Special Report

Terrorism and counterterrorism in the EU

Haitham Abdelsamad (2018)
Terrorism and counterterrorism in the EU:
Overestimated threat, oversimplified approach

Haitham Abdelsamad

This report provides an overview of the European Union’s (EU’s) counterterrorism strategy before and after the 9/11 attacks, which marked a major shift in prioritising counterterrorism in the EU’s Foreign Security policy. This report finds that the EU’s strategy has been and remains crisis-driven: waves of terror attacks tend to be followed by short-sighted initiatives and measurements that lack efficiency and coherence. The EU counterterrorism policy has continued to evolve towards ‘strong-arm’ policies, largely due to overestimating terrorist threats. The main challenges today include the absence of a scientific understanding of terrorism and a dearth of measures addressing the root causes of radicalisation combined with the dismissal of ‘soft power’ in the context of counterterrorism. The EU’s future depends on if and how it manages to achieve a nuanced counterterrorism strategy. Furthermore, the extent to which the ongoing Brexit will affect the EU’s efforts in this area remains to be seen.

Dialogue between civilisations has been well established as the most promising tool in ‘soft power’ measures. Much of this report is dedicated to defining key terms such as ‘terrorism’, ‘radicalisation’, and ‘lone wolf terrorism’. Understanding the complexity of these topics is necessary for further discussion in the field of counterterrorism and terrorism prevention.

Part I: Terrorism – lone wolves – radicalisation

What is terrorism?
“As long as people believe in absurdities, they will continue to commit atrocities” (Voltaire).

Surprisingly, terrorism is not easy to define. Even though most people think they know what terrorism is, they often possess subjective ideas of what they believe this phenomenon to be. Terrorism is a popular term that is used frequently, but its application is often based on individual perceptions rooted in emotion rather than objectivity. Despite the many attempts to define terrorism concretely, a uniform definition of the term continues to elude us. Why?
The often-cited phrase “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” may offer some insight. What might be considered an act of violence in one country could be regarded as a necessary and legitimate undertaking—or even an accomplishment—in another country or group. As the political climate, geostrategic interests, collective experiences, and perspectives vary from one place to another, it is difficult to achieve a universally accepted definition of the term.

Bearing this challenge in mind, most definitions do share the following keywords: ‘violence’, ‘create fear’, ‘targeting of non-combatants’, and ‘loss of human/civilian life’ (Rowan University Campbell Library, 2018). Still, the related lack of a shared and binding definition of ‘counterterrorism’ poses many problems in academia and politics, especially with regard to cooperation or law in terms of criminal prosecution (Gomis, 2016).

As this report focuses largely on the European Union (EU), let us look at how the EU appears to define terrorism. A hint of a common definition can be found in Article 1, Paragraph 1 in the “Council Framework Decision of 13 June 2002 on combating terrorism” in which terrorist offences are defined as acts that seriously:

- damage a country or an international organisation;
- intimidate a population;
- compel a Government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act; and/or
- destabilise or destroy the fundamental political, constitutional, economic, or social structures of a country or an international organisation.
- attacks upon a person’s life, which may cause death;
- attacks upon the physical integrity of a person;
- kidnapping or hostage taking;
- causing extensive destruction to a Government or public facility, a transport system, an infrastructure facility (including an information system), a fixed platform located on the continental shelf, or a public place or private property, damage to which is likely to endanger human life or result in major economic loss;
- seizure of aircraft, ships, or other means of public or goods transport;
e. manufacture, possession, acquisition, transport, supply, or use of weapons, explosives, or of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons, as well as research into, and development of, biological and chemical weapons;
f. release of dangerous substances, or causing fires, floods, or explosions the effect of which is endangerment of human life;
g. interfering with or disrupting the supply of water, power, or any other fundamental natural resource the effect of which is endangerment of human life; and/or
h. threatening to commit any of the acts listed above.

In the Directive 2017/541 of the European Parliament and the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism, which replaced the above-mentioned Council Decision, the definition of ‘terrorist group’ was added as follows:

a structured group of more than two persons, established for a period of time and acting in concert to commit terrorist offences; ‘structured group’ means a group that is not randomly formed for the immediate commission of an offence and that does not need to have formally defined roles for its members, continuity of its membership or a developed structure” (Council of the European Union and European Parliament, 2017, p. 7).

As shown, the EU regards terrorism as a set of criminal activities and actions that disturb societal peace and democratic principles. It is interesting to observe the avoidance of using terminology that might link terrorism to a certain (extreme form of) belief or ideology—especially because terrorism has become increasingly associated with religious extremism, particularly in relation to Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups inspired by or associated with them, since 9/11. After the attacks on the World Trade Center, terrorism (particularly in the public eye) shifted from being perceived as a criminal act to one that seemingly stemmed from religion, namely Islam; most, if not all, religiously motivated terrorist attacks appeared to reference Islamic texts and concepts as their motivator and
Terrorism thus started to become increasingly associated with Islamic extremism. Terms such as ‘new terrorism’ began to gain traction in the public discourse and academic discussions, sparking controversy.

**Terrorism and terror (do not) go hand in hand**

“*Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.*” (Viktor Frankl)

“How do you defeat terrorism? Don’t be terrorized.” (Salman Rushdie)

The questions ‘Why does terrorism exist?’ or ‘Why do terrorists do what they do?’ may initially sound rhetorical, self-evident, or perhaps even naïve. But they are not; in fact, these are legitimate questions to ask in exploring why terrorism exists in the first place rather than taking it as a given. Walter Laqueur, a prominent American historian, journalist, and political commentator, wrote more than 40 years ago that terrorism is objectively irrational given its inefficiency, noting that, historically speaking, terrorism has never “had a lasting effect” (Laqueur, 1976, p. 99). The same continued to hold true decades later. In 2008, scholars conducted an analysis to see if terrorists achieved their goals and, if so, to what extent. Laqueur’s observation was confirmed: “In numeric terms … only 4% of the 648 groups analyzed obtained their strategic demands” (Jones & Libicki, as cited in Gomis, 2016, p. 72). Approximately the same percentage was estimated in another study conducted three years later (Cronin, as cited in Gomis, 2016). Terrorists have rarely if ever been successful in achieving their proclaimed goals, a failure that “is inherent to the tactic of terrorism itself” (Abrahms, as cited in Gomis, 2016, p. 72). Why, then, do terrorists still choose this apparently irrational and unsuccessful method?

Despite the complexity of terrorism, the answer is relatively simple: terrorists have other objectives than those they proclaim. Whether they claim to be fighting for equality, independence, or against foreign intervention or the perceived/proclaimed suppression of certain groups, one could argue that these objectives are often only a legitimiser for their
violence. Often, having people watching is the end goal of (most) terrorists and terror groups. The effects of terrorism “… are intended to be psychological. Terror causes people to exaggerate the strength of the terrorists and the threats they pose” (Jenkins, 2017, para. 1).

The fact that terrorists use killings of (most of the time) civilians only as a means to an end has profound implications on this discussion on terrorism and, later, on the EU’s fight against terrorism. Given that even low and numerically insignificant levels of terrorism can induce high levels of terror, one can conclude that “terrorism (the actions of terrorists) and terror (the psychological effects of terrorist actions) are separate domains” (Jenkins, 2017, para. 2). Although it is always horrific and deeply saddening to witness the killings of civilians in a terror attack, we must ask where the line is between the reporting and analysis of such an event and providing terrorists what they seek: publicity.

Fear sells. Therefore, we must be cautious when discussing terrorism and the threat it poses in today’s world. Terrorism is violent, but it is also a means of communication, namely of propaganda. As Schmid noted, “The immediate victim is merely instrumental, the skin on a drum beaten to achieve a calculated impact on a wider audience” (as cited in Spalek, 2012, p. 4). Terrorists are quite sophisticated in being able to predict the scale of the response, which is sadly often in their favour (Spalek, 2012). It is therefore society’s responsibility not to take the bait and give terrorists what they want, be it publicity or—even worse—revenge or retaliation. Doing so, as evidenced by America’s War on Terror, does not diminish terrorism but rather pushes society into their trap. More dangerously, it confirms the threats terrorists proclaim and increase public fear of terrorism. Terrorism can be violent and poses a threat to open, democratic, liberal societies. Yet there is a difference between acknowledging its existence and magnifying its threat. There is also a difference between supporting its victims and painting entire Western societies as potential targets. We cannot eliminate terrorism from the world, nor can we ever fully predict or avoid its consequences. But we can control our response to it, and the first step in doing that is to bring reality back into discussions about terrorism.

Terrorism 2.0: Lone wolves

“Lone wolves are the biggest terror threat” (CNN, 2014).
The concept of lone wolf terrorism began to form in the 19th century with the emergence of leaderless resistance, when individual “… anarchists conducted political assassinations and bombings under the message of ‘propaganda by deed’” (Dickinson, 2015, p. 7). Lone wolf terrorism was first used by anti-communist Americans against Soviets in Eastern Europe to communicate objectives. The strategy persisted decades later, when the Klu Klux Klan used it against the American government (Nesser, as cited in Dickinson, 2015). In the 1990s, this form of terrorism (i.e., conducting terrorist activities as a group organisation while encouraging individual terrorists [lone wolves] to do the same) became increasingly popular with Al Qaeda and more recently with ISIS (Nesser, as cited in Dickinson, 2015). Today, the threat of lone wolves is arguably one of the greatest dangers facing the West. But first, who are lone wolves from an academic perspective?

