

The Impact of International Terrorism on Mediterranean Countries

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Just when everyone has spontaneously come to recognise the existence of terrorism, it has now become difficult to define it. There is a media utilisation of the phenomenon involving spectacular and traumatic images – the site of the attack, the victims, and so on. Politically, states sometimes exploit terrorism to justify their own security policies. In fact, the definition of terrorism itself is highly political and states are involved in a symbolic struggle to impose a terminology that suits their interests. The differences in public communication policy between the United States, Israel and Great Britain on one side and most of the European Union on the other are a demonstration of this. After 11 September 2001, Algeria actively tried to link its own terrorism with the strike against the United States, which was partly true beyond specifically local causes, and by doing so it achieved various political, security and technological advantages.

Many aspects of the threat itself are undoubtedly simplified: “al-Qaeda” ends up becoming a label covering all the international Jihad networks, local organisations like the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) or the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM), and independent militants carrying on their own Jihad and spontaneously emerging here or there. In fact, this violence has multiple, deep and long-term causes:

- Reactive (the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia or today in Iraq, the fate of the Palestinian people, the existence of a generation imbued with a romantic ideal of Islamic radicalism, the crises in Chechnya or Central Asia, se-

paratist movements with an underlying religious factor, etc.)

- Structural (the development of Arab-Muslim societies between tradition and modernity, the difficulties of developing a local democratic political model and integrating Western democratic and liberal values).

The security-based approach and the strengthening of legislation

The 11 September 2001 has acted around the world as a generator of legal security measures. This was certainly a response to a public need, but it has also sometimes been carried out to the detriment of civil liberties or in contradiction of the legal traditions applying in each country where these laws have been adopted. Moreover, the “al-Qaeda” label has, in many states, encouraged the arrest of individuals who, far from being operational terrorists, were simple Islamist militants – some radical, some not – or opponents of existing regimes. This last point is particularly true for Arab-Muslim regimes around the Mediterranean. Concerning the European Union, there are continuing gaps in anti-terrorist measures, particularly in co-operation between countries, co-ordination and the real-time use made of the results obtained. However, there is general agreement among European leaders to strengthen Europol, the police co-operation bureau, and Eurojust, the embryonic “European Prosecution System.”

In the South, several countries have taken measures, some of which would be unthinkable according to Western criteria:

- strengthening or creating national legislation,
- intensifying the battle against money laundering or clandestine immigration,

- freezing assets,
- creating special police units,
- the imprisonment of specific individuals,
- prolonged solitary confinement of prisoners,
- coercive interrogation,
- censorship, etc.

The African Union Convention for the fight against terrorism forbids member States helping terrorist organisations, in particular relating to papers, passports and visas. A multilateral summit meaning in Algiers in September 2002 on preventing and combating terrorism adopted an action plan against terrorism (aspects involving the police, judiciary, border control, exchange of information, etc.). Focusing on the origins of terrorism, this conference emphasised the need for development aid to be provided by Western countries.

The member states of the Community of States of the Sahel-Sahara region (Cen-Sad) met on 14th May 2004 in Bamako for a sixth summit, where various issues, including terrorism, the possibilities for co-operation against this phenomenon and food safety were brought up. Following this, Senegal and Morocco adopted cooperation measures concerning intelligence and the police. An African centre for studies and research against terrorism, based in Algiers, was set up at the end of 2004 at the initiative of the African Union and with European, United Nations and American financial support.

Terrorism and the realignment of security alliances

The fight against terrorism has provided the opportunity for unlikely rapprochements between States which had sometimes experienced conflicts of interest. So, we can talk about a rapprochement between Spain and Morocco, symbolised by the visit of King Juan Carlos to Morocco, the first for 25 years. Until then, relations between Spain and Morocco had been difficult because of territorial issues and clandestine immigration. These bilateral relations had initially been strengthened by the coming to power of a Socialist government in Madrid and a more European-centred and less Atlanticist approach to international relations. Also, it has to be pointed out that Mr. Zapatero's first foreign visit was to Morocco. Within the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), the American Defense and State Departments are providing train-

ing and materials to security forces in several countries: Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, to help them control their borders better. In May 2004, the American military command "Europe" proposed to extend the PSI to Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. In itself, the PSI is symptomatic of the lessons picked up by American troops in the theatres of operations in Afghanistan and, to a certain degree, in Iraq: this new approach in effect avoids the Americans having to plan and deploy a considerable troop presence. Instead, the more discreet and probably cheaper special forces, capable of training local forces, are used.

Another example of the realignment of alliances – the security links developed between the United States and Algeria – has sometimes been considered as providing competition for the traditional relationship between Algiers and Paris. From the point of view of the authorities in Algiers, this recent interest in the United States could have been motivated by an attempt to show that there were alternative possibilities to the traditional links and/or that these were insufficient compared to what the United States was proposing.

