FORTRESS EUROPE:
TERRORIST THREAT IN THE CONTEXT OF ISIS

This article analyses the terrorist threat in Europe in the context of the existence and activities of the Islamic State. The first part of this paper is devoted to the evolution of the terrorist threat in Europe, with particular emphasis on changes in its nature in the context of the Islamic State and the migration crisis. The second part of this article discusses three structural factors determining the level of terrorist threat on the European continent: the Schengen area, no-go zones and the related crime problem. The article then examines how both time and structural factors influence prevention and anti-terrorist strategies that must deal with both external and internal threats not only from organized terrorist cells, whose members have been trained, but also from independent radicalizing lone wolves, who are beyond the control of security services, including converts. Due to its nature, the danger of terrorism affects the whole continent and is present even in countries previously considered to be relatively safe, such as Poland, the case of which is analysed in the final part of this article.

EVOLUTION OF RELIGIOUS TERRORISM IN EUROPE

While, it is beyond the scope of this paper to present a comprehensive evolution of modern religious terrorism in Europe,\(^1\)

in order to explore the current terrorist threat, it is necessary to identify some of the key developments that influenced the nature of the danger. The emergence of Islamic terrorism dates back to 1980s and is marked, as Paul Wilkinson underlies,\(^2\) by bitter resentment not only to the United States or Israel, but to all Western countries. This recognition is shared by many authors who point towards different political,\(^3\) economic,\(^4\) and socio-cultural\(^5\) factors feeding into this animosity and maintaining the polarized reality of “the West and the rest”. Bruce Hoffman went as far as to estimate that “the religious imperative for terrorism is the most important defining characteristic of activity today,”\(^6\) an appraisal consistent with David Rapoport’s theory of the fourth wave terrorism.\(^7\)

Interestingly, very quickly the challenge posed by religious rather than secular terrorist groups was deemed to be more difficult to counter. To invoke Bruce Hoffman again: “terrorism motivated either in whole or in part by a religious imperative, where violence is regarded by its practitioners as a divine duty or sacramental act, embraces markedly different means of legitimization and justification that that committed by secular terrorists; and these distinguishing features lead, in turn, to yet greater bloodshed and destruction.”\(^8\) The new species of terrorists propelled by faith and motivated by fanaticism (often a key-word in numerous analyses), most closely associated with Islamic terrorist groups approached violence as a divine duty and used religion as legitimizing force. Terrorists themselves were not interested in altering the system, but replacing it with entirely new model; instead of sitting at the table, as James Woosley has famously said, the main aim is “to destroy the table and everyone sitting at it.”\(^9\)

More importantly, the connection between religious fundamentalism and violence, even though not clarified, was noticed by scholars.\(^10\)


\(^8\) Hoffman, *op.cit.*, p. 88.


Very often, this religious zeal presented as something irrational and therefore impossible to prevent, is a typical feature of the academic literature on the subject\(^1\) even though the myth of religious violence has been finally dispelled by William Cavanaugh\(^2\) and the normalcy of terrorists has been repeatedly underlined.\(^3\) As Wojciech Kostecki observed, “usually terrorists are not crazy people unthinkingly opting for a suicidal death.”\(^4\)

In the European context, trends in international terrorism in the 1990s clearly place this kind of danger as an external threat. While the Islamic movements were bitterly opposed to the Western countries, the attacks on Westerners were either perpetrated abroad like it was in the case of the Egyptian Islamists attack on a group of Western tourists in Cairo in 1996 or the 1997 Luxor massacre carried out by the Gamat al-Islamiya (Islamic Group) in which 58 foreign tourists died or by groups whose operational base was outside European borders. Perhaps the best example of the latter is GIA (Groupe Islamique Armé aka. al-Jama’ah al-Islamiyah al-Musallaha). In December 1994 GIA hijacked the 8969 Air France flight from Algiers to Paris and organised a series of bombings in France (1995 -1996). This wave of attacks in the subway, and public places like markets, cafes or schools, left eight people dead and 180 wounded. By 2000 GIA’s external networks in Europe were taken over by the Salafi Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) who established its cells in Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium, France, The Netherlands, and Britain (where GIA had training camps).\(^5\) Nonetheless, in that period the terrorists attacks on European targets were either

---


carried abroad (and usually aimed at tourists) or involved overseas operatives sneaking into Europe and implementing their plans. The apex of such mode of operation were the 2004 Madrid trains bombings directed by an al Qaeda – inspired terrorist cell.

