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JIHADIST TERRORISM AS A LATENT THREAT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: CAPABILITY VS. INTENTIONALITY

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IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: CAPACITY VS. INTENTIONALITY

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Resumen: En los últimos años, el número de atentados consumados en la Unión Europea atribuidos al Daesh ha disminuido de forma significativa, lejos de la cantidad y letalidad de los años 2016 y 2017. No obstante, la cifra de conspiraciones terroristas frustradas por las Fuerzas y Cuerpos de Seguridad, el número de radicales presentes en determinados países, unido a las actividades terroristas del ISIS-K en Alemania o Francia, así como en aquellos otros países que el grupo considera apostatas – y por tanto enemigos-, tales como Rusia, Irán, o Turquía, permiten inferir que la amenaza yihadista es alta y continua latente.

A raíz del presente estudio, se observa cómo las redes yihadistas promueven la radicalización entre los sectores más vulnerables existentes en las "sociedades paralelas" que florecen dentro de los denominados *hotbeds*, aprovechando el contacto personal y la cercanía. Se verifica que los doce países de la Unión Europa y el Reino unido donde se han sufrido atentados presentan, cómo características comunes, además de la presencia de las redes, la existencia de combatientes extranjeros europeos, y/o haber participado militarmente contra el Daesh. En dichos territorios, el ciclo de odio fruto de la dinámica ataque-xenofobia-reclutamiento posibilita la radicalización.

Si se quiere acabar con la amenaza yihadista, hay que trabajar no solo en la neutralización de la capacidad de atentar, sino especialmente, en una forma efectiva de encarar el ideario terrorista que es capaz de radicalizar y seducir a individuos que se unen a la organización y llegan a matar en su nombre.

Abstract: In recent years, the number of completed terrorist attacks on European Union soil has decreased significantly, far from those committed in 2016 and 2017, in terms of quantity and lethality. However, the number of foiled plots by law enforcement agencies, the quantity of radicals presents in certain countries, coupled with terrorist activities under ISIS-K in France or Germany, and in other countries considered apostates by Daesh, and, consequently, enemies, such as Russia, Iran or Turkey, reveal that jihadist threat is both high and latent.

Resulting from the present research, it is observed how jihadist networks boost radicalization among those more vulnerable in "parallel societies", that flourish within the so called hotbeds, taking advantage of face-to-face contact and closeness. In this way, it is verified that the twelve European Union members and the United Kingdom that have suffered terrorist attacks on their soil, have common characteristics, such as existing jihadist networks, having produced European foreign fighters and/or having participated

in the military intervention against Daesh. In those territories, the cycle of hatred that stems from the attack-xenophobia-recruitment dynamic, enables radicalization.

If we want to put an end to the jihadist threat, not only has the capacity of attack to be dealt with, but also find an effective way to cope with the ideology, the one that is able to radicalize and seduce people that end up joining the ranks of the organization, killing in its name.

Palabras clave: Radicalización, factores *pull*, factores *push*, *hotbeds*, redes yihadistas.

Keywords: Radicalization, pull factors, push factors, hotbeds, jihadist networks

ABBREVIATIONS

UNGA: United Nations General Assembly

BBC: *British Broadcasting Corporation*

CC: Central Issue

EUROPOL: *European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation*

IAEM: Institute for Advanced Military Studies

IRU: *Internet Referral Unit*

ISIS-K: *The Islamic State - Khorasan Province*

KTCC: *Kurdish Training Coordination Center*

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

UNDCP: United Nations Development Programme

POOLRE: *Pool Reinsurance Company*

RAN: *Radical Awareness Network*

SAPO: *Säkerhetspolisen*

SOUFAN GROUP: GS

TESAT: *Terrorism Situation and Trend Report*

TDP*: The Defense Post*

TST*: The Strait Times*

TRIVALENT: *Terrorism prevention via radicalisation*

EU: European Union

WC: Wilson Center

1. INTRODUCTION

The self-styled Islamic State, Daesh, rose to the spotlight for taking control of a territory the size of the United Kingdom *(The Strait Times* [TST], 2019), for its attempt to create a 'state' with governance structures, services and resource management (Bakkour and Stansfield, 2023, p. 126, 127), for its use of social media and propaganda (Tomé, 2015, p. 11), and above all, for the wave of terrorist attacks carried out in its name in the West, particularly in Europe, on a scale and with a force that was unprecedented. The attack on the Bataclan hall in Paris and the mass shootings in Nice, Berlin, Stockholm and Barcelona are some examples of the terrorist threat that Europe has experienced in recent years.

The classic rationale in terms of measuring a terrorist threat is to count the number of executed attacks. This is understandable, as the attacks are in the public eye and are a measurable and tangible indicator. However, the approach of using this factor alone gives an incomplete picture, as the attacks carried out constitute just the "tip of the iceberg"; in other words, they are what is left after police forces have done their job, preventing and dismantling terrorist plots (Nesser, 2021, p. 143).

According to EUROPOL's latest *Terrorism Situation and Trend Report* (TESAT) (2023, p. 24), two attacks were carried through to completion in the European Union (EU) in 2022, and three in 2021. Taking into consideration the above, and given that the number of actual attacks in Europe is relatively low, can we conclude that the terrorist threat in the EU is likewise low? This is the central question of this article, which we attempt to answer by analysing the problem of jihadist terrorism in Europe and identifying the factors that contribute to combating it and to its continuity.

Regarding the concept of threat, it can be seen as the product of the capacity to attack, of the conscious will to do harm (Couto, 1980, p. 329). To this effect, a specific situation is capable of creating a threat if the agent has the potential to cause harm, and if they intend to do so (Escorrega, 2009, p. 6). Assessing the threat in terms of accomplished attacks alone ignores the intentionality[1], i.e. the conscious will to do harm.

In the light of the above, several indicators will be analysed[2] that measure the capacity to attack, such as the different modalities of attacks, and the evolution from complex attacks (with weapons or explosives) to more simple or rudimentary ones (bladed weapons). This will be followed by a discussion of the other threat factor, intentionality. We will look at the potential pool of people willing to adhere to the jihadist ideology, and those who end up making the leap from cognitive radicalisation to the materialisation of violence. In the results analysis section, we will comment on the results based on the indicators. And last, in the conclusions, I will answer the central question posed above and comment on the current situation in Europe.

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[1] As opposed to damage caused by forces of nature - weather, flood, earthquake, etc. - by accident or chance. In other words, the "natural" threat differs from the terrorist threat due to the "human" factor, precisely because of the intention to do harm.
[2] See Table 6 in Section 3.5.

2. ABILITY TO ATTACK

I will begin this section by highlighting the importance of the paradigm shift in jihadist terrorism. The pioneer of this new approach was Al-Qaeda chief Mustafa Setmarian, who advocated individual jihad as a way of avoiding leaking plans and police action (Rojas and Carrión, 2017). It marked a shift from group terrorism, which was more likely to be detected and had a certain hierarchy, to a more fluid terrorism based on the initiative of the individual or small cell.

This individual jihad, together with the simplicity of planning[3] and the execution of *low-cost* terrorism, makes it extremely difficult to detect and prevent this type of attack, as Ramos (2019, p. 166) rightly points out. Notable too is the fact that Daesh itself claims attacks that have been directed, facilitated or inspired by the group, under the assumption that an attack inspired by Daesh is an attack by Daesh. (Osborne, 2018).

In fact, the probability of detection of a terrorist cell is directly proportional to the number of its members (Woo, 2017, p. 6). Individual attacks are therefore the least likely type of attack to be detected. In this vein, internet contacts, the purchase of suspicious substances and other similar activities may uncover a plot, enabling the attack to be foiled.

