance of the framing of a clear nexus between migration and asylum on the one hand, and terrorism on the other, became institutionalised in the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act of 2001 (ATCS Act), the central piece of legislation that was introduced in response to the 9/11 events (Bosworth and Guild 2008: 708; Huysmans and Buonfino 2008: 775). Terrorism was framed as being part of a problem of controlling foreigners entering British territory, and those already established in the UK (2008: 768), so immigration became a policy instrument in the fight against terrorism.

Eventually, criticisms about the key part of the ATCS Act 2001 argued for a category of terrorist threats not based on nationality criteria, namely because of the episode of the ‘British shoe bomber’, and arrests at the time elicited explicitly to possible threats from home-grown terrorists.

Boswell also strikingly notes that while securitisation might be applied to legitimise the implementation of security practices, public legitimation is not always a precondition, since there is substantial scope for action within administrative agencies, independent of public scrutiny (Boswell 2007: 593). According to that scholar, the terror attacks of Madrid and London had a different effect in Europe, from the 9/11 in the U.S. (Boswell 2007: 606). In line with her research, one can ascertain that the securitisation of immigration gained momentum initially in speech acts in the political sphere, but effectively proved difficult to sustain on a policy level (Boswell 2007: 606). The reasoning of this is said to stem from cognitive constraints, as well as from diverging political interests, both at the political and administrative levels (Boswell 2007:606).

Huysman and Buonfino point out several factors that explain why the political elite across the board largely refrained from politically instrumentalising the nexus between migration and terrorism: a concern with possible effects on community relations and cohesion, possible undermining effects on political legitimacy of populist politicisations of migration, reluctance of playing too much into the cards of the far-right British National Party, possible spill-over into claims for restraining economic immigration, and the relatively restrained nature of parliamentary debates (2008: 4).

In the case of the United States, once it became clear that the nineteen 9/11 hijackers were foreigners, there was an upsurge in criticisms to the lax immigration system, and demands to reinforce the border security functions of the Naturalization and Immigration Service. Those seeking refuge in the U.S. have been profoundly affected by the many new immigration policies and practices, and were swept by the numerous immigration enforcement actions that were launched in the months and years following the attacks. Congress passed the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which brought together some of or all twenty-two federal agencies into a new Cabinet agency - the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The responsibility for asylum matters, along with other immigration functions, was transferred from the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), to the DHS. Within a week, the Immigration and Nationality Act, increased the number of hours that the INS could detain someone without charge from twenty-four to forty-eight hours. The regulation also authorised detention without charge for an unspecified additional “reasonable period of time”, in the event of an “emergency or other extraordinary circumstance” (Acer 2004: 1366).<sup>7</sup> The Patriot Act also gave U.S. immigration authorities unprecedented power to detain non-citizens who are designated as terrorist threats by the Attorney General.

As the origins of the terrorism threat are largely unknown or unpredictable in nature, this uncertainty has allowed for the implementation of wider and more comprehensive preventative approaches, especially in the area of immigration (Coleman 2007:50-51).

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<sup>7</sup> Unlike the Patriot Act's detention provision, this authority is not limited to detainees suspected of terrorist activity.

## Immigration and Islamic Terrorism Post-9/11: A Blownout Connection?

The reform of the security agenda made assumptions about the inherently foreign nature of the terrorist (and thus immigrant) threat; which assumptions were thrown into disarray in the aftermath of the 2005 London bombings, since most of the four bombers were British citizens, and had all been raised in the country. In the search for common underlying features that explain why individuals become involved in jihadi terrorism, researchers have generally investigated variables such as social background, psychological characteristics and circumstances of joining the jihad (like age, place of recruitment, faith, employment, relative deprivation, friendship, kinship, discipleship, worship) (see Bakker, 2006; Sageman, 2004). However, and until very recently, no thorough quantitative study had been conducted (Spencer 2008) highlighting the correlation between immigration, and domestic and transnational terrorism. There was no reliable basis to come to any conclusions on the amount of immigrants versus citizens in terms of conduction of acts of Islamic-inspired terrorism. There was no rigorous evidence that could inform this debate. Unfortunately, evidence-based studies on jihadi terrorism in Europe and in the West, in general, still have not been able to explore and unpack number of angles of analysis. This type of research is, however, of vital importance to be able to track trends, and pinpoint developments with regard to terrorism in Western countries.

One exception is the detailed study by Robert S. Leiken of 212 known terrorists, arrested or killed in North America and Europe (2004). He concluded that global terrorism and immigration are clearly entwined or linked, and, more forcefully, that nearly all terrorists in the West have been immigrants (Leiken 2004: 24). In a later study, Leiken and Brooke convincingly assert that “terrorists and immigration networks display some degree of overlap” (Leiken 2014: 509). Eighty-seven per cent of the terrorists analysed by the authors were immigrants, thus enabling them to conclude that “[T]hough most immigrants are not terrorists, most terrorists are immigrants” (2006: 504). The authors adduced all terrorists were visitors, or first- or second-generation immigrants.

In his piece, *Bearers of Global Jihad? Immigration and National Security after 9/11*, Leiken posits that terrorists take advantage of generous Western immigration policies to infiltrate the country in order to recruit new members, create logistical facilities to aid their cause, and form sleeper cells to conduct terrorist attacks. More recently, a research study by Leiken and Brooke (2006) has reinforced this idea by examining 373 terrorists and enabling the authors to conclude that there is a “close link between immigration and terrorism”.

The study conducted by Leiken and Brooke has some fundamental flaws. Because it cannot account for the whole universe of migrants, it is not representative enough of the migrant population; not being representative, wide generalisations may be inaccurate. For example, the selection of dependent and independent variables in their research is scientifically questionable, if not biased. They did not scrutinise immigration flows as a whole, but positively selected only cases where terrorists abused immigration (Spencer, 2008, 7). One thing is posing - such as several studies suggest - that many transnational terrorists are, in fact, migrants to their host country, quite another is stating that “immigration actually induces terrorism” (Bove and Böhmelt 2016: 5).

