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**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ISIS AND AL QAEDA: THEIR MAJOR
TERRORIST ATTACKS**

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INTRODUCTION

I. Object of the study

The present end of degree project addresses the evolution of the jihadist threat in Europe spanning the critical period from 2004 to 2016, with a particular focus on the dominant jihadist organizations shaping this landscape: al Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS). This exploration with several dimensions starts with an initial conceptualization of the jihadist threat in Europe. The examination ensues, delving into the origins of al Qaeda and IS, unravelling the relations and conflicts that defined their coexistence during this period.

Furthermore, a comprehensive and descriptive overview of the four attacks is provided, including the context of each attack. The subsequent sections present the garnered results and a nuanced analysis of the data collected during the research process.

The primary objective of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of significant attacks orchestrated by al Qaeda and the Islamic State, involving individuals either integrated into or affiliated with the hierarchical structures of these organisations. The four selected attacks include the 2004 Madrid train bombings, perpetrated by al Qaeda, followed by the 2005 London subway and bus attack, orchestrated by the same organisation. In contrast, the 2015 Paris attacks, attributed to IS, and the 2016 Brussels airport attack, linked to the same entity.

All these attacks fall within the same stage of global terrorism in Western Europe, the phase after the September 11 attacks in 2001. However, in addition to common features, the study clarifies disparities between al Qaeda and IS, as well as within attacks executed by the same organisation.

This investigation seeks to provide a deep understanding of the multifaceted dynamics characterizing the jihadist threat in Europe during the specified timeframe.

II. Delimitation of the study

The scope of the research is limited to four terrorist attacks that occurred between 11th March 2004 and 22th March 2016 (Madrid, London, Paris and Brussels), marking an important period in Europe's recent history. These events, which have left a crucial impact on the collective memory, serve as fundamental reference points for understanding the dynamics of the jihadist threat on the continent.

Within this framework, the comparison extends beyond the mere observation of the attacks themselves, encompassing also the members of the cells involved in their execution. The research is done both at the micro level, where each individual cell member becomes a unit of analysis and at the meso level, where each attack is analysed in detail.

This multifaceted approach not only allows for a comprehensive analysis of the characteristics of each attack and its actors, but also provides a more complete picture of the network that underlies the evolution of the jihadist threat. The research ultimately aims to answer the fundamental question of how the jihadist threat has evolved in Europe from the post-9/11 period to the event in Brussels in 2016.

III. Objectives of the study

The primary aim of this study is to illustrate the evolution of the jihadist threat in Europe from 2004 to 2016, with a particular emphasis on the ascendancy of the Islamic State (IS). The objective is to discern the features that have endured and those that have undergone transformations during this period. The timeframe is strategically chosen by key case studies, commencing with the Madrid and London bombings in 2004 and culminating with the Brussels Airport attack in 2016. This selection is based on the pivotal significance of these events in the European jihadism, bearing notable repercussions at both national and international levels.

Moreover, a nuanced analysis of this temporal span provides insights into the evolving tactics, strategies, and objectives of these terrorist groups. The significance of this timeframe becomes evident in its relevance to European security, offering an understanding of the jihadist threat's transformation within the continent.

Aligned with the primary objective, several secondary objectives come to the forefront: (2) Develop a characterization of the actors involved; (3) Analyse the radicalisation process; (4) Gain an understanding of the attacks and the factors that intervened during the planning. These secondary objectives serve as integral components, enriching the overall understanding of the landscape of jihadist activities in Europe during the specified period.

IV. Relevance of the study

Given the continuous threat and challenge that terrorism poses in Europe, this research assumes significance. Its overarching objective is to make meaningful contributions to both academic scholarship and public awareness, while simultaneously informing counterterrorism policies and counter-radicalisation efforts. Beyond these implications, the research bears broader relevance in the realm of international relations, underscoring the imperative of global cooperation to effectively combat terrorism.

All in all, this study includes valuable insights, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the dimensions of the ongoing counterterrorism situation, taking into consideration the period of time analysed.

METHODOLOGY

This study constitutes a quantitative analysis grounded in documentary research, encompassing micro and meso data collected from secondary sources such as journalist sources, news published in national and international press and academic sources such as books or articles made by authors who have researched the cases under scrutiny. All the data has been organized in a database created using Microsoft Excel, facilitating a systematic approach to information management and enabling the extraction of conclusions.

In light of the sensitive nature of personal data, specifically pertaining to the members comprising the cells, authorization has been requested from the Ethics Committee of the university Rey Juan Carlos. The committee granted approval for data processing under the internal registration code 221120234102023.

Inside the aforementioned database, the names of the individuals are assigned by a randomly 6 digit numerical code, complying with data protection criteria. Additionally, to bolster the security of the information, this document is encrypted with a secure password, accessible solely to the researcher and the assigned tutor, Alvaro Vicente. Once the final thesis is officially graded, the database will be destroyed, reinforcing the commitment to secure data storage, custody and management in accordance with the university's standards.