An example of the above is the thwarted attack in Cologne by German security services in June 2018 that led to the arrest of a Tunisian suspected of having been inspired by Daesh, revealing the importance of internet monitoring to uncover terrorist plots. It was also the first time a jihadist had managed to produce ricin by themselves following tutorials shared via Telegram (Flade, 2018, p. 1,3). Another similar event had taken place in 2017, when Daesh terrorists planned to detonate a bomb on a plane in Australia and, after that failed attempt, planned a chemical gas attack in Sydney (BBC, 2019).

2.1. ATTACKS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: LETHALITY VS. MODE

Figure 1 shows clearly how the number of victims increased dramatically as a result of the attacks Daesh began to perpetrate in Europe from 2014 onwards, coinciding with the proclamation of the Caliphate. As Ramos (2020, p. 55) states, the volume of attacks steadily and progressively decreased as the group lost control of territory thanks to military actions[4] and police pressure in Europe.

Indeed, the decrease in attacks and the large number of plots dismantled by the security forces show the importance of international cooperation. In this respect, EU legislative measures have been decisive, as they have made it possible to prevent travel to conflict zones, to control borders, weapons, explosives and their precursors, to monitor the internet, to create the *Internet Referral Unit* (IRU), and to exchange intelligence, among other activities, thereby optimising the police response to jihadism (Correia and
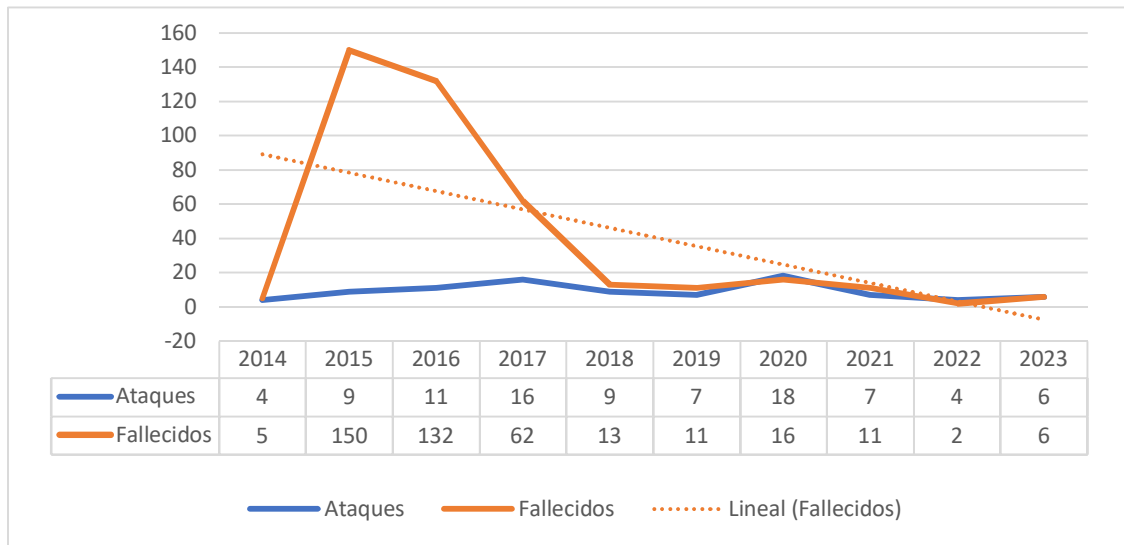
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[3] Attacks carried out using rudimentary tools such as bladed weapons do not require detailed planning such as would be involved in the manufacture and use of an explosive device. A hit-and-run or stabbing of passers-by in a public area with a large number of people is easy to plan and execute and are the most common methods used by terrorists. See Figure 2.

[4] Military actions to suppress Daesh in the framework of Operation *Inherent Resolve* and the International Coalition against the group. See, Calvo, J. L. (2016). Military Response. Strategies to defeat Daesh and regional destabilisation. Strategy Notebook 180. Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, 180. http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/cuadernos/CE_180.pdf

Santamaria, 2021, p. 233). However, the number of attacks perpetrated over the period 2014-2023 has never been below four.

Jihadist propaganda and, in particular, the online instructions in Daesh's Rumiyah magazine, have also influenced the terrorists' chosen mode of attack. These guidelines have been used by small groups or individuals to "industrialise" terrorism *(Pool Reinsurance Company* [POOLRE], 2017, p. 4, 5, 24, 25).

Figure 1.
Evolution of jihadist attacks and number of deaths in Europe, 2014-2023

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Ataques	4	9	11	16	9	7	18	7	4	6
Fallecidos	5	150	132	62	13	11	16	11	2	6

Note: Based on data from Igualada and Aguilera (2024, pp. 53-55).

Firearms, a previously popular method chosen by terrorists, and very present in the attacks in Paris in January (Charlie Hebdo) and November 2015 (Bataclan), among others - became less used, and after 2018, there were just one-off attacks using this means[5] in 2019, 2020 and 2023. Similarly, since 2019 there has been no use of explosives in attacks.

The predominant mechanical means in the 1990s and at the beginning of the 21st century was group dynamics within terrorist cells, but now there is a clear trend towards individual perpetrators. Indeed, since the territorial collapse of Daesh, there have been no large-scale group jihadist attacks in Europe (Nesser, 2023, p. 8).

In terms of the means employed, the threat of the use of homemade explosives remains high, as evidenced by the many attacks in the EU, and especially those dismantled by law enforcement agencies that would have involved the use of explosives. EU regulations regarding the restriction of access to explosives precursors and the detection of suspicious transactions have contributed significantly to this new situation[6] (European Commission, 2020, p. 15).
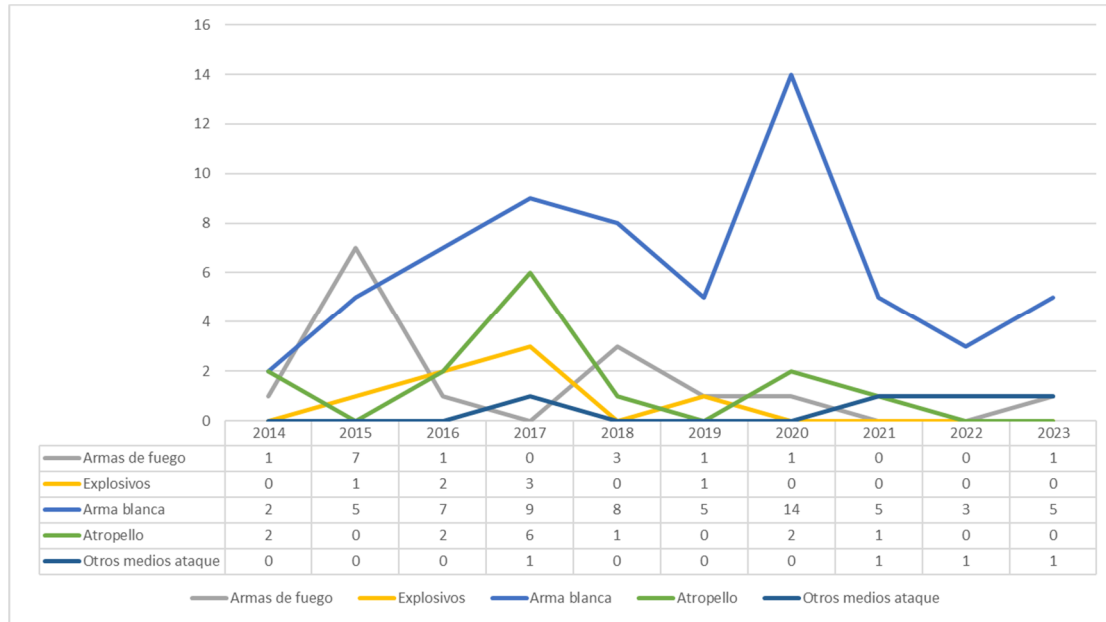
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[5] See Figure 2.
[6] Figure 2 shows that there have been no attacks featuring explosives since 2019.

