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THE JIHADIST THREAT IN 2025: OLD RISK, PERMANENT DANGER.

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ABSTRACT

The year 2025 is taking its first steps. New hopes are emerging amidst old threats and real dangers. Old conflicts are giving way to new situations. One of those real risks and threats looming over us and globally is jihadist terrorism. But we must not forget far-right terrorism, a product of the action-reaction phenomenon. In this article, we will offer some brief ideas, observing the present and studying the past, about how the year 2025 may unfold in the field of jihadist terrorism, with special reference to the Spanish case.

Keywords: terrorism, jihadism, Europol, Spain, 2025.

1. INTRODUCTION

On September 14, 2001, President George W. Bush announced the beginning of the "War on Terror" following the attacks on American soil on September 11: "Our responsibility to

history is now clear: respond to these attacks and free the world from the devil. [...] This unity against terror now extends throughout the entire globe."

More than twenty-three years later, and as the year 2024 drew to a close, specifically on December 12, the European Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL) published the Annual Report on the Situation and Trends of Terrorism in the European Union for 2023E (TE-SAT-2024) (Europol, 2024).

This report, which Europol has produced annually since 2007, aims to publicize the evolution of the threat and the specific situation observed throughout 2023, as well as to serve as a reference for the overall analysis of the terrorist threat within the European Union.

The document provides data on terrorism linked to jihadist terrorism, ideological and anarchist terrorism, as well as nationalist and separatist terrorism. To provide an overview, it is complemented by information on judicial matters regarding convictions and acquittals linked to terrorist offenses in the EU, as well as information on modifications or new developments incorporated by Member States into their national legislation. Finally, it also analyzes violent incidents or notable events that occur outside the EU and could lead to threats to the security of the Union.

2.-2023-2024 EUROPE DATA.

Regarding jihadist terrorism, during 2023, 14 jihadist attacks occurred on European Union soil, of which five were successful and nine were foiled. This represents an increase compared to 2022 (6). The five completed attacks took place in France (2), Belgium (1), Germany (1), and Spain (1). These attacks resulted in twelve injuries and six deaths.

The attackers continued to opt for less sophisticated plans, both financially and logistically. Using easily accessible weapons to attack victims in public places. All completed attacks were carried out in urban areas by male suspects acting alone. Stabbing remained the primary modus operandi. The Brussels attacker used a firearm, firing at civilian targets on the street.

Six jihadist plots in France, two in Germany, and one in Belgium were foiled. Lone-wolf actors operating in the EU have continued to pledge allegiance to Daesh and its various branches of the terrorist group. Of the 14 jihadist attacks (completed/foiled), four were attributed to the Islamic State by law enforcement, but only one was officially claimed by the jihadist group.

In the European case, the European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT, 2025), published in June 2025, reflects that 58 terrorist attacks related to terrorism occurred, of which 34 were completed, 5 were unsuccessful, and 19 were aborted.

Of these, 24 attacks have been attributed to jihadist terrorism, which marks an increase compared to the attacks that occurred in 2023. Jihadist terrorism attacks resulted in 5 fatalities and 18 injuries.

In contrast, 21 attacks were attributed to far-left and anarchist terrorism, 4 were related to jihadist terrorism, and 1 attack was attributed to far-right terrorism.

Regarding those arrested, 449 people were detained. Of these, 289 were for jihadist terrorism; 47 for acts of far-right terrorism, 27 for far-left or anarchist acts; 28 for nationalist or separatist acts; 58 arrests have not been classified at the time of writing (Europol, 2025).

3.-SPAIN DATA 2023-2024

Regarding Spain, during 2023, the data regarding jihadist terrorism are:

- 36 operations (more than half after October 7) in 24 provinces.
- 78 arrests (highest figure since 2005).
- 29 (Spanish nationality), 22 (Moroccan nationality), 27 (other nationalities).
- Age range from 15 to 75 years.
- 8 women arrested (highest figure since 2015).
- 6 minors arrested (Terrorism, 2024).