The analysis conducted by Bandyopadhyay and Sandler (2014) tries to formally connect immigration policy in a developed (home) country, to the supply of terrorism from a developing (foreign) country, but the study is not far-reaching because it concentrates on a narrowly-defined dependent variable (2014: 112). Specifically, it looks at how countermeasures aimed at the skilled and unskilled immigrants by a targeted developed foreign country can affect the strategic calculus on attacks, leading terrorists to choose between domestic or foreign targets.

Kephart’s report for the Centre for Immigration Studies shows weaknesses in the U.S. immigration system, plus the lack of adequate intelligence, have facilitated the entry and embedding of numerous terrorists and their supporters both prior to and since 9/11. The study dissects the immigration histories of 94 terrorists who operated in the U.S. between the early 1990s and 2004, including six of the September 11 hijackers. It demonstrates operatives needed the guise of legal immigration status to

support them, even if committing immigration fraud. No matter what the terrorist organisation or mission, the study highlights that terrorists will keep trying to come to developed countries to carry out their operations; and their instructions will keep including immigration-related plans.

The findings highlight the dangers of the U.S. lax immigration system, not just in terms of who is allowed in, but also how terrorists, once in the country, used weaknesses in the system to remain there, and acquire immigration benefits. The report makes clear that the strict enforcement of immigration law is an integral part of counterterror efforts to prevent attacks.

The fact is that until 9/11, most of the terrorist incidents were perpetrated by regional jihadist groups operating primarily from Muslim countries. Before the Madrid and London attacks, the terrorist threat was, to a large extent, perceived to stem from jihadists coming from abroad, and Europe was seen mostly as “a place for recruitment, logistics and finance – not a place for Jihad” (Precht 2007: 19; AIVD 2005: 17). During this period, most other European countries also realised the steady emergence of the phenomenon of radicalisation among its citizens. To be sure, the nature and complexity of the Islamist terrorist threat has evolved since 9/11, from a largely external threat by international terrorist organisations to, a rising element of home-grown terrorism. The Islamist terrorist threat against the West ‘has evolved from a small, exogenous threat to a significant and structural exogenous and endogenous threat for modern western societies’ (AIVD 2006: 15). Islamic terrorist attacks are increasingly taking place cross-borders in Europe, because Islamic fighters are native-borns and have organised their activities in the West, so the threat emanates from there (AIVD 2002: 21; Cesari 2012: 430-449). As Roy plainly laid it out, Islamic radicals in western Europe ‘speak European languages as their first language and often are European citizens’ (Roy 2007: 78; Roy 2004; Wiegel 2016).

In the ensuing years, European authorities began to witness the growth of small clusters of home-grown jihadist networks (Vidino 2011: 4). As Leiken emphasised in his comparative study, alienated Muslim communities in Europe increasingly became a much more fertile ground for recruitment by radical groups, than Muslim communities in the U.S. (Leiken 2004). Through his case study, Leiken noticed the difference in the level of integration and assimilation between U.S. and French Islamist sleeper cells. Leiken’s analysis resulted in a distinction between two profiles of candidates of Muslim terrorists: the outsiders, and the insiders. The outsiders, are the aliens, foreign dissidents, students or asylum seekers, some of whom have sought refuge from anti-Islamic crackdowns in Arab countries. The insiders, are citizens from socially or economically deprived sections of second-generation immigrants from Muslim countries (Leiken 2004; Taarnby 2005: 32). To those two types, Taarnby in 2005 added a third type: that of the European convert (Taarnby 2005: 36; AIVD 2004).

As regards Europe, the 2006 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) highlighted the threat from home-grown cells without any direct links to al-Qaeda: “We assess that the operational threat from self-radicalised cells will grow in importance... The Jihadists regard Europe as an important venue for attacking Western interests. Extremist networks inside the extensive Muslim Diasporas in Europe facilitate recruitment and staging for urban attacks, as illustrated by the 2004 Madrid and 2005 London bombings” (quoted in Precht 2007:14).

The idea of people who were born and brought up in Europe, being willing to carry out attacks in their home country, first really dawned with the murder of Theo Van Gogh in The Netherlands, in 2004, and the London bombings in 2005. According to the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), home-grown terrorism and the so-called jihadist threat were beginning to form as early as 2002. The Service found that there “were indications that radical Muslims brought up in Europe were beginning to regard Europe as a frontline for Jihad, and that they might proceed to perpetrating localised terrorist attacks” (quoted in Precht 2007: 18). Since 2003, the AIVD consistently observed that “[G]rass root radicalisation, eventually leading to home grown terrorism, was gaining ground” (quoted in Precht 2007: 18).

In 2004, the British Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) stated that the UK would face a continuous threat from home-grown terrorism over the next five years. However, as Precht underlines, it is particularly worth noting that the judgements of the British JIC two years earlier did not consider home-grown terrorism to be probable, compared to terrorist attacks carried out by foreigners: “attacks against the UK were felt more likely... to be conducted by terrorists entering from abroad than by British nationals resident in the UK” (quoted in Precht 2007: 18). This assessment had clearly changed in early 2004.

In fact, an analysis of the socioeconomic background of the four plotters of the London 2005 terrorist attack, by the House of Commons, reports evidence that three out of four terrorists were second generation British citizens, and the fourth had been born in Jamaica. The British citizenship of the bombers, and the lack of strong ties between them and an international terrorist group, illustrated the potential threat of “home-grown” terrorists as perpetrators of future attacks (House of Commons 2006: 13; Bonino 2012: 13; U.S. Department of Justice/FBI n.d.: 23).

