José María Blanco Navarro

The Fight against Jihadism in Spain
Special Mention to the Spanish Civil Guard

1. Introduction: Jihadism, A Global Phenomenon

The data related to the year 2014 published by the Country Reports on Terrorism, from the State Departed of the United States, and the database included in the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), show a great increase in the number of terrorist attacks that took place around the world in that year. The number of attacks during the last two years has increased, reaching the levels from the years 2006 and 2007, with a death toll higher than 30,000 each year. The data partly explain the situation: an accelerated deterioration of the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan after the long military interventions, the rise and push of Daesh and the huge increase of attacks and lethality of Boko Haram in Nigeria.

To be sure, jihadism is widely considered as the main security threat, but it needs to be put into context: in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, and Syria it is a daily reality. In Western countries, in turn, it is an important threat that is not normally produced.

Different questions help to understand the recent situation: a threat increasingly diversified after the break of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) from Al Qaeda and the proliferation of local groups, the momentum of Daesh and its capacity for attracting the youth around the world, specially after the declaration of the Caliphate in Mosul, a multiplicity of endless conflicts in extreme fragile states, an intensification of the conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims, the fragmentation of Islam itself with growing extremist visions, the benefit from new telecommunication technologies – such as the Internet, the darknet or apps – which increase the propagandistic effect of the message and the actions of those groups, the creation of real “terror armies” in the conflict zones, with the mobilizations of foreign fighters who support Daesh and rise of their strategic and tactic capacities, growing connection between terrorist and organized crimes groups who live together in the same conflict environments, the rise of homegrown terrorism in Western countries and evolution and adaptation of the *modus operandi* with an important emulation effect
(use of firearms, attacks against soft targets, beheadings, vehicle related actions). These tendencies will remain in the medium term.¹

All these elements, and others of local character, imply for Western nations an important increase of the terrorist threat and the need of adapting the counter-terrorism operations to the metamorphosis the threat has suffered.

Before focusing on Spain, we need to understand how the situation in Europe is evolving. Freedom of movement inside the European Union implies that the threat of any of its states could perfectly expand to the rest, which proves the need of shared measures.

The Paris terror attacks in January and November, the police operation in Belgium in which two alleged terrorists were killed, the attacks registered in Copenhagen in February, together with the constant police operations and dismantling of presumed complots against multiple European cities, have raised all the alarms during 2015.

Within Europe, the effects of the Paris terror attacks are evident and clearly negative. The impacts are not only the personal and material damages produced directly during the attacks, but also the increase of the social terror, which has contributed to a social polarization – the rise of xenophobic actions and Islamophobia, as well as anti-Semitism, with several attacks to mosques or refuge centers, or the support of actions of groups such as PEGIDA and its spread along Europe.

The effects have also opened the tricky debate between freedom and security and divided the Western vision related to the limits of the freedom of speech, especially when these expressions offend concrete communities. It has fostered the common complaint against the security forces and intelligence services, because of the retrospective clarification bias based on drafting an analysis afterwards. It has also promoted the beginning of the adaptation process of new legislative and police measures, but perhaps without pointing out sufficiently the need of not overreacting to the threats. The paralysis of a city such as Brussels and the prolonged state of emergency declared in France after the attacks represent a victory of terrorism that has determined the lifestyle in Europe and imposed limitations on our rights and freedoms.

2. Analysis of the Threat in Spain

2.1 Factors involved

After the attacks of March 11th, 2004, Spain redoubled efforts to fight against jihadist terrorism, which had previously used Spain as a logistics centre and a place to find shelter. The most important historical antecedent was the attack on the restaurant “El Descanso” in 1985, near the US military base of Torrejon de Ardoz, in which 18 people were killed.

In order to analyze the existent threats for Spain, we need to identify a series of factors, which could be quantified, or at least, susceptible of being measured. They should allow fixing the needed references to determine if the threat is rising or lowering. In that sense, we could distinguish a range of structural and circumstantial aspects, following the approach of Reinares, who analyzed the dimension of the threat in different European countries.

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**Figure 1: Structural and circumstantial factors in assessing the threat**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Circumstantial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>Threats and mentions to the Spanish state in the jihadist propaganda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Al-Andalus</td>
<td>Counter terrorism efforts in Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Previous experiences with terrorist groups, attacks and counter-terrorism policies</td>
<td>Spanish presence in the international sphere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geography</strong></td>
<td>Level of acceptance of the Muslim communities and level of social polarization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Proximity to conflict spots.</td>
<td>The number of displaced fighters and returnees from the conflict areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Ceuta and Melilla</td>
<td>Specific grievances. Use of veil, caricatures or policies toward mosques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Spain, link between continents.</td>
<td>Opportunity circumstances. Closeness to the elections, ephemera, religious celebrations (Christmas), celebration of big international events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social-Demography</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Communities and minorities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Multiculturalism and integration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Fragile Urban Environments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author's concept.