Regarding 2024, the figures not only do not improve, but actually worsen compared to 2023, once again reaching a record high since the 11-M attacks in 2004, which resulted in 131 arrests and another 92 in 2005, according to data published by the Ministry of the Interior:

- 49 operations
- 81 arrests (a new record number of people arrested)
- 36 Spanish nationals arrested
- Age range: 14 to 69
- 9 women arrested

- 15 minors (Recio, 2025)

4.-SCENARIOS.

Middle East

If September 11, 2001, with the Al-Qaeda attacks on the United States, brought the global jihadist phenomenon to the West and the rest of the world's attention. October 7, 2023, with the Hamas terrorist group's attacks on Israel and the subsequent response of the Hebrew state, marked another turning point in the jihadist phenomenon and the radicalization process.

In Spain, of the 36 police operations against jihadist terrorism carried out in 2023, more than half of them took place after that date, which demonstrates the importance of this event in the jihadist ideology.

Sahel/Maghreb

The Sahel—in the center of the African continent—has been the region most affected by jihadist terrorism worldwide. This is a problem that will undoubtedly capture the world's attention in 2025.

The rivalry includes the two major multinationals of jihadist terror, Al-Qaeda and Daesh, through their franchises in the region, JNIM (Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims) and ISWAP (Islamic State in West Africa), respectively, not to mention other groups such as Boko Haram.

France's definitive withdrawal from the region, with the withdrawal of its troops from the Ivory Coast, will be an element to consider in the fight against jihadism. This is not to mention the interference of Russia and China in the region.

The Maghreb region continues its particular "cold war" between Morocco and Algeria. Without forgetting Tunisia, the migration, economic, and social problems are undoubtedly being exploited by jihadist groups to destabilize the region.

Syria

After more than five decades of power over the Syrian nation by the al-Assad family, Bashar al-Assad's march toward Russian territory, after losing Putin's military support, and the advance of rebel troops led by the Levant Liberation Organization or Hayat Tahrir al-Sham

(HTS), which controls much of northwestern Syria, have gained ground following the fall of the regime. HTS, led by Abu Muhammad al-Julani, is attempting to redefine itself as a legitimate force in the eyes of the international community, leaving its macabre jihadist past behind.

Syria is currently in an uncertain situation, with a power vacuum and internal struggles between the various rebel factions that have been fighting since the Arab Springs.

Afghanistan

Following the withdrawal in August 2021, after more than twenty years in the region following the attacks of September 11, 2001, the country remains mired in a serious humanitarian and human rights crisis, with grave violations against children and women.

Despite the new Taliban authorities recognizing the US negotiators in Doha's rupture with al-Qaeda, their ties remain stable, and a UN report establishes that the country is once again a haven for the jihadist organization.

Iran

As a shadowy player, Iran is and has been one of the main supporters and financiers of global terrorism since the ayatollah regime came to power. It has continued to try to destabilize the region and support groups, such as those in Yemen and the Houthis, as well as Hamas and Hezbollah. Last June, due to the lack of cooperation in controlling its nuclear program and attacks on Israel, the United States, through Operation Midnight Hammer (on June 22), launched US bombers and submarines to attack the Fordow uranium enrichment plant, the Natanz nuclear facility, and the Isfahan Nuclear Research and Technology Center.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Predicting when and where terrorists will attack is one of the most difficult tasks for an intelligence analyst. This requires assessing the combination of capabilities, intentions, and operating environment, overlaid with public statements and propaganda from terrorist groups to understand their grievances and discern potential targeting. If 2024 ended with attacks like the one at the Christmas market in Magdeburg (Germany), with six deaths, 2025 didn't start

any better. Even though we in Spain hadn't even had our first breakfast of the new year, and due to jet lag, the first radio news reports informed us of the terrorist attack in New Orleans (USA), carried out by a Daesh-affiliated individual on New Year's Eve, ramming a van into the crowd, leaving 14 dead and more than 30 injured.