In addition to the above mentioned tool, artificial intelligence has been used in this study to revise the grammar of the text and improve readability as well as to support statistical analysis.

The methodology employed in this research is deductive through comparison. Featuring four case studies representative of terrorist attacks in Western Europe within the defined period (2004-2016). The object of this comparison is to investigate the attacks and the individuals involved, aiming to comprehend the socio-demographic characteristics, radicalisation processes, and patterns of involvement. Consequently, microdata at the individual level and mesodata relating to the attacks are integrated.

In addition, the case study is a methodology in itself, which seeks to provide a detailed description of selected cases in order to understand in detail their characteristics and configurations. This comparative approach facilitates the understanding of the evolution of jihadism in Europe.

Besides, the study is composed by 12 variables, several of them based on the Royal Institute El Cano's study on Jihadism and Jihadists in Spain. The variables are classified in three primary groups: variables of characterization (socio-demographic features of the actors); variables of radicalisation (radicalisation process before the attack); variables of involvement (divided into two subgroups - those related to the actors and the cell, and those related to the terrorist attack.). In that sense, almost all aspects of the jihadist phenomenon in the period of time investigated are encompassed, obtaining a detailed analysis by using descriptive statistics.

1. Variables of study

Variables of characterization: focused on the socio-demographic features of the actors.

- Age.
- Gender.

- Nationality.
- Immigration origin.
- Religious background.
- Residence.
- Criminal records.

Variables of radicalisation: focused on the process of radicalisation.

- Training.
- Environment of radicalisation.
Contact with an agent of radicalisation.

Variables of involvement: related to the actor and to the terrorist attack.

- Related to the actors:
 - Organisations of reference.
 - Function inside the cell.
 - Size of the cell.
 - Structure of the cell.
- Related to the terrorist attack:
 - Motives.
 - Method.
 - Sequence of the attack.
 - Lethality.

CONTEXT: JIHADI THREAT UNTIL 2016

The previous milestone to the creation of al Qaeda is the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet troops in December 1979 (Robinson, 2017). This point is considered the origin of the global jihad (1979-1990). Many foreign Muslim volunteers travelled to this area in order to fight against the Soviet Union (Sageman, 2004). Abdullah Yusuf Azzam was a key ideologue for this first wave of global jihad (Robinson, 2017). The two texts most famous of this ideologue are: *The Defence of Muslim Lands* (1984) and the book *Join the Caravan* (1987). The first one is related to his argument of liberate Muslim lands of non-Muslims forces, while the second one is a call for young Muslims to join the fight in Afghanistan, both claiming a defensive jihad.

In 1987, al-Ansar fighters defeated Soviet forces in the battle of Jaji, setting the stage for the creation of al Qaeda. After the Soviet withdrawal in early 1988, some Muslims decided to go back home, while others preferred to travel to occupied zones (Robinson, 2017). This defeat started an open debate about the next strategy after having eliminated the legitimacy of traditional jihad to carry out a worldwide jihad (Sageman, 2004).

On the other hand, Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 constitutes an important fact for the global jihad (Sageman, 2004). Osama bin Laden, Azzam's pupil, offered the Saudi royal family a mujahidin battalion in order to recapture Kuwait instead of being the Americans the ones who liberated the territory (Robinson, 2017). The Saudi's refusal to this proposal made him start to think about Zawahiri's idea of the corruption of the regimes in the Muslim world as the main problem.

The second wave of global jihad was led by al Qaeda. Two declarations of the leader of the organisation transformed the strategy followed until the moment, focusing on Europe. Since then, they looked for the far enemy and followed an offensive jihad approach (Sageman, 2004). This wave ended up with the 9/11 attacks in 2001 (International Crisis Group, 2016).

The Global War on Terrorism began in 2001 (Zimmerman, 2021). Since the 9/11 attacks, jihadism, as well as counterterrorism, has been transformed. Several aspects included in jihadism such as targets, leadership, areas of operation and strategies have proliferated in different ways (Wright, 2016). Global jihad is understood as "a social movement in that it is a conscious, concerted and sustained effort by ordinary people to change some aspect of their society by using extra-institutional means" (Goodwin and Jasper, 2015 cited in Clarke and Moghadam, 2018).

The third wave of violent jihadist was triggered by the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Thousands of Muslims fought against the Americans. This fact encouraged the creation of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), in the past Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), in a context of chaos (Robinson, 2017).

Finally, the fourth wave is the one pioneered by IS. Its origin could be situated around 2010, with the outbreak of the Arab Spring and then, with the Syrian civil war. According to the International Crisis Group (2016) is the most dangerous threat until the moment, due to Islamic State's territorial control, ideological innovations and because of the currents that drive it, notably unrest in the Middle East. Therefore, by the end of 2014, global jihad has evolved from a unipolar state with al Qaeda as the main character to a bipolar state with the expansion of IS (Clarke and Moghadam, 2018).