Lone wolf terrorists are defined as “lone operators, isolated from any organized terrorist networks and pushed to violence without assistance” who may “identify or sympathize with extremist movements or terrorist organizations, however if they join an established organization, they cease to be deemed as a lone wolf” (Spaaji, as cited in Dickinson, 2015, p. 5). Furthermore, their modus operandi is conceived and executed individually outside the context of organisational structure. A single operator uses violence as a means of communication and acts on purely ideological (not personal–material) reasons that are not directed but may be inspired by other terrorist groups or perhaps even other lone wolves (Ellis et al., 2016). They may act on different kinds of motivations. Even though the term ‘lone wolf terrorist’ has been inexplicably linked to the image of a well-integrated young Muslim man who suddenly becomes a terrorist (or worse, has been radicalising for a long time), the term encompasses other types of stimuli, such as political. One such example is Anders Breivik, a far-right Norwegian lone wolf who detonated a van bomb in the district capital in 2011 before gunning down 69 members of the Workers Youth League. Two years later, Pavlo Lapshyn, a Ukrainian white supremacist, murdered an elderly Muslim man and planned to detonate three mosques in England. There are many other examples of right-wing aggression or flat-out extremism that have taken the form of organised crime or individual violence.
Still, religiously motivated lone wolves do represent a substantial proportion of individually conducted attacks, such as the bombings in Madrid (2004) and Brussels (2005) or the attacks in Toulouse (2012) and Paris (2015). Religious arguments have been made to legitimise these abhorrent deeds. More dangerously, religious texts have been cited that supposedly call on all Muslims to fight against the oppression of Muslims worldwide. Sayare (2016) posited that “Weak and desperate young men [become] transfixed by ultra-violence and the promise of self-affirmation it contains” (para. 5), leading them to “mix personal frustrations with extremist ideologies and externally blame their own problems on others” (Gill et al., as cited in Dickinson, 2015).

These “little losers”, as former CIA officer Glenn Carle described them (Sayare, 2016), no longer need to be recruited by charismatic leaders sent out by terrorist organisations. The internet has transformed terrorist development from a top-down to bottom-up process. The International Peace Institute (2010) noted that the internet “brings willing candidates to fora through which they can participate” where already extreme views are reinforced due to the selection effect “whereby people seek out others with similar beliefs on the internet” (p. 3).

**Terrorism: An overestimated threat**

“Terrorism, like viruses, is everywhere. There is a global perfusion of terrorism, which accompanies any system of domination as though it were its shadow, ready to activate itself anywhere, like a double agent” (Jean Baudrillard).

Today, terrorism is considered to be the greatest threat, or at least one of the most pertinent concerns, for people around the world, particularly in the West. According to an online survey, 66% of Austrians expressed terrorism as one of their major fears (Die Presse, 2016); 71% in Germany listed terrorism among their top concerns (Die Zeite, 2017). In a study conducted by Pew Research Center in May 2017, most in Europe and North America were found to be actively worried about the rise of Islamic extremism (Poushter, 2017).
# Pervasive concern about Islamic extremism across Europe and North America

*How concerned are you about extremism in the name of Islam in our country these days?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not too</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>NET:</th>
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<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>72%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>51%</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<td>Hungary</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>France</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>46%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
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<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
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<td>36%</td>
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<td>Poland</td>
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<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU median</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<td>79%</td>
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Source: Spring 2017 Global Attitudes Survey. Q20

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Now a new question presents itself: is that fear legitimate? Specifically, are these concerns rooted in facts and objective realities? After all, media coverage across Europe and the U.S. seems to indicate a constant rise in terrorism, political analysts warn against so-called ‘home-grown terrorists’ that should be regarded as ticking bombs, and politicians devote their efforts to protecting their countries from this brutal menace that appears to be taking the world by storm. Yet terrorism (acts of violence), which differs from terror (being scared) as noted earlier, is indeed marginal in the West. The threat seems to be highly exaggerated. Considering the following figure, which shows the total number of fatalities from 1970 to 2007, we can see that most attacks in the West have had few to no fatalities whereas a small percentage (roughly 1%) has resulted in substantial causalities (approximately 25 deaths) (Gomis, 2016).

Data from more recent years have revealed that most attacks (leading to an inflated statistic) occur in the Middle East, especially Iraq and Pakistan, rather than in Western countries (Statista, 2018). Interestingly, despite the statistically low impact and scope of
terrorism, the public still fears “an attack from terrorism more than the prospect of being a victim to a violent crime or even being hospitalized” (Statista, 2018). This overestimated fear “could indicate a necessity to increase understanding of public attitudes to improve programs used to manage public risk perception” (Statista, 2018), a point on which I will elaborate later. Before we move on to what we can do to mitigate the terror aspect of terrorism (see ‘Suggestions’ section), it would be interesting to ponder why the threat of terrorism is overestimated in the first place.

The first reason for this overestimation may be political. “The political penalty for being wrong about the threat or underestimating [terrorism] is much more severe than the penalty for overstating it” (Feaver, as cited in Jaffe, 2012, para. 10). I agree; as mentioned earlier, fear sells, not only in media but also in politics. Politicians tend to be encouraged by their advisors to project strength and leadership. They believe that the best way to display these characteristics is by portraying themselves as courageous. It thus seems only logical that, to appear courageous, there needs to be a threat, an immediate danger, from which the public is to be saved and against which they are to be protected. Research has revealed a direct correlation between “fear of external attacks and support for standing leaders” (Gomis, 2016, p. 86). As a case in point, just a few days after the 9/11 attacks, George W. Bush’s approval rating skyrocketed from 51 to 86 percent. It therefore seems rational to “maintain levels of fear [to] … boost support for incumbent leaders” (Gomis, 2016, p. 86).

However, other factors have contributed to the increased interest in propagating and maintaining levels of fear associated with terrorism. The threat can be used to legitimise larger budgets or government spending. Security companies and research institutes often profit from these increased budgets, and their work expands vastly as a result. In an environment of heightened alarm, these entities can “raise awareness to their cause, sell products, or simply gain attention for more power and influence” (Gomis, 2016, p. 86).

**What causes terrorism?**

“Nothing can justify violent extremism, but we must acknowledge that it does not arise in a vacuum. Narratives of grievance, actual or perceived justice, promised empowerment and sweeping change become attractive where human rights are being violated, good
governance is being ignored and aspirations are being crushed” (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

We have covered what terrorism is, how it can be distinguished from terror, and the actual scope of terrorist attacks versus their perceived threat. Now it is important to understand the causes of terrorism. Even though terrorism in the West can be considered an overestimated threat, it is still a threat, and one that needs to be taken seriously. But more importantly, it must be understood rationally and objectively. To facilitate this, I will proceed to describe some of the factors and causes that may have contributed to the rise and persistence of terrorism.

It is important to understand that there “is no one set of causes [of terrorism] … the forces involved vary radically by country” (Cordesman, 2015, para. 17). Still, we can look at some of the factors that researchers and policymakers have cited as having (in)directly aided in the rise of what is now called ‘new terrorism’, which merely refers to the evolved nature of terrorism (which existed long before the rise of Islamic extremism) in the 21st century.

“When a country experiences insecurities such as scarce resources, and when one group, whatever its demographic weight, acts monopolistically in political and economic sectors at the expense of other groups, the potential for intercommunal tensions, gender inequality, marginalization, alienation and discrimination increases … [which] may incite those who feel disenfranchised to embrace violent extremism as a vehicle for advancing their goals” (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

The chaos in the Middle East and with it, the “abundance of weak and failing states … [such as] Yemen, Libya, Somalia, Nigeria, Mail, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, [and] Bangladesh, to name just a few, will provide terrorist organizations with an open-ended laundry list of countries to exploit for recruiting and logistical purposes” (Chalk, 2017, para. 2). I will address the recruitment aspect later, but for now, it is necessary to mention that the political turmoil most Middle Eastern states are going through serves as fertile soil for extremist forces. In times of anarchy and disarray, the voices of hatred and contempt roam free. With a weakened or non-existent state authority, they find themselves with new power that often translates into acts of terrorism, most of which are directed inwards towards their
own countrymen as shown earlier. However, some terrorism will be projected towards the West, which leads to increased media coverage and heightened fear of a pending attack. Additionally, some people living in the West will be successfully manipulated by this propaganda and motivated to conduct terrorist attacks. The issue of lone wolf terrorists will be discussed in a subsequent section.

“Both the far right and Islamist extremists benefit when their professed enemies engage in a terror attack or do anything that confirms their narratives. They want to see more rifts and more chaos in society. When communities are scared, when they’re driven apart, they’re vulnerable to the extremist narratives” (Ebner, as cited in Illing, 2017).

Another reason cited in increasing terrorism, particularly so-called ‘home-grown terrorism’, is the far-right trend in Europe. Not only does the U.S. have a president who is well-known for his anti-Muslim comments, statements, and policies, but Islamophobia has also been on the rise in Europe for the past couple years. This pattern can be directly correlated with the surge in populism across this continent: from the Alternative für Deutschland in Germany, which is represented in more than half the country’s states; the Front National in France, with eight deputies in parliament, the most in over 25 years; to Austria’s Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, a vocally anti-Islam party that is now ruling in a coalition government and has control over ministries such as defence, the interior, and foreign affairs (Chakelian, 2017). It is not a coincidence that as anti-Muslim sentiments have become increasingly mainstream (see figure below), the far-right trend in Europe has “[provided] plenty of opportunities for jihadis to justify their acts as a ‘legitimate’ response to a western war against Islam” (Chalk, 2017, para. 2).