Silber and Bhatt’s study about the radicalisation process in the West, provides a clear profile of alleged Islamic terrorist “candidates”, according to the profiles of terrorists linked to five main Western-based plots and groups: the 2004 Madrid attack; the 2005 London attack; the Amsterdam’s Hofstad Group; the Toronto 18 Case; and the Australia’s Operation Pendennis (Silber and Bhatt: 2007). In terms of ethnic background, the authors have identified a mixed one, but often the linking thread is the fact that they are second/third generation in the hosting country (Silber and Bhatt 2007: 22). It is also an inescapable fact that the majority of those suspected of terrorist activities are Muslim, which creates the danger - in terms of counter-terrorist response - of turning them into the suspect community.

In general, authors have been able to assess that in the countries most affected by conspiracies, cells are usually composed of mainly second and third generation immigrants and converts (Karagiannis 2012), in the context of family and friendly relationships, and work or social-religious activities.

In his 2006 study, Bakker examined 242 individuals and networks involved in 31 cases of jihadi terrorism in Europe for the period between September 2001 and September 2006. Analysing the family origin, most persons in the case study are of non-European extraction, and are first, second or third generation migrants. In fact, very few terrorists’ families originate from Europe (17 persons) (2006: 36). If anything, one of the most striking similarities between the networks include the region of family origin. Almost all networks have roots in the Arab-speaking world, especially in the Maghreb countries. Looking at similarities within networks, one can note that indeed networks often show homogeneity as far as the geographical roots of terrorists (Bakker 2006, 34).

In the most detailed study on migrant inflows and terrorist attacks,<sup>8</sup> Bove and Böhmelt (2016) showed that terror attacks can be linked to migration from terror-prone states. They ascertained that the countries with the highest level of exposure to the spread of terrorism are those with many immigrants from nations with a high number of terrorism incidents, such as India, Pakistan, Morocco, Western Sahara, and Tunisia, but only for a very small minority of migrants. These authors also verified that, on the whole, more migration could create a decrease in the number of terrorist attacks, not an increase, because it improves peoples’ living conditions.

In the case of the U.S., after 2006, in the long shadow cast by the Madrid 2004 and London 2005 attacks, there was a perceptible shift in the characterisation of the threat posed by American Muslims (Brooks 2011: 7).

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<sup>8</sup> Based on the analysis of terrorism in and migration flows between 145 countries, between 1970 and 2000.

## **Home-grown Terrorism Fostered by Foreign Fighters**

Since 2001, the number of surveillance actions put in place by the authorities led to the closure and disruption of many traditional structures and spaces for jihadist message dissemination, recruitment, and for Jihadism socialisation. Even the European Muslim communities themselves have developed greater resistance to the phenomenon, as a result of greater awareness of the extremist narratives. The increased costs associated with adhesion to and formation of radical cells and mobilisation for activism, have rendered them high-risk activities.

The threat of home-grown terrorism and radicalisation appears to have developed more clearly over the period 2001-2005 (Bakker 2006: 19). As a result of increasing surveillance and restrictions put in place by authorities, the patterns of recruitment and the training of cells and groups, which started happening underground, have changed. Discussions and meetings between elements that are under a radicalisation or mobilisation process for Jihadism, are now held in private homes, in gyms or other sports venues, or even in unsuspected public places. The more hostile environment in which these groups find themselves in, also contributes to the migration of some of their activities to the Internet, leading to the creation of virtual communities (AIVD 2007: 18-19), and fostering ties between local sympathisers and groups with the global movement.

From 2004, as a result of the fragmentation of the jihadist scene in Europe, and the disruption of the networks that channelled volunteers to Afghanistan and Iraq, there is a tendency for the emergence of smaller, independent cells, with more flexible structures (Taarnby 2005: 17-18; Sageman 2004). Joining the movement has become a bottom-up process, with the initiative stemming from the individuals themselves (Taarnby 2005: 23). Operational independence is accounted for by counter-terror efforts, which render it difficult to establish contact with al-Qaeda or other established organisations (Vidino 2014, 20).

In this context, Marc Sageman coined the term “leaderless jihad”, to describe the process that gives rise to small, local, self-organised and self-radicalised groups, connected via the Internet to a dispersed global network (Sageman 2008: 125-146). According to this theory, the main threat in Europe does not come from an organisation that monitors and provides guidance on when and how to act, but from a set of informal local groups that conceive and execute operations on their own initiative, without any external interference, and in the name of an extremist ideology, catering for the means to accomplish their goals. Thus, plots that used to be directed by an overseas organisation (leader-led), now have a predominately leaderless and domestic pattern.

This phenomenon is intimately linked to another trend, conventionally called domestic radicalism and terrorism. As stated earlier, it tends to involve national citizens or converts in conspiracies to attack their home countries. It has eventually dominated much of the academic discourse on radicalisation in the past decade (Precht 2007; Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman 2009; Bjelopera and Randol 2010; Silber and Bhatt 2007; Veldhuis and Staun 2009; Wilner and Dubouloz 2010: 33-51). This notion implies the absence of any guidance, communication or logistic support from outside groups. It roughly corresponds to the notion of “decentralized jihad” which was theorised by the Syrian jihadist, Abu Musab al-Suri (Nesser 2016: 56; Lia 2006: 3; Cruickshank and Ali 2007: 8), and put into practice with the creation in 2009 of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), under the direction of Anwar al-Awlaki (al-Awlaki, und.; al-Wahayshi 2010: 17).