I. Al Qaeda after the 9/11 attacks

Al Qaeda was created in the late 1980s by Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri and Abdullah Azzam in Peshawar, Pakistan. The formation of al Qaeda could be pointed in the Soviet Union withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1988 (Sageman, 2004). It was created as an Arab paramilitary organisation with the aim of end secular regimes (Nesser, 2016).

During 2001 to 2011, Al Qaeda held the primacy of the global jihadist movement. It had to overcome some obstacles such as bin Laden's death in 2011, the emergence of IS in 2014 and the strengthening of counterterrorism measures by governments and the international community after the attacks in 2001 (Wright, 2016). Therefore, after the 9/11 attacks, the organisation has shown a great ability to adapt and face new difficulties.

Other challenge was the post-period of the Afghanistan War. In October 2001, US forces invaded Afghanistan, a key location for the jihadi group with the intention to reduce al Qaeda's threat, changing the centre of gravity from Afghanistan to Pakistan.

The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 fuelled the movement, attracting many Muslims from the Gulf and North Africa to the heart of the Arab world to fight against Americans (International Crisis Group, 2016). After the Iraq invasion, al Qaeda branch in Iraq (AQI) emerged as one of the most influential affiliates within the movement, under the leadership of Abu Musab Zarqawi.

Between 2005 and 2006, al Qaeda through Zawahiri "al Qaeda's propaganda point man" (Riedel, 2007, p.30) increased its propaganda campaign that was not only a strategy of recruitment but also a tool to send instructions to their followers.

Al Qaeda also adopted a wider perspective in terms of their target audience for recruitment. Before 9/11, their propaganda campaigns were aimed to Muslim population but, the group, progressively incorporated a more populist rhetoric trying to attract a broader audience, including non-Muslims (Braniff and Moghadam, 2011).

Since the 9/11 events, al Qaeda adopted a more political speech. The organisation has sought to sow discord between the US and its allies in the West by carrying out attacks against Spain, UK, Germany, and various other forces (Braniff and Moghadam, 2011). These actions had as principal objective to erode public backing for military endeavours in locations such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and other regions.

Al Qaeda's structure has also changed since 2001. After bin Laden's death, Ayman al-Zawahiri became the leader, but the central command was less active than in the past (Wright, 2016). By 2011, al Qaeda had a central hub, in North Waziristan, inside a multipolar organisation with autonomous regional nodes (Braniff and Moghadam, 2011). This multipolarity is not only shown in the locations but also in their targets and strategies of terrorist offensives. According to Mendelsohn (2011), al Qaeda has followed a franchising strategy, referring to those affiliates in diverse regions that share their ideology and objectives but acts autonomous.

The adaptation of the organisation is found in three notable transformations (Braniff and Moghadam, 2011). First, it has established formal affiliations with geographically dispersed groups and also it has informal partners in co-located groups. Another important change is that it has cultivated a virtual sanctuary that is accessible with minimal barriers to entry.

There are several opinions about the relationship between the decentralized structure of the organisation and its effectiveness. For example, Zimmerman (2021) stated that this characteristic put some limits in its impact, while Riedel (2007) argued that this kind of structure is the one that allowed al Qaeda to survive. However, these authors also pointed out that it could be a problem because these mergers are risky regarding al Qaeda's brand but also constitutes an obstacle for the group's agenda (Mendelsohn, 2011).

Regarding the strategy, al Qaeda, unlike IS, advocated for achieving long-term objectives and they focused on gaining local support and build support in multiple countries (Wright, 2016). In 2010, bin Laden developed the "long-game strategy" calling al Qaeda members to not use violence against Muslim population.

The Arab spring (2010-2012) benefited the organisation by leaving some new ungoverned spaces, which al Qaeda could utilize, as training camps. As a result, new front groups emerged in Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt (Clarke and Moghadam, 2018). The suppression of these revolts put forward the fourth wave (International Crisis Group, 2016). Al-Zawahiri called for a "united" jihad in 2013 by issuing "General Guidelines for Jihad". Therefore, al Qaeda was perceived "as the more rational jihadist actor" (Wright, 2016, p. 19).

II. AQI evolution to IS

ISIS, a descendent of Al Qaeda, was created in 2014, with a more aggressive interpretation of jihad (Wright, 2016). Its roots were in a Jordanian militant, Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) founded in 1999 (known as Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad) by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (Wright, 2016). From the very beginning, AQI already had confrontations with al Qaeda because they incurred in some brutal sectarian attacks that Al Qaeda saw as illegitimate.