The lack of socioeconomic opportunities is also considered a factor pushing predominantly young men into choosing violence to communicate their anger, frustration, and contempt. Citizens like these find that criminality, which is often a gateway towards terrorism when combined with extremist views and behaviours, offers them alternative sources of income or at least the promise of such. The United Nations General Assembly (2015) spoke on this matter, with the following excerpt summing up this aspect perfectly:
Countries that fail to generate high and sustainable levels of growth, to create decent jobs for their youth, to reduce poverty and unemployment, to improve equality, to control corruption and to manage relationships among different communities in line with their human rights obligations, are more prone to violent extremism and tend to witness a greater number of incidents linked to violent extremism” (para. 24).

Poor education is a prime example of lacking socioeconomic opportunities. According to the United Nations General Assembly (2015), having little to no literacy is a decisive factor in one’s vulnerability to indoctrination. Religious literacy is as important as academic education in this context to avoid “distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies and ethnic and cultural difference” (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Therefore, investing in academic and religious education will hinder terrorist groups from distorting religion to manipulate followers and will be of service to young people who experience extremist tendencies; specifically, education will help them identify propaganda, misuse of religion, and hate speech.

The countries addressed here—at least those relevant to our discussion—are currently in the throes of political and economic turmoil. It is therefore self-evident that if we want to counter terrorism, or at least mitigate its threat, we must assist in the peace-building process in the region instead of either staying out of it or intervening militarily. This point is further detailed in the ‘Suggestions’ section.

Turmoil need not proliferate throughout a region on a political level for terrorism to rise. Many terrorists become terrorists because, as individuals, they were/are going through an emotional turmoil of their own, which leads them to search for an outlet for their frustration. In 1951, Eric Hoffer, an American philosopher, wrote the book The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements in which he argued that people who join radical or extremist movements lack a sense of identity and are deeply discontented as a result. Their self-worth is thus devalued and with it their individual identity, which aides in their submersion in a new (terrorist) group or, in the case of lone wolves, in the cause for which they proclaim to be fighting; hence, they are empty vessels to be filled with whatever ideology or propaganda they encounter or seek (Hoffer, 1951).
Many individuals join terrorist groups due to another (mostly overlooked) reason: harsh prison treatment. According to the United Nations General Assembly (2015), “Research shows that harsh treatment in detention facilities can play a disconcertingly powerful role in the recruitment of many individuals who joined violent extremist groups and terrorist organizations” (para. 31). Often, due to a lack of police oversight, prisoners will join groups for protection only to become brainwashed by their propaganda in the process. A suggestion that will be mentioned in more detail later would be to prevent this spread of extremist ideologies among prisoners by improving prison conditions in the first place while providing inmates with the necessary protection against conditions into which they may be forced (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

As we have seen, various factors can aid in radicalising a person and nourish the benevolent ground on which he or she bases a distorted worldview. It is understandable that countries have proclaimed (at least publicly) to have a solution for terrorism, a phenomenon they market as a matter of life or death for Western civilisation. However, many counterterrorism strategies that are intended to fight terrorism seem to produce other problems that are also incompatible with liberal, open, and democratic societies. The latest British counterterrorism strategy, CONTEST, states, “moderate Muslim groups/individuals/communities have a duty and an ability to identify and isolate radicals – those with illegitimate beliefs, politics, values, grievances, expression and dissent – to prevent terrorism” (Spalek, 2012, p. 8). It can be dangerous to view all Muslims as one group and to assume that the moderate majority has knowledge of their ‘bad apples’. Not only are such counterterrorism strategies unfortunate in terms of racial profiling and prejudice, but they also show how little security officers and policymakers in this field understand about terrorism and radicalisation—or at least how little they care to admit it.

Veldhuis and Staun noted that “Thus far, scientific studies and researchers have failed to develop and agree on a universally accepted definition of Radicalization … [which] causes the inability to generalize core causal factors in which violent radicalization occurs” (as cited in Dickinson, 2015, p. 5). The difficulty for academia in finding a concrete definition of radicalisation begs the question of whether counterterrorism strategies are based on science rather than political calculations. As Professor Basia Spalek, who spent more than
20 years researching terrorism, violence, and radicalisation, stated, “it is potentially possible to cast suspicion over any individual as the range of factors is so broad and encompasses the majority rather than the minority of Muslim populations” (Spalek, 2012, p. 8).

Part II: The EU counterterrorism strategy: History, evolution, pillars, and priorities

History and evolution of EU counterterrorism: Pre-9/11

Cooperation among EU member states to combat terrorism cannot be considered one of the EU’s priorities early in its inception. It was not until the 1970s that the European community realised the importance of acknowledging terrorism as an issue and considered the exchange of information and lessons learned to be necessary (Rehak, Foltin, & Holcner, 2007). The idea of creating an intergovernmental platform was discussed in the first half of the 1970s. TREVI (French for Terrorisme, Radicalisme, Extrémisme et Violence Internationale) was created in 1975. Its members were Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. However, “as police matters were outside the competence of the European Community, TREVI was established as an informal body that was independent of the [European Community’s] institutional structure” (Bunyan, as cited in Rakovská, 2014, p. 30).

Later, there were “frequent calls from within and outside the TREVI group to formalize police cooperation within the Community” (Bunyan, as cited in Rakovská, 2014, p. 30). Thus, the Europol was born over roughly eight years. In 1991, the German delegation presented a formal proposal to the European Council in June 1991, followed by a reference in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty to a European Police Office (Europol), which was confirmed in Article K3 4 years later. Europol officially came into force in October 1998. Its purpose was to facilitate cooperation and coordination between EU member states on topics related to drug trafficking and immigration; its scope of competencies later encompassed terrorism and international crime as well (Rakovská, 2014). Yet Europol did not become the European CIA or FBI.
Informal arrangements were still preferred to either bi- or multilaterally discuss, cooperate, and negotiate on security-related issues. To put it another way, “the voluntary character of the information flow” (Coolsaet, as cited in Rakovská, 2014, p. 31) remained the main preference of EU member states. Still, some efforts were made to cooperate in the field of terrorism, at least officially. It is important to note, however, that terrorism cooperation throughout EU history was not understood as it is today in terms of terrorism prevention. Rather, the idea was to collaborate in sharing intelligence and strengthen police cooperation (Rakovská, 2014). In 1999, the European Council introduced a program that would facilitate joint action in terrorism matters. Several such programs and declarations to enhance EU-level cooperation in the fight against terrorism were made following the Tampere meeting and the European Council meeting in Da Feira in 2000.

Post-9/11

It was not until the events of 9/11 that informal cooperation and assertive declarations quickly developed into an actual European counterterrorism policy. More specifically, stalled legislative proposals (such as those of the above-mentioned Tampere program) were ratified and new ones were proposed and ratified in an expedited manner. Extraordinary sessions were held at the European Council; the EU was under pressure to come up with a plan of action for what was now presented as the world’s biggest threat (Rakovská, 2014).

This plan of action took the form of a memo issued by the European Commission on the 12th of March 2002, which reflected the Commission’s intention to make counterterrorism one of its top priorities. This publicly declared intent was later formally expressed in the Council Framework Decision on combating terrorism on the 13th of June 2002, which called for a consistent counterterrorism policy across all EU member states. For instance, a common definition of terrorism (specifically, actions that constitute a terrorist offence) were included in the members’ legislature. This legal harmonisation process in terms of countering terrorism led to the establishment of Eurojust in 2002, which promised to facilitate judicial cooperation (Rakovská, 2014).

The EU’s counterterrorism strategy, which was and is often criticised as being crisis-oriented (more on that later in the section ‘Criticism of EU counterterrorism strategy’), was
strengthened even more after the Madrid bombings in 2004. Among major developments at that time was the appointment of the EU Counterterrorism Coordinator (currently Gilles De Kerchove). Also, a new element, whose importance was previously unrealised, was introduced in the scope of the EU’s counterterrorism strategy: investigating the terrorist recruitment and radicalisation. Preventing terrorism, not just fighting it, began to shape the EU’s approach towards this matter (Rakovská, 2014).

The “need to identify and understand the root causes of terrorism” (Rakovská, 2014, p. 33) was complemented by a desire to understand the idea that terrorist attacks were ‘home-grown’. The London attacks of 2005, conducted by four young men who were previously unknown to the police, gave rise to the phenomenon of ‘home-grown terrorism’. This deepened the fear in the European public even more; whereas terrorist attacks had been previously conducted by terrorist organisations from the outside, now unsuspected young men who were not on any radar could suddenly pose a threat to society from within. As a result, a comprehensive ‘EU Counterterrorism Strategy’ was introduced and institutionalised as a “single framework that would streamline previous measures” (Rakovská, 2014, p. 34). The strategy is composed of four pillars: prevent, protect, pursue, and respond.