Very quickly this way of preparing and carrying out acts of terrorism was found wanting. Terrorism is an ever evolving, changing and very dynamic phenomenon. Its ability to adapt and adjust in terms of actors, means, goals, tactics and strategies is one of the most constituent characters of this form of political violence.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, it should not be surprising that the next terrorist attack after Madrid, the 7 July 2005 London bombings, are characterized by a different \textit{modus operandi}. Of the four men who detonated their backpacks filled with explosives on the metro trains and a bus, three were second generation British Muslims of Pakistani origin and one (Jamaica-born Germaine Lindsay) was a convert to Islam. A new type of terrorist became typical for the second generation terrorism: ‘cleanskins’, term denoting a person hitherto unknown to the police and/or security services and hence not being under surveillance. Mastermind of the London bombings, Mohammad Sidique Khan, is a good example of a cleanskin. While he briefly attracted MI5’s interest, it was decided that he did not pose any threat and therefore his activities were not monitored. This allowed him to operate freely and was a decisive factor for the success of the plot.

Soon it transpired that there is another huge group largely outside the police radar, i.e. European converts to Islam. The specificity of the terrorist threat to Europe, with its home-grown, bottom-up dynamics, drew attention to European converts to Islam who are believed present in terrorist organisations in large numbers, where they occupy key positions.\textsuperscript{17} While converts are not a homogeneous group, and cannot be considered \textit{en bloc} as gullible individuals, easy to influence and prone to fall into an outbidding spiral when trying to prove their worth to the new brethren. In some cases, as my research proves,\textsuperscript{18} a unique coalescence of rejection and exclusion provide favourable conditions for a totality


of belief which has the potential of resulting in susceptibility towards terrorist violence. Furthermore, two structural factors impede counter-terrorist efforts when it comes to converts. Firstly, because public shahada (confession of faith, Muslim conversion rite) is rather optional than obligatory, and the conversion is not preceded by official preparatory courses, the available official registers of converts are incomplete. During my research I have met several individuals in different countries who admitted that they converted independently of any institution and at home, and thus were not included in the official state figures; in other words, they were invisible for the state apparatus. Secondly, as there are no standardised conversion mechanisms that would be approved by Islamic authorities, equally no universal induction period for converts exists. Such induction, directly following the first days and weeks after conversion is extremely important from the security perspective due to its capability is to facilitate and help New Muslims throughout the crucial first period after conversion via proper community mechanism in order to eliminate the danger of radicalisation.

Indeed, in 2007, when Michael Taarnby from the Danish Institute for International Studies announced that al Qaeda and other terrorist groups recognise not only the operational but also the cultural value of converts to Islam, he voiced a concern shared by many experts and policy-makers. By that time European converts to Islam had been active in several terrorist plots on the continent and beyond its borders. These included the clumsy attempt of the shoe-bomber, Richard Reid, and a foiled plot to bomb American targets in Germany masterminded by Fritz Gelowicz and Daniel Martin Schneider. Similar charges were made in Britain against Andrew Rowe who was arrested in the Eurostar with traces of explosives and Omar Abu Izzadeen (Trevor Brooks) arrested for incitement and radicalisation for the purposes of terrorism, as well as the

---


alleged provision of financial support for international terrorism; likewise Simon Sulayman Keeler was accused of fundraising for terrorism, while Anthony Garcia aka. Rahman Benouis and several other converts, including Don Steward White, a son of a former conservative politician, were awaiting trial. Abdallah Andersen was soon to be sentenced in Copenhagen and in Sweden the public was shocked to discover that a Swede, who changed his name from Ralf Wadman to Abu Usama el-Swede was recruiting *jihadi* fighters through the internet. In Belgium even further turmoil was caused by the first female convert suicide bomber, Muriel Degauque who went on a mission to Iraq in November 2005.22 Martine van der Oeven, a Dutch convert from the Hofstad group23 (and former policewoman)24 and French convert Willy Brigitte were found guilty of being engaged in a terrorist enterprise (i.e. planning attacks on nuclear research facility and military installations outside Sydney).25 Finally, several French converts, including the Courtailleur brothers David and Jerome, and Christopher Caze,26 all of whom fought in Bosnia were later involved in other jihadist activities.