With US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the movement gained importance. In 2004, Zarqawi proclaimed his allegiance to bin Laden (Riedel, 2007). In 2005, he reinforced the view of the necessity of continue igniting the Sunni-Shiite division (Riedel, 2007). AQI prioritized the destabilization of regimes to gain territorial control rapidly (Wright, 2016). Therefore, AQI opted to attack the near enemy (Zimmerman, 2021).

During 2007-2011, US troops and Iraq tribes pushed ISI out of its stronghold, many core members died or were imprisoned (Zimmerman, 2021). When the US forces went out of the country in 2011, ISI appeared to be severely weakened, but it took advantage of the Syrian civil war and the marginalization of Sunnis in Iraq (Byman, 2016).

The Arab Spring protests in March 2011 in Syria provoked a loss of territory by the regime. Then, the Syrian civil war provided ISI with an opportunity to establish a significant presence in Syria, exploiting the power vacuum and chaos.

This context was an opportunity for Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to implement his radical jihadi program, different from al Qaeda's vision. Finally, because of several disagreements between al-Zarqawi and al Qaeda, after Zarqawi's death in 2006, AQI became the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi since 2010.

In 2011, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi sent members to establish bases in Syria. This operation was controlled by Abu Muhammad al-Golani who finally became the leader of Al Nusra, a splinter group of al Qaeda (Blanco, 2019).

By 2013, Al Nusra rejected the fusion that ISI's leader announced and reaffirmed his allegiance to al Qaeda (Blanco, 2019). Al-Zawahiri ordered the dissolution of the ISI, although it remained in Syria and gained control of vast territories.

ISI experienced a wave of restoration and the group was rebranded again under the denomination of Islamic State of Iraq and Iraq (ISIS). In 2014, after the July victory of its troops in the city of Mosul (Iraq), ISIS became Islamic State (IS), proclaiming a "Caliphate". Within weeks, it overran the north and west of the country, linking it to strongholds in eastern Syria. Islamic State forces destroyed part of the Iraqi-Syrian border, marking the first time the jihadist group has claimed supranational territory (International Crisis Group, 2016). Tens of thousands of foreigners have joined, many attracted by the strength of the online recruitment process of IS.

In this year, their division from Al Qaeda was finally formal and it threatened the previous organisation, surpassing it in size and strength (Byman, 2016). Moreover, IS had more franchises in quantitative terms in the Muslim world. The Libyan and the Egyptian provinces are the most serious threat. Previous years, they were not focused on Western interest; however, gradually they raised their ambitions.

Since August 2014, a coalition of 60 countries plus US forces started a campaign against IS inside Iraq and Syria (Ashford, 2016). By December 2017, "ISIS caliphate had lost 95% of its territory", including Mosul and Raqqa (Wilson Center, 2019). Despite they achieve a reduction of IS's territory, the number of its fighters stayed relatively consistent.

Counterterrorism campaigns by US forces continued the next years. Abu Bakr al Baghdadi was killed by US forces in northern Syria in October 2019 (Wilson Center, 2019). The successor was Ibrahim al Hashemi al Qurayshi.

As al Qaeda, IS also counts with a "virtual caliphate" tailoring its messages to Western audiences in a way that seeks sympathy while promoting the idea of seeking revenge (Clarke and Moghadam, 2018). By the use of these online resources, among other factors, IS will endure as a threat because of their support and sympathizers in the West (Wright, 2016). Through these online tools, IS incites individuals to commit attacks under its name. This is also related with the raising of the lone wolf phenomenon (International Crisis Group, 2016). Therefore, IS has the capacity to influence other terrorist attacks. There are many attacks that are considered inspired by IS rather than led by the jihadist organisation (Ashford, 2016).

III.Struggle between Al Qaeda and AQI, later IS

Al Qaeda and IS share Salafist ideology, but they are rivalries. Until 2013-2014 the principal jihadist threat was al Qaeda but after the Syrian war, IS represents the main warning in this scenario even al Qaeda still exists. Nevertheless, al Qaeda linked groups are also relevant in the current jihadist threat (International Crisis Group, 2016).

Despite they has been fighting for dominance, this does not means that it harms the jihadi threat but increases its scope (Wright, 2016). They take advantage of their respective failures. Besides, although IS seems to be more successful than Al Qaeda since 2011, this last one is a more pragmatic actor and benefits from IS's violence by exploiting the instability that it creates.

Furthermore, as IS appeared, al Qaeda has also evolved (International Crisis Group, 2016). Military offensives have weakened al Qaeda nucleus in Pakistan, but despite IS efforts to overcome al Qaeda members, no senior commanders have defected.

The final objective of both is the same, achieve a society governed by an extremist interpretation of sharia but they varied in timeline and methodology (Wright, 2016). This author considered that “IS is a political extremist actor while Al Qaeda is more an extremist political actor” (Wright, 2016, p.7). Therefore, the first one is more identified as an extremist movement with political goals and, the second one is a political organisation with extremist beliefs.