**EU counterterrorism: Structure**

EU institutions actively engaged in the EU’s counterterrorism strategy are the Council of the European Union, Europol (Rehak, Foltin, & Holcner, 2007), and Eurojust. Still, member states are the major players in counter-terrorism (Boutin et al., 2016). That means that when it comes to designing, implementing, and following a policy or issuing legislature, member states have the final say. The same is also true for each country’s intelligence agencies. The EU’s actual role is merely in coordinating member states’ individual counterterrorism strategies and ensure operation within a common framework (Boutin et al., 2016). In practice, although each member state will have different geostrategic interests and an old mentality of preferring voluntary intelligence sharing over binding cooperation, the EU still plays a major role in monitoring the overall counterterrorism policy. Given that the EU is,
despite various criticisms, a key actor in international affairs, it is important to see how it is dealing with an issue as important as terrorism.

The EU Counterterrorism Coordinator, who works under the Council of the European Union, is “responsible for recommending priority areas of action and concrete policies to the Council of the EU … [as well as] improving communication between the EU and third countries on [counterterrorism]-related issues” (Boutin et al., 2016, p. 11). Europol and Eurojust aid member states in terrorism-related matters, especially with regard to investigations and prosecutions. Legal assistance is provided through the latter, whereas exchange of intelligence is available through the former. A recent institution that is supposed to be actively engaged in the field of European counterterrorism is the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC), which was launched organisationally under Europol.

The ECTC came into being in January 2016 following the longstanding EU consensus “… in the counter terrorism policy context, that a cornerstone for cooperation at EU level was needed to support national counter terrorism efforts” (Europol, 2017, para. 2). Its main function, according to the Europol website, is to act as a “hub to exchange information, conduct analysis and coordinate operational support … [which has led to a] significant increase in trust and awareness across national counter terrorism authorities” (Europol, 2017, para. 4). In its first year, the information-sharing process has reportedly increased tenfold. In the organisation’s published 1-year report, the ECTC boasts about its achievements. Eighty operational analysis reports have been issued, 32 social media report packages have been conducted, and “new leads for investigation … [and the] identification of new targets” have been realised (Europol, 2017, para. 6).

One can interpret the creation of the ECTC, which was born of a decision from the Justice and Home Affairs Council, as confirmation of the aforementioned critique of the EU’s overall trend in counterterrorism policy being crisis-driven. A case in point is the initiative to create “a key intelligence and analytical counter-terrorism institution which united the intelligence and analytical capabilities of Europol related to counter terrorism” (Burkov, 2016, p. 45) immediately following the Paris attacks in 2015. The recurring wave of shock across Europe and the emergence of ISIS put the EU under new pressure to find a response.
Another fact that points to this conclusion is the “absence of will of the governments to improve the situation … [in terms of] cooperation and information exchange” (Burkov, 2016, p. 45). If member states do not start to realise the importance of real cooperation and collective decision making, the ECTC will never evolve to be the EU’s answer to the threat of terrorism as proclaimed by the EU; instead, it will remain a mere short-term policy response with no longstanding effects.

**EU counterterrorism: Pillars and priorities**

Now we return to the pillars and priorities of EU counterterrorism outlined in the first part of this chapter. By way of brief review, the pillars are: prevent, protect, pursue, and respond. According to the European Council, the first pillar refers to the prevention of “individuals from turning to terrorism” (European Council, 2018), and the second pillar refers to the protection of “citizens and infrastructure by reducing the vulnerability to attacks” (European Council, 2018). The third pillar refers to the investigation of terrorists as well as the disruption of their support networks. The fourth and last pillar stresses the importance of managing and minimising the consequences of terrorist attacks (Boutin et al., 2016).

To explain further, the ‘prevent’ pillar consists of various objectives that are collectively intended to combat radicalisation and terrorist recruitment. By improving firearms control, the acquisition and possession of weapons is to be monitored. A directive of the Council states that rules for procuring weapons are to be tightened and firearms are to be better traced (by marking their essential components and creating a harmonised catalogue of these marks across member states). Furthermore, various semi-automatic firearms have been added to category A, which is composed of the most lethal firearms, thus banning civilians from using them (Cerdeira, 2017). The end goal is that firearms will “not [be] abused by criminal groups or terrorists” (Cerdeira, 2017, para. 2). However, the Council also stresses the importance of further cooperation between member states in this area to combat the illegal procurement of firearms, which make terrorist attacks more damaging in effect and scope.

Moreover, the list of terrorist offences has been extended to “better … meet the challenge of the evolving terrorist threat” (Sadet, 2017, para. 2). The issue of foreign fighters,
which was the topic of the day for quite some time, was planned to be addressed by criminalising the following: travelling within, outside, or to the EU for terrorist purposes; organising or aiding in such travel; training or being trained for extremist purposes; and providing or collecting funds that are to be used for terrorist aims (Sadet, 2017). With this came another step: reinforcing checks at external borders. This included systematic checks (also of EU citizens) at all external borders to which member states are now obliged. These checks are carried out against the Schengen Information System and the Interpol database, among others (Cerdeira, 2017).

The second pillar of the EU counterterrorism strategy, ‘protect’, overlaps to some extent with the first pillar as it includes securing external borders but also encompasses improving the security of transport and the protection of strategic targets. The end goal is to reduce “the vulnerability of critical infrastructure” (European Council, 2018) by dealing with cross-border crime through filling security gaps. Specifically, a directive has been adopted to regulate the use of passenger-provided personal information that is collected and held by air carriers (also known as ‘Passenger Name Record/PNR’). The transfer and processing of this information by state authorities and EU institutions such as Europol is to be regulated by this directive; member states have, from this point on, one year to comply with the directive. However, it is interesting to question the effectiveness of such a directive and ask how deepening security measures and regulating their use can be achieved at the same time. For instance, the directive requires (among others) that the data is to be “depersonalized after a period of 6 months so the data subject is no longer immediately identifiable” (European Council, 2017). Does not it seem paradoxical to aim to protect fundamental rights while simultaneously increasing securitisation?

The third pillar, ‘pursue’, seeks to make it harder for terrorists to plan and organise their crimes, mainly through disrupting their financing as well as their communication networks. The EU is trying to improve transparency and facilitate interconnection in terms of company and trust ownership. This includes determining a threshold for prepaid cards (€250), after which holder verification will be extended. The EU Council website states that virtual currency exchange platforms will have to apply to “end the anonymity associated with such exchanges” (European Council, 2018). However, this might not be realistic.
Bitcoin has been increasingly used as a convenient way for terrorists and terrorist organisations to circumvent financial restrictions and tracing. The essence of this electronic currency is in its anonymity. Since it is “not subject to legislation and it has global distribution”, it is untraceable (Azan & Liv, 2018, p. 1). Aside from the difficult, if not impossible, goal of tracing virtual currency, there is another problem: the aforementioned lone wolf terrorism. Such terrorist acts do not necessitate major financial planning, as these terrorists’ plans often do not require it. Matthew Levitt, an expert on terrorism financing, remarked, “The person who is going to take money out of his or her bank account and go buy a kitchen knife or rent a car is going [to] be much harder to identify through financial means.” These are just some of the issues that call the practicability of this pillar into question.

The fourth and last pillar, ‘respond’, refers to preparing, managing, and minimising the consequences of terrorist attacks by “improving capabilities to deal with the aftermath, the coordination of the response, and the victim’s needs” (European Council, 2017). This includes developing risk assessment tools and sharing “best practices on assistance to victims of terrorism” (European Council, 2017). Moreover, the need to develop entire EU crisis coordination arrangements is asserted.

The EU counterterrorism strategy also includes a category entitled ‘other priorities’. These include, for instance, engagement with international partners. The EU appears aware of the reality of the interconnectedness of EU security and that of neighbouring states and others around the globe. Therefore, “high-level political dialogues, the adoption of cooperation clauses and agreements, or specific assistance, capacity-building projects with strategic countries” are among the issues included in the February 2015 EU counterterrorism agenda (European Council, 2017). Recalling the point presented earlier in Chapter 1 about how the chaos in the Middle East is among the factors cultivating an atmosphere conducive to terrorism, the EU’s cooperation with, among others, countries from the Middle East, can be seen as a favourable development in this context.

For example, last year, the EU opened negotiations for “agreements on the transfer of personal data between Europol and Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey” (European Union External Action, 2017) in hopes of strengthening the
Europol’s international position. It seems to me that much potential is being wasted in this regard. Instead of solely focusing on trying to build an “international consensus and promot[ing] international standards for fighting terrorism” (European Council, 2018), which is admittedly vital for any effective counterterrorism strategy, the EU should broaden its scope to include other aspects of combating terrorism. The fight against terrorism, at least when it comes to international cooperation, does not have to be limited to expert groups or so-called high-level diplomatic talks. A bottom-up approach could be quite beneficial. Investing in the education of young people in third-world countries including the Middle East, organising conferences on terrorism in today’s world (allowing moderates to be heard), and making it easier for students from poor countries to study in Europe instead of limiting the opportunity to those who can afford it are just a few ideas to improve relations between the EU and the Middle East. Such measures would also combat a lack of knowledge about the EU (and the EU about Arab countries) and, most importantly, focus on bureaucratic measures to bridge gaps that are being completely overlooked.