However, and not intending to invalidate Sageman’s theory, the evidence collected so far indicates that the reality is far more complex. And although there are conspiracies which are planned on a completely independent basis, and whose cells fit the definition of Sageman, as investigations have revealed in a few cases, it has become clear that this phenomenon is far more complex than the early definition suggested. It is now clear in Europe that individuals and cells with some kind of connection (past or present) to jihadist organisations in other parts of the world, coexist with independent cells and lone actors who only share to different degrees the spirit of global jihad. Hoffman has strenuously held that (2014: 193) that the “fashionable contention” of assuming that the home-grown threat has

superseded the threat posed by al-Qaeda, does not hold up against reality, and that the evidence, since the 2005 London attacks, points exactly in the opposite direction: “that al-Qaeda ... has been actively planning, supporting and directing terrorist attacks on a global canvas since at least 2004” (Hoffman 2014, 193 and Hoffman, 2008). In the same vein, and following an initial predominance of the home-grown thesis, it has been demonstrated that the Madrid and London bombings had substantial al-Qaeda involvement (Reinares 2016: 29, 38; Hoffman 2016: 193; Celso 2014: 82).<sup>9</sup> Cruickshank has also concluded that, until 2014, the most dangerous plots which have have orchestrated have connections to al-Qaeda (Cruickshank 2014). In his 2016 book on Islamist terrorism in Europe, Nesser acknowledges that, although the most significant change in tactics in the 2008-2013 period was “the rise in single-actor plots” (Nesser 2016: 59), most of the conspiracies involve al-Qaeda (in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region or Yemen) and/or its affiliates.<sup>10</sup>

As far as ISIL is concerned, a plausible scenario is that “jihadist wannabes” and home-grown networks manage to establish some sort of contact with jihadist organisations abroad or, link up to them simply by swearing allegiance to ISIL and its leader. In the case of this organisation, terrorists may act under direct orders from the Islamic State (such as the November 2015 Paris attacks), or just seek publicity and the group’s approval for a personal act of hate (most of the other cases). The public oath is about the only requirement that ISIL imposes on sympathisers who wish to carry out acts of terror on its behalf: “Influencing distant attackers to pledge allegiance to the Islamic State and then carry out mass murder has become a core part of the group’s propaganda over the past two years. It is a purposeful blurring of the line between operations that are planned and carried out by the terror group’s core fighters and those carried out by its sympathizers” (Callimachijune 2016).

The November 2015 Paris attacks reportedly involved a cell of French nationals affiliated with ISIL in Syria, intent on carrying out a terrorist campaign in France. They remotely recruited and assisted their own acquaintances in France and Belgium to carry out attacks. The ringmaster was in Syria. The assets were local residents, but came from Syria. In other words, and, as Jenkins points out, it was not solely a matter of home-grown terrorists, returning fighters, or direction from fellow nationals abroad, but a combination of all three (Jenkins 2015: 4-5).

Most networks and cells that have been broken up are composed of individuals who value organisational links, and to whom ideological issues are important factors, leading them to seek participation in foreign conflicts, get training, and receive guidance from abroad; but also by individuals that devalue such factors or who have limitations that prevent them from treading the same path.

A case in point is the Hofstad group, considered by Vidino as “the new face of terrorist networks in Europe” (Vidino 2007). Inspired by Salafi jihadism, this group was mainly composed by Dutch descendants of 1960s immigrants from Morocco, most of whom had been exposed to episodes of racism and xenophobia, and some affected by deep personal crises. Disillusioned with life in the Netherlands, those individuals established a connection between the way Muslims were treated by Dutch society and international issues, such as the invasion of Iraq and the foreign policy of their home governments (Nesser 2005; Peters 2008: 145-159; Precht 2007: 50-52).

In response to the threat of "Islamic" terrorism, European states have intensified their security and anti-terrorism laws, while placing further restrictions on immigration. Nevertheless, while much closer attention is now paid to religious and political extremism, foreign policies keep emphasising border control as though the primary risks emanate from abroad. With the death of Osama bin Laden in 2011, the core al-Qaeda organisation has been significantly depleted. However, the danger from so-called

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<sup>9</sup> Beatrice de Graaf also states that the Hofstad group also emerged and operated connected to the international jihad and was not entirely home-grown (2014, 123).

<sup>10</sup> Thirty-eighty percent of jihadi terrorist incidents, as compared to the period before 2008, when only 12 percent of jihadi terrorist acts were of bottom-up “solo terrorists” (Nesser 2016: 59).

home-grown terrorism may yet be on the rise, fuelled by foreign nationals returning from key international theatres of war, such as Syria/Iraq. This trend is in continuity with the jihad dynamics noted in Europe fuelled by the Afghan-Arab wars (Nesser 2016: 288).

Home-grown terrorism has evolved from a peripheral issue to the increasingly terror threat, particularly in Europe. Since 2014, plots against European targets have spiked, involving a wide of attack modalities, weapons, and targets. Most involved single actors, acting on inspiration from ISIL and claiming to act on behalf of the group. On 24 May 2014, French-born of Algerian descent, Mehdi Nemmouche stormed the Jewish museum in Brussels and opened fire on visitors, killing four. Nemmouche was the first European volunteer in the Syrian war, fighting for the Islamic State in 2012-2013, who committed attacks upon returning to Europe (Mulholland 2014).

The January 2015 attack in Paris, that targeted the office of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, and the subsequent related incidents in the following days, involved two Parisian-born brothers, Said and Chérif Kouachi (aged 34 and 32), with ties to al-Qaeda in Yemen. Twelve people in total died in the attacks. One police officer died in a manhunt for the brothers. In a separate but related incident, the childhood friend of the Kouachi brothers, the 32-year-old French-Malian citizen, Amedy Coulibaly, raided a Jewish supermarket in Vincennes, killing four hostages after pledging allegiance to ISIL.

The eight people officially named in connection with the November 2015 series of coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris - which murdered 130 people in multiple gun and suicide bomb attacks in the French capital -, were all European citizens, with European passports, allowing them to move in and out of Europe with a high degree of freedom.

One of the novelties of the current jihadist phase in Europe, is the growing number of European citizens or residents, of Muslim background, who went to conflict zones in Syria and Iraq to fight. The increased interest around the foreign fighters issue intensified from 2013 onwards, due to the number of European nationals involved. This has resulted in heightened academic interest on this issue (Barrett 2014; Briggs and Frenett 2014; Zelin 2013a, 2013c, Hegghammer and Nesser 2015).