Figures 1 and 2 show that in parallel to the group's loss of strength, territory and means, the attacks changed modality, and the use of weapons and explosives gave way to rudimentary tools[7], with a consequent decrease in lethality.

Figure 2.
Evolution of jihadist attacks by modality, 2014-2023

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Armas de fuego	1	7	1	0	3	1	1	0	0	1
Explosivos	0	1	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
Arma blanca	2	5	7	9	8	5	14	5	3	5
Atropello	2	0	2	6	1	0	2	1	0	0
Otros medios ataque	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1

Note: Based on data from Igualada and Aguilera (2024, pp. 53-55).

2.2. ATTACKS THWARTED VS. ATTACKS CARRIED OUT

Available data indicate that law enforcement agencies in the counter-terrorism context have been reasonably effective in terms of disrupting and neutralising terrorist plots involving chemical agents and firearms. However, analyses also show the vulnerability of societies to attacks that can be carried out using other tools as means, even if these are not "weapons" in the strict sense, including vehicles (Nesser, 2021, p. 153).

Ramos (2020) highlights the work of the police forces and the effectiveness of the military, which has contributed so much to reducing Daesh's capacity to carry out attacks abroad. Indeed, since the dismantling of Amn al-Kharji (external security) in 2017 thanks to military pressure, the organisation has proved incapable of devising, orchestrating and directing attacks of the calibre of those perpetrated in the period 2015-2017 (Hamming, 2023, p. 25).

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[7] The number of attacks with knives and "other means of attack" in Figure 2 illustrates this. The latter includes other tools, such as bow and arrow and hammer. In this regard, on 13 October 2021, an attack took place in Kongsberg, Norway, using a bow and arrow. On 2 December 2023, in Paris, there was an attack with a knife and hammer (Igualada and Aguilera, 2024, pp. 53-55).

However, as will be discussed in the section on external threats, in recent times, *The Islamic State - Khorasan Province* (ISIS-K) has managed to boost this once diminished capacity for international attacks by means of complex and targeted attacks.

With regard to thwarted and successful attacks, when EUROPOL data are considered (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023), a comparison of the sum of thwarted and unsuccessful attacks shows that apart from 2020 due to the dynamics of the pandemic, the figure is higher than that of successful attacks (Figure 3). This highlights two extremes: the capacity of European police forces to thwart attacks and intentionality, i.e., despite this police effectiveness, there is still a will to do harm.

Figure 3.
Successful, thwarted and failed jihadist attacks in Europe, 2017-2022
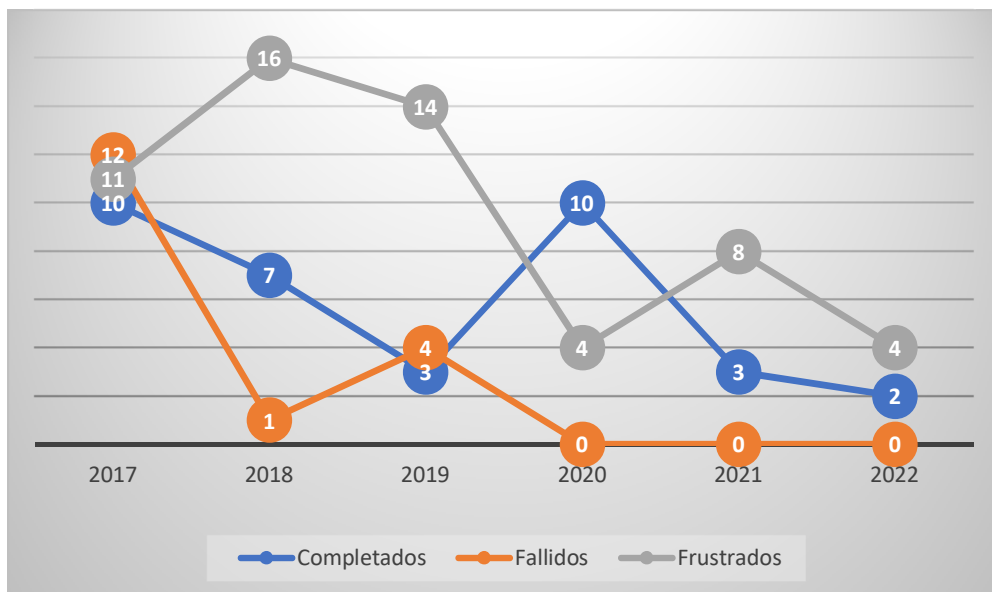
Note: Elaboration based on EUROPOL data (2019, 2021, 2022, 2023)

2.3. ATTACKS BY COUNTRY: HOTBEDS, JIHADIST NETWORKS AND MILITARY INTERVENTION AGAINST DAESH

Table 1 shows how attacks in the EU (including the UK) have occurred in certain countries, using a range of modalities from explosives to bladed weapons, as discussed in section 2.1 above.

Table 1

Jihadist attacks in Europe by country of commission 2014-2023

Pais	Ataques	Fallecidos	Arma de fuego	Explosivos	Arma blanca	Atropellos	Otros medios ataque
Alemania	13	17	0	1	9	2	0
Bélgica	9	42	4	2	6	0	0
Austria	1	4	1	0	0	0	0
España	5	18	0	0	4	3	0
Dinamarca	2	2	2	0	0	0	0
Finlandia	1	2	0	0	1	0	3
Francia	38	266	7	2	26	6	0
Italia	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Noruega	2	5	0	0	1	0	1
Paises Bajos	3	4	1	0	2	0	0
Suecia	1	5	0	0	0	1	0
Suiza	3	1	0	0	3	0	0
Reino Unido	12	42	0	2	10	2	0
TOTAL	91	408	15	7	63	14	4

Note: Based on data from Igualada and Aguilera (2024, pp. 53-55).

The attacks have been concentrated in a total of 12 of the 27 EU countries and the UK. Is there a reason for this? Is there a reason why attacks have occurred in these countries and not in others?

The Soufan Group's *hotbed* concept is extremely important in this respect. Ali Soufan and Daniel Schoenfel (2016, p. 19) explain how, in certain geographical areas (Table 2) and due to a number of factors, jihadist groups are more successful in their recruitment strategy. Notably, there is no single path that leads to radicalisation (Moccia, 2019, p. 34), but an amalgamation of factors at the macro-medium and micro levels[8], which when combined in different and multiple ways, can lead to violent extremism, as cited by Marcus Ranstorp *(Radical Awareness Network* [RAN], 2016, p. 1-3).

A clear example of this can be seen in the number of foreign fighters displaced to the conflict in Syria and Iraq, who can be identified as being mainly from certain regions: Saudi Arabia, Belgium, Tunisia, France, Libya, Russia and the UK, among many others. Continuing in this line of reasoning, there are also specific areas in these countries where the flow is located, which are the aforementioned *hotbeds* (Magri, 2016, p. 9).