In general, it can be said that in the past terrorists from outside of Europe needed to get past through the border and/or migration control in order to operate from within, whereas those who were born and raised in Europe, when radicalised tended to leave for jihad elsewhere, be it Chechnya, Afghanistan or later Iraq and Syria. Presently, standard is the schematic model of foreign fighter radicalization developed by Daniel Byman and Jeremy Shapiro27

---


23 There were also other converts in The Hofstad Group including the Walter brothers involved in a foiled terrorist plot in November 2004.


26 Christopher Caze, a 25-year-old former medical student who travelled to Bosnia as a hospital medic and returned to France as a radical Islamist only to lead the so called Roubaix Gang with links to GIA. In March 1996, when the leaders of the Group of Seven industrialized nations, including French President Jacques Chirac were to meet in Lille, near Roubaix, Caze’s group filled a Peugeot with explosives and compressed gas and parked it three blocks from the meeting site. French police defused the bomb and raided the group’s hideout in Lille. Four of the terrorists were killed there and Caze, who managed to escape, was stopped the next day at a roadblock and shot during an attempt to ram his way through the blockade.

with individuals undergoing the cycle of deciding (becoming motivated to fight) – travelling to foreign country – training and fighting, gaining skills, experience and networks of connections – returning home – in order to plot terrorist attack or recruit others. Furthermore, not only the three types of the terrorist production system function concomitantly, but also the three crucial structural factors determining the dynamic of the potential terrorist threat in Europe must be taken into consideration: ISIS strategy, reality of Schengen in the context of migration crisis, and the archipelago of no go zones across the continent.

ISIS STRATEGY

What is known about the Islamic State resembles a precarious mixture of a wartime propaganda, social media newsfeed, and secret service operational files. Our ignorance of ISIS is partially explicable for academic research in this area is impossible, and majority of analyses rely on speculation or extrapolation. We know ISIS existed as one among many Islamist groups operating in the Middle East long before it captured attention of global media and world politicians. It is confirmed that the self-proclaimed caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, has been its leader since May 2010. In the summer of 2014 ISIS seized vast swaths of territory, including cities like Mosul and Ramadi, and, as Graeme Wood noted\(^{28}\) “even though nobody expected them to last longer than three months, ISIS already rules an area similar to that of the United Kingdom”. Wood’s thorough analysis of the group suggests that ISIS “rejects peace as a matter of principle; that it hungers for genocide; that its religious views make it constitutionally incapable of certain types of change, even if that change might ensure its survival; and that it considers itself a harbinger of apocalypse—and headline player in—the imminent end of the world.” In other words, religion is an essence, an axis of the *modus vivendi* as well as *modus operandi*, and the strategic goals of the group to this extent that one could claim ISIS to be a unique case of using politics for furthering religious agenda rather than the other way round. As Ryszard Machnikowski reminds us, while survival is the basic aim of the Islamic State, the prognoses and analyses

stipulating that ISIS is interested primarily in local operations hence its existence does not significantly increase the terrorist threat in regions as far as Europe, were proved to be false.\textsuperscript{29}

To the contrary, ISIS conducts systematic and worldwide recruitment and propaganda, mainly on the Internet and social media with many initiatives (videos, magazines, blogs, etc.) directed especially at Western Muslims.\textsuperscript{30} The estimates vary between 12,000\textsuperscript{31} to over 20,000\textsuperscript{32} foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria (plus 5,000 jihadis in Libya).\textsuperscript{33} These fighters are trained and prepared for conducting terrorist operations in the countries of their origin. In January 2015, an article, “Libya: The Strategic Gateway For the Islamic State,” by ISIS supporter Abu Irhim Al-Libi was published online.\textsuperscript{34} Al-Libi listed several advantages of operating in Libya, including Libya’s strategic location which he termed as a strategic gateway to neighboring African countries and Europe. According to MEMRI’s Jihad and Terrorism Threat Monitor, Al-Libi notes how easily illegal immigrants reach the “southern [European] Crusader countries” and suggests that with careful strategic planning, ISIS can turn those countries to “hell.”\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, ISIS operative quoted in the media claimed more than 4,000 trained ISIS gunmen have already been smuggled into Europe – hidden among innocent refugees.\textsuperscript{36} Similar


\textsuperscript{34} Abu Irhim’s writings can be found on his blog libi4.blogspot.com and on Twitter account, @jihad_libi5.