Many of these studies focus on the motivations that lead individuals to participate in conflicts outside their country of origin or residence, and, especially, on the potential threat that the return of these could play in their countries, and in the most appropriate way to deal with the phenomenon. Authors such as Neumann, Hegghammer, Bakker and Zelin, as well as various government agencies and independent institutes, have monitored the movement of Europeans to those territories, producing some hypotheses on the possible impact of the foreign fighters' return to Europe. The existing body of literature on the subject has increased, and is mainly centered on the formulation of containment policies of the threat (Neumann, Carter, and Maher 2014; Hegghammer 2013b; Bakker, Paulussen, and Entenmann 2013; Zelin 2013).

Security services have become increasingly more concerned about the potential danger such trained militants might pose if and when they return to Europe. The latest EUROPOL report on terrorism in Europe underlines the threat from Islamic radicalisation, as evidenced by a number of completed attacks committed in the EU throughout 2015 (2015: 6). Among the approximate 5,000 foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, 3,700 individuals are from Western Europe. The biggest number of EU foreign fighters comes from just four countries: about 1,800 individuals from France (as of October 2015), another 760 fighters from the UK, and 760 from Germany (as of November 2015), along with 470 from Belgium (as of October 2015) (The Soufan Group 2015; AFP 2015; Teffer 2015).

Thus, current data supports the importance of distinguishing between those seeking to attend training camps for the acquisition of military skills, and individuals participating in insurgencies. The first, show greater willingness to perpetrate attacks, after returning to the West (Mendelsohn 2011: 193); the latter, which may follow such a path, have the original intention to fight against a defined enemy, whether an external occupier of Muslim lands or an apostate regime. The training camps are

used not only to acquire technical and combat skills, but are also useful to forge social relationships between individuals, and instil in them a sense of obligation and mission, which can be important explanatory factors for greater activism at domestic level (Neumann and Evans 2014: 68-71).

Although the motivations of those participating in conflict may differ, the trips to designated jihad theatres - an initiative that, as a rule, stems from the aspiring jihadist -, may deepen the process of radicalisation through contact with other individuals, physical isolation from the rest of the world, and the creation of a new identity. Combat experience and international paramilitary training do not inevitably transform an individual terrorist, since, upon returning to the country of origin, the aspiring jihadist can follow multiple paths: abandon militancy, engage in radicalising others, recruit new elements to move or transform themselves in terrorists engaging in acts of violence within their countries.<sup>11</sup> Nesser's 2016 study concludes that people with foreign fighter experience play a crucial role in terrorist cells: "They functioned as entrepreneurs who built cells, led them and linked them to militant networks internationally" (2016: 66).

There are also concerns about "lone wolf" attacks, from those who may not have travelled abroad, but that have been inspired by Islamist extremist propaganda (EUROPOL, 2015: 6). EUROPOL predicts that European-based individuals and networks - affiliated with al-Qaeda or ISIL - are more likely to engage in pragmatic collaboration where deemed necessary back on home soil (EUROPOL 2015: 6). The tendency for home-grown groups to join together under the banner of "global Jihad", inspired by the variety of international terrorist groups, is likely to continue (EUROPOL 2015: 6).

Jihadi aspirants were inspired by calls by ISIL in late September 2014, for individual jihadists in the West to retaliate the U.S.-led airstrikes<sup>12</sup> on ISIL (The Middle East Media Research Institute 2014c; Shaykh al-Adnani ash-Shāmī 2015; The Middle East Media Research Institute 2014b; The Middle East Media Research Institute 2014a). Indeed, individual terrorism and attacks by jihadist sympathisers increased during this phase. Attacks (and failed plots), carried out by groups composed by two or three individuals seem to be tactically relevant, not only by the challenges they pose to authorities, plus their operational effectiveness, but also because of their inspirational potency. The group's access to radicalised Westerners who have fought in Syria and Iraq provides it with a pool of operatives who could potentially have access to European countries and the United States.<sup>13</sup> ISIL had hardly made it a secret it sought to target Europe: in the year before the Paris attacks, Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, the head of ISIL's external operations, had threatened the European countries supporting the anti-ISIL coalition in a series of audio messages. In fact, intelligence reported by CNN after the Paris attacks, indicated that ISIL had planned attacks in Paris, London, Berlin, and in a major population centre in Belgium (Cruickshank 2016a). In an audio message released on 20 May 2016, and following a string of military setbacks in key city strongholds across Iraq and Syria, al-Adnani reiterated his call for attacks on Europe and the United States during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan starting on 6 June (MEMRI 2016, Associated Press 2016). The spokesman urged sympathisers to attack civilian targets in Europe and the U.S. if they were unable to travel to the group's self-declared caliphate.

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<sup>11</sup> For an analysis of the trajectories followed by some of the foreign fighters taking part in conflicts in Afghanistan (1980), Bosnia and Somalia (2000s), see van Zuijdewijn and Bakker, (2014).

<sup>12</sup> Thus, attacks such as that of Mohammed Merah in 2012 in France against military and Jewish targets, the 2013 Woolwich attack against a British soldier, and the 2015 Paris attacks, have the potential to produce a contagion effect.

<sup>13</sup> Fabien Clain, the voice of a jihadist claiming on an ISIL statement, was another French home-grown terrorist. He was suspected of orchestrating a foiled attack on at least one French church in April 2015, and said he was a close friend of al-Qaeda inspired gunman, Mohammed Merah, who killed seven people (including three children at a Jewish school) on a shooting spree in Toulouse in March 2012. He was sentenced to five years in prison in 2009, for having led a recruitment network to send jihadis to Iraq, and left France after his release. Clain, who goes by the alias Omar, is now in Syria where he has joined the IS. Clain, and his brother Jean-Michel, originally from the French overseas territory of La Réunion, are converts to Islam who were radicalised in the early 2000s (Robinson 2015).