When confrontations between AQI and al Qaeda appeared, one of the aspects involved was al Qaeda’s agenda (Byman, 2015). This agenda was being affected by IS because they perpetrated some attacks on Iraqi Shia, damaging al Qaeda’s reputation among the Muslim population. Therefore, one of their differences is related with who is the real enemy. Meanwhile al Qaeda has focused on the far enemy since 1998, IS has usually prioritized the internal enemy (Blanco, 2019).

In addition, IS has a stricter discourse. According to Wright (2016), “ISIS’s message is zero-sum: you are either with ISIS, or you are an infidel” (p.7). However, Al Qaeda seeks local participation to make the relationship durable. Besides, IS’s has as an objective to control territory and criticized Al Qaeda, among other jihadi groups, to not have this issue as a primary goal.

When the movement disintegrated from Al Qaeda, some of their members decided to left ISIS and remains with Al Qaeda leadership in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Wright, 2016). It was in June 2014, when IS decided to formally announced a completely own caliphate, with its own government.

In 2014, it appeared that IS had surpassed Al Qaeda in prominence but the second one, gained support from local jihadist group of South Asia, the Caucasus, and the Middle East in order to overcome this crisis (Wright, 2016).

Initially, in the years following the establishment of the Caliphate in 2014, IS hold sway in the information domain over Al Qaeda (Blanco, 2019). Nevertheless, after this initial surge, IS faced significant setbacks in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, leading to a decline in its ideological influence and its ability to inspire attacks in Western countries.

According to Blanco (2019), while the IS remains a prominent reference of radical jihad and has been the inspiration behind numerous attacks in Western countries, it now lags behind Al Qaeda (AQ) in terms of influence, reach, operational capacity, and cohesion.

IV. Jihadist threat in Europe

Firstly, the war in Algeria, during the 1990s, was the main cause for jihadi terrorism in Europe (Nesser, 2016). The Armed Islamic Group (GIA) an Algerian terrorist group, launched in the mid-1990s, a bombing campaign in France, during the civil war. It constituted the first example of jihadi terrorism in Europe.

The main reason of these attacks against France was the France’s Algeria policy, supporting the Algerian government during the civil war. Besides, France’s counter terrorism measures that weakened the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) and the Islamic

Salvation Front (FIS), both networks that provides support to the GIA as well as other radicals had to move to other countries.

Regarding the formation of GIA's terrorist cells in Europe, it is noteworthy that these cells coalesced around entrepreneurs based in France and other European nations with connections to GIA leaders in Algeria and jihadists in Afghanistan.

According to Nesser (2016), the origin of the emergence of jihadism in Europe is in an Afghan-Arab foreign fighter movement. The beginning of the Jihadist threat in Europe is located in two declarations of bin Laden. The first one, the declaration of “War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places” in August 1996 (Sageman, 2004), characterizing a step forward in global Salafi jihad. Secondly, in 1999 other fatwa was issued, the World Islamic Front declared “Jihad against Jews and Crusaders” (Sageman, 2004).

These declarations signified a change in the strategy, from a defensive to an offensive one, as well as it varied from the near to the far enemy (US and the West). According to Sageman (2004), the defensive jihad is related with an individual obligation of action if “infidels invade dar al-Islam and threaten the existence of Islam and its practices” (pp.2). On the other hand, “offensive jihad to attack the land of the infidels to submit it to sharia (...) implies a collective obligation” (Sageman, 2004, pp.2). In the beginning of pursuing global jihad, al Qaeda bombed US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, a US warship in Yemen and launched the recognized 9/11 attack.

Existed an internal debate about the legitimacy of carried out attacks against the West (Nesser, 2016). This debate was based in the principle of the covenant of security. According to this principle, Muslims under the protection of a non-Muslim state must not inflict any harm to the state. However, if the state engages in war against Muslims or insults the Prophet Muhammad or Islam, this principle ceases. (Nesser, 2016).

Furthermore, the US invasion of Afghanistan, after 9/11, made al Qaeda lost its sanctuary in Afghanistan. The relocation of al Qaeda in Pakistan was also significant because it was translated into new possibilities to expand its scope in the West. Notably in the United Kingdom (UK) due to the connections to the Pakistani diaspora in the UK (Riedel, 2007).

Bin Laden also set up a propaganda front in London and organized some logistics cells in places such as Milan, Hamburg, or Madrid. Jihadist benefited from the facilities of the democratic regimes such as the freedom of speech in order to disseminate propaganda and recruit new members (Nesser, 2016).

Another fact which broader al Qaeda's vision of global jihad was the participation of many European countries in the invasion of Iraq (Nesser, 2016). Threats against Europeans were issued by al Qaeda since this moment. After this event, the frequency of plots in Europe rose until they reached an unprecedented peak in 2004, marked by the Madrid attack. European foreign policies such as those supporting Israel, US and Arab regimes were seen as a way to discriminate Muslims, fostering new attacks against European countries.