To this effect, Perliger and Milton (2016) indicate how jihadist recruitment networks focus on specific areas to identify potential followers among immigrant communities, which are themselves under economic, social and other types of stressors. These authors also pointed to the importance of personal contact in recruitment: of 854

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[8] According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNPD) (2017):
- Macro-level factors are based on a socio-economic and political context that affects large numbers of people, manifesting itself in governance failures, political grievances and marginalisation.
- Meso-level factors are social and cultural, based on group identity, socialisation and other influences, including religion, ethnicity and culture. Studies in this field suggest that appeals to collective and identity-based grievances are crucial in establishing narratives of victimisation, motivation, legitimacy, and recruitment and retention in violent extremist groups.
- Micro-level factors relate to individual-level vulnerabilities and may include cognitive problems, identity issues, feelings of alienation, marginalisation, discrimination, stigmatisation, predisposition to violence and susceptibility to narratives through social networks or personal encounters.

individuals who joined the ranks of jihadist organisations, almost 70% originated from cities where other foreign fighters had been identified (p. 26).

Table 2
Recruitment points for foreign fighters by city and country

Country	City	Number of Recruits
UK	London	38
Belgium	Antwerp	32
Belgium	Brussels	30
Spain	Ceuta	18
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Zenica	15
France	Nice	13
France	Toulouse	13
France	Lunel	12
Belgium	Vilvoorde	11
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Sarajevo	11
Belgium	Molenbeek	10
France	Paris	10
Germany	Dinslaken	9
Netherlands	Hague	9
UK	Portsmouth	8
Canada	Montreal	7
Germany	Frankfurt	7
Netherlands	Delft	7
Australia	Sydney	7

Note: Perliger and Milton (2016, p. 27)

The Soufan Group (2015, p. 10, 11) states that the existence of these *hotbeds* is due to the personal nature of recruitment. Joining Daesh is an emotional as opposed to a rational act, with the presence of a close relative or family member in the radicalisation process often determining the outcome.

Research by García Carola, Reinares and Vicente (2017) identifies previous links and personal contacts as essential factors in radicalisation, confirming the Soufan Group's hypothesis. The researchers' study of 178 subjects detained between 2013 and 2016 in Spain highlights two factors as being of paramount importance in understanding their radicalisation: First, personal or online contact with a radicalising agent, and second, the prior existence of social links with other radicalised individuals. This would explain why some individuals are radicalised and others are not, and also why this happens in certain areas and not uniformly among the Muslim population that is targeted for recruitment (p. 1).

However, according to Nesser (2019, p. 17), aside from personal contacts, there are other factors that contribute to the continued high level of threat in certain European countries. An example of this is France and the UK, two countries with diametrically opposed approaches to integration: for the former, assimilation is essential, and for the latter, the policy of multi-culturalism. Despite these opposing approaches, the two countries have the highest threat levels in Europe. What other factors are at play? The answer is the policy of intervention in armed conflicts in Muslim countries (Table 3) and

the dynamics of domestic jihadist networks in both countries that create international cells to represent Daesh or Al-Qaeda.

Table 3

Military contribution of countries in the International Coalition against Daesh

Country	Fuzzy value	Military Contribution to the anti-Daesh coalition	Since	Personnel
UK	1.0	Air strikes in Iraq and Syria, training local forces	09/2014	1350
France	1.0	Air strikes in Iraq and Syria, training local forces	09/2014	1000
Netherlands	1.0	Air strikes in Iraq and Syria, training local forces	10/2014	150
Belgium	1.0	Air strikes in Iraq and Syria, training local forces	10/2014	150
Denmark	1.0	Air strikes in Iraq and Syria, training local forces	10/2014	140
Italy	0.8	Air support, training local forces	11/2014	1500
Germany	0.8	Air support, training local forces	12/2015	1200
Poland	0.8	Air support	06/2016	150
Spain	0.2	Training local forces	01/2015	480
Hungary	0.2	Training local forces	01/2015	116
Finland	0.2	Training local forces	01/2015	100
Sweden	0.2	Training local forces	08/2015	70
Romania	0.2	Training local forces	01/2016	50
Portugal	0.2	Training local forces	01/2015	30
Latvia	0.1	Training local forces	11/2015	6
Estonia	0.1	Training local forces	08/2016	6
Slovenia	0.1	Training local forces	09/2016	6
Lithuania	0.1	Training local forces	01/2017	6
Czech Republic	0.1	Training local forces	08/2017	4
Cyprus	0.0	Political and logistical support (overflight and basing)	–	–
Greece	0.0	Political and logistical support (overflight and basing)	–	–
Austria	0.0	Political support	–	–
Bulgaria	0.0	Political support	–	–
Croatia	0.0	Political support	–	–
Luxembourg	0.0	Political support	–	–
Slovakia	0.0	Political support	–	–
Ireland	0.0	No involvement	–	–
Malta	0.0	No involvement	–	–

Note: Mello (2022)

Table 3 shows the degree of commitment and contribution of each country in the International Coalition in its fight against Daesh. The countries that have contributed troops and made airstrikes have suffered the highest number of attacks (Table 1). Other countries that have provided technical assistance (training), such as Spain, Sweden and Finland, and Norway, have also suffered attacks. Switzerland is the only country that has not contributed to the Coalition but has suffered attacks, which is to do with the presence of jihadist networks there.

What about the other countries in Table 1?

Broadly speaking, the contribution by countries to the Global Coalition against Daesh can be classified into three categories (Mello, 2022, p. 233):

- The first group contains those who have actively taken part in air strikes, either through direct attack (the UK, France, Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands), or by providing air support or reconnaissance (Germany, Italy and Poland).
- The second group of countries is made up of those whose contribution is directed towards training and education of local forces, mostly at the *Kurdish Training*

Coordination Center (KTCC) in Erbil, but also at other locations[9]. These training missions were small, although some countries deployed significant contingents (between 30 and 500), including Spain, Hungary, Finland, Sweden, Romania and Portugal.

- Last, making up a third group are the countries whose only material contribution has been logistics (overflights, such as Greece and Cyprus), or simply expressions of political support (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Luxembourg and Slovakia).

From the above, Romania, Portugal, Hungary, Greece and Cyprus, each contributing to training and logistics, have not suffered attacks on their territory. Switzerland, while not taking part in the Coalition against Daesh, has been the target of attacks, and there is a reason why.

Like other European countries in the 1980s and 1990s, Switzerland has been used by jihadist militants- mostly from North Africa- as a logistical base to raise funds, spread propaganda and provide support to jihadist organisations. Until 2001, jihadist networks were largely able to operate in the country with just a few arrests and deportations. However, 9/11 changed the Swiss approach to terrorism. In 2009, 2010 and 2011, there were several cases linked to Al-Qaeda operating from Swiss soil, providing either logistical support or issuing propaganda (Hofer, 2020, p. 20).

Therefore, aside from the military contribution of each country, the presence of jihadist recruitment networks that have favoured or facilitated the journey to the conflict zone is also crucial. In the case of France, three cases of networks that are said to have facilitated logistics and travel to conflict zones will be cited here: (1) 'Rachid', 'Nasser' and 'Said': Jihad facilitators in France, 1992 to 1994; (2) Abu Turab' and 'Tarek', who mobilised recruits to Fallujah: Iraq 2003 to 2004; (3) the Syrian war via Skype: enablers move to the Web, 2013 to 2014 (Holman, 2016, p. 13).

For its part, the Abu Walaa network in Germany was responsible for the Christmas market attack in Berlin in December 2016, which resulted in the death of 12 people and 56 injured (Bin Sudiman, 2017, p. 10). This attack on German soil was the first Daesh-linked fatal attack in Germany by a Tunisian national, Arnis Amri, linked to the Abu Walaa network. (Heil, 2017, pág. 1). Also in Germany, the Tajik network would attempt to attack a NATO base, with Daesh officials directing the cell's activities from Afghanistan and Syria. (Soliev, 2021).