The 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris beg the question of whether there is a significant change in ISIL's strategy towards prioritising attacks against the West. As Ashour points out, after coalition air strikes were started, there was a gradual escalation in ISIL rhetoric, narrative and tactics against the "far enemy" (Ashour, 2015b), culminating in the deadly terrorist attacks in Paris. Jihadis speak of the "near enemy" (apostate regimes in and around the Middle East), and of the "far enemy" (the United States, and the West in general). ISIL, contrary to al-Qaeda, initially focused on the "near enemy" – the "apostate" regimes in the Arab world, particularly the Assad regime in Syria, and the Haider al-Abadi's (and previously Nuri al-Maliki's) regime in Iraq. Al-Qaeda is focused on the "far enemy", that is, on eliminating or significantly reducing U.S. influence in the Islamic world.

Before 2015, ISIL's strategy was primarily aimed at conquering territory, cleansing it, controlling it, and proto state-building within it, according to its vision; and then expanding into surrounding territories, by attacking nearby enemies - who ranged from the al-Nusra Front to Bashar al-Assad's Syrian regime, and the Iraqi government. This started to gradually change from the summer of 2014, especially after the first U.S. air strikes in June and August 2014 respectively, with the target moving against the "far enemy".

In the latest issues of ISIL's multilingual magazine, *Dabiq*, the focus was more on attacking the West - a definitely different trend compared with the earlier issues: "Either one performs hijrah to the wilayat [provinces] of the Khilafah [Caliphate] or, if he is unable to do so, he must attack the crusaders" (quoted in Ashour, 2015b).

As stressed earlier, one of the nuances of this phase of Jihadism in Europe, is the extent to which the displacement of foreign fighters affects most countries of the continent, even those who traditionally have been more sheltered from the jihadist appeal, such as Finland, Norway, Austria or Portugal (Neumann 2015). It was in late 2013 that the number of Europeans fighting alongside Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIL, hinted that Syria was an important mobilisation engine for Jihadism in Europe, and the new centre of gravity of the movement (Zelin 2013b).

Strikingly, there is a mobilisation of individuals from all walks of life, and from different ethnic backgrounds. These movements have social and psychological consequences, regardless of the security impact – blowback - that the possible return of those individuals to their respective countries can produce. In an article in the journal *American Political Science Review* from 2013, which has become a reference for the discussion of this issue, Hegghammer argued that Western jihadists prefer to give vent to their activism in foreign stages, rather than directly attacking their own countries. The author offers three explanations for this preference: opportunity, that is, militants move to where there are fewer restrictions on activism; the desire to train in order to increase operational effectiveness before embarking on violence domestically; and regulatory doctrinal issues that render illegitimate the use of violence in the West, but justify the fight against the enemies of Islam within the Muslim world (Hegghammer 2013: 6-9). The author points out that foreign fighter activity is more popular than jihad in the West, but it has become less attractive over the 2000s compared with the previous two decades (Hegghammer 2013: 5-6; 2010/11: 61). The security measures implemented after 2001 restricted the opportunities for travelling and participating in external conflicts (Hegghammer 2010/11: 61).

Although there has been a growing trend towards the relocation of European Muslims to regions where conflicts arise, or terrains where they can undergo military training, activism in Europe has not been curtailed. Conspiracies continued to be organised, but within the context of changes in internal structures, with the emergence of smaller groups and individual actors, which are related to tactical and security issues linked to the type of security environment in Europe, and ideological issues, such as the appeals and justifications to individual jihad by ISIL and al-Qaeda.

External experiences enable the emergence of networks of former combatants who inspire, contribute to the radicalisation of others, and facilitate contacts with external organisations (Sageman 2004: 107-113; Taarnby 2005: 22-23; Klausen 2010; Brandon 2009: 10-12; Robertson, Cruickshank and Lister 2012). This form of activism also helps to build a collective identity, and to deepen the

sense of *Ummah*. Western interventions in Muslim territories strengthen the narrative of global jihad and the design of advertising actions, enhancing the previous dynamics. Thus, there is a strong interconnection between domestic and international activism and militancy. Transnational organisations try to use their unaffiliated supporters as a means to circumvent their own operational limitations, encouraging the launching of multiple campaigns of violence in the West and confirming the potential of this conflict to increase the attacks. This may be reflected in increased lone attackers, acting in isolation or on behalf of ISIL, and less tangible networks in terms of formal membership, but equally motivated.

### **Evidence of the Home-grown Threat Coupled with Foreign Fighters' Return**

The increase of conspiracies since 2014 appears to be related to al-Adnani's message of 22 September, calling for attacks in the West in retaliation against the actions of the international coalition.

A look at the profiles of the November 2015 Paris attackers and their accomplices confirms the suspicions outlined above regarding the home-grown threat coupled with the pattern of foreign fighters' return: it reveals a group of individuals who were mostly of Moroccan and Algerian descent who were born and raised in Europe, either in France or Belgium. Many of whom travelled to the Middle East as foreign fighters. One of them is Mehdi Nemmouche: after radicalising in prison in France, spent time with ISIL in Syria (Nesser 2016, 288-289), returning to attack the Jewish Museum in Brussels on 24 May 2014.

We will first look into the typology of attackers considered "soldiers of the caliphate", as ISIL masterminded and directed the attacks in which they took part. That applies to the perpetrators of the terrorist cell which was involved in the November 2015 Paris attacks and was also responsible for the 2016 Brussels bombings. Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the suspected mastermind of the 2015 Paris attacks, was a 28-year old Belgian national of Moroccan origin who grew up in the Brussels neighbourhood of Molenbeek. He is believed to have joined ISIL in 2013 and spent time in Syria. Similarly, the group that attacked the Bataclan concert hall, Omar Ismail Mostefai (29), Samy Amimour (28) and Foued Mohammed Aggad (23), were born and raised in France and allegedly travelled to Syria. As to Ibrahim Abdeslam, the 31-year-old French national who blew himself up in an attack outside a café in eastern Paris, had travelled to Turkey in 2015, intending to reach Syria, before being turned back. Bilal Hadfi (20), one of the Stade de France attackers, was a French national who lived in Belgium. The authorities knew that he had gone to Syria to join ISIL but failed to detect his return. Chakib Akrouh, the 25-year-old Belgian-Moroccan citizen who blew himself up using a suicide vest during the police raid days after the attacks, is thought to have been the third man involved in the bar and restaurant attacks. He travelled to Syria in 2013 and was given a five-year jail sentence in absentia while he was there. Mohamed Belkaid, a 35-year-old Algerian citizen, who immigrated to and lived for several years in Sweden, was killed in a police raid in a suburb of Brussels in relation to the November 2015 Paris attacks. In 2014, he traveled to Syria to commit jihad.