\textsuperscript{36} A BuzzFeed article titled, „ISIS Operative: This Is How We Send Jihadis To Europe,“ which featured an ISIS operative who claimed 4,000 militants have quietly infiltrated Europe,
Fortress Europe: Terrorist Threat in the Context of ISIS

Statements have been made through unconfirmed ISIS Twitter accounts and on the propaganda videos.

**SCHENGEN ZONE IN THE REFUGEE CRISIS**

While these claims might be dismissed as empty propaganda and media hype, ISIS strategy finds its confirmation in the official UN data and statements issued by the security services. The official demographic statistics of the United Nations in the first months of the crisis indicated that 75% refugees arriving in Europe are male and only half of them come from Syria.\(^{37}\) Similarly, the European law enforcement and security services warned about the growing number of *jihadis* coming to Europe disguised as refugees. Rob Wainwright, head of Europol, said that up to 5,000 Europeans have returned to the continent after being trained in terrorist camps.\(^{38}\) The awareness of the danger started to permeate the public opinion when Osama Abdul Mohsen, a Syrian man who made international news after being tripped by a Hungarian camerawoman, was accused of being a member of the al-Qaeda-linked Al-Nusra Front by the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party.\(^{39}\) When it transpired that Osama Abdul joined the rebel group in 2011 and committed crimes against civilian minorities, including Kurds, he already enjoyed a refugee celebrity status and was offered employment in Spain.\(^{40}\) These concerns were doubled when it became apparent that it is impossible to track refugees

---

\(^{37}\) The UN Refugee Agency official data available is available at: http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php. It should be noted that the numbers fluctuate and thus in July 2016 the percentage of males went down to 49 while children (gender unidentified) increased to 32%. This might also be potentially troubling especially in the light of the increasing number of asylum frauds. For instance, a recent survey in Denmark showed that 72% of asylum-seeker “children” were actually adults (Source: http://www.mx.dk/nyheder/danmark/story/10542201).


\(^{39}\) Full statement available at: http://pydrojava.com/

movement once they are admitted to Europe with tens of thousands individuals missing from their supposed place of residence\textsuperscript{41} and found its peak shortly after the November 2015 Paris attacks when it transpired that Paris attackers were registered as refugees on a Greek island of Lesbos in October 2015, and managed to travel freely across the continent.\textsuperscript{42}

This further fueled a debate over the apparent lack of security measures needed to keep terrorist groups out of the Schengen zone. External borders of the European Union that exist only theoretically and simultaneous lack of internal borders mean that the activities (or lack of thereof) of one EU member state can endanger the rest of the community. A situation aptly summarized by Sharon L. Cardash et al. that the whole EU will be only as strong as its weakest link.\textsuperscript{43} Current response to the refugee crisis comes down to nearly unconditional acceptance of people whose identity and background is either impossible (false documents or no documents at all) or too costly to check.\textsuperscript{44} In the present situation terrorists arrive in Europe using false identities and posing as refugees exploit freedom of movement guaranteed by the Schengen agreement. Upon arrival to Western Europe they vanish off the radar, often with the help of already established networks and cells operating in many countries from within the no go zones.

\section*{NO-GO ZONES}

In Europe we usually speak of no-go zones in the context of Muslim-dominated neighborhoods that are off-limits to non-Muslims due to a variety of factors, including the lawlessness