Combating online radicalisation is another of the EU’s counterterrorism priorities that includes collaborating with internet service providers and platform hosts to take down terrorist-related content. The EU maintains ongoing initiatives with Facebook (content referral) and other social media companies. Not only is it difficult to detect terrorist-related activity, which the EU Council admits is even harder to identify than child pornography (Ask EP, 2017), as the former is context-related, but the EU strategy also misses another important point here. If we accept there are people who adhere to extremist views and that some will act on these distorted beliefs in a violent manner, then all we are doing is covering up the surface. There will always be ways for terrorists to find terrorist material and/or share their views. Even though the EU has had its own dedicated unit since March 2015, the Internet Referral Unit, which is “aimed at reducing the level and impact of terrorist and violent extremist propaganda on the internet” (Europol, 2016), the internet is too vast to be controlled. Even the new Unit cannot reach out to every platform, which can be created in a matter of minutes, to take down certain material—not to a significant degree, at least. This is particularly true for two reasons: first, social media platforms operate based on their own
terms and conditions; and second, the Referral Unit’s decision is not necessarily binding to the provider.

Another priority of the EU counterterrorism strategy that certainly overlaps with but is not necessarily limited to the above-mentioned pillars is information exchange. There have been many efforts over the years for intelligence to cooperate through a single platform, with Europol, ECTC, and other institutions experiencing noteworthy but certainly not blazing success. Therefore, the EU is expanding its efforts to encourage member states to coordinate and cooperate in this area, resulting in projects such as Project Prüm, a multilateral treaty signed in Prüm, Germany. According to the joint decision, member states are bound to adopt and implement agreed-upon rules concerning police cooperation, data exchange, and mutual access to DNA analysis files as well as fingerprint identification plus vehicle registration data (Berthelet, 2017). The treaty was signed more than 13 years ago but only became binding in 2015.

In addition to the Schengen Information System mentioned earlier, which includes a central automated fingerprint identification system starting this year, the EU is investing in the use of biometric databases (i.e., fingerprints and facial recognition) to better deal with foreign fighter threats (Interpol, 2017). It would be interesting to interview an expert in this field to discuss, based on recent research, whether the field of biometric data is an expensive and ineffective way to contribute to the security of the EU’s external borders or a promising field worthy of further investment.

The European counterterrorism strategy was updated in late 2016. Aside from being given a new working title, ‘EU Global strategy’, terrorism and counterterrorism were placed even higher on the EU agenda. In the strategy’s mission statement, terrorism is no longer seen as a main threat but rather the primary danger facing the EU. This updated counterterrorism approach is discussed further in the final chapter of this report on the future of the EU’s counterterrorism policy.
Part III: The EU counterterrorism strategy: Criticisms

The EU counterterrorism strategy, which evolved after 9/11 as a crisis-driven policy response, seems to continue to be “a patchwork of measures and mechanisms, often elaborated in great haste, [and] obviously lacking an overall design” (Coolsaet, as cited in Rakovská, 2014, p. 32). It was and is still crisis-driven because, to a large extent, the four major terrorist attacks and resulting waves of public shock shaped it: the 9/11 (2001) attacks; the Madrid (2004) and London (2005) bombings; the rise of ISIS (from approximately 2010 onwards) and associated calling for various lone wolf attacks in the West; and the Nice and Berlin attacks (2016). With each of these terrorist attacks, including other small-scale attacks, the EU “felt the need to re-evaluate its counterterrorism policy” (Rakovská, 2014, p. 35), which indicates that the EU’s counterterrorism policy is not remotely based on any scientific understanding of terrorism, Islamic extremism, or so-called ‘home-grown terrorists’. This very fact casts doubt on the policy’s ability to be effective.

Nevertheless, the EU has never shied away from issuing drafts, directives, organising meetings, publishing reports, and declaring objectives that remain rhetorical. The added value of these crisis-driven responses remains to be seen. For instance, the European Union Counter Terrorism Strategy of 2005, which made cooperation that formerly took place outside the EU institutional structure an official part of the EU framework, has often been criticised for not being coherent “with the plethora of overarching (e.g. the EU’s internal and external security strategies) and sub-strategies (e.g. on countering radicalization and recruitment, countering terrorist finance, protection of critical infrastructure and customs) [being] unclear” (Wensink et al., 2017, p. 16). This raises various problems that seem to comprise the central drawback of the EU counterterrorism strategy: lack of uniformity.

The EU faces criticism for lacking uniformity and coherence “because it is sprawled out amongst a variety of different policy areas with multiple action plans and strategies drawn up by several committees, actors and law enforcement agencies” (Daly, 2017, para. 1). This is where the problematic nature of the EU counterterrorism policy being crisis-driven comes in: because the entire strategy seems to be composed of numerous policies devised under the pressure of developing an EU policy in response to so-called ‘critical junctures’,
there is neither a basic understanding of the general trend nor a common framework for
tackling the EU’s problems (which, by the way, each member state views differently) (Daly,
2017). This lack of understanding of what terrorism is, the degree of its threat, and how to
deal with its consequences (both now and in the long-term) has given rise to another critique:
should the EU even be involved with counterterrorism?

The argument here is that counterterrorism “is a foreign policy and a national security
issue, which is core to state sovereignty in which most member states take a neorealist
approach [an international relations theory that assumes that states behave individually
based on their strategic capabilities] to and therefore will not easily give up” (Lelieveldt &
Princen, as cited in Daly, 2017, para. 4). Member states’ reluctance to cooperate based on
EU interests rather than national interests has combined with the EU’s lack of power to
oblige member states to share a common EU counterterrorism strategy effectively and
comprehensively. This point of criticism, namely that the EU will never have a
comprehensive, effective, coherent, and binding counterterrorism strategy, seems to make
sense—not only because states have different strategic interests, but also because
sovereignty will only be given up by those states that see an interest in doing so.

“Increased institutional involvement and data exchange among agencies and
member states is essential for legitimacy and effectiveness, which [the EU] desperately
needs” (Daly, 2017, para. 6). However, as pointed out earlier, we already have Europol,
Eurojust, and the newly launched European Centre for Counter Terrorism. Still, EU member
states prefer bilateral and informal cooperation and intelligence sharing. Yet member states’
inability or unwillingness to act as a collective when it comes to counterterrorism is not the
only problem.

EU institutions themselves are not clearly arranged in terms of hierarchy and
leadership. “Currently, too many actors are involved in the design and implementation of this
policy area, the tasks of the individual actors at times overlap. This is notably the case when
it concerns strategies that can be issued by the European Council, the Council of the EU
and by the Commission, making it unclear who is in the lead” (Wensink et al., 2017, p. 16).
The Counterterrorism Coordinator, whose post was recently introduced, certainly does not
help in solving the problem of competence overview.
Other problems include the broad nature of the EU counterterrorism policy. By encompassing every conceivable aspect of terrorism and merely increasing the list of criminal offences in terms of terrorism, little can be done. It does make sense that the EU is trying to reflect the shared security concern of all member states, given the above-mentioned complication of every member state having (or at least perceiving) different threats. Nevertheless, for the sake of effectiveness, the EU would be far better off trying to narrow its scope and define what it views as the EU’s ‘internal security’. As Wensink et al. (2017) suggested, “It is important to go back to the drawing table and redesign the entire policy field, to start with a clean slate and reassess what works and what does not … [since] the current situation rather shows a very crowded market place with too many actors involved in the design and implementation of the various policies” (p. 18).

The EU’s counterterrorism strategy has also been criticised as one of “sectorial conception” (Bonansinga, 2015, p. 42), meaning that the division of pillars into prevent, protect, pursue, and respond shows a key fault in the EU’s approach to combating terrorism. The ‘prevent’ pillar, for instance, is and has been difficult to implement “due to the diffuse nature of terrorist organizations and the impossibility of determining the circle of supporters[,] it is not easy to develop effective strategies” (Bonansinga, 2015, p. 42). When it comes to the ‘protect’ pillar, another problem has been identified concerning data protection: the approach “implies an equation simplistically linking bigger amounts of data to higher security” (Bonansinga, 2015, p. 42).

This is a problematic notion that I have illustrated in an earlier chapter concerning the dilemma of big data vs. privacy protection. Each cannot be simultaneously achieved without making compromises in one of the two. The problems with the ‘pursue’ pillar regarding the disruption of terrorism financing have also been pointed out previously in the emergence of virtual currency that makes trace-ability difficult if not impossible owing to its inherent anonymity. The ‘respond’ pillar, which deals with managing the aftermath of terrorist attacks, is difficult to assess given that Europe has not witnessed a large-scale (militarised) terrorist attack. As pointed out earlier, the terrorist attacks in Europe have never been enormous in their actual scope but rather in their perceived impact. In that sense, the EU did not do nearly
enough to respond to the (threat of) terrorist attacks in ways that involve public awareness and resilience, which I will discuss more in the ‘Suggestions’ section.

It seems to me that the biggest failure of the EU counterterrorism strategy thus far has been prevention—not the ‘prevention’ pillar of the EU document per se, but the general prevention of terrorism. The EU is working more towards combating terrorism rather than preventing it. As Sayare (2016) explained, “while European authorities have developed strong legal tools to stop those men identified as threats before they act, there have been few concerted efforts to prevent such men from becoming threats in the first place” (para. 12). The EU has focused more on response rather than prevention. By regarding terrorism as a crime (which it is) rather than a product of complex personal, societal, psychological, economic, and ideological factors (which it is as well), the EU has been busy addressing the symptoms rather than the causes. A final point on the success or failure of the EU’s counterterrorism strategy, depending on one’s perspective, is a point that is often overlooked: expectations. High expectations, especially after every major terrorist attack, have been placed on the EU in responding to terrorist threats. However, given the lacking ability and willingness of EU member states to collaborate on counterterrorism, it seems that short-sighted declarations and measurements have been issued after every crisis that yield few to no long-term effects. Even though many of these initiatives could potentially have an effect, the problem is the time between the date of issuance and the time it takes for such measures to be implemented on a national level, which reduces the effectiveness of such steps given the rapid spread of terrorism today. As a result, the “EU counterterrorism policy still seems more of a paper tiger than an effective counterterrorism device” (Bures, as cited in Bonansinga, 2015, p. 43).