Ibrahim el-Bakraoui, a Belgian national of Moroccan descent, who blew himself up at the Brussels airport on 22 March 2016, was detected by Turkish authorities near the Syrian border in June 2015, and was deported to the Netherlands. Najim Laachraoui, who blew himself up at Brussels airport, reportedly traveled to Syria in February 2013. Laachraoui was born in Ajdir, Morocco but raised in the Schaerbeek neighbourhood of Brussels, where he attended a Catholic high school. He made the TATP explosives and the suicide vests used in the assaults. His DNA was also found on one of the vests that detonated inside Paris' Bataclan concert hall, as well as one that blew up outside France's national stadium on 13 November 2015. Mohamed Abrini, failed to detonate his bomb at the airport was arrested on 8 April 2016. He is also suspected of having fought for the Islamic State in Syria. Osama Krayem, a Swedish national of Syrian origin, was involved in the suicide bombing at the metro station, being arrested in April 2016 with Abrini. As a youngster, he participated in a Swedish documentary film about the successful integration of migrants into Swedish society. He lived in

immigrant neighbourhood in the Swedish city of Malmö, an area that produced many foreign fighters. He went fight for ISIL in Syria in 2014. In 2015, he travelled back to Europe, passing through the Greek island of Leros and posing as a migrant using a false passport.

A second typology can be derived from the string of jihadist attacks that were inspired by ISIL, by unaffiliated sympathisers who claim to act in its name (Hegghammer and Nesser 2015). In this case, the connection to the group is usually validated with a video footage pledging allegiance to ISIL before or after carrying out the attacks. Most of them correspond to the pattern of “bottom-up solo terrorists” identified by Nesser (2012), that is, individuals who act on their own on behalf of an organisation:

- inspired by ISIL, on 14 February 2015, Omar Abdel Hamid el-Hussein, born in Vordingborg, Denmark, to Jordanian-Palestinian parents, killed one civilian and wounded three police officers at a public on “Art, Blasphemy and Freedom of Expression” attended by the controversial Swedish artist, Lars Vilks, author of drawings of Muhammad. The second shooting took place later that night (on the 15th), outside the city’s Great Synagogue in Krystalgade. Omar killed a young Jewish man on security duty during a bat mitzvah celebration, and wounded two police officers;
- in December 2014, Bertrand Nzohabonayo, a 20-year old French citizen born in Burundi, attacked three police officers armed with a knife in the French town of Joué-lès-Tours. He had converted to Islam and was a sympathiser of the Islamic State;
- on 19 April 2015, Sid Ahmed Ghlam, an Algerian IT student, shot dead a woman in her car in Villejuif, a Paris suburb. Investigators believed he was planning an “imminent” attack in Paris or the city’s suburbs (possibly churches), after they found documents about al-Qaeda and ISIL at his home. He had been in touch with suspected militants in Syria about an attack on a church. He had tried earlier to travel to Turkey and was arrested and warned by police on his return;
- on 21 August 2015, Ayoub el-Khazzani, boarded the high speed Thalys train from Amsterdam to Paris planning for a massacre. Some passengers, including American soldiers off-duty, prevented a bloodbath as el-Khazzani opened fire, injuring four people. The gunman was 25-year-old Moroccan national known to the intelligence services of several countries for his radicalism. He traveled to Syria in 2014 to fight with ISIL group and was probably connected to the November 2015 Paris plotters;
- on 1 January 2016, a 29-year-old French citizen of Tunisian descent rammed his car twice into 4 soldiers protecting a mosque in France’s southern city of Valence. He said he wanted to kill soldiers. Jihadi propaganda images were found on his computer;
- on January 7, 2016, Tarek Belgacem, a Tunisian native who migrated in 2011 to the EU via Romania, wearing a fake explosive belt, attacked police officers in the Goutte d’Or district in Paris with a meat cleaver, while shouting “Allahu Akbar”. He was shot dead and one policeman was injured. He had made a pledge of allegiance to the extremist group’s leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi;
- on 26 February 2016, a 15-year-old Moroccan girl stabbed and severely injured a policemen in Hanover’s central station, Germany. She had spent time living on the Turkish-Syrian border, and had possibly been radicalised there, although she had recently returned from there;
- on 26 June 2015 in Saint-Quentin-Fallavier, near Lyon, a French Muslim of North African descent, Yassin Salhi, decapitated his employer and drove his van into gas cylinders at a gas factory, causing an explosion that injured two other people. He was suspected of having ties to Islamic State extremists;
- on 22 March 2016: suicide attacks on the Brussels airport and subway killed 32 people and injured hundreds. The perpetrators were linked to the group that carried out attacks in Paris some four months earlier. The Islamic State group took the credit for the attacks;