and insecurity that pervades a great number of these areas.\textsuperscript{45} In many of these places host-country authorities have effectively lost control and are often unable or unwilling to provide even basic public aid, such as police, fire fighting and ambulance services, out of fear of being attacked by Muslim youth.\textsuperscript{46} Because for a very long time the European no go zones were considered an urban legend, it is difficult to obtain official data. Nonetheless, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in France there are 751 Sensitive Urban Zones (\textit{Zones Urbaines Sensibles}, ZUS), inhabited by some 5 million Muslims. A list of the ZUS can be found on a French government website, complete with satellite maps and precise street demarcations.\textsuperscript{47} In October 2011, a landmark 2,200-page long report, “\textit{Banlieue de la République}” (Suburbs of the Republic),\textsuperscript{48} prepared by Gilles Kepel together with five other French researchers, showed how the problem is being exacerbated by radical Muslim preachers. These imams promote social marginalization of Muslim immigrants in order to create a parallel Muslim society in France that could be ruled by Sharia law. In Sweden, which has some of the most liberal immigration laws in Europe, according to the \textit{En nationell översikt av kriminella nätverk med stor påverkan i lokalsamhället report}\textsuperscript{49} there are 54 no go zones in the country. In Germany, Chief Police Commissioner Bernhard Witthaut, in a newspaper interview revealed that Muslim immigrants are imposing no go zones in cities across Germany at an alarming rate.\textsuperscript{50} The terrorists who struck Paris on November 13, 2015 had organized their attacks from Molenbeek and Salah Abdeslam, one of the organizers, had been able to live there for four months before he was apprehended by the police. While Molenbeek has recently became an icon of a no go zone, in the

\textsuperscript{45} In an interview for the Radio Télévision Suisse, Fabrice Balanche from the University of Lyon speaks of this problem at length. Available at: http://www.agoravox.tv/tribune-libre/article/des-mini-etats-islamiques-en-46961


\textsuperscript{47} Le ministère de la Ville, de la Jeunesse et des Sports, Atlas des Zones urbaines sensibles (Zus). Available at: http://sig.ville.gouv.fr/Atlas/ZUS/

\textsuperscript{48} Full findings of the report including methodology and bibliography can be found at http://www.banlieue-de-la-republique.fr/#/enquete.

\textsuperscript{49} En nationell översikt av kriminella nätverk med stor påverkan i lokalsamhället (2014, October). Stockholm: Rikskriminalpolisen.

\textsuperscript{50} Interview with Bernhard Witthaut in: Problemvierteln fürchtet sich sogar die Polizei, (2011, August 1). \textit{Der Westen}. Retrieved from: http://www.derwesten.de/politik/in-problemvierteln-fuerchtet-sich-sogar-die-polizei-id4926287.html
Belgian capital of Brussels (which is 20% Muslim), several immigrant
neighborhoods have become no go zones for police officers, who
frequently are pelted with rocks by Muslim youth. According to the
Gatestone Institute experts already in 2011 in the Kuregem district
of Brussels police were forced to patrol the area with two police cars:
one car to carry out the patrols and another car to prevent the first
car from being attacked.\(^{51}\) Additionally, in many places the radical
mosques in no go areas have been used as weapon depots, do it was
discovered in France in the wake of 2015 Paris attacks\(^{52}\) or recently
in Germany.\(^{53}\)

While many of the above issues can be attributed to organized
crime, it needs to be noted that high criminality rates in the no
go zones and among the Muslim communities is another variable
that should be factored into analyses. In 2004, French sociologist
Farhad Khosrokhavar published “Islam in Prison”, a study
devoted to Muslim inmates in French prisons.\(^{54}\) It is estimated
that over half (up to 70\%)\(^{55}\) of French convicts are Muslim,
which far exceeds the 10% share of the general population. This
overrepresentation of Muslims in prisons is a common trend
across Europe, from Spain (70% of those in Spanish jails are
Muslims in contrast to about 5% of the Spanish population as
a whole)\(^{56}\) to the United Kingdom. In 2013 11,200 Muslims were
sentenced to prison in England and Wales, what amounts to about
13% of the prison population. It is noteworthy that the number
jumped to 11,248 in 2012, up from 3,681 in 1997 (over 200%


Scholars and practitioners agree that British prisons are becoming hotbeds for Islamic radicalization what proves difficult to counter. According to leaked information from Whitehall every single senior jihadist jailed in the UK in recent years has refused to engage with the British government’s counter-terrorism strategy, ‘Contest’. Instead they spread propaganda, recruit new members, and in result many individuals leave prisons more radical than before. Richard Reid or the members of the Roubaix Gang illustrate this pattern. Also, two of the three terrorists who attacked “Charlie Hebdo”, Chérif Kouachi and Amédy Coulibaly, met for the first time in the biggest jail in France and radicalized under the influence of an Al Qaeda affiliate.