The UK can be cited as the origin of the main platform for Daesh in Europe, where a network grew that would spread across Europe, based on a movement that initially supported Al-Qaeda and mobilised a generation of jihadists in the 2000s. After being banned, this network reappeared under the name *Islam4UK*, under the leadership of the radical British Pakistani preacher Anjem Choudary. This network was replicated in Belgium (*Sharia4Belgium)*, the Netherlands (*Sharia4Holland)*, Spain (*Sharia4Spain*) Denmark (*Sharia4Denmark)*, Finland (*Sharia4Finland)*, Italy (*Sharia4Italy*), France

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[9] Baghdad, Suleimaniya, and Hamman (Global Coalition, 2024).

(*Sharia4France, Forsane Alizza*), Germany (Millatu Ibrahim) and Norway (*The Prophet's Umma)* (Nesser, 2019, p. 18).

Belgium is prolific when it comes to recruitment networks, and according to Ostaeyen (2016, p. 7), the ones that have been most active and have managed to send hundreds of radicals to the battlefields of Iraq and Syria are Sharia4Belgium, Resto Tawhid (Jean-Louis Denis), and the so-called Zerkani network.

There are large Muslim communities in the northern regions of Italy, including Lombardia, Veneto and Emilia Romagna, where most cases of radicalisation are found, although there are individuals and networks in other regions of the country, too. Jihadists do not usually live in metropolitan areas, but in small towns and other rural regions. Some of these radicals come from seemingly stable families, others have a troubled past and comprehensive criminal records, and others are radicalised from established jihadist networks (Vidino and Marone, 2017, p. 5).

In this dynamic, Marone (2017, p. 51-55) points to four families that "produced" foreign fighters: the Sergio-Kobuzi family, the Brignoli-Koraichi family, Bencharki-Moutaharrik and Abderrahmane Khachia, and Pilè-Sagrari.

In Austria, authorities were able to link Kujtim Fejzulai - responsible for the 2020 Vienna attack - to 21 individuals, and 12 individuals were arrested in this regard. Police in Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Turkey also arrested other people linked to the terrorist. A considerable number of them shared the same ethnicity, with family roots in the Balkans, especially in countries[10] with an Albanian population (Saal and Lippe, 2021, p. 36).

In the case of the attack in Barcelona on 17 August 2017, García Calvo and Reinares (2022, p. 3) explain how an imam named Es Satty acted as a radicaliser of 10 terrorists (9 of them teenagers and second generation, raised or born in Ripoll, descendants of Moroccan immigrants), leading them to violence, and how important the links[11] of kinship and friendship were in the creation of this jihadist cell.

Table 4 shows how all countries in the EU that suffered attacks in the period 2014-2023 (including the UK) produced foreign fighters who went to fight in Iraq and Syria. The 13 countries in Table 4 therefore meet one or both of the conditions set out by Nesser (2019), namely: (1) having maintained a policy of intervention in armed conflicts against Daesh, and/or (2) having domestic and/or international jihadist networks on national territory, the same ones that could have helped the displacement of their foreign fighters.

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[10] The Albanian diaspora is mainly spread across Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro. Fejzulai belonged to the terrorist group the "Balkan Lions", an international network composed of subjects in at least Austria, Germany, Switzerland and the Western Balkans. Indeed, members of the group were arrested in North Macedonia (Saal and Lippe, 2021, p. 36).
[11] The cell included, among other members, four pairs of brothers aged between 17 and 24, born or raised in Ripoll. (Rodríguez, 2017)

Table 4

Foreign fighters and the military contribution of EU countries that have suffered attacks

Pais	Contribución militar Coalición Internacional contra Daesh	Tropas paises	Combatientes extranjeros	Retornados	Fecha
Francia	Ataques aéreos en Siria e Irak; formación fuerzas locales	1000	1910	271	ago-17
Alemania	Apoyo aereo; formación fuerzas locales	1200	915	300	mar-17
Reino Unido	Ataques aéreos en Siria e Irak; formación fuerzas locales	1350	850	425	feb-17
Bélgica	Ataques aéreos en Siria e Irak; formación fuerzas locales	150	478	102	ago-17
Suecia	Formación fuerzas locales	70	300	106	sep-16
Austria	Apoyo político	0	296	90	dic-16
Paises Bajos	Ataques aéreos en Siria e Irak; formación fuerzas locales	150	280	50	feb-17
España	Formación fuerzas locales	480	204	30	jul-17
Dinamarca	Ataques aéreos en Siria e Irak; formación fuerzas locales	140	145	67	feb-17
Italia	Apoyo aereo; formación fuerzas locales	1500	110	13	oct-17
Noruega	Formación fuerzas locales y apoyo económico	110	90	30	sep-16
Finlandia	Formación fuerzas locales	100	80	43	feb-17
Suiza	No forma parte de la Coalición contra el Daesh	0	70	14	feb-17

Note: Elaboration based on Soufan Group (2017, p. 12, 13),

Global Coalition (2018)and Mello (2022)

3. INTENTIONALITY

In the previous section, we analysed the ability to attack factor of the concept of threat. In this section, we will look at intentionality. Intentionality has been defined as the conscious will to do harm (Couto, 1980, p. 329). Who are the individuals who will do harm by virtue of their extremist beliefs?

3.1. THE DATA: ARRESTS AND SUSPECTED RADICALISATION

The lists of radicals/extremists held by each member state of the EU are confidential or secret. These records include the situation of each individual, how dangerous they are, the level of need for monitoring and, where necessary, the requests for additional measures.

Nonetheless, open sources provide some references [12] to official figures of individuals considered extremists, as well as estimates made by independent researchers, which allow us to infer some numbers that can be used to assess the terrorist threat.

The mobilisation of the jihadist ranks during the Syrian war has contributed significantly to the growth of the extremist pool in Europe. Paul and Acheson (2019, as cited in the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, n.d.) explain how the number of jihadist extremists in Germany in 2019 was estimated at 26,560, of whom 2,240 would be radical jihadists. The number of extremists was to grow significantly in Germany:

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[12] Given the sensitive nature of these data, open sources provide references to official statistics or estimates derived from studies. An additional problem is that the data available are sometimes not up to date, hindering the value of the analysis.

9,700 in 2016, 10,080 in 2017, and 11,300 in 2018. In addition, a number of investigations to this effect are ongoing, with 1,300 suspects linked to jihadist terrorism on German soil (p. 46).

For the UK, estimates have pointed to as many as 25,000 jihadist extremists, of whom 3,000 have been considered a serious threat at some point, with 500 under permanent surveillance. France, for its part, had 20,000 extremists on the February 2018 list of radicals and, of those, 4,000 are monitored as a potential serious threat (Nesser, 2019, p. 19, 20).

Swedish authorities monitored 2,000 subjects identified as potential threats to national security in 2017. Indeed, the then head of the Swedish Security Service, Klas Friberg, noted that in 2019, there were 3,000 individuals in Sweden with the potential to carry out attacks (Paul and Acheson, 2019, p. 88, as cited in the Swedish Security Service [SAPO], 2017).

As for people who have decided to take the "leap" into action, going to conflict zones as foreign fighters, the numbers speak for themselves (Soufan Group [GS], 2017): (1) More than 42,000 foreign fighters travelled to join Daesh from more than 120 countries between 2011 and 2016. (2) Of this number, an estimated 5,000+ were from Europe, mostly Belgium, Germany and the UK, but with significant numbers from Austria, Denmark, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Spain.

Relevant in this respect is the reasoning of Leuprecht et al (2010), who argue that there is a big gap between belief and action. These authors highlight the contrast between security reports and investigations in the UK, where out of a population of 1 million people, only 50,000 would accept the justification for committing terrorist attacks, and only 200 have been arrested for active participation in terrorist activities (p. 47).