- on April 16, 2016, two teenage Islamic extremists threw a bomb at a Sikh temple during a wedding in Essen, Germany, injuring three members of the Sikh community. Both were sympathisers of Islamic State;
- on 13 June 2016, French citizen of Moroccan descent, Larossi Abballa, murdered two French police officers in their home in the city of Magnanville, He swore allegiance to ISIL in a video posted on Facebook. The video claimed that the attack was a direct response to Adnani's call;
- on July 14, 2016, a French citizen of Tunisian origin, driving a truck, ploughed into a crowd that was celebrating Bastille Day in Nice, killing at least 84 and injuring hundreds others. ISIL claimed the attack;
- on 18 July, an Afghan refugee hacked at passengers on a train in Würzburg, Germany, wounding five people. The 17-year-old Afghan male (presumably Pakistan), had arrived in Germany as an unaccompanied child refugee in 2015. He allegedly kept in contact with suspected members of Islamic State via telephone numbers registered in Saudi Arabia;
- on July 24 2016, a 27-year-old Syrian man who was denied asylum, injured 15 when he detonated an explosive device in his rucksack near a music festival in Ansbach, Germany.
- on 26 July 2016, two Islamist terrorists stormed a catholic church in Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray, Normandy, northern France, killing the 85-year-old priest Jacques Hamel. One of the attackers, the Algerian-born, 19-year-old Adel Kermiche, had twice in 2015 attempted to travel to Syria. He was once returned by Germany, and once turned back by the authorities at the Turkish border. The second attacker was the French-born 19-year old, Abdel Malik Petitjean who had also tried to enter Syria from Turkey. They had pledged allegiance to ISIL, which claimed responsibility for the attack.
- on 6 August 2016, a 33-year-old Algerian living in Belgium since 2012, attacked two female police officers in Charleroi, Belgium, using a machete. The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack;
- on the 19th December, Anis Amri, a 24 year old Tunisian asylum seeker who entered Italy in 2011, hijacked a Polish truck in Berlin and drove it into a Christmas market in Berlin. The attack claimed 12 lives including the Polish driver of the truck. ISIL claimed responsibility and later realised a video of Amri pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

## **Conclusion**

The Paris attacks have transformed Europe's migration crisis into a security debate, as the current situation - with a large number of people entering the EU in a relatively short time -, is seen as posing a serious threat to public order and national security. Analyses of migration and asylum discourse and policies in the EU have borne out the intensified securitisation of migration, especially since 2001.

There is the fear that groups such as the Islamic State might send trained operatives to Europe, hidden among the uncontrolled waves of migrants heading to EU countries. Officials are alarmed by the prospect that several of the assailants involved in the 2015 November Paris attacks may have tapped the migrant routes. That prospect was warranted by the 2016 Brussels metro station attacks: one of the terrorists, who travelled back from the war in Syria posed as a migrant using a false passport. In the case of the Berlin Christmas market Tunisian attacker, he was a failed asylum-seeker in Italy and Germany.

Some conclusions can be evidenced from this study: ever since the rise of ISIL in 2014 as a self-styled caliphate, the number of terrorism incidents involving (recent) immigrants has risen, although overall it is still not statistically relevant. This finding clearly illustrates that the number of sympathiser attacks has increased significantly since late 2014, maybe as a response to ISIL's spokesman call for sympathiser attacks in the West. If immigration flows continue, this trend could be

reinforced. At the present, and using the best available evidence, the main terrorist threat to Western countries still does not actually come from recent immigrants or refugees, but from home-grown extremists driven by the ongoing jihad in Syria.

The third major conclusion is that overseas jihads have confirmed to be a major driver of radicalisation and a breeding ground for potential terrorist preparation. That is in line with the jihadist trail in Europe left by the wars in Algeria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Most of the attackers involved in the 2015 November attacks in Paris and March 2016 attacks in Brussels had fought in Syria.

As regards the home-grown nature of the threat, this is a major problem for European authorities, as seemingly well-integrated European young people of Arab origin, (re)convert to extremist forms of Islam and turn violent. Indeed, most of the terrorist incidents have been carried out so far by second-generation immigrants who were born in European countries or arrived there as children.

It remains to be said that a trend which has been identified as a distinctive feature of the Syrian war is a surging number of young people from non-Muslim backgrounds flocking to the Middle East to wage jihad. The number of converts streaming to aid the Islamic State is unprecedented and reportedly far greater than in any other international conflict in the Islamic world. It is part of the so-called home-grown threat.

The fourth conclusion is that the concept of home-grown terrorism needs to be rethought in light of those considerations. If international terrorists based in foreign countries succeed in recruiting among the disaffected populations of Europe, then European states face a simultaneous internal and external security threat. The definition of home-grown is rather limiting as it hinges on two basic differences: the foreign or domestic nature of the plots, leader-led conspiracies (organised by ISIL or al-Qaeda), versus leaderless plots. A definition of home-grown takes into account the cell make-up and local motivations, usually excluding direct involvement with al-Qaeda and ISIL. However, the distinction is frequently difficult to unpack due to the intricate interplay of domestic and external motivations, connections and opportunities. Two examples can help illustrate the difficulty in telling apart the internal from the external scene: social networks are a tool used by ISIL to recruit young people. People are increasingly radicalised on their own by accessing specific websites, by entering a jihadi chat room, or visiting radical pages. Being radicalised by the Internet does not mean youngsters are recruited by a jihadist or that they receive direct order from a group like ISIL. Still, the web is a transnational space where no boundaries exist, where it is impossible to distinguish the domestic from the international dimension. The other issue is alleged affiliation to ISIL: claiming to act on behalf of the group may amount to posting a video or making a declaration claiming allegiance to the group or its leader. This requires no actual presence or complicated formal requirement and can be done anywhere, especially far away from ISIL's base and in the absence of its leadership. This connection to ISIS is tenuous at best, but the group often validates acts claimed for in this way. The allegiance requirement certainly encourages sympathisers to carry out attacks on behalf of the Islamic State. It has increased its ability to both recruit foreign fighters and carry out attacks in territories far from its self-declared caliphate. It provides both publicity to the group, and prestige to the perpetrator.

The main crucial realisation regarding terrorism in this day and age is that it can no longer be characterised as foreign or domestic; rather, it is transnational by nature. Radical Islamic groups throughout the Muslim world, such as al-Qaeda and ISIL, provide a transnational explanatory framework, which taps on local grievances, and places them within the broader Salafi-Jihadist ideology, which pleads to defend Muslim honour and interests against a supposed Western aggression to the *Ummah*. This transnational Salafi Jihadist ideology attempts to inspire young Muslims by exploiting common resentments, and by directing its violence towards the West.

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