Among the first set of factors, historical, geographical and social-demographical aspects continue to determine greatly the current threat.

The claim of Al-Andalus, or the mention of the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, is a constant in the jihadist literature. Al Andalus represents the splendor of Muslim power and culture and the great future desire. The name describes parts of Spain that were occupied by Muslims between 711 and 1492. It constituted a province of the Umayyad Caliphate, the Emirate of Cordoba (750–929) and the Caliphate of Cordoba (929–1031).

Taking into account the historical aspects, we need to consider previous attacks and antiterrorist measures in the country, even though the past cannot be used as a reliable source to predict the future. Spain has fought for many years against a cruel terrorist group (ETA) and has demonstrated that the tools of the rule of law can end this scourge. The domestic terrorist group Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) has not launched any attacks since it announced a “definitive cessation of
armed activity” in October 2011, although the group had not formally disbanded or given up its weapons arsenal by the end of 2015.

But jihadist terrorism is a different phenomenon, with new features, which have forced Western states to adapt legal and judicial structures and the actions of law enforcement agencies. Presently, our societies face a more international and diffuse threat.

At the same time, however, the proximity to North Africa, which sets up Spain as the main entrance to Europe, is a differential aspect against the backdrop of other European nations. As Reinares claims, the distance to jihadist centers is an essential aspect to take into account. The existence of close conflict spots, such as Libya, Sahel, or the desire of Boko Haram to play in a greater international dimension after pledging loyalty to the Daesh – this change is shown in the new denomination they have adopted, calling themselves Islamic State in Western Africa – constitute clear and present risks.

In this regard, collaboration with Algeria and Morocco are fundamental for the national security of Spain against the instability of the Sahel, and especially the turmoil in Libya and Tunisia, as well as the connections between the terrorist net in Spain and in Morocco. De la Corte,³ analyzing the situation in Ceuta and Melilla, establishes a conceptual framework, suggesting to take into account the proximity to extremist centers, the existence of shared frontiers, the connection between the different migration routes and the terrain.

In the social-demographical aspects, we need to point out the demographic configuration, which could feed the social polarization between communities and minorities, the existence of marginalization and social exclusion, and the creation of urban ghettos. Blanco and Cohen,⁴ in a drug trafficking analysis in Mexico, applied the conceptualization of Sullivan⁵ about the existence of “narco-cities,” a local application of the concepts of failed or fragile states. In the present

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paper, we shall apply this concept to specific zones of cities and regions in which we can talk about “fragile urban environments.” In this regard, we may think of examples of districts such as Príncipe Alfonso in Ceuta, Molenbeek in Brussels, or some banlieues in the suburbs of Paris, although we can also assume that they are subjected to different conditions.

A failed state would be the one which is not capable of providing the basic goods and services to its citizens, which cannot guarantee their security against armed forces, and which, finally, lacks legitimacy, as a great percentage of its elites and society do reject the existing rules. Following Max Weber, we can describe a failed state as one that does not have the monopoly of the use of force. According to the OECD, a fragile state cannot satisfy the expectations of its citizens or control the changes in the political process. Sullivan classifies examples of “narco-cities” as communities with extreme violence rates and conflicts due to the actions of different cartels. In their most extreme level, there are several cities with a lack of legitimacy and public power, which is occupied by non-State entities, such as the organized crime groups.

Blanco and Cohen understand as “fragile urban environments” the districts or zones of regions characterized by the convergence of several of the following aspects: a high inequality rate, great unemployment rates (especially youth unemployment), high percentage of school failure, extreme poverty or deprivation, huge crime rates, difficulties in accessing basic public services – electricity, water, healthcare, education or security provisions – or the complex urbanism which could isolate a part of a city, among others.

We need to avoid the unfair stigmatization of the resident population, which could only create the effect of polarizing the feelings and raising the perception of offense. The majority of the citizens who live in those places assume all the rights and obligations demandable as a part of a citizenship. They are not violent radicals, nor jihadist, and they do not want to travel to Syria. However, there are socio-economic conditions for radicalization processes: employment, infrastructure, social services and development are the means of action. Professor Luis de la Corte, in a report for

7 J. P. Sullivan, Narco-Cities…op.cit.
the Real Instituto Elcano, suggested a series of measures, in which the ones of local character and socio-political content acquired special relevance.

Among the circumstantial factors to evaluate the threat, the following should be pointed out:

1. **References to Spain in the jihadist propaganda, especially in the cases of direct threat**

Spain continues to appear in the jihadist discourse. Torres summarizes all references to Spain in the jihadist propaganda without taking into account the anonymous declarations, and allowing to distinguish those which claim historical and geographical aspects, from those which call for violent actions.\(^{10}\)

In the year 2015, the above mentioned author has found 21 references, while in the previous year only 10 references were found.