In this regard, Figure 4, showing jihadist arrests in the period 2017-2022 in the EU, illustrates that as the number of attacks has fallen as a result of police pressure, network monitoring and tracking, the number of arrests has likewise fallen. What this indicates, however, is that radicals' leap into action from the world of ideas has been diminished by police action, not by waning intentionality.

Figure 4.
Jihadist arrests in the European Union 2017-2022

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Detenidos	705	511	436	254	260	266
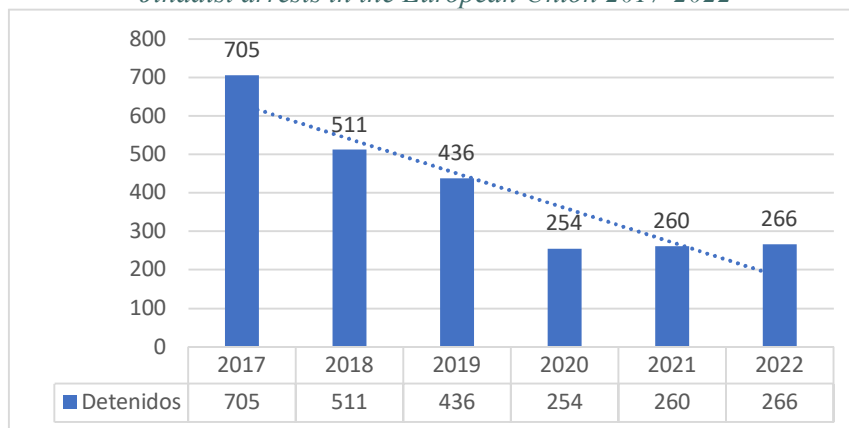
Note: Elaborated from EUROPOL (2017, 2022, 2023)

When viewed through the lens of the Leupechet et al. argument, the above open source examples - which do not contain the confidential lists held by each country - together with the actual numbers of European foreign fighters (Table 4) and those detained in Europe (Figure 4), give an idea of the thousands of jihadist extremists radicalised in ideas and potential perpetrators of attacks in Europe.

3.2. THE CYCLE OF HATE

A terrorist attack provokes an extreme reaction against the entire Muslim community, which in turn leads to vulnerable elements of society being attracted by jihadist siren songs, seeing themselves as likewise legitimised, and presenting themselves as victims and defenders of their community. Such is the xenophobia-recruitment-attack cycle that feeds back on itself, and which Guo warned (2015) of: the cycle of hatred.

Ramos (2020, p. 53) explains this clever Daesh strategy: the group attempts to confront Europeans, creating a climate of suspicion and provoking strong anti-Muslim sentiment, polarising societies.

This dynamic of hatred flushes in so-called "parallel societies", where a set of social and cultural disadvantages converge, transforming them into places where radicalisation can flourish. As Sanz (2018, p. 268) explains, the social organisation of a community or group that presents a certain homogeneity of immigrants, who, disenchanted with the host country, do not accept its rules, adopts a system of values and principles close to their ethno-cultural environment.

Most of the perpetrators of attacks in Europe have been nationals, but two of the terrorists in the Paris attacks in November 2015 carried Syrian passports. Despite one of the documents being a fake, the fingerprints and photos matched those taken in October 2015 at a refugee centre in Greece (Funk and Parkes, 2016, p. 1).

Why would a terrorist carry a passport on a suicide mission? Charlie Winter, a renowned jihadist analyst, puts forward his reasoning: "Why would a jihadist who expressly rejects all aspects of modern citizenship carry a passport to a suicide mission? So that it can be found" (Kingsley, 2015).

In this regard, Funk and Parks (2016, p. 2) note how Daesh may have had a larger political objective for using refugee routes: to provoke social and political reactions, beyond killing Westerners or taking out strategic targets. To trigger fear of Muslim refugees among Europeans. If the Paris attacks were indeed carried out by registered refugees, Daesh's objective had already been achieved, mere suspicion alone having succeeded in provoking social division.

Martin Ramirez (2017) states that no nations of peoples is violent, made up of drug traffickers and criminals, because what some fundamentalists, criminals or madmen may do cannot be blamed on any one group. Fundamentalist, violent or confused individuals can be found everywhere, in all societies and religions, strengthening intolerance, feeding on xenophobia and hatred. There is no such thing as Islamic terrorism, just as there is no such thing as Christian or Jewish terrorism (p. 219).

Criminal law holds that what is important is the attitude of the person, i.e. the intent or recklessness involved in committing a crime. It does not matter what an individual believes, where they belong, or what faith they profess. No one is exempt from scrutiny on the crimes commission, since the inspection exercised by the state is for the safety of all citizens.

3.3. JIHADIST RADICALISATION: KALEIDOSCOPE OF FACTORS

Qualitative research conducted on the motives that lead to violent extremism, based mainly on interviews, suggests two main categories, the so-called *push* and *pull* factors. First, we will examine the *push* factors, i.e. the conditions that lead to violence and the structural environment in which violence emerges. Then we will look at the *pull* factors, i.e. individual motivations and processes that play a crucial role in transforming ideas and grievances that lead to violent extremism (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 2015, p. 7).

The mechanisms of radicalisation are a product of the interaction of these factors, with different speeds of radicalisation. There is no single cause that leads to extremism, but a kaleidoscope of elements and numerous individual combinations (RAN, 2016, p. 1, 3, 4) from which we can construct an overview of social dynamics and mobilisation to terrorism. These factors have proven useful for a better understanding of extremism (Schmid and Tinnes, 2015, p. 37).

One of the most ambitious and comprehensive studies on the subject is the 2019 TRIVALENT (Terrorism pReventIon Via rAdicaLisation) project, sponsored by the European Commission. This research identifies the main causes of violent extremism, which are found at the meso level - social interaction, radical rhetoric and group identity - at the micro level - political grievances, the search for meaning and deprivation - and at the macro level - foreign policy (Moccia, 2019, pp. 3, 24).

The IMPACT Europe project *(Innovative Method and Procedure to Assess Counter-violent-radicalisation Techniques in Europe)* identifies a number of factors, such as ideology and interpretation of religion, and social exclusion, as the most significant factors reported by the scientific literature in relation to terrorism (Hemert, Berg, Vliet, Roelofs, & Veld, 2014, p. 28).

While the causes are many and varied, one issue is of a fundamental nature: ideology. It is ideology that makes the survival of terrorist groups possible (Habeck, et al, 2015, pp. 10, 11), in line with Dunford's argument, when he notes that "it is the flow of foreign fighters, along with the ability to mobilise resources and ideology, that enables terrorist organisations to function" *(The Defence Post* [TDP], 2018).

Moghadam (2008) explains how jihadism is presented through their ideology as a kind of justification for extremists: (1) it attempts to create an awareness among Muslims that their faith is in military, economic, political, religious and cultural decline, compared to the golden age of the early years of its existence; (2) it identifies the Crusaders, Zionists and apostates, a kind of anti-Muslim coalition, as the source of Muslims' ills and their disgrace and humiliation; (3) it creates an identity among its followers and acolytes, providing a sense of belonging and definition as part of a supranational entity, the Muslim community; (4) last, it provides a plan of action, jihad, that will change history and bring

about the redemption they deserve, presenting martyrdom as the supreme way of doing jihad (p. 2).