Prevention of jihadism on the northern shores of the Mediterranean

The fact that there are networks of jihadists that have arisen in Western countries does not necessarily mean that Islamist radicals are playing a central role in European Islam. It seems in reality that the movement of re-Islamisation affects young people who feel marginalized by life in European suburbs. There are several reasons for this: a desire to reaffirm themselves, construction of individual identities based on Islam, activities by proselytizing organisations on the ground and, at the same time, a lack of action by the State and its failure to be perceived as the legitimate regulator of law and order. There is also a fashion effect: nowadays some young people enjoy declaring themselves to be "Salafists," invoking a poorly understood concept of Jihad, probably in the same way that young people declared themselves to be "revolutionary communists" immediately following 1968.

From a social point of view, the European development of jihadism seems to be a small-scale – but dangerous – reflection of national ills: social exclusion, unemployment, acculturation of certain citizens of foreign origin, compatibility problems bet-

ween different aspects of Islam and national values, etc.

Prevention therefore includes social measures, such as the fight against unemployment and the need for a cultural reassertion of national values in "difficult" districts.

In this context, in many countries, prisons are now a scene of intense proselytizing. It is practically impossible for prison staff to get a proper grip on the situation. In addition, the jihadists who sooner or later come out of prison will not have been forced to change their opinions, which raises the problem of the surveillance of dangerous people of this kind.

If there is a correlation between unemployment rates and the increase in numbers of jihadists in France,

falling unemployment rates would significantly reduce their numbers. However, it would not eliminate them, because activities by various organisations and proselytizing individuals would remain, along with the influence of the conflicts and structural problems in the Arab-Muslim cultural atmosphere.

In short, some of the northern Mediterranean problems can only be solved in the South.

Prevention of terrorism on the South Mediterranean : Islam and development

Active measures to prevent political violence – infra-state conflicts or terrorism – can be of two kinds:

THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS: A SPANISH PROPOSAL ADOPTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS

On 21st September 2004 in his first speech to the United Nations General Assembly, the President of the Spanish Government, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, proposed the establishment of an Alliance of Civilizations between the West and the Arab and Islamic world. Although this proposal was drawn up very briefly at first, it represented the culmination of a discourse which sustains that security and peace can only be established through the actions of the United Nations, international legality, human rights, democracy, the rule of law and gender equality. To this end, Zapatero proposed to the Secretary General the setting-up of a High Level Group which would be responsible for carrying out this initiative.

On 10th December this formula was broadened by the Minister for External Affairs and Cooperation, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, who presented the proposal as an effort intended to define a new paradigm opposed to a "clash of civilizations," which should meet strong international political consensus on a series of concrete actions and carry them out from the UN. Furthermore, two possible main spheres of intervention were pointed out. The first being politics and security, through multilateralism and international law, and the second, cultural and educational. Rodríguez Zapatero has consequently looked in greater detail at the universal nature of citizenship which he aims to give top priority through the development of this concept, beyond the idea of just belonging to a particular country.

From Spanish proposal to United Nations project

The Alliance of Civilizations proposal was drawn up in an unusual context in Spain. It was made public during the first speech by the President of the Spanish Government to the United Nations, the main multilateral forum, six months after the terrorist attacks on Madrid (11th March 2004), to those who followed the general election and the change in government. Over the following months the new Socialist Government launched several convincing messages to show a new stance in foreign policy and the alliance proposal was part of this. The latter, however, went further than the national scope, as it proposed an active multilateral policy which at first sight could be considered as the antithesis of the "clash of civilizations" paradigm.

For many the proposal was extremely suggestive and visionary, although imprecise and perhaps with a rather unfortunate name. For its part, the conservative opposition, and especially certain areas of the press, scorned it immediately, classing it as simplistic, naive, ingenuous and unrealistic.

Since then, the Spanish Government has made the proposal a constant in its discourse on Spanish foreign policy in Latin America, in the Arab countries and the Middle East. As a result of this promotion it has received the explicit backing of numerous governments and has been publicly accepted by several international forums and conferences.

But the most significant aspect is that the Alliance of Civilizations proposal has marked a defined path, given that it has stopped being a Spanish matter and has moved on to become a United Nations initiative, in whose progress the Secretary General will play a unique role.

The contents of the proposal

Although the proposal is still made up of rather vague elements, its general aims have been defined at various times: to deepen the political and sociocultural relationships between the western world and the Arab-Muslim countries, to tackle the growing rift which exists between them, to take prominence away from extremists, to cooperate in the area of collective security through the promotion of multilateralism and international legality, and to carry out concrete activities in the fields of education and culture. Obviously, such general aims arouse almost unanimous support and a consensus as wide as this is weak. However, the added value of the proposal lies in its intention to go further and to construct a solid political consensus which is translated into action.

At this time, when it is necessary to make the proposal more concrete, it is interesting to confront some of the criticisms made of the proposal in detail, which have been progressively made over recent months.

- The terminology used to name the proposal is perhaps not the most fortunate. Although the formulation has the immediate appeal of being considered the antithesis to the controversial paradigm named "clash of civilizations" (B. Lewis, S. Huntington), it still shares with it the same cultural approach to conflicts that hides the social, political and economic dimensions of the interests which are at stake.