Other important characteristic of this threat is the phenomenon of homegrown jihadism, related with the radicalisation process of the individual in a European country. Therefore, it has changed the terrorist threat from external to internal (Crone, 2011). Moreover, the jihadist threat in Europe could be divided in two moments. Until 2013, when it was more related with al Qaeda, while since 2014, IS lead this threat in Europe (Reinares, 2016). In this second period,

IS support Muslims in order to carry out attacks in the West under its name (Clarke and Moghadam, 2018), differentiating among IS-linked cells and IS-inspired cells (Reinares and García-Calvo, 2021).

DESCRIPTION OF THE ATTACKS

I. Al Qaeda attacks

Al Qaeda perpetrated one of the major terrorism milestones, the attack against New York's World Trade Centre towers, on September 11, 2001. After this terrorist attack, the organisation has starred other violent events in Arab territory but also in Europe. Among them, the two chosen for the analysis are the one in Madrid in 2004 and the one in London in 2005.

1. Madrid train bombings of 2004

The Madrid train bombings of March 11 2004, also know by the numeronym 11M, consisted in a series of coordinated attacks that targeted commuter trains in Madrid (Riedel 2021). It was an attack against a soft target, commuter trains of the Guadalajara-Madrid line, specifically between the city of Alcalá de Henares and Atocha station (Reinares, 2017). These attacks killed 191 and left around 1,841 people injured. Since the fall out of the Pan Am Flight 103 in Scotland in December 1988, the Madrid bombings became the deadliest terrorist attack.

There were 10 explosions during the attack that exploded near simultaneously, between 7:37 and 7:41 a.m. (Reinares, 2017). Besides, another three explosive devices, that failed to detonate, were founded in Atocha and El Pozo stations.

These attacks consisted in coordinated and simultaneous bombings (Nesser and Stenersen, 2014). The system of the bombs consisted in synchronized alarms of cellular phones, there were no suicide bombers. In total, they prepared 13 rucksacks bombs. Regarding the explosives, there was a peculiarity, they used dynamite (Goma 2 Eco), different from the triacetone triperoxide (TATP) that used to utilize al Qaeda.

At the beginning, the Spanish government, ruled at that time by José María Aznar from the Popular Party (PP), attributed the attacks to ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna), a Basque separatist organisation (Riedel, 2021). Nevertheless, the police investigations began to point to al Qaeda as the main suspect behind the attacks.

The 3/11 had domestic consequences in the country (Reinares, 2017). It took place three days before general elections. They led to a profound societal division in Spain, as people grappled with assigning blame for the train bombings. Due to this reason, a huge manifestation occupied the city of Madrid as well as other autonomous communities in Spain days after. This fact is interesting because others terrorist attacks such as the London bombings in 2005 used to unite the population of the country affected, meanwhile the 11M provoked a really different effect (Riedel, 2021).

The network that planned and committed the Madrid train bombings was formed between March 2002 and the summer of 2003. It was a long-established al Qaeda cell and there is plenty of evidence about its connection with the senior al Qaeda leadership (Riedel, 2021). For example, it was connected to Amer Azizi, who finally became the chief of al Qaeda's external operations (Reinares, 2017). Therefore, as Reinares (2021) claims, "the 3/11 Madrid attacks were a coordinated, complex manifestation of al Qaeda's capabilities in Western Europe after 9/11" (pp. 24), revelling a top-down hierarchy of control.

In addition, this cell had connections with the Hamburg cell responsible for 11S attacks as well as they facilitated, before the attacks, the meeting between Mohamed Atta, leader of the 9/11 hijackers and his al Qaeda contacts in Spain (Riedel, 2021).

Three main components formed the cell. First, the remnants of Abu Dahdah's Al Qaeda cell that was dismantled in November 2001 during the Operation Date (Reinares, 2017). In this counterterrorism operation, which finished in September 2003, all the core members of the cell were arrested, except Amer Azizi who was in Iran at that moment.

However, another five members eluded arrest in 2001 as a result of the fragile Spanish counterterrorist laws in this context. The five members and Amer Azizi had a crucial role in the formation of the cell. Amer Azizi acted as an intermediary between the network and the top leaders of al Qaeda in Pakistan. Furthermore, in 2003 he became the adjunct to Hamza Rabia, al Qaeda's chief of external operations.

The Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (MICG), a jihadist terrorist organisation affiliated with al Qaeda was another component of the network. It was integrated in the network from its Belgian cell. Brussels, the capital of Belgium, was highlighted as a hub for terrorism (Riedel, 2021). Thirdly, a gang of delinquents that turned to jihadism was the final component (Reinares, 2017). The gang members that were involved in this network were 10 Moroccans living in Spain.