*Figure 2: Spain in the Jihadist propaganda*

![Graph showing the evolution of topics by year from 2001 to 2015.](#)


\(^{10}\) M. Torres, *Referencias a España en la propaganda yihadista*, available at [http://www.seguridadinternacional.es/?q=es/content/referencias-espa%C3%B1a-en-la-propaganda-yihadista#overlay-context=es/content/operaciones-policiales-contra-el-terrorismo-yihadista-en-espa%C3%B1a%25C3%25B1%3Fq%3Des/content/operaciones-policiales-contra-el-terrorismo-yihadista-en-espa%C3%B1a%25C3%25B1](http://www.seguridadinternacional.es/?q=es/content/referencias-espa%C3%B1a-en-la-propaganda-yihadista#overlay-context=es/content/operaciones-policiales-contra-el-terrorismo-yihadista-en-espa%C3%B1a%25C3%25B1), accessed 20 January 2016.
As the figure shows, most of the mentions are based on Al-Andalus, sometimes as the greater desired goal, and sometimes together with the desire of taking Paris and Roma. However, we can point out two very specific references to Spain. The first one was the call for action of the “brothers” of Melilla, with origins in Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), in which the Spanish Abu al-Nur al Andalusi speaks, but which does not call for action in Spain. The second one was an article titled “The Lone Wolves,” published by Al-Khilafah Media Fundation, about future terrorist actions in Madrid, London, and Sydney. Later on, in January 2016, in a new video from Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Abu al-Nur al Andalusi threatens Napoli, Rome and Madrid with future explosions.

A video published in November by Wilayat Dayala, threatening France, used Spain as an example, pointing out how Spanish citizens forced the Government against the participation in the war in Iraq.

The evaluation of these communications could also consider the broadcast and the impact of the channel in which they appear. Spain is mentioned three times in Dabiq, the publication of Daesh – on the numbers 7, 8 and 11. It is also referenced on the environment of Al Qaeda, as Ayman Al Zawahiri speaks about Spain three times: in the jihadist magazine *Inspire*, in the magazine *Resurgence*, and in a video of AQIM.

The number of references to Spain has soared in January 2016. Torres has detected the existence of at least nine statements, with explicit mentions to Al Andalus, Ceuta, Melilla, Canary Islands, Cordoba, Sevilla, Granada and Madrid.¹¹

### 2. Counter-terrorism efforts

The number of developed operations and detainees could turn into an indirect indicator of the jihadist activities developed in the country: in terms of recruitment and indoctrination, financing and communication activities, foreign fighters traveling to conflict zones or plans of attacks.

Police operations are also an indicator of violent incidents (there are more attempts, luckily, than performances), susceptible of specific evaluations: the threat does not have the same degree in the disarticulation of a propaganda network as an attack in an advanced process. In 2015, 102 individuals were taken into custodys with Islamic terrorism charges, 75 in Spain and 27 in other States. Since

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the beginning of our last government in December 2011, 177 individuals were detained. Data from 2015 show a great increase over the 46 detainees in 2014, 21 in 2013 or just 8 in 2012, proving the momentum of Daesh and its recruitment, indoctrination and transfer of fighters to the conflict zones. The number of operations has also increased, reaching a maximum of 36, against the 19 registered in 2007, with 8 other additional missions in other countries.

Figure 3: Police operations and arrested people

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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operations in Spain</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrested people</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>603</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations in other countries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrested in other countries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own analysis on the basis of data from Ministry of the Interior of Spain.

Figure 4: Evolution of operations and arrested people

Source: Own analysis on the basis of data from Ministry of the Interior of Spain.

As we shall argue later on, Spain develops an intensive activity in the fight against terrorism in all its forefronts, not only in the police field.
3. Number of returnees and displaced combatants

According to the official information issued by the Ministry of the Interior, there would be approximately 139 people displaced to conflict areas from Spain. At the end of June 2015, 25 were estimated to have returned to Spain. Some of them would have died in Syria, in combats and suicide missions or because of bombings. At the beginning of December 2015, The Soufan Group estimated between 27,000 and 31,000 people coming from 86 countries to have travelled to Syria and Iraq during the last 18 months in order to join Daesh, and it pointed out that 133 of them came from Spain, a relatively low number compared that of other neighboring countries (1,700 from France, 760 from UK and Germany or 470 from Belgium). It is estimated that around 10–30% of displaced people, at a global level, could have returned to their home countries.

Furthermore, according to data given by the media in November, 301 people are being investigated by the National High Court, due to their possible relation to recruitment, exaltation, belonging to or collaboration with armed groups.

4. Spain’s action and its international role, especially in conflict countries

Spain’s exterior action in conflicts like those taking place in Syria, Iraq and Libya is currently low, at least in comparison to the main role the country assumed in the meeting of the Azores, which was previous to the war in Iraq, after the meeting of the former president José María Aznar with George Bush and Tony Blair. The jihadist propaganda of the last months, previously mentioned, published the Spanish flag among those of the countries they identify as part of a coalition against ISIS.