This doesn't bode well for a year in the realm of jihadist terrorism. This type of terrorism adapts the precepts of old-fashioned terrorism to the 21st century, with weapons as powerful as the internet and new technologies.

Old scenarios, such as Ukraine or Syria, will follow. Those that deserve attention as a source of instability and radicalization, to which new variables must be added, the evolution of which is still unknown.

This past January, the United States began President Trump's second term. His attitude toward conflicts such as those in Ukraine and Israel's with Hamas and Hezbollah in Lebanon remains a key issue. We will have to wait and see how the news develops regarding the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, with the exchange of hostages on 7-0 for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails (Siminovich, 2025). We will also have to watch the new changes in the structure of the Israeli Ministry of Defense, following the resignation of the army chief, who acknowledged his failure after the 7-0 referendum (Arredondas, 2025). At the same time, Donald Trump has brought the United States into the war with the June attacks on Iran, and we will have to see how Iran's response evolves, both with regard to Israel and the United States. Asia, along with Syria and Afghanistan, could become two "base" countries for jihadism, where these groups can plan and train with complete impunity.

Terrorism, in general and especially jihadist terrorism, remains and will continue to be a real threat and risk to our way of life. The two major multinationals of this terror, Daesh and Al-Qaeda, and their current leaders, Abu Hafs al-Hashemi al-Qurayshi (DZC, EFE, 2022) and Saif al-Adel (Pais, 2023), respectively, will continue their battle to gain absolute control over the Global Jihadist Movement (GJM). For the moment, there is no sign of a unifying figure who would unite the establishment of this global caliphate under the guise of their most rigorous and distorted vision of Islam.

The struggle in the Sahel between the two major multinationals of jihadist terror (Al-Qaeda and Daesh), with Europe abandoning the region and Russia and China occupying it, could lead to the radicalization of more individuals and provoke massive displacements of people,

which could be used to introduce high-value strategic individuals into Spain and the rest of Europe via the Maghreb.

Regarding the West, it will continue to be a potential target. and with extensive media coverage, seeking high-impact attacks and the highest number of victims. Attacks using "dirty" weapons (biological, nuclear, radiological, chemical), although difficult, should not be ruled out (black swan attacks), since this has been one of their desires all along, and the UN has already warned of the real and current interest in acquiring nuclear weapons (Infobae, 2023).

If they fail to achieve this, they will opt for low-cost attacks that are easy to carry out (vehicles, knife attacks, handgun attacks, or homemade explosives).

Pro-Palestinian support in Europe and the United States, and the jihadist attacks justified by Israel's actions after October 7, can fuel far-right terrorist groups and "domestic" terrorism. It should be noted that in December 2024, there were eight incidents related to far-right extremism in six countries, from Canada to the United States. to Italy, via the United States, Australia, Italy, and Switzerland (Cantó, 2025).

In Spain, in recent years, there has been an increase in police operations, with an increase in arrests. What is most notable is how recruiters have targeted minors, as evidenced by data from recent years, where the number has not stopped increasing, with some even being arrested after having already decided to commit an attack. In turn, this will be the end of the route or stage on the path to return to other European countries for combatants returning from conflict zones such as Syria, such as the Tunisian who returned from Syria and was sent back after his illegal entry into Ceuta. As of July 16, 2025, 47 operations against jihadist terrorism have been carried out, with 80 people arrested.

The fight will be long-lasting and must be waged in various fields and with multidisciplinary and international strategies. No country can hope to end this problem alone. And they must be sustained over time by the authorities. West; "The West has clocks, we have time"

This year, just as we have been suffering since 2001, attacks will occur, unfortunately with fatalities. A good example is the attack in Bavaria (Germany), where an Afghan refugee stabbed several people, leaving two dead, one of them a two-year-old child.

We will have sad moments, but, Surrender, never!!!

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