**Part IV: The EU counterterrorism strategy: Suggestions**

This chapter will be divided into two parts. First, I will outline suggestions that have been proposed by various academics, analysts, and the EU itself to improve the EU’s work in the field of counterterrorism. These will be labelled ‘suggestions that could work’ because, as I will illustrate, it is doubtful whether they are realistic and/or effective. The second part will
focus on suggestions that must work as, in my opinion, their implementation will largely determine the long-term success of the EU’s counterterrorism strategy.

**Suggestions that could work**

Reintroducing the EU Data Retention Directive was suggested in an EPP Group Position Paper in 2015 (Pablo, 2015). The Directive, which came into force in 2006, allowed member states to store telecommunication data on EU citizens for up to 24 months (with court permission), thus enabling law enforcement agencies to access information that is supposedly vital for counterterrorism officials (e.g., text messages, location, and emails). The directive was annulled in 2014 after the Court of Justice of the European Union found it to be in violation of citizens’ fundamental rights. The EPP Group, however, seems to believe that reintroducing it, despite the court ruling stating it did not follow data protection laws, would be integral in “giving law enforcement authorities the appropriate tools … to formulate an effective response to the threat of terrorism” (Pablo, 2015, p. 14). Nonetheless, no specific suggestion has been made as to how law enforcement agencies are supposed to access, gather, store, and analyse data in a legal framework.

To increase trust between EU member states, it is suggested that peer-to-peer training sessions and exchanges of best practices be organised between law enforcement agencies across Europe. While this would certainly improve the trust issue, it would not solve it. A lack of deep cooperation over counterterrorism has little to do with a reduced amount of exchange; rather, diverse geostrategic interests and capabilities simply render a collective counterterrorism approach, at least an effective one, either difficult or unrealistic among law enforcement agencies. Nonetheless, increased investment in skills standardisation, for instance, would represent a meaningful development that could improve the operational competence of the EU’s collective counterterrorism strategy.

Another related suggestion is to deepen cooperation in intelligence sharing. Lack of trust is pervasive and continues to hinder the sharing of sensitive information, “particularly with Eastern Europe countries that were under communist control just a generation ago” (Maher, 2017, para. 20). This fact, combined with the above-mentioned divergent interests, capabilities, and laws in the fields of counterterrorism and intelligence, solidify the problems
surrounding a collective EU counterterrorism strategy. Small steps could help change this: accelerating the rate at which countries implement the PNR directive, increasing Europol’s budget exponentially, and more importantly, providing the newly launched European Counterterrorism Centre with a research centre so it does not evolve into an intelligence-sharing platform that can be circumvented but instead represents an added value in terms of information analysis (not only gathering, which seems to be the main focus in discussions around this topic).

The sharing of biometric data is another recurring suggestion, one that I also mentioned in a previous chapter. Interpol Secretary General Jürgen Stock “highlighted the importance of law enforcement moving from a ‘need to know’ to a ‘need to share’ culture relating to biometric data on known suspected terrorists, and ensuring that this data reaches officers on the frontlines in a timely manner” (Interpol, 2017, para. 6). The strengthening of the information flow is suggested to take place through the Interpol database, which already contains nearly 200,000 fingerprint records as well as another recently installed database dedicated to images. Extending the database to incorporate biometric data could, as previously mentioned, be an interesting development. However, as an emerging field, it requires more research especially regarding its accuracy; false hits can be highly dangerous when it comes to terrorist identification.

Research is also necessary to better understand why people become terrorists and how terrorists operate and communicate but, more importantly, how they think. In other words, it is essential to understand the social and psychological dimensions of terrorist networks and of the previously presented lone wolves. An ongoing research program established by the EU Commission called ‘Horizon 2020’ is tangentially relevant, but the topic of terrorism does not seem to be at the focal point of this project, and little to no priority appears to be given to researching the backgrounds and roots of lone wolf terrorism in terms of whether it is religiously or politically motivated. It would be a good idea to dedicate a separate project to research on terrorism and radicalisation. Such a project could include frequent reports, analysis, expert meetings, and suggestions for policymakers. Investing in applied research in terrorism would be helpful to the overall EU counterterrorism strategy in the long-term.
There have been some calls from within European parliament for security clearances for a limited number of EP members. This measure would likely take the form of “in camera meetings or similar mechanisms, whereby Parliamentarians would be allowed to get restricted access to sensitive non-classified and classified information on counterterrorism” (Pablo, 2015, p. 23). This raises obvious questions and concerns about the added value of such a measure. Such a step would, of course, elicit significant protest from national secret service agencies in member states because they would not accept oversight easily, even if it were not the primary aim of such an initiative. Also, such a suggestion demonstrates that EU policymakers are primarily focused on security and overlooking other aspects to which they can contribute effectively. For instance, there is an ongoing citizens’ initiative to combat extremism, started by an Austrian politician, which seeks to address and suggest solutions (i.e., societal, legal, and political) to oppose and prevent various forms of extremism. In my opinion, investing more time and energy would be a wiser choice for MEPs rather than focusing on terrorism from a security perspective alone. Besides, even if such a measure were to be considered, who decides which MEPs are granted this security clearance and based on what criteria?

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the EU has recently launched the European Centre for Counter Terrorism; however, there are now many voices, such as Roberta Bonazzi of the European Foundation for Democracy, who “[feel] that the EU is still underutilizing that key basic counter-terrorism technique” (Schultz, 2017). She suggests establishing an EU centre focused solely on preventing radicalisation. Through it, the EU, including its institutions and member states, could engage with NGOs and civil society organisations in trying to understand the roots of extremism and dealing with its propagation in European societies.

As encouraging as this idea may seem, some may find it slightly idealistic. Young people, the main target group when it comes to radicalisation, still feel disenfranchised, especially those from immigrant families who deal with a significantly higher rate of poverty, social discrimination, and workplace obstacles. Instead of focusing on organising meetings between experts, these young people, who the United Nations views as “an untapped resource” (United Nations General Assembly, 2015), should be integrated directly into such
projects by offering them not only a voice but also a positive future that would allow them to reach their full potential and contribute to society. This can be achieved by bringing them into the decision-making process “by establishing youth councils and similar mechanisms, which give young women and men a platform for participating in mainstream political discourse” (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Individuals from underrepresented groups should be a population of focus. By empowering youth who are largely disenfranchised, society can become more resilient against extremism tomorrow.

Terrorists “have achieved considerable success in luring people, especially young women and men, into their ranks. While violent extremists have demonstrated sophistication in their use of old and new media tools, it is equally true that we who reject their message have largely failed to communicate to those who are disillusioned and disenfranchised a vision of the future that captures their imagination and offers the prospect of tangible change” (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

Another suggestion to move towards a future extremism-free society is to challenge the narratives that terrorists are admittedly clever at promoting and propagating their objectives. Many have proposed providing grants for activists who combat violent extremism in their music, art, film, and other means. National communication strategies that focus on the restriction and banning of extremist online material (such as through stronger cooperation between governments and social media companies) and the spreading of alternative forums, where people can share frustrations without being shunned, are promising possibilities. Such channels will allow discussion (and perhaps personal counselling meetings) and even afford victims opportunities to share their stories, which could have a positive effect on awareness around terrorist attacks (Pablo, 2015). Certainly, such measures should be welcomed, but they should be regarded as a complementary step rather than an oppositional one. Sadly, voices of hatred seem to attract more attention than those that call for peace and harmony. Still, it is vital to counteract the online presence of these groups instead of indulging in faineance.

Some EP members have called for the monitoring of prayer rooms in Muslim communities. While such ideas have largely been put forth by right-wing politicians, they still receive little to no protest from the rest of the society and, slowly but steadily, become part
of the general discourse. It is understood that any preacher who propagates fundamentalist ideas and spreads hate speech should not be tolerated; abusing such a position of authority for radicalisation purposes has no place in a liberal society. Yet I would find it difficult to implement such an idea given the (un)intended consequences and difficulties. First, which mosques or prayer rooms would be observed? How would the government know which to select? Who would be doing the monitoring? Based on what criteria would such analyses be made? Second, what about the effects of such a step, namely the singling out of Muslim prayer rooms as targets for observation? Third (and this is more of a philosophical point), does not such a suggestion imply that most Muslims cannot assess for themselves whether a preacher is propagating extremist ideas? And if such a measure is focused on a small minority of the ‘easily misled’, cannot they be manipulated in numerous other ways?