**EUROPEAN CHALLENGE**

European approach to counter-terrorism considers this form of political violence a crime rather than an act of war (more typical for the American response). Crime requires monitoring and surveillance as basic tools of prevention as it bases on an ‘innocent until proven guilty’ premise. Characteristic features of the contemporary terrorist threat in Europe discussed above render eliminating terrorism extremely difficult, bordering on impossible. In the first place there are far too many suspects, a realization voiced by Manuel Valls who said that “We note the power of the threat, a threat level [France] has never before known.” Indeed, the incessant monitoring of suspected individuals only in France presents an insurmountable challenge. According to the official report that was leaked to the

---


media, the number of radical Islamists increased dramatically. While in March 2015 there were 4,000 of such individuals known to the law-enforcement agencies, at present the estimates doubled. 70% of the suspected Islamist radicals were male (in addition to women, minors were a separate category in the report). According to the probe, it means constant surveillance of the 1,730 individuals ready to strike and meticulous monitoring of their close associates and wider networks because majority of identified radicals followed the kinship-worship-friendship pattern of direct radicalization identified by Marc Sageman. Worryingly, this number includes also police officers and military personnel.

In fact, certain en bloc radicalisation of the European Muslim community poses a counter-terrorist challenge on its own. Up to 15% of French Muslims have a positive attitude towards ISIS (27% among people aged between 18 and 24). An ICM poll conducted in 2015 showed that that 1.5 million of British Muslims (i.e. nearly half of the whole community), can be identified as supporters of ISIS.

---


67 There are no statistics for the number of Muslim soldiers in the French armed forces but already in 2013, during the fifth national security parliamentary conference, Colonel Pascal Rolez, adjunct to the assistant director of the counter-intervention unit of the Defense Security Protection Department, declared, “We are witnessing an increase in radicalization among the French military, notably since the Merah affair.” Mohammed Merah, a young French Muslim, murdered three French soldiers in Toulouse and Montauban. The post conference report is available at: http://www.defense-et-strategie.fr/images/stories/securite/securite2013/progsecu2013.pdf On January 21, 2015, the radio station RFI announced that about 10 French soldiers deserted and joined the Jihadist fight in Syria and Iraq.

68 The poll was conducted in July 2014 among 1,000 people aged over 15 years by ICM Research for the Russian news agency Rossiya Segodnya. 15% of French people back ISIS militants, poll finds (2014, August 18). RT. Retrieved from: https://www.rt.com/news/181076-isis-islam-militants-france/

According to BBC, 45% of British Muslims agree that clerics preaching that violence against the West can be justified represent mainstream Islam. Moreover, U.S. diplomatic cables revealed by WikiLeaks divulge that one third of Muslims on UK campuses believe killing in the name of religion is justified. Similarly, the research carried out by the Motivaction Group in Amsterdam showed that 80% of Muslims saw nothing wrong in jihad, or holy war, against non-believers.

According to the “European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2014”, 152 terrorist attacks were carried out in EU member states whereas one year later, the number stood at 201. Both reports confirm that the number of foiled plots is much higher and concerns high profile places. The threats both from the outside and from the inside, ranging from lone wolves attacks encouraged by official propaganda to coordinated plots prepared by trained operatives, from DIY devices to possible attempts of acquiring weapons of mass destruction only exacerbate the feeling that Europe is becoming a besieged fortress. More importantly, the trends are not only present in the Western but also in the Central and Eastern part of Europe; the case of Poland being a prime example of the latter.

---

70 ComRes interviewed 1,000 Muslims living in Britain aged 18+ by telephone between 26th January and 20th February. Data were weighted to be representative of the known population. The methodology and results of the poll can be found at Muslim Poll. Telephone Fieldwork (2015, January 26 – February 20). ComRes. Retrieved from http://www.comres.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/BBC-Today-Programme_British-Muslims-Poll_FINAL-Tables_Feb2015.pdf


THE CASE OF POLAND

Poland remains a periphery of the European Union, and is an ethnically homogenous country without colonial history. At the same time, while the Muslim community in Poland is considerably smaller than in the Western member states of the EU and in an overwhelming majority relatively well assimilated (particularly when it comes to Polish Tatars), the structural factors discussed above affect also Eastern flank of the European Union. Whereas no go zones do not exist in Poland, both ISIS strategy and vulnerabilities of the Schengen zone should be taken into consideration.