However, despite the name, the proposal contains elements which dissociate it from the paradigm of civilization clash. It demands understanding of the phenomena that have produced the rift. In fact, recently it has been specified that it should be an eminently political initiative and not cultural or religious, for which it will require strong political will on behalf of the governments that will be making observations, getting involved in the discussions and following the recommendations specified by the initiative.

- A second criticism has been that the proposal was initially justified by the necessity to collectively combat and prevent terrorism and it clung to a relationship between the West and the Arab-Muslim countries, reinforcing the perception of confrontation between both poles. This focus has subsequently been revised and details have been introduced which have given it a global character taking into account the initiatives carried out in concomitant fields (dialogue between cultures, faiths and civilizations) and on a different scale (international, regional and local).
- Finally the proposal has been criticized for being too ambitious and for duplicating the general aims of the United Nations. A proposal of this kind implies a criticism of the situation of the Organization and can cause a salutary lesson in favour of effective multilateralism.

The current lack of details in the proposal gives rise to numerous possibilities in reference to the contents and instruments to carry it out, as

well as regarding the results obtained. These can be limited to a declaration or a resolution, without exceeding the weak consensus which the UN system generates. Furthermore, a strong and active political consensus can be sought, such as, for example, an international conference or a special session of the General Assembly on the alliance, followed by an action plan (concrete, realistic, feasible and visible) which concurs with the different actors of civil society.

Finally, the proposal of the Alliance of Civilizations, given its nature, should not be limited to governmental level. The civil societies and the transforming and democratizing forces can take on a key role in this project. Fundamentally, the proposal forms an integral part of the debate on the democratization of the global system and cosmopolitan citizenry.

Speech by the President of the Government José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero to the United Nations General Assembly (21-09-04)

www.un.org/webcast/ga/59/statements/spaeng040921.pdf

Speech by the Minister for External Affairs and Cooperation at the Arab League on the Alliance of Civilizations (10-12-04)

www.mae.es/mae/MINISTERIO/muestra.jsp?catId=62029&catalogName=publishing/ADMARTICULO

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- Reactive. This means preventing a situation degenerating into intense armed conflict without being able or wanting to put things right at the grass roots level through lack of time. The aim is to keep conflict restricted to a latent level.
- Structural prevention, on the other hand, is more substantial and ambitious. It attempts to make a contribution to getting to the deep-seated social and historical origins of potential violence.

Economic development can contribute to the creation of a middle class in communities that traditionally support terrorist organisations, and jihadists in particular. Economic and social development policies can contribute towards reducing the intensity of recruitment by reducing the socio-economic origins of terrorism (unemployment, underdevelopment, lack of infrastructures or consumer goods).

A strictly security-based approach to anti-terrorist measures – although clearly necessary – does not take care of long-term factors. The social origin of this violence is complex and it cannot be reduced to a few overall factors. Poverty is, therefore, a necessary but insufficient explanation. In Egypt, for example, Islamist radicalism draws a good proportion of its militants from the middle classes. Finally, in Algeria it developed in the cities, where young unemployed people – “trabendistes” – were influen-

ced by Salafist militants who had returned from Afghanistan, or by Wahhabite NGO's.

Immediately after 11th September 2001, the prevention of terrorism became a declared priority for developing countries in the Arab-Muslim Mediterranean world. But nowadays, faced with budgetary imperatives, it has sometimes become less urgent. To put it simply, while the “security community,” made up of the police, experts or politicians, has a tendency to consider only repressive aspects and to ignore the deep roots of jihadism, the “development actors community” (NGOs, specialized civil servants, international organisations), because of their training, rarely take security aspects into account. These two blind spots have very real consequences: we have often seen on the ground that the rather oracle-like “good governance” and “conflict resolution” programmes limit themselves to distributing funds and materials or to instilling negotiation techniques in an untargeted way to local partners, who are most often linked in one way or another to the existing power structures.

Between individual anti-terrorist security campaigns and techniques to help economic development in problem areas, a systematically combined approach is possible. German technical cooperation has created some development projects with the aim of preventing crisis by trying to target the youngest peo-

ple in the poorest areas of the Maghreb, those who could react in the most violent ways to structural problems. There is also aid to help Islamists and juvenile prisoners to re-find employment.

But how can the expansion of Islamist radicalism and jihadism be reduced throughout the world? There is no simple answer. On the contrary, humility should always prevail and resolving the cultural crisis of modern Islam is something that can only be achieved by Muslims themselves. "Good governance" is a Western concept which is too often promoted in a superficial way. It has certain advantages: fairness, reduced

corruption, taking into account minority points of view. In this sense, it may be useful in directing development efforts. But real change must come from inside Arab-Muslim societies themselves. We can only assist it. We should at least think systematically about the consequences of our actions: "Is our policy feeding the anger of young Muslims?" And consider that the fight against terrorism requires a presence on the ground: not with satellites or hundreds of tanks, but with police officers, social workers and humanitarian aid assistants.