

## Round Table - Terrorism, Threats and Strategy

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### ❖ *The level of terrorism threats*

- The radical Islamist group is now expanding in roughly a dozen countries across Africa, the Middle East and Asia by exploiting local grievances, doling out money and leveraging its battlefield successes;
- The expansionist strategy is not new. Since 2014, Islamic State leaders reached out to militant groups in such countries as Libya, Egypt, Nigeria, Yemen, Algeria, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Their goal is to increase Islamic State's influence and recruit fighters to come to Iraq and Syria.
- The threat to Europe is not direct but indirect;
- 30,000 foreign fighters have flocked into Syria and Iraq from more than 100 countries since 2011. Most of them joined the ranks of Islamic State jihadists;
- According to UN report, the number of foreign fighters worldwide had soared by 71% between the middle of 2014 and March 2015;
- IS shown an unprecedented ability to recruit and to radicalize followers over the Internet and on social media; IS is modern and use the new technologies;
- There are approximately 5,000 foreign fighters from Europe, with the most fighters leaving from France, Germany and the UK;
- Up to 1,800 French citizens and residents are suspected to be involved in jihadist networks worldwide. Some 500 of them are believed to take part in the military action in Syria and Iraq, while reportedly 133 have died there in combat.
- Traditional terrorist threats such as regional separatism and left wing terrorism fade away. Somehow the radicalisation has been “Islamised”.
- The expression “Jihadism” is more appropriate than “terrorism” as it is more revealing of its ideological characteristic; the enemy and the threat is the ideology;
- The terrorist strategy has evolved from local initiatives to outreach attacks from outside (09/11) to a concentrated strategy based on a territory (IS) where victims are foremost Muslims;

### ❖ *The EU response*

- Strong EU response articulated by the European Council meetings in February and June 2015 following the Paris Attack;
- Measures decided included the creation of the *Europol Counterterrorism Center* and the *Internet Referral Unit* within Europol to detect and erase illegal content online;
- Reluctance of MS Counter-terrorism intelligence services to sharing data and information remains the big challenge;
- However serious improvements on sharing of information has been observed lately;
- The urgency of finalizing the EU PNR directive;

- Meaningful use of TFTP agreement for disrupting financing of terrorism;
- Cooperation with private partners: the setting up of the Internet referral Unit: has permitted to detect 50000 tweet followers of IS. Internet Services providers are key partners in taking down websites containing terrorism propaganda;
- Europol has to be provided legal means to secure its cooperation with private partners and human and financial resources to perform its tasks.

❖ ***Strategies to explore***

- Explore the ways to reconcile security and political stability with the freedom of religion;
- Muslim traditions are consistent with European identity and values: Muslim doctrine also place security as the prerequisite for a correct practice of the religion;
- Empowering religious leaders and civil society in non-confessional secular dimension of Europe to spread the authentic values of religion;
- Avoid the overspread in the public opinion of the confusion between migration and terrorism;
- Arab springs were a popular reaction to the crisis of secular governments of Arab democracies turning into pan Arab Islamic revolutions;
- confusion was observed in Europe where decision makers thought they could compare Muslim brotherhood to Christian democrats; while the first is nor inspired by religious principles nor by honest politic purposes;
- Need to restructure and revamp the interreligious dialogue with reliable, authentic topologists and believers, politician and civil society to decrease the emotional impact on integration on Islam;
- Using the Christian values of the fathers of Europe as a model for the middle east crisis
- Education is key to prevent radicalization and avoid clash of civilizations
- Developing an effective counter narrative to radical propaganda online and offline;
- Shaping a European task force or transatlantic platform where policy makers, representative of religious leaders' intellectuals to frame and to show to the Arab word how religious values and secular dimension can cooperate.
- There will be no solution to Syria crisis without Assad. It is accepted that Assad is not the solution, he will not lose nor win, but he will be part of the transition. This new shift in the narrative will allow the Geneva negotiations to start again;
- First option: Fighting Military: would only be effective if it implies troops on the ground, but the West is not ready for that, and using local soldiers has ineffective in the past. Military failure is unavoidable.
- Second option: Curving the current zone of conflict: which implies consolidating neighboring countries such as Iraq, Kurdistan, Jordan, and Syria of Assad; which means IS will last.