Finally, another suggestion that could work but would need further investigation is the prospect of countering radicalisation in prison. As mentioned in the first chapter, a primary cause of radicalisation, and ultimately terrorism, is the prison setting itself; therefore, it is necessary to consider how to prevent imprisoned radicals from spreading their extremist views to other prisoners who have been incarcerated for different crimes. Prisons serve as an ideal place for radicals to recruit new terrorists or at least to plant the seed of what may later become a lone wolf terrorist. To counter such a development, the Netherlands has devoted a specialised wing to prisoners sentenced based on terrorist crimes. Individuals charged with terrorism are assigned to this wing prior to trial to discourage prison-based recruitment. While this sentiment may be in the right place, the consequences of such a measure certainly do not eliminate the problem. When a person is placed in a terrorist wing before conviction, this leaves an often large window for the dissemination of extremist views to potentially innocent persons charged with a crime they did not commit. Furthermore, even if the person is later convicted of his or her crime, having a separate terrorist wing can have the unintended consequence of hardening already-extreme views and facilitating the exchange of radical views into a downward spiral. Briefly, none of these terrorist offenders would even have a chance of changing their opinions.

It seems that the only rational way to deal with this dilemma is to invest in rehabilitation programs that are tailored to convicted terrorists. The goal should be to
facilitate reintegration into society for those who decide to change their path without having to commit to a choice they may regret, as many were radicalised at a young age. A prime example is British activist, Majid Nawaz, who was a member of a radical Islamist party as a young man and became further radicalised after being imprisoned. Later, after interacting with Amnesty International, he turned his life and views around and became a liberal democratic member of the UK parliament and founder of ‘Quilliam’, a think tank focused on countering terrorism and extremist views in Europe.

**Suggestions that must work**

In this section, I would like to present some suggestions that are necessary to improve, strengthen, and develop the EU’s counterterrorism strategy specifically and the European approach towards combating extremism in general. The implementation of these recommendations is vital for dealing with terrorism and terror, which, as we recall, are (or at least can be) two separate domains.

As shown in earlier chapters, the focal point of the EU counterterrorism strategy is security. That means risk reduction; the physical security of the public becomes the focus as a result. By viewing terrorism only as a crime that is to be fought in the classical sense, the psychological component is easily overlooked as mentioned earlier (Wright, 2015). The EU strategy must start thinking ‘outside the box’ and realise that the utilisation of traditional counterterrorism methods is inadequate in addressing this problem. The fact that terrorism is indeed an overestimated threat needs to be addressed. Even if politicians do not tend to project views that are not congruent with public opinion, this is exactly what is needed at this moment. Building the public’s resilience to terrorism is vital. As society is less informed about the actual threat terrorism poses, fear rises, and with it, pressure begins to mount on politicians to respond. In this vicious cycle, repressive measures and strong-arm approaches are often implemented that further nourish the extremist narrative, leading to even more terrorism. Panic cannot be the leading factor in policymaking; rather, information, evidence-based assessments, and rational thinking are paramount.

Another important component of the EU counterterrorism strategy is international cooperation, which is “indispensable to preventing and countering extremism and terrorism”
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(Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2017, p. 7). This can be done by organising discussions with the international community to “pool expertise … and create an environment of mutual trust” (Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2017, p. 7). Especially when it comes to the internet, international cooperation is necessary: through a multi-stakeholder approach “that combines political, technical, and contextual expertise … an open dialogue among the respective stakeholders” (Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2017, p. 7) can pave the way towards “a more inclusive process, open communication channels, build capacity, defuse conflicts of interest and identify critical gaps” (Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2017, p. 7). What is especially promising about this approach is that, through international government–government and government–private collaborations, duplicate efforts are eliminated. However, it is also important to strengthen ties with third-world countries outside the EU, including global actors such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Intercultural dialogue also comes into play with regard to cooperation, which I will discuss shortly in more detail.

“Rome did not succumb to the rise of another empire but to the onslaught of waves of barbarians. Modern high-tech terrorists are the new barbarians” (Joseph Nye, Jr.)

One of the most prominent political scientists, Joseph Nye, Jr., coined the term ‘soft power’, which is relevant to our discussion here. By ‘soft power’, he means “the ability to get what we want by attracting others rather than by threatening or paying them. It is based on our culture, our political ideals, and our policies” (Nye, 2004). Nye realises the limited control Western countries have over terrorism and the extent/scope of terrorist attacks that are planned or proclaimed. He also recognises the dangers of a War on Terror and its negative consequences in alienating stable partnerships, endangering international cooperation, and deepening societal tensions.

The above-mentioned suggestions concerning disenfranchised youth who need to be empowered and included in the decision-making process and in propositions that stress the importance of challenging the extremist narrative by creating tailored campaigns to enlighten people and provide them with an alternative worldview can be considered ‘soft power’. Soft
power is the opposite of Nye’s other concept, ‘hard power’, which refers to measures that include military operations and security responses. The latter are to be used against terrorists, but the former is, according to Nye, the only way to be able to “attract the moderates and deny the extremists new recruits” (Nye, 2004). By investing more in soft power rather than hard power, the EU counterterrorism strategy can become more successful in achieving meaningful change when it comes to terrorism prevention.

An area in which the EU could invest pertains to projects that enhance the role of families in terrorism prevention. Specifically, family-based social networks should be prioritised as family “can play a central role in shaping attitudes toward non-violence” (Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2015, p. 2). According to recent research, the role of the family in countering violent extremism cannot be overstated as the family seems to be more impactful than other social networks such as friends or work environments. Mothers, for instance, “can humanize the impact of terrorism, or highlight the hardships, economic and otherwise, that may be imposed on a recruit’s own family if he/she leaves” (Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2015, p. 2). The Global Counterterrorism Forum (2015) further identified the role of fathers as “a missing link” (p. 2.) that can aid in communication with children by consciously and actively providing an alternative narrative to the notions of masculinity that extremists try to merge with violent behaviour. Educating family members on signs of radicalisation and providing them the tools to prevent this process should be a focal point. In this case, ‘tools’ refer to knowledge of how to “address the political, psychological, sociological and ideological issues” (Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2015, p. 3).

**Intercultural and interfaith dialogue countering terrorism through soft power**

Unity in principled action will overcome the rhetoric and appeal of violent extremism and, ultimately, the violent extremist groups themselves. At a time of growing polarization on several national, regional, and global issues, preventing violent extremism offers a real opportunity for the members of the international community to unite, harmonize their actions and pursue inclusive approaches in the face of division, intolerance and hatred (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).
The idea of dialogue among civilisations began nearly three decades ago when two theories rose to prominence: the ‘clash of civilizations’, put forward by Samuel L. Huntington, and ‘End of History’ by Fukuyama, who proposed that the eternal ideological struggle had been settled in favour of liberal democracies. Of course, both concepts were wrong: liberal democracies did not remain unchallenged despite the end of the Soviet Union, and civilisations did not clash, as will be illustrated shortly. New threats emerged, such as international and transnational terrorism, that left the majority unsure of how to make sense of these new developments and if Western civilisation was in fact under threat and, if so, by whom. This is where a third political reaction came in: the idea of dialogue of civilisations. Even though it did not enjoy the same prominence of the former two theses, most importantly due to the absence of a significant theoretical framework that can be embedded in international relations, it did provide an “intellectual strategy … [that offered] absolute faith in progress and in the unlimited perfectibility of human nature” (Petito, 2009, p. 5).

Although dialogue among civilisations has yet to be reinforced as an international political theory, its practice can be solidified to counter terrorism among other problems. It is a method whose importance must be fully recognised and whose potential should be fully exploited. To start, intercultural dialogue can be defined as “a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, based on mutual understanding and respect” (Bunjes, 2008, p. 10). But for intercultural and interreligious dialogue to take place, certain factors and components are required.

Among those criteria is that actors engaging in dialogue be able to express their thoughts and beliefs freely. Even though this might sound self-evident, there are many countries where restrictions on freedom of speech are in place, thus making dialogue difficult if not impossible. In areas such as Western societies where freedom of expression is to a large extent guaranteed, these actors must be willing to conduct talks with those who are on the ‘other side’, be it with regard to political, religious, economic, or social standing. Engaged actors, who sadly are often not a given, must be enthusiastic about and certain in the necessity of social cohesion and the notion that understanding each other is more important than blaming each other. Even though common beliefs such as human dignity, democracy,
liberal society, the rule of law, freedom of expression, freedom of (and freedom from) religion, as well as societal union must constitute a shared understanding between the engaged partners, a certain willingness to hear each other and possibly change one’s opinion is also helpful (Bunjes, 2008).

Especially when it comes to topics such as those presented in this report (i.e., terrorism, radicalisation, extremism, radical ideologies, and violence), a certain readiness to understand the roots of such problems is vital for successful intercultural dialogue. Only then can such talks result in fruitful exchanges that might even lead to ideas of how to address some of the reasons why young people (mostly men) turn to violence. Addressing and attempting to solve the problems of social marginalisation, personal frustration, and distorted religious views would certainly make a significant contribution towards preventing terrorism. Such progress would also aid in removing prejudice and deconstructing popular stereotypes about, in this case, the Muslim community (Bunjes, 2008). As we can recall, one of the causes of lone wolf attacks in Europe is the far-right surge that has recently led, as an unfortunate consequence, to further marginalisation of Muslims, thus confirming the narrative of terrorist recruiters and propaganda about the dichotomy of the West vs. Islam for young people on the edge. To counter that through intercultural dialogue would be a smart means of combating terrorism indirectly.