Poland has been engaged in the Global War on Terror coalition since the 9/11 attacks and even though the involvement has been minimal, deployment of Polish forces to Iraq and Afghanistan meant that the name and location of this country started circulating in the jihadi circles. This trend has been strengthened by two factors. Firstly, closure of the investigation into the CIA prisons in Poland. The investigation which started in 2008, aimed to determine whether Polish authorities agreed to set up American prisons on the territory of Poland and whether any abuse occurred in them. In 2014 the US Senate prepared a report confirming that in some prisons CIA agents have used illegal practices such as crush, waterboarding and sleep deprivation. The explanatory memorandum is the first document officially confirming that the CIA prisons were established in Poland. 77 This places Polish detention centre next to Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib and thus seriously impinges on national security. The latest decision of sending troops to join the fight against the Islamic State in exchange for the increased NATO presence in Central and Eastern Europe 78 further enhanced the danger. While the threat is not as pronounced as it is in case of Germany or France, jihadis noted that Poland exists and already promised attacks against it. 79


79 Poland was mentioned in the Dabiq magazine as a member of the American-led coalition fighting against ISIS. The first message against Poland dates back to October
Low numbers of Muslims in Poland (15–25,000)\footnote{In the report on Poland's demography prepared in 2011 by the Central Statistical Office of Poland words like 'Islam' or "Muslims" did not appear and this religious minority was classified as 'Others'. 0,15% of Polish population belongs to this category. Cf. \textit{Ludność. Stan i struktura demograficzno-społeczna. Narodowy spis powszechny ludności i mieszkań 2011 (2011)}. Warsaw: Zakład Wydawnictw Statystycznych.} eliminate the challenge posed by no go zones. From the operational point of view, on the one hand it is difficult to blend in, on the other, it is easier to plot and prepare attacks in an environment where no one expects such things to happen. Law enforcement agencies usually downplay Polish motifs on the grounds of low probability, which in turn can be carefully used by the jihadists. So far the few Polish jihadis were second generation migrants, usually converts, like aforementioned Fritz Gelowicz or Christian Ganczarski, for many years bin Laden’s informal ambassador to Europe, linked to the 2002 Djerba bombings.\footnote{18 Years for Al-Qaida Member: Paris Court Finds German Guilty of Tunisian Attack (2009, June 2). \textit{Der Spiegel}. Retrieved from: http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,605911,00.html} More recent examples include Maximillian R. and his sister Karolina (residing in Germany) both associated with the Islamic State. The former supposedly died fighting, the latter was accused of providing operational and financial support to ISIS. Another convert, Jacek S., born in Poland later also migrated to Germany and acquired German citizenship, the carried out a suicide attack in Iraq on June 13 2015 killing 11 and injuring further 27 people.\footnote{Urodzony w Polsce Jacek S. terrorystą Państwa Islamskiego. Wysadził się w samobójczym zamachu (2015, August 12). \textit{Dziennik.pl}. Retrieved from: http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/swiat/zdjecia/497657,1,jacek-s-z-polski-islamski-terrorysta-panstwa-islamskiego-dzihadysta-wysadzil-sie-samobojczym-zamachu-zdjecia.html} Finally, Adrian al N. (aka Abu Bakr Al Sham) born in Germany, son of a Polish mother and a Palestinian father, joined ISIS for six months.\footnote{Interview with Abu Bakr al Sham. Gadowski, W. & Król, M. (2015, August 5–11). Zginiecie jak wszyscy niewierni. \textit{ABC Tygodnik}, pp. 15–17.} Overall it is estimated that 15–20 Poles or people of Polish origin could have joined ISIS. However, due to the secrecy of meetings of the Parliamentary Committee for
Special Services these calculations should be taken with extreme caution.  

While Polish citizens engage in jihadi activities abroad, Polish territory can be a place where Western European jihadists will attempt to acquire weapons and explosives. Such was the case of three Dutch citizens of Arab origin who tried to buy Kalashnikov rifles and a machine gun in a military shop in Gdynia. Upon their arrest it transpired that they had repeatedly been listed by the Dutch police for possession of firearms, violent robberies and theft. Operation “Sword” by Polish Internal Security Agency (ABW) carried out in 2003 and made public in 2014 confirmed that Poland is not any longer merely a transit zone, of special interest only to those travelling from Chechnya or the Caucasus region as well as those coming as students or spouses of Polish citizens from North Africa or the Middle East.