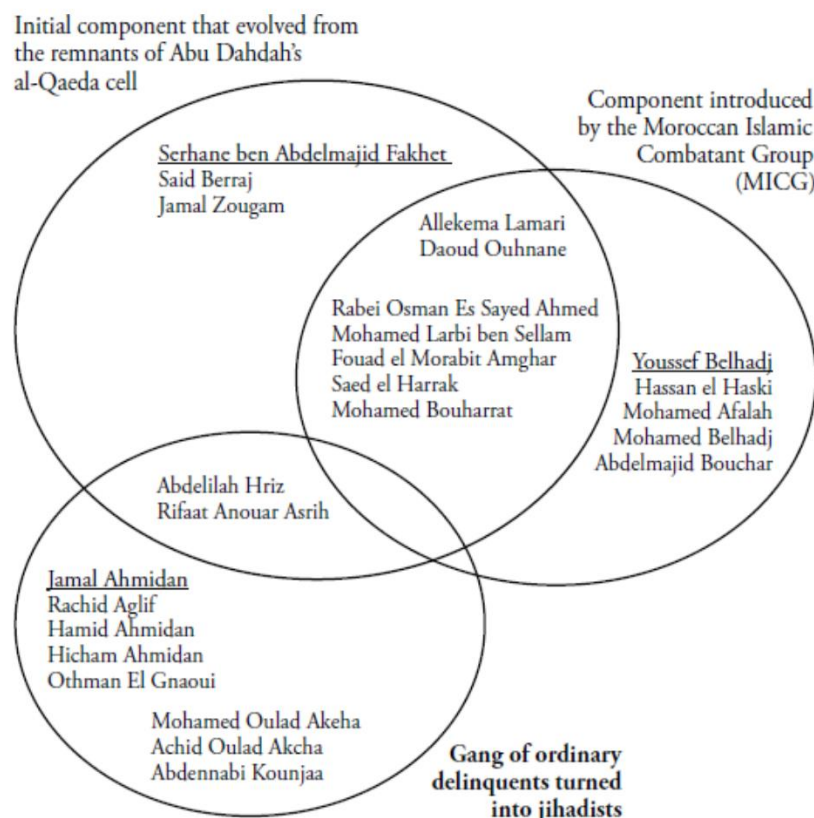


Figure 1: The composition of the 3/11 network.

Source: Reinares (2021) in Al Qaeda's Revenge, The 2004 Madrid Train Bombings.

As Reinares (2021) stated, the attacks were motivated by a desire of revenge, among other reasons. Some core leaders of al Qaeda's cell in Madrid were arrested or persecuted by the Spanish authorities (for example, in the Operation Date). Moreover, the terrorists claimed also as another justification of their attack the Iraq invasion by the US troops, in which Spain participated.

Authorities apprehended and successfully prosecuted some of these individuals, both within and beyond Spain. Some met their end in the group suicide at the Leganes flat, while others managed to elude capture entirely (Reinares, 2017). Additionally, there is a likelihood that certain participants of the Madrid train bombings remain unidentified.

2. The London bombings of 2005

On the morning of July 7, 2005, the city of London suffered a terrorist attack. The target was again public transport (soft target) but, in this case, the explosives were set in three London subways and one bus (Hoffman, 2014). As a result, 770 people were injured and 52 were killed (British Transport Police, n.d.) without taking into account the bombers, in total 56 (Hoffman, 2014).

At 8:50 a.m., 3 of the 4 explosives were detonated. One took place in a train that was going from Liverpool Street to Aldgate Station. The other bomb was situated in a circle line that was in direction to Paddington (Hoffman, 2014). The third bomb exploded in the Piccadilly line train between King Cross and Russell Square stations. Then, around 1 hour later, at 9:47 a.m., the fourth explosive was detonated on the upper deck of one of London's iconic red double-decker buses. The bus was the one of the route 30 and was crossing the junction of Tavistock Square and Upper Woburn Place when it happened.

Regarding the modus operandi, it varied from the one used by jihadist in Madrid one year before. Explosives were made from peroxide in rucksacks, exactly with hexamethylene triperoxide diamine (HMTD) (Arnold, 2005). It constituted an example of improvised explosives devices innovation (Nesser and Stenersen, 2014). Regarding the technique of elaboration of the explosives, terrorists used a composition formed by hydrogen peroxide and an organic compound. It is found that this characteristic also repeated in other consecutive attacks, is linked with the fact that some individuals had received training in Pakistan.