This dichotomy of West vs. Islam is something that far-right parties and terrorist groups have in common. Both posit a clash of civilisations, and both present their culture/religion to be under attack from the other. While it certainly is true that Islamic fundamentalism poses a threat to liberal and open-minded societies and that democracies have no place for religious extremism, let alone terrorist or violent acts, the same goes for all other kinds of extremism. Political extremism, like that acted out by populist and far-right parties and politicians by refusing the notions of tolerance, by propagating false generalisations about minorities, and by favouring simple solutions to complex problems, challenges the very principles upon which liberal societies are based. The EU therefore has a large gap to fill when it comes to "supporting research and information projects on moderate Islam by intensifying dialogue with Muslim communities” (Pablo, 2015, p. 6).
One of the ways it can do that is to bring together religious leaders on a platform where they can engage in discussions and constructive debates that enrich mutual understanding of the opposite side (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Furthermore, even though public rejection of terrorism and violent extremism has had little deterring effect on terrorists, leaders can make a more significant contribution by reaching out to youth in their respective communities and working to correct their distorted belief system that has been twisted and misrepresented by extremist voices.

Moreover, the EU would be well-advised to integrate a “culture of dialogue … [as] an integral part of the education imparted in our schools, cutting across disciplinary lines and helping to give young people the tools needed to settle conflicts differently than we are accustomed to [doing]” (Schwimmer, 2016). The EU should refocus its counterterrorism strategy, which is currently centred around cooperating with military, police, and intelligence agencies, on building partnerships in the fields of culture, education, religion, and communities (Schwimmer, 2016). It is strongly recommended that the EU start taking ‘soft power’ more seriously. There are two problems with ‘hard power’: first, it should not be the first refuge for such complex issues; and second, the EU does not possess the authority to effectively execute such measures, as mentioned before. As such, it seems that ‘soft power’ is the EU’s best bet for countering and preventing terrorism.

The risks of non-dialogue

“Not [engaging] in dialogue makes it easy to develop a stereotypical perception of the other, build a climate of mutual suspicion, tension, and anxiety, use minorities as scapegoats, and generally foster intolerance and discrimination” (Bunjes, 2008, p. 16). In other words, not investing in cross-cultural and interreligious dialogue does not only mean forfeiting the above-mentioned benefits, but it could also have consequences. By leaving the stage to violent voices to shape what goes into young people’s minds unchallenged, a negative contribution is made towards the flourishing of extremist views and tendencies. Every time dialogue is either ignored or dismissed, the social divide is deepened; and every time openness towards cooperation across groups, races, cultures, and religions is displayed, catastrophes (or at least the consequences thereof) are significantly mitigated. As Pope
Francis eloquently put it, we should build “a culture, which privileges dialogue as a form of encounter” (Pope Francis, as cited in Schwimmer, 2016).

**Limitations of interreligious and intercultural dialogue**

Despite the overwhelming positive feedback expressed about dialogue between civilisations, some voices have warned about its limits and likely unintended consequences that, for the sake of completeness, shall also be presented here.

According to Sarah Eltantawi, Assistant Professor of Comparative Religion with a specialisation in Muslim communities living in the West, this “model of engagement is inherently limited” (Eltantawi, 2005, para. 2). Her first point is that there are no fixed identities anymore and putting Americans or Europeans of Arab descent, Westerns converts, Arab Christians/Jews, and atheist Arabs living in the West (i.e., Muslim religion or Arab culture) into one ‘pot’ does not resonate. This is a legitimate point as, in today’s globalised and barrier-free world, identities have become permeable and new identities can be easily created. Certainly, it is necessary to reflect on how to effectively conduct dialogue between civilisations or religions with group members who do not necessarily identify primarily on the basis of the category to which they were assigned. Nonetheless, this could be seen as a benefit rather than a drawback: when groups come together that are composed of actors who are mixed in terms of identity, then a certain degree of openness and understanding will be brought to the table. If I, for example, as a European of Arab descent, engage with an Arab Christian, we have a common ground: our knowledge of Arab culture. If a European Muslim were to engage in a conversation with a German Christian, they would also have a certain shared understanding of cultural concepts that can serve as a foundation. The idea that we now live in a world where there are no longer fixed identities can represent an obstacle to dialogue but, if framed correctly, may in fact enrich it.

While it is certainly true that engaging with those who do not fully share our views or values is the starting point of dialogue (Bunjes, 2008), there is the danger of confirming or deepening the us–them dichotomy. When dialogue is framed as taking place between the open, pluralistic, and liberal West and the democratically underdeveloped Arabs, polarisation is not bridged but rather deepened. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the
outcome depends completely on how the dialogue is framed and on what foundations it is based. By that I mean that we “must strive to develop methodologies of engagement and utilize terms of reference that are non-exclusive” (Eltantawi, 2005, para. 9). Identifying and seeking to understand shared concepts (apart from stereotypical assumptions) along with the grievances that differentiate each side’s experiences is vital for realising the full potential of dialogue between civilisations and religions.

Conclusion

The global strategy of the European Union: Another missed opportunity

In June of 2016, the EU released ‘The Global Strategy on the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy’ (EUGS) based on the initiative of Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Terrorism, in the new update to the general ‘European Union Counter Terrorism Strategy’, takes higher priority and is presented as the main concern for European security. In contrast to the 2003 European Security Strategy, in which Europe was described as having never “been so prosperous, so secure nor so free” (European Council, as cited in Millar, 2015, p. 3), the new document, entitled ‘Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe’, is not as optimistic: “We live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union” (Council of the European Union, 2016, p. 2). The terrorist attacks that have occurred in the last 15 years (i.e., in the time since the EU issued its latest Security Policy), as well as the ensuing waves of attacks, have clearly influenced the narrative of the updated document on the EU’s future security goals.

In a dedicated section on counterterrorism, the EU notes it is planning to introduce “harder security measures that relate to intelligence sharing and cyber security as well as preventive efforts … [such as] education, communication, culture, [and] youth” (European Council, as cited in Millar, 2015, p. 5). It does reiterate its intentions to collaborate with “civil society, social actors, the private sector and the victims of terrorism, as well as [conducting] interreligious and intercultural dialogue” (European Council, as cited in Millar, 2015, p. 5). Essentially, in terms of soft power, the EU merely emphasises that it will continue to work
across the four previously presented pillars and that the major update regards the hard power aspect of counterterrorism. The EUGS calls for “tighter institutional links between [the EU’s] external action and the internal area of freedom, security and justice” (European Council, as cited in Millar, 2015, p. 5). Even though the EU’s focus is yet again (if not even more so) placed on the security aspect of terrorism (i.e., combating terrorism) rather than the myriad other sets of complex aspects that lead to it (i.e., terrorism prevention), we can conclude that the EU has not yet understood or effectively tried to comprehend the nature of terrorism.

Its policy dynamic remains crisis-driven, and the EU seems not to want to deviate significantly in real terms from any of its previous strategies. In my opinion, the EU counterterrorism approach (policies, not rhetoric) will remain the same: focus on security cooperation while issuing initiatives that give the impression that other areas, such as civil cooperation and intercultural dialogue, are not completely off the table. This will remain the main shape of the EU’s counterterrorism policy: with each terrorist attack (whether by a group or by lone wolves), calls to increase security cooperation will grow in the context of EU integration and public assurance.

**Final words of warning on the future of the EU counterterrorism policy**

Concerning the future of EU counterterrorism, I would like to conclude with a few words of warning. It is impossible to win the so-called war against terror, as exemplified by the U.S. War on Terror. This war cannot be ‘won’ per se, neither abroad nor at home. It may be sad, but it is true. There will always be people with legitimate grievances who choose violent means by which to communicate those issues. There will always be people who legitimise their violent acts with distorted interpretations of religious texts. There will always be people who, at some point in their lives, turn to these distorted and extremist ideologies as a safety and fallback when things do not go their way. The problem is that terrorism is not like drug trafficking. With the latter, which is not simpler on any level, there is a tangible thing to be fought: drugs. Certainly, there will always be people who turn to drugs and others who illegally supply them, but progress is measurable. Terrorism is mostly based on ideas, and ideas cannot be fought with weapons, guns, or tight security borders. Any security measure
will, at best, help in tracking terrorists before they commit their crimes, but not before they become radicalised.

As noted in this report, the process of radicalisation is not easily defined; it is highly complex and involves a multitude of factors that, aside from economic and educational aspects, mostly revolve around psychological elements and religious ideas that are successfully ‘sold’ to those who are easily susceptible. Drugs are not sold through propaganda and manipulating would-be drug users. Drug addicts do not undergo indoctrination. Most importantly, a drug dealer can be arrested based on the drugs he or she carries. A radicalised person’s extremist ideas cannot be detected and certainly not confiscated. The War on Drugs has been criticised for being too focused on heavy measures and too ignorant of a nuanced strategy that incorporates the causes that lead to drug use in the first place. The same goes for the War on Terrorism in that, I hope, the EU will not continue to conduct using “strong-arm policies” (Chalk, 2017, para. 5) but rather by finally realising the potential that soft power mechanisms hold, some of which were mentioned earlier.

Even though the EU itself was critical of the American War on Terror, the EU’s tone changed drastically (which the U.S. government foresaw back then) after the rise of ISIS, and military action (e.g., in Syria and Iraq) followed. Now, the EU has not yet launched an American-style War on Terror, but they should heed this word of warning: the EU should consider adopting “a more restrained and considered approach to military counterterrorism to promote European security and help reinforce an international order in line with the EU’s interests and values” (Dworkin, 2016, p. 2). The EU needs to recognise the importance of investing in building public resilience rather than responding (and appealing to) public fear. Ending this vicious cycle would eventually be in the EU’s best interest.
References