A popular leitmotif among Daesh followers - believed to be the work of journalist Abdulelah Haider Shaye - illustrates the essential role of the jihadist ideology: "The Islamic State was designed by Sayyid Qutb, taught by Abdullah Azzam, globalised by Osama Bin Laden, made real by Abu Musab al-Zarquwi, and implemented by the al-Baghdadis, Abu Omar and Abu Bakr"(Hassan, 2016, p. 19).

The mantra of al-Bahgdadi's Daesh drew a historical parallel between the Crusaders' occupation of the Holy Land in ancient times and today by their contemporary proxies, led by the US. From here the demonisation of the West, which became a crusader (Elorza, 2020, p. 20).

To justify violence against believers in Islam, jihadists use Takfir, i.e. they label other Muslims as kafir (non-believers or apostates), infidels, thereby legitimising the use of violence against them (Kadivar, 2020, p. 1, 3). This term reveals an important point: Daesh is an enemy of Christians, Jews and even Muslims, i.e. anyone who does not have the group's extremist view of the world.

Indeed, year after year Muslims themselves are Daesh's first targets and its biggest victims, in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. Table 5 shows that, in 2023, most of the victim countries are majority or exclusively Muslim. According to Igualada and Aguilera (2024), the number of jihadist attacks worldwide in 2023 was 2,304, causing 9,572 casualties (pp. 17, 32).

Although not dismantled, the core of the Daesh structure in Iraq, once the centre of jihadist activity, currently has limited capacity to carry out high-impact actions, with West Africa now becoming the epicentre of jihadist violence (Igualada and Aguilera, 2024, p. 33).

Table 5.
Number of jihadist terrorism victims by country 2023

	PAÍS	VÍCTIMAS		PAÍS	VÍCTIMAS
=1	Burkina Faso	2.916	↑ 18	Filipinas	24
=2	Mali	1.739	↑ 19	Tailandia	18
↑ 3	Somalia	760	↑ 20	Irán	17
↑ 4	Pakistán	704	↓ 21	Yemen	15
↓ 5	RD Congo	696	↓ 22	Egipto	14
↑ 6	Nigeria	623	↑ 23	Túnez	5
↓ 7	Siria	543	↑ 24	Argelia	5
↑ 8	Níger	505	↓ 25	Chad	4
↑ 9	Camerún	330	↑ 26	Bélgica	2
↓ 10	Afganistán	132	↑ 27	Francia	2
↑ 11	Togo	97	↑ 28	Mauritania	2
↑ 12	Uganda	88	↑ 29	España	1
↓ 13	Irak	88	↑ 30	Reino Unido	1
↓ 14	Mozambique	85	↓ 31	Indonesia	1
↑ 15	Benín	73	= 32	Alemania	0
=16	Kenia	53	= 33	Marruecos	0
=17	India	29		**TOTAL**	**9.572**

Note: Igualada and Aguilera (2024, p. 32)

As already stated, radicalisation is a combination of *push* and *pull* factors, which in a non-deterministic way can affect individuals and lead them to radicalisation. That said, the importance in this kaleidoscope of jihadist ideology cannot be underestimated because, according to the Soufan Group (2017), in its name more than 5,000 Europeans have left their lives behind to join Daesh in Syria and Iraq (p. 11), and in its name, attacks are carried out every year in Europe and other parts of the world.

3.4. THE EXTERNAL THREAT: ISIS-K

According to the report[13] sent to the US Congress by the Inspector General of Operation *Inherent Resolve*, senior Daesh leaders in Iraq and Syria remain committed to enabling attacks abroad. The group's affiliates continue to attack regional targets, most notably ISIS-K, based in Afghanistan (Storch, Lewis, and Martin, 2024, p. 11).

In fact, ISIS-K is undergoing a shift from a regional to a more global approach by implementing a two-pronged strategy. (Zelin, 2023):

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[13] It covers the period from 1 January to 31 March 2024.

- Through its *al-Azaim Media Foundation*, ISIS-K has developed an independent media structure, which produces content in Arabic, English, Farsi, Pashto and other languages and dialects, with content referring to foreign targets from India, Iran and Pakistan to Israel, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, China, Europe, Russia and the US.
- The second part consists of planning and executing attacks abroad, whether guided, directed or inspired.

When looking at the scope of international attacks in recent times, ISIS-K has been prolific:

- In early January 2024, on its Telegram channels, Daesh (ISIS_K) claimed responsibility for the attack in Iran by individuals who blew themselves up with explosive belts, killing nearly a hundred people. The attack took place during the fourth anniversary memorial for General Qassem Soleimani[14], who was killed by a US drone, in the Iranian city of Kerman (Hafezi, Elwelly, and Tanios, 2024).
- On 28 January 2024, hooded assailants attacked a Catholic church in Istanbul, killing one person. Shortly afterwards, through its news agency Amaq News, Daesh (ISIS_K) claimed responsibility for the attack. This attack drew attention to the growing presence of Daesh's Afghan branch, ISIS-K, in Turkey. (Shahbazov, 2024)
- The attack on the Crocus concert hall in Krasnogorsk (Russia) on 22 March 2024, which killed 139 people, was the work of ISIS-K. (Strachota, 2024)

Each of these attacks reflects the group's ideological priorities: Iran is a Shia state[15], all the countries attacked have been involved in fighting Daesh in Syria or Afghanistan and/or on their own territory, and all are considered apostates or heretical enemies of the Caliphate. (Strachota, 2024).

Jihadist terrorism specialist Colin Clarke (2023) points out how the international community is failing to adequately assess the threat posed by ISIS-K, which has a presence in almost all of Afghanistan's 34 provinces and a force of between 1,500 and 2,200 men. Since August 2021, ISIS-K has committed more than 400 attacks on Afghan soil. In September 2022, it sent suicide jihadists to the Russian embassy in Kabul and attacked the Pakistani embassy in December, as well as the Kabul Longan hotel, which is frequented by Chinese businesspeople.

In addition, law enforcement agencies in several countries have foiled various terrorist plots in India (3), Iran (4), Germany (3), the Maldives (1), Qatar (1) and Turkey (3). In addition to arrests for links to terrorist plots, on various occasions in several countries, including Britain (2), India (2), Turkey (1), Pakistan (1), and the United States

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[14] General of the Quds Force of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard.

[15] The origin between Shi'a and Sunni is the outcome of the absence of a successor after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632. The expanding Muslim community found itself in a political, spiritual and institutional vacuum to deal with the problems and administer the territory. Muhammad's succession generated a dispute between those who considered his cousin and son-in-law, Ali Ibn Abi Talib - and descendants - to be the legitimate successor, and those who thought that the appointment of the Caliph should be deliberated (DerGhoughassian, 2015). Thus arose the division between the Sunni, whose choice was the worthiest among the community, and the Shia, who believe that the rightful heirs are by blood lineage. Daesh is a Sunni group, hence the sectarian tension that arises with the Shia.

(2), authorities have arrested members linked to ISIS-K for recruitment and fundraising. (Zelin, 2023).

Several ISIS-K plots to attack NATO bases in Germany were broken up in April 2020 by German security forces (Soliev, 2021, p. 30). A number of individuals were arrested in the summer of 2023 in Iran, and others in July, August and December 2023 in Germany, in connection with the preparation of an attack in Cologne. In March 2024, several arrests were made in connection with a plot to attack a synagogue in Moscow on the eve of 22 March. In Turkey, since June 2023, more than 692 individuals linked to ISIS-K have been detained, including 40 individuals linked to the attack in Krasnogorsk in March 2024. (Strachota, 2024)

France foiled several terrorist plots targeting the 2024 Paris Olympics. One such conspiracy was an attack planned on a football match to take place in the city of Saint-Étienne, and the perpetrator was in contact with ISIS-K (Clarke and Webber, 2024).