These terrorist attacks surprised UK's governments. They ensured, only one day before, that UK and London were out of the radar of terrorism (Hoffman, 2014). By the contrast, even in the period before of the 9/11 attacks, Nesser (2016) argued that there were a phenomenon called "Londonistan". This term makes reference to London as a hub for the jihadism in Europe, especially for recruitment, and it served as a transit point for those individuals who attended to training camps in Afghanistan

Regarding the bombers, all were British citizens and only one was not born in the UK. All of them were identified the 14th of July. They were: Shezad Tanweer, Mohammed Sidique Khan (main figure), Hasib Hussain, Ejaz (Nadim) Fiaz (Lehr, 2005).

They were radicalised in the country, two of them had personal links, while the others became closer when the main leader of them established a gym in 2000 (Hoffman, 2014). The four bombers came to this gym, and he also opened another one in 2004, possibly connected

with extremist activities. The background of these individuals is in some aspects very similar. 3 out of 4 had academic background and lived in Beeston, a working class neighbourhood.

This attack was a reaction to the attacks committed against their brothers and sisters, the injustices carried out by the West against Muslims (The Stationery Office, 2006). They argued that in a democracy, citizens are responsible for the actions of their governments. Besides, it was influenced by the US invasion of Afghanistan, illegally occupied Muslim land (Hoffman and Dryer, 2007).

The House of Commons Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) undertook an extensive inquiry into the connections between the July 2005 London bombings and other terrorist networks in the U.K. Particularly those connections associated with Operation Crevice, which led to the arrest of five individuals in 2004 for planning various plots across the UK (Hoffman, 2014). The ISC's investigation achieved to understand the role of one member, a British Muslim identified as an Al Qaeda facilitator, heading a facilitation network in the UK that provided financial and logistical support.

In a prior inquiry conducted by MI5, the British Security Service, there was a mistaken conclusion, leading authorities to believe that two individuals under surveillance were not important, and they were not leaders of a distinct operational terrorist cell (Hoffman, 2014). Consequently, neither of them became a priority for further surveillance and investigation. Regrettably, both individuals were later found to be involved in the 7 July bombings.

II. IS attacks

IS continues being the benchmark of radical jihad and has inspired the most attacks in Western countries. By the contrast, it also has some linked cells in Europe. One example could be the Barcelona and Cambrils attacks in 2017, which were carried out by the Ripoll cell, an IS-linked cell (Reinares & García-Calvo, 2021). The attacks selected are the Paris attacks in 2015 and the Brussels airport attack in 2016.

1. Paris in 2015

On November 13, 2015, France experienced the largest terrorist attack in that century (Pons, 2016). The attack involved three separate killings by 3 groups of terrorist, in total, 10 individuals, that attacked in three different places almost simultaneously. In this case, they did not target public transport, but these places had something in common, they were locations with plenty of people: a concert hall, restaurants, and bars and a football stadium. It left 130 people dead and more than 350 wounded (Hernández Velasco, 2015).

It is said that this attack was inspired by another previous one, the attack in Mumbai, India, the November 26-29 in 2008 (Riedel, 2015). There, 10 terrorist killed 164 people and injured more than 300. They share similarities such as the place, an urban area, the multiple soft targets and the sequence, simultaneous and sequential attacks. However, one difference in the modus operandi of Paris attacks is observed, they added suicide vest to increase the number of casualties. Moreover, the level of coordination was higher in Mumbai attacks.

Firstly, at 21:20, three suicide bombers detonated their explosives outside the Stade de France (Pons, 2016). Secondly, other group, perpetrated suicide bombing too and other

members of the group started shooting to the people who were in Central Paris in four restaurants and cafes:

- 21:25 the Petit Cambodge restaurant and Le Carillon bar (carried out by one shooter)
- 21:32 Rue Fontaine au Roi (other shooter)
- 21:36 in Belle Equipe bar (two gunmen)
- 21:40 Boulevard Voltaire (suicide bomber)

(BBC, 2015)

Finally, the third group, composed of three attackers, opened fire at 21:40 in the Bataclan theatre during a rock concert.

In order to fabricate the explosives, Paris attackers used triacetone triperoxide (TATP) but they also included gunmen with Kalashnikov rifles and 7.62 calibre bullets (Público, 2015). The vest of explosives was battery-operated with manual detonators.

One day after, François Hollande, the president of France established the state of emergency for 12 days but it was extended twice and endure until May 26 (Pons, 2016). French police done multiple raids searching for suspects, including the Belgian city of Brussels (BBC, 2015). The duration of the state of emergency was controversial because it was understood as an abuse of power by the government and the Amnesty International denounced that they were violating human rights (Henry, 2016 cited in Pons, 2016).

The main leader of the attacks was identified as Abdelhamid Abaaoud and another important figure was Salah Abdeslam. Both were born in Brussels (Pons, 2016). The vast majority of those implicated in the attacks had criminal records, and some of them had travelled to Syria (RTVE, 2015). Moreover, 2 of them had Syrian passport. 5 out of 10 had French nationality but 2 of these 5 were living in Belgium and 3 out of 10 had Belgian nationality but with Moroccan origins.