In this context monitoring of immigrants is not an excessive luxury but a bare necessity. Report prepared by the supreme Audit Office in Poland (NIK) concludes that Poland is not ready to manage requests for refugee status. According to the report officials already have no knowledge what is happening with immigrants in Poland. NIK studied 429 cases of people who have been refused the refugee status and received on order to leave the country. Only 154 people complied (36%), the rest simply disappeared and nobody knows whether they still reside in Poland or moved beyond its borders. Furthermore, in 2014, Polish Border Guard detained over 4.8 thousands foreigners trying to illegally cross Polish borders. Bearing in mind the Schengen zone reality and the refugee crisis, it should be assumed that this number will only increase in the coming years.

---


CONCLUSIONS

Contemporary terrorist threat in Europe is dominated by religiously motivated Islamic groups and evolved from an external threat whereby the terrorists attacks on European targets were either carried abroad (and usually aimed at tourists) or involved groups whose operational base was outside European borders with overseas operatives sneaking into Europe and implementing their plans. Quickly, the threat was internalised insofar as the second and third generation of European Muslims as well as European converts to Islam joined the terrorist organisations. In spite of the home-grown, bottom-up dynamics of the phenomenon, majority of radicalised individuals were leaving their countries of origin in order to travel for jihad elsewhere without explicit intentions to return. This changed again when the Islamic State called for global jihad and through their recruitment and propaganda effort reached out to Western Muslims who were encouraged to travel to Syria and Iraq, and having gained combat experience, return home in order to plot terrorist attacks in Europe and/or recruit others. The migration crisis enabled a growing number of jihadis to enter Europe disguised as refugees.

Instrumental exploitation of the dramatic migration flows into Europe has been exacerbated by the realities of Schengen zone. Porous external borders and lack of internal borders allow terrorists to arrive in Europe using false identities and posing as refugees. Once admitted, they exploit freedom of movement guaranteed by the Schengen agreement and vanish off the radar, often with the help of already established networks and cells operating in many countries from within the so called no go zones. High criminality rate in the no go zones and among the Muslim communities is another variable that should be factored into the analyses, especially that in many European countries prisons have become hotbeds of radicalisation.

European approach to counter-terrorism, considers this form of political violence a crime rather than an act of war (more typical for the American response). Crime requires monitoring and surveillance as basic tools of prevention as it bases on an ‘innocent until proven guilty’ premise. Characteristic features of the contemporary terrorist threat in Europe discussed above render eliminating terrorism extremely difficult, bordering on impossible due to the number of possible suspects (both internal and external), free movement of
people, and radicalisation of the European Muslim communities in many countries. These trends are not only present in the Western but also in the Central and Eastern part of Europe as demonstrated in the Polish case study analysis.

Latest attacks in Paris and Brussels demonstrated how lethal is the combination of factors identified in this paper. A prolonged state of emergency in France proves that existing solutions in the field of combating terrorism are outdated. Also recent counter-terrorist activities in Belgium and Germany confirm this diagnosis. In view of the above, it seems that each country must be ready for reintroduction of checks at their borders not only in episodic situations (like the NATO summit in Warsaw), but also in the long term. Current terrorist threat highlights the need to redefine the rules of border integrity also against the non-military threat. Tools allowing for proper control of the state borders, both in terms of manpower, material resources, communication and data-sharing systems are necessary.

Simultaneously, these efforts cannot be fixated only on Western Europe. While Muslim communities in Central and Eastern Europe are considerably less numerous, the structural factors render them similarly vulnerable. Where on the one hand it is difficult to blend in, on the other, it is easier to plot and prepare attacks in an environment where no one expects such things to happen. For this reason monitoring of mosques, religious organisations and charities, visiting imams, students and other short-term migrants is necessary. Careful observation of finance flows and individuals leaving for scholarships or religious retreats to countries with active terrorist connections is also crucial. Perhaps in this context it would be desirable to create a platform for cooperation among countries in the region, primarily on the basis of the extended Visegrad Group. Finally, converts to Islam, both residing in the country of origin and those who migrated abroad, should also be taken into consideration when assessing the potential terrorist threat. All of the above require time and resources, but most of all a nuanced understanding that comes only from research, study and analyses indispensable for determining the radicalising and deradicalising patterns. Only policies based on informed scholarship can transform Fortress Europe back into the European home.