Similarly, two Afghan nationals accused of preparing a shooting attack near the Swedish Parliament were arrested in March this year in Germany (Stern, Pleitgen, and Nicholls, 2024). According to German prosecutors, in the summer of 2023, ISIS-K allegedly ordered the main defendant "to carry out an attack in Europe in reaction to the Koran burnings that were taking place in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries". (DW, 2024)

Although attacks in Europe of a complex nature such as those that took place in Paris in November 2015, led and coordinated by Daesh, had all but been neutralised since the group was defeated and stripped of all territorial control in Syria and Iraq, it appears that ISIS-K once again has the capability to carry out attacks internationally.

In other words, there is a real and serious threat to Europe, the West and all those countries considered apostates according to the jihadist ideology of Daesh.

3.5. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Having overviewed the figures and information on the indicators corresponding to the two variables that make up the concept of threat- capacity and intention- we can now analyse the results, using the summarised data in Table 6, which brings together the figures in Tables 1, 4, 5 and Figures 1, 2, 3, 4.

We agree with Sampieri *et al.* (2014), when they state that the results of qualitative research should not be generalised, as this is not its purpose, but rather that part of the results or the main ideas derived can be applied to other contexts. As the author of this article, my only aim is to give my own perspective on where and how the results can fit into the field of knowledge of the analysed problem (p. 458).

Table 6
Summary of indicators of the jihadist threat concept

Amenaza= Capacidad X Intención				
Indicadores				
Capacidad		Intención		
Ataque arma de fuego (UE+Reino Unido)	15	Extremistas		Millares
Ataques con explosivo (UE+Reino Unido)	7	Detenidos		Millares
Ataque Arma blanca (UE+Reino Unido)	63	Ataques frustrados		Decenas
Atropello (UE+Reino Unido)	14	Combatientes Extranjeros		5.000
Otros medios de ataque (UE+Reino Unido)	4	Redes yihadistas en la UE		
		Amenaza exterior: ISIS-K		Alemania, Suecia, Francia, Irán, Turquia, Qatar, India, Pakistán, Estados Unidos, Maldivas
Total ataques 2014-2023 (UE+Reino Unido)	91			
Fallecidos (UE y Reino Unido)- 2014-2023	408			
Ataques yihadistas en el mundo (2023)	2.304			
Víctimas mortales por atentados yihadistas en el mundo (2023)	9.572			

Note: Prepared by the authors, based on the data[16] of Igualada and Aguilera (2024, p. 32, 53-55), Soufan Group (2017, pp. 12, 13), Zelin (2023), DW (2024), Clarke and Webber, (2024), Strachota (2024) and EUROPOL (2017, 2022, 2023).

We began this study by questioning the level of threat in the EU, given that the number of materialised attacks in recent years may seem low. Throughout this work, we have managed to verify that although recent attacks in Europe have been relatively few in number, there is intentionality on the part of both the perpetrators of the attacks and the ideologically radicalised individuals who may make the effective leap to violence, of which there are thousands. The figures for jihadist attacks around the world - which amounted to 2,304 in 2024, with 9,572 fatalities - are an indication of the strength and mobilisation that jihadist ideology is capable of generating at a global level. The military and territorial strength of the group can be taken away, but as long as the ideology that is capable of radicalising and recruiting followers and fighters is not, the threat will remain.

Some may think that what happens abroad is not a European problem, but it does have repercussions in Europe: the thousands of European foreign fighters prove that. Some may think that having ended Daesh's territorial dominance, which is what allowed it to lead/coordinate attacks in Europe, the group has no capacity to attack abroad. The presence of ISIS-K and its terrorist activities in Germany, Sweden and France prove otherwise. And we cannot forget the Daesh-inspired attacks, the lone actors who, wielding a knife or driving a vehicle, can and do kill in the name of the organisation.

The summary figures for the various indicators in Table 6 speak for themselves: hundreds of deaths, dozens of attacks thwarted and hundreds executed, thousands of extremists and detainees in the EU, and thousands of attacks and fatalities worldwide. We can therefore affirm that the jihadist threat in the EU remains high.

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[16] Some terrorists have used firearms and knives, or firearms and explosives in the same attack. These data count in each of the modalities referred to, even if it is the same event. For ISIS-K, this includes executed attacks, foiled plots and recruitment and logistical activities.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This analysis, carried out to answer the question "Is the terrorist threat in Europe low?", focuses on the concept of threat, that is, on the product of the capacity to attack, which includes the conscious will to do harm and intentionality.

The Daesh terrorist group's ability to attack in the EU has evolved from complex, group attacks with weapons and/or explosives to attacks committed by individual actors, without direction or coordination, inspired by their ideology and narrative, and committed with rudimentary tools, bladed weapons or vehicles to cause mass deaths.

Legislation passed within the EU, international cooperation and the police response have helped disrupt numerous plots and made it more difficult for terrorists to gain access to firearms, explosives and other more lethal weapons. In other words, the ability to carry out attacks has been undermined by police action.

In terms of intentionality, the number of radicals in the field of ideas, with extremist world views and faithful to the jihadist ideology, is in the order of thousands. The data on foreign fighters and detainees already indicate the proportion of those who have made the leap to armed action, i.e. to being capable of perpetrating violence.

Given the above, and despite the diminished capacity to carry out attacks, the intentionality that drives individuals to radicalise - as identified in the number of attacks, foiled plots, foreign fighters and extremists present in the EU - remains high, and with it does the threat.

Of great academic and practical interest to governments is why there have been attacks in 13 countries in Europe (including the EU and the UK) and none in others. The presence of social and economic circumstances, among others, among vulnerable populations, coupled with the presence of jihadist networks, which through personal contact have facilitated radicalisation and travel to conflict zones, partly explain this. Countries' military action against Daesh, through participation in the Global Coalition against the group, put these states in the crosshairs of the terrorist organisation. According to the analysis carried out, the presence of one or both of these two factors is a determining factor in the commission of attacks in that country by Daesh or its supporters.

Outside the EU, attacks on Russia, Iran and Turkey by ISIS-K confirm this, in line with the group's ideological priorities: Iran is Shiite, and the other targeted countries, considered heretical enemies of the Caliphate, have been involved in fighting Daesh in Syria or Afghanistan and/or on their own territory.

Add to this the ability to attack of Daesh's Afghan affiliate, ISIS-K- which can be identified by analysing attacks in Iran, Turkey and Russia, as well as foiled plots in Germany, France, Sweden, India, the Maldives and Qatar- and we have a real and serious threat, not only to the EU, but to all countries, be they Christian, Muslim or Jewish, that oppose the jihadist creed and are considered apostates by the group.

The possible causes (*push* and *pull* factors) that lead to jihadism, including terrorist ideology, verify that certain countries with jihadist networks on their territory are more susceptible to attacks than others. Therefore, in addition to working to neutralise the

capacity to carry out attacks, we must work to thwart the cycle of hatred and to neutralise the ideology's capacity for recruitment and attraction. Daesh understands no faith but its own, and considers itself the true defender of Islam, while the rest of the world, be they Christians, Jews or Muslims, are apostates and enemies.

The cycle of hatred is powerful, and it is easy to fall into. No one should be judged for belonging to a certain ethnicity or religion, but they should for their willingness to commit crimes and harm others. No one is above the law and people are judged by their actions, not their beliefs, with the state exercising its functions over all citizens to ensure their safety.

It is therefore a struggle between those who respect the values and attitudes that allow for coexistence between people of different cultures and religions - including Muslims, Christians and Jews - and the jihadists. The enemy is the violent extremist, the rest must learn to live in peace and follow the laws and principles that make coexistence and security possible.

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