
Welcome from the Editors

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to announce the release of Volume X, Issue 6 (December 2016) of *Perspectives on Terrorism* at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com>. Our free online journal is a joint publication of the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), headquartered in Vienna (Austria), and the Center for Terrorism and Security Studies (CTSS), headquartered at the Lowell Campus of the University of Massachusetts (United States). Now in its tenth year, *Perspectives on Terrorism* has nearly 6,700 regular subscribers and many thousand more occasional readers and website visitors worldwide. The Articles of its six annual issues are fully peer reviewed by external referees while its Research Notes, Policy Notes and other content are subject to internal editorial review.

This Special Issue was prepared by guest editor Petter Nesser and his colleagues at the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment (FFI, in Oslo, Norway) in collaboration with Alex Schmid (The Hague, Netherlands) and James Forest (Lowell, Mass., USA), the regular editors of *Perspectives on Terrorism*. It contains papers from the FFI – hosted conference “European Jihadism in the ‘Caliphate’ Era,” held in Oslo on 1-2 September 2016. It has been made possible by funding from the Norwegian Ministry of Defence and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Opened by Minister of Defence Ine Eriksen Søreide[1], the conference brought together academics, policy makers, practitioners and journalists with the aim to assess the status of jihadi militancy in Europe following the rise of the so-called “Islamic State” (IS).

Presentations covered attack plots and operations, foreign fighting, radicalization, social media usage and country-specific variations. Some of the contributors were encouraged to make forecasts about medium-to-long-term future trends, considering three dimensions: 1) the rise of IS, 2) the refugee crisis, and 3) polarization within Europe.

Since the September conference, IS has come under pressure in Iraq, and the influx of refugees into Europe has slowed down. We do not yet know for sure whether these developments will continue and how they might affect polarization of host societies. These fourteen articles provide nearly up-to-date insights about the IS-induced effects on European jihadism; they contains well-informed thoughts on what could be the future trends.

The contributions in this issue demonstrate how the study of European jihadism has moved beyond ‘either-or’-explanations, such as debates about whether the threat is either international or home-grown, or whether it is driven either by social grievances or ideology. The contributors take into account the interplay between different drivers and highlight both continuity and discontinuity regarding the evolving threat and responses to it. Findings are based on empirical research, ranging from qualitative interview to, content and quantitative data analysis.

Petter Nesser, Anne Stenersen and Emilie Oftedal offer an empirical overview of the terrorist threat to Europe since the rise of IS, focusing on network dynamics, modus operandi, and the financing of plots. Viewing developments from a historical perspective, they find that, apart from the broadening scope of the jihadist phenomenon, “less is new than most assume”.

Then, three articles address what *is* actually new in recruitment and terrorist cell formation. Rajan Basra and Peter Neumann highlight the growing presence of criminals in IS’s European networks. Clare Ellis examines how the IS threat in Europe involves new, “hybrid” forms of lone actor terrorism, whereas Nico Prucha looks at how the encrypted social media platform *Telegram* has emerged as IS’ new “information highway” and recruitment tool for European jihadis.

Another three articles shed light on European foreign fighters. Jakob Sheikh who interviewed Danish foreign fighters, noticed that the very idea of a new Islamic “State” was a major pull-factor for them. Philip Verwimp makes a case for the role of socio-economic factors in radicalization, noticing that the unemployment rate gap between native citizens and immigrants on the one hand and foreign fighter exodus on the other hand correlate per country. Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn discusses the need for looking beyond the terrorist threat and beyond Europe when assessing the consequences of the European foreign fighter phenomenon.

Four articles present case studies of how the broader dynamics of European jihadism play out locally. Jean-Pierre Filiu illustrates the historical continuity of European jihadi networks and how seasoned veteran militants act as guides for new generations of IS terrorists. Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen discusses a development towards a ‘plebeian’ form jihadism in Denmark—something that already preceded the rise of IS. Carola García-Calvo and Fernando Reinares present data on the characteristics of IS-linked militants in Spain, using a three-tier model to conceptualize the dynamics of Spanish jihadism. Brynjar Lia and Petter Nesser introduce a new framework to understand the emergence of jihadi networks in peripheral European countries, using Norway as a case study.

Last, three contributions address counter-measures and the future threat of jihadism. Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen makes a case for more flexible counter-measures adapted to different types of actors, pleading for a “networked governance approach”. Timothy Holman looks at the challenges states face in countering foreign fighter mobilizations, highlighting how national political interests and poor intelligence sharing hamper success. The Special Issue is concluded by Thomas Hegghammer, who offers a sobering forecast about what the future is likely to hold for us if present jihadist trends in Europe continue. A new bibliography about Islamist terrorism in Europe and the Islamic State from the experienced hands of Judith Tinnes rounds off this issue.

Note

[1] Ine Eriksen Søreide, “European jihadism and its international backdrop,” Speech/statement published: 2016-09-14; URL: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/eriksen-soreide-european-jihadism-and-its-international-backdrop/id2511135/>