5. Degree of acceptance of Muslim communities, social exclusion or opportunities for social participation, communication lines and representation, Islamophobia, hate crimes

Exclusion, inequality and marginalization feelings can favor violent radicalization processes. They can be circumstantial situations, but if they are maintained over time and in a specific geographical area, they lead to the creation of “fragile urban areas.”

While Spain's unemployment rate was 21.6% in September 2015, the Moroccan rate was 60%. Ceuta presents an unemployment rate of 30.6% and Melilla 31.4%, according to the Labor Force Survey data of the third quarter of 2015. Youth unemployment is even worse, reaching 47.7% in September 2015 in Spain (90.35% in Ceuta or 69.14% in Melilla).

Additionally, the economic downturn left 720,000 households without any kind of income, according to data of the third quarter of 2015 (in comparison to 740,000 in 2014). 1.470,000 households have all their members unemployed. 22.2% of the population is in risk of poverty, a number which rises to 44.3% in Ceuta.

Different studies show how Spain is the state of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) in which inequality rose the most (2007–2011). 10% of the poorest individuals lost a third of their income between 2007 and 2010. The Gini coefficient gives Spain a punctuation of 0.347 in 2015, the second country in inequality matters of Europe, after Latvia.

On December 31, 2014 there were 1,858,409 Muslims living in Spain, which means an increase of 7.2% in comparison to 2013 numbers, according to the data shown by the Observatory Andalusí¹³ and the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain (UCIDE). More than 40% come from Morocco. 218,288 are Spanish, approximately 40% of the total, 400,286 descendants. This means an increase of 26% of the data of 2013. If we classify them by Autonomous Communities, in Catalonia there are 509,333 Muslims, 298,152 in Andalusia, 274,907 in Madrid and 194,585 in Valencia.

A report of PEW Research¹⁴ published in 2014 points out that 47% of Spanish citizens want fewer immigrants, which is a much lower number than that of countries like Italy, France or UK. A report published in 2015 shows that 42% has a negative perception of Muslims, in comparison to 52%, which has a positive perception. A report of Foundation La Caixa points out that the acceptance of the immigrants in Spain fell from 70% in 2010 to 57% in 2012, and that the rejection rose from 10% to 14%. At the same time, mistrust toward Muslims went from a 23% to a 26%.

Spain has made progress in the last two years in registering and addressing hate crimes, offering the first statistics since 2013. There were 1,172 hate crimes in 2013, increasing in 9.6% in 2014. In both years, sexual identity or orientation

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were the most common incidences (452 in 2013 and 513 in 2014). 381 racism and xenophobia incidents took place in 2013 and 475 in 2014. Through 2015, the Ministry of the Interior admitted a rise in the data that are being analyzed this year, with 40% of hate crimes related to Islamophobia.

Figure 5: Hate crimes in Spain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hate crimes in Spain</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Semitism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate against poor people</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacities</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual identity</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism / Xenophobia</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1172</td>
<td>1285</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own analysis on the basis of data from Ministry of the Interior of Spain.

6. Specific grievances perceived. Veil, caricatures

Several debates have affected other European states, especially France: the use of religious symbols, the Islamic veils in schools or Prophet Muhammad caricatures in satirical magazines like *Charlie Hebdo*. In Spain, there have been no discussions of such intensity and they have not caused direct or explicit threats as a consequence of that type of issues.

7. Opportunity criteria

Terrorism is a random event, where intentions and capacities must converge in order to materialize an attack against the identified vulnerabilities. This convergence might take place whenever and anywhere in the world, as it depends on the decision taken by groups or individuals. The intention might be increased thanks to facts like the celebration of especially important events (general elections, sports or an international summit). In these cases, the desire to attack raises the expectations about the impact it may cause, which is always a part of the terrorist objective.

The model that has been set out allows us to analyze the evolution of the threat and to make a comparison to other neighboring countries. We can thereby see that the level of threat in Spain is lower than in France.

The following chart offers a comparative between Spain and France:
Figure 6: Threat analysis in Spain and France

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical factors</td>
<td>Al Andalus, autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla</td>
<td>Colonial past, history of Algeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical factors</td>
<td>Proximity to the north of Africa</td>
<td>Distance to conflict focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Muslim population</td>
<td>1.858.09</td>
<td>4.710.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No of displaced people</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>1.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- to conflict zones</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Returnees from conflict</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>10.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zones</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sized up people or people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- under special surveillance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in</td>
<td>Very low current level</td>
<td>High implication, especially in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>international operations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Syria and Sahel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of threat in</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jihadist propaganda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity in anti-terrorist</td>
<td>Intense</td>
<td>Extremely intense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other circumstances:</td>
<td>Low-medium level of grievance perception</td>
<td>High level: Charlie Hebdo, debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caricatures of Mahomet, veil,</td>
<td></td>
<td>about laicism and multiculturalism,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td>etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author's concept.

2.2 Case analysis

It is of relevance to complement the analysis of objective data presented in the previous sections with an analysis of the profiles, activities and motivations of some of the individuals arrested in the operations which were carried out. The quantitative and qualitative information obtained from this type of analysis can help us to know the phenomenon, but not to entirely understand it.

The information about the last police operations allows us to characterize the current threat:

- Existence of recruitment and indoctrination networks to send people to Syria and Iraq. In spite of the low number of displaced people coming from Spain regarding other countries, it is still the aspiration of some people.
- Coexistence of cells that, regardless of a displacement of some of its members, want to commit an attack in Spain.
• Existence of groups susceptible of extremist propaganda, with a possible progress of the Salafi movement.
• An evolution of women’s role in different lines, not only regarding displacement in order to get married and establish in a territory controlled by Daesh, but also in active recruitment activities.
• A clear change in tendency, with a majority of arrested being Spanish citizens, and the increasing phenomenon of the converted people. A homegrown violent radicalization.
• The existence of links among arrested people and networks or extremists previously arrested. The networks that send combatants connect previous experiences of people already linked to violent extremist opinions with new young candidates to Jihad.
• The existence of a risk that derives both from the return of people that have fought in conflicts and the frustration of those who could not travel to conflict zones, increased by the call from Daesh to act in their own area of origin. International bombings in Syria, the greater control of passengers in the EU and a greater surveillance in Turkish borders can make their journeys more difficult, generating the alternative of moving to other conflict zones, like Libya, or staying in their countries of origin in order to wait for an opportunity.
• The risk that derives from individual actors willing commit a terrorist attack, especially against soft targets.
• The cases of explicit radicalization, and the role of social media in this regard.
• The existing focus in Ceuta, Melilla and Catalonia.

Researches from Reinares and García-Calvo\(^\text{15}\) and Jordan\(^\text{16}\) offer a complete vision of the characteristics of people involved in jihadist plots in Spain and the jihadist militancy in Spain, through the analysis of people condemned and operations developed.


2.3 Evaluation of the threat and alert level

Therefore, the threat would be the convergence of objectives, intentions and capacities.

- Objectives. Even though there are no objectives declared *a priori*, unlike in France with *Charlie Hebdo*, the emulation effect of other attacks and the orientation toward soft targets (objectives of low protection) make any action possible.

- Intentions. The intention is connected to the desire to commit an attack and the expectations that it causes. The variables mentioned before and the high number of police interventions that have been developed show the existence of the desire. The expectations grow when the attack can generate a higher impact, and attract the attention of mass media: indiscriminate and coordinated attacks, symbolic targets, number of deaths or coincidence with international events.

- Capacities. The capacity is determined by the knowledge needed and resource availability in order to commit an attack. Capacities are present, access to information is easy and resources (basically economic in order to obtain weapons and prepare the necessary logistics: rented housing, vehicles) are available. In any event, carrying out a sophisticated attack, trying to emulate what happened in Paris, increases the cost of the necessary resources, implies a larger group of people and, therefore, makes its development more complex.

The Spanish system has been modified in 2015 and level 4 has been established, considered as high. In the previous months, the existing model for evaluating the threat established an activation level 3, which corresponded to a very high threat alert, implementing the grade of low intensity.

Moreover, the new level of Anti-terrorist Alert has been made public, available on the webpage of the Ministry of the Interior, contributing to transparency and avoiding misunderstandings or circulation of unfounded rumors.
It would be possible to determine the existence of an endogenous and an exogenous threat, in spite of globalization present in all areas (economy, politics, society or technology), including the globalization of evil.

With respect to the endogenous threat, it reveals the existence of networks, cells and radical individuals established in Spain. In fact, even though their objective is still essentially logistic, especially in what refers to sending combatants to conflict zones, we cannot dismiss the fact that any of these structures could revert their activity, so that they decide to commit terrorist attacks in Spain, either by their own means and motivations, or induced by international organizations, as recent attacks in France have confirmed. This situation could also be favored by the return of jihadists coming from conflict zones, who could at any moment invigorate actions on the national territory with their new ideological and operative capacities obtained in their displacement. We cannot dismiss either the action of individual terrorist actors (“lone wolves”), given the increasing effectiveness of the extremist propaganda and the existence of radicalization centers in our country. Likewise, we would include the risk that derives from the frustrated individuals when they try to move to Syria and Iraq, as well as released prisoners after serving their sentences.

The exogenous threat is the one that comes from international terrorist organizations and that could manifest through oriented or coordinated attacks from outside, or against Spanish interests abroad, with motivations linked to the factors that have been previously mentioned (historical aspects, anti-terrorist activity or participation in international missions of Spain). The threat is focused on Daesh, not forgetting the continuity of Al Qaeda either, especially...
through its franchise Al Qaeda at Islamic Maghreb, which is active in calling for getting back Al Andalus.

In this case, as we have previously pointed out, the proximity of conflicts in the Sahel and the Maghreb, with states in a situation of huge fragility (Mali), failed states (Libya) or states subjected to an important terrorist action (Tunisia). These environments foster the existence of several radical groups, the free movement of firearms and the use of organized crime networks for their financing. They become logistics, recruitment, and training, as well as dissemination centers of jihadists to other parts of the world. Considering the possible return of Jihadists from conflict zones, the countries of North Africa present data to be considered (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia). The dismantled networks in Spain have shown the existing connection with Morocco, which has increased its alert level.

3. Efforts against Jihadism in Spain

Spain is facing the current threat with a holistic vision and an integrated action. In this sense, the year 2015 has been especially important, with measures from different spheres, making use of all the resources available in the rule of law. When facing an asymmetrical threat (no norms, no values, with plenty of resources, opaque and diffuse, resilient and adaptive), the rule of law must have the necessary tools to provide measures that can ensure the safety of the citizens and that allows the citizens to exercise their full rights and freedoms. The great challenge, as in the rest of European countries, is to achieve security, that will never be absolute, which entails the least degree of intrusion into citizens’ rights and liberties, provided with the necessary guarantees, and which do not involve a change in our way of living. The current risk is to place freedom at the service of security.

3.1 Characteristics of the fight against terrorism in Spain

In a review of Frank Foley’s work, *Countering Terrorism in Britain and France: Institutions, Norms and the Shadow of the Past*, Blanco and Cohen, after a bibliographical revision, make groups of the criteria that can characterize the fight against terrorism of a state:

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**Figure 8: Counter-terrorism factors in Spain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Spain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical, geographical and demographical aspects</td>
<td>It makes reference to the structural issues previously mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priorities</td>
<td>The fight against Daesh and violent radicalization are the two political priorities in terms of security and one of the biggest challenges to National Security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature and intensity of the threat</td>
<td>The threat is Spain in obvious and is materialized in the different intentions from groups or individuals. The intensity of it varies over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of previous events and experiences against terrorism</td>
<td>The attacks of May 11th, 2004 had great impact and represented an inflexion point. The impact was massive in terms of lives and social and political polarization. The fight against the terrorist group ETA has been an important experience in the fight against this scourge through the intense use of the tools that the rule of law provides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State capacity</td>
<td>Spain shows a clear internal capacity to fight against terrorism, but not at the international (compared with US or France).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing values</td>
<td>As a European model, we do have guarantees to protect the rights and freedoms of the citizens. Spain could represent a mixed model in comparison to the French one (security above all) and the British one (rights and freedoms as the priority).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>In Spain, we have also experienced the international trend toward greater coordination of intelligence services and security forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other facts: caricatures of Mahomet, veil, etc.</td>
<td>Low-middle level of damage perception.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal system of the State</td>
<td>It is related to the judicial model. In France, the magistrates are the ones who guide the investigations. In the UK, the separation of powers and judicial independence represent a key principle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of counter-terrorism actions</td>
<td>The former and current measures form an antiterrorist model over time and can have both a positive and a negative impact (stigmatization of communities, increase of xenophobia and hate crimes, vigilantism or control of ideologies and speech).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relevant criteria</td>
<td>This makes reference to the relevant factors already mentioned: opportunity criteria, international agreements, security alert and social alarm, party policies, social support…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the basis of these approaches, we can conclude that Spain has an intense counter-terrorism system.

3.2 The fight against terrorism in 2015

After the generalized psychosis in Europe, especially after the attacks in January and on November 13th, 2015 in Paris and other global actions of Daesh, Spain has reacted by developing two basic principles: unity and firmness.

In February 2015, the party in power (Popular Party, PP) and the biggest opposition party (Spanish Socialist Party, PSOE) signed an agreement in order to adopt counter-terrorism measures, showing that certain national policies should be above the governments of each period. PP, PSOE, CC, UPN and Foro Asturias in the first place, and Ciudadanos, UPyD, Unió and el PAR, have signed it 9 months later. The pact is based on eight basic points, and it is especially relevant because it represents the political unity in the face of the threats. On the document, all the signers agree to modify the Criminal Code in relation to terrorism; to apply the maximal penalty of imprisonment for terrorist crimes related to deaths; the promotion of legislative measures that improve the framework for action for judges, attorneys and law enforcement agencies; to keep alive the memory of victims; to provide the means and resources for the fight against terrorism; to activate policies against violent radicalization that includes racism, xenophobia and discrimination; to boost Spain’s participation in the European Union and international institutions and promote initiatives in the Parliament that seek to achieve the greater consensus.

At the normative level, several important measures have been adopted. For example, those included in the Organic Law 2/2015, from March 30th that has modified the Criminal Code and introduced a new crime and penalty classification, with the aim of adapting it to the evolution of the jihadist movement. In such way, it has recognized the role of the fighters returning to Spain and the individual terrorists (or most commonly known as “lone wolves”). The Organic Law 13/2015, from October 5th, modifies the Criminal Procedure Court, which facilitates the interception of communication through new technologies, the introduction of trojans for investigative purposes, and the use of secret informatics agents, always with a judicial authorization.

A Strategic National Plan against Violent radicalization was published in 2015. Different actors participate in the fight against terrorism and this can be shown in the plan: Muslim communities, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, law enforcement agencies, etc. The process must include private security sector, Academia, citizens and the mass media. It implies the development
of a culture of security. As we have already mentioned, Spain is developing a continuous policing and judicial activity when fighting against jihadist terrorism.

At the beginning of December 2015, the Ministry of the Interior opened a service for citizen complaint against possible radicalization situations that works through a web page, a telephone number, an email or an app (AlertCops), and that is a part of the plan called Stop Radicalisms. Sources from the Ministry of the Interior informed that in less than one month (from December 4th to December 30th), they received almost 600 alerts from the citizens, 270 out of which were really relevant in the fight against terrorism. The aim of this plan (that ensures anonymity of the complainer) is to give a voice to the alerts in cases of radicalization in schools or neighborhood, or the disappearance of people suspected to have travelled to Syria or Iraq to join Daesh.

Besides, at the end of 2015, the Ministry of the Interior has started to spread videos that counteract the jihadist propaganda of Daesh. These videos are published in the Internet and social media with the hashtag #DaeshVidasRotas, which means “Daesh broken lives.” The videos are in Spanish and in Arabic and are produced by the Sawab Centre, an initiative from the USA and the United Arab Emirates. However, there is a plan to self-elaborate videos from the Intelligence Centre against Terrorism and Organized Crime (Centro de Inteligencia contra el Terrorismo y el Crimen Organizado, CITCO).

At the international level, Spanish activity is also remarkable. Spain is an active partner with the United States in efforts to track and disrupt transnational terrorism. Spain deepened its cooperation with Morocco, Algeria, Mali, and Mauritania to combat and contain the threat posed by Al Qaeda (AQ), its affiliates, and like-minded groups.

Spain has been an active member and an outspoken supporter of the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since its inception. Spain is an active member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum.

Spain is a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Egmont Group, a global association of financial intelligence units. Spain was reviewed under the new round of FATF evaluations and found to have “a strong system to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, with up-to-date laws and regulations and sound institutions for combating these threats.” The evaluation also recommended improvements “such as the implementation of targeted financial sanctions to allow the freezing of terrorism-related assets.”

Since 2004, Spain has been part of the informal working group on Jihadist known as the 5 + 5. The group brings together defense ministers or their designees from five European countries (Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, and Malta) and...
five Maghreb countries (Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya). Its mission is to exchange information and discuss the operational implications of the threat from violent Islamist extremists in the European theater, including the threat posed by returning foreign terrorist fighters.

Spain's participation in the G-4 with Portugal, France, and Morocco also has an operational objective. The four countries freely exchange tactics and intelligence on counternarcotics, counterterrorism, and organized crime/illegal immigration. Spain continued its work with the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

Despite all this, the path of the fight against terrorism will be long and painful. This effort would require not only to implement more measures but also to achieve equilibrium between privacy and rights and freedoms.

Therefore, there are still some remaining challenges that should be added to those that will come from the evolution of terrorism: increase in social participation, progress of the culture of security, fight against radicalization in schools, attention to hate crimes, engagement of the media in the fight against terrorism, implementation of national plants with local police and members of the private security sector (as the first action forces in attacks against soft targets), strengthening of coordination levels, existence of clear police action protocols at all levels, promotion of knowledge and intelligence in such a complex environment, collaboration with a greater number of actors and stakeholders, introduction of measures to evaluate the fight against terrorism (evidence based policing), and improvement of the police resources, among others.

4. The Efforts of the Guardia Civil against Jihadism

A summer course celebrated in July 2015, in collaboration with the University Institute of Research in Homeland Security (IUISI) and Universidad de la Rioja, presented different levels of action of the Civil Guard against jihadism.

Currently, the Brigadier leads the Information Department, with the mission of fighting terrorism. There is a second authority, the Colonel; the technical area also managed by a Colonel and 5 Central Units, managed by the Lieutenant Colonels. The Special Central Unit number 1 (UCE-1), is focused on internal national terrorism; the Special Central Unit number 2 (UCE-2) is focused on international terrorism; the Special Central Unit number 3 (UCE-3) is in charge of general information, labor and social issues, and counterintelligence. There is a Central Unit for Logistic Support (UCAL) and the Operational Support Group.

The UCE-2, within its area of responsibility in fight against global terrorism, is the Unit directly in charge of the counter-terrorism activity in the frame of Islamist terrorism. For that purpose, it has two groups, one for obtaining (managing
sources of information) and one for elaborating (analysis). It has also an economic investigation section that is focused on the research concerning everything related to the financing of terrorism. In almost forty operations of the Unit, nearly 150 people have been arrested since 2004.

The Information Department acts both at the strategic and operative levels, participating in all decision-making organs of the Ministry of the Interior, and in collaboration with the Intelligence Center against Terrorism and Organized Crime (CITCO). The Information Department covers all intelligence analysis and investigation areas against the terrorist and violent radicalization phenomena, such as groups and individuals, activities, propaganda, communication in social media or financing.

CITCO is the result of the union, in 2014, of the former National Centre for Antiterrorist Coordination (CNCA) and the Intelligence Centre against Organized Crime, created after the attacks of March 11th, 2004. The Intelligence Centre against Terrorism and Organized Crime (CITCO) has an organic level of general sub-directorate and is in charge of the reception, integration and analysis of the strategic information available in the fight against any kind of organized crime, terrorism and violent radicalization, the design of specific strategies against these threats, as well as – if needed – the creation of action and operative coordination criteria of the acting bodies in cases of coincidence or concurrence in the investigations.

This growing link between criminal and terrorist activity, already known but proved with the recent Paris attacks and the flow of weapons in the EU, makes necessary the implication of other units of the Civil Guard, from their different fields of activity. The action of a criminal group can lead to the dismantling of a terrorist cell. In this sense, it must be remarked how the Civil Guard, through the Judicial Police Department, fights all types of organized crime.

Moreover, the international dimension of the Civil Guard is another factor to point out when fighting terrorism. The global world in which we live points out the importance of the external action of the state. This external action is reflected mainly in three areas: cooperation with other police forces and international organizations, support the actions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEC), and participation in crisis management operations.

The Civil Guard has some features and capabilities that make it perfect to take on these responsibilities. The Civil Guard is an ideal tool to be deployed outside our borders in support of missions for crisis management, both military and civilian, improving post-conflict stabilization processes, in which the Civil Guard can play a key role due to their police and military capacities.
This presence is reflected in the ongoing participation of members of Civil Guard in international organizations, where decisions are taken at the European level and within the United Nations, and where initiatives or strategies are designed in the field of security. It is also common to find civil guards cooperating closely with other police forces in operations against terrorism, illegal immigration and organized crime.

Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, the Civil Guard supports the governmental action to strengthen the security of embassies in high-risk countries. Civil Guard has aggregates and counselors in several embassies, supporting the external action, while facilitating police cooperation.

Finally – and with the aim of exploiting the different open sources of information, the relations with universities and think tanks, the participation in research projects of the EU and the elaboration of future studies about the criminal phenomenon – the Guardia Civil has a Centre of Analysis and Foresight.

According to the US Department of State, “the National Police and the Civil Guard share responsibility for counterterrorism and cooperate well with the United States, with strong information sharing and joint threat assessments.”

The European Commission decided to establish a new European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC), launched on January 2016. Mr. Manuel Navarrete Paniagua, a high-ranking officer of the Spanish Civil Guard with extensive practical counter terrorism experience, will lead it. He was already the head of the counter terrorism unit at Europol. Currently, 39 staff members and 5 seconded national experts work in the ECTC. Working alongside other operational centers at Europol, such as the European Cyber Crime Centre (EC3), the ECTC will be a constituent part of Europol, under the general command of its Director, and will serve to augment the organization’s capabilities as the EU’s law enforcement agency. It is an evidence of the experience and good work done by the Civil Guard against terrorism.

5. Conclusion

After the Paris attacks, Spain has been able to show firmness and unity. No event has been cancelled and the lives of the citizens have not suffered any changes. In a calmness framework, different measures have been adopted and the level of terrorist alert has been maintained (or only “reinforced”, according to the Minister of the Interior). At the same time, measures have been adopted in every sphere as a way of adaptation to this new phenomenon, that is not new, but that evolves

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and adapts to a complex and changing environment at the political, social and technological levels, in an asymmetrical confrontation.

Firmness and unity are the pillars for the counter-terrorism action. Before that action, we need to have the best knowledge and intelligence that allow a better analysis to support the decision-making process. This process must include long-term views, so that, step by step, the counter-terrorism activity will stop being so reactive and will become much more preventive and anticipatory.

The road will be long. More attacks will occur. It requires an exercise in creativity and imagination to exploit all the tools that are allowed by the rule of law, bearing in mind that the role of a law enforcement agency is, first of all, to guarantee the exercise of the rights and freedoms of citizens.

References


The Fight against Jihadism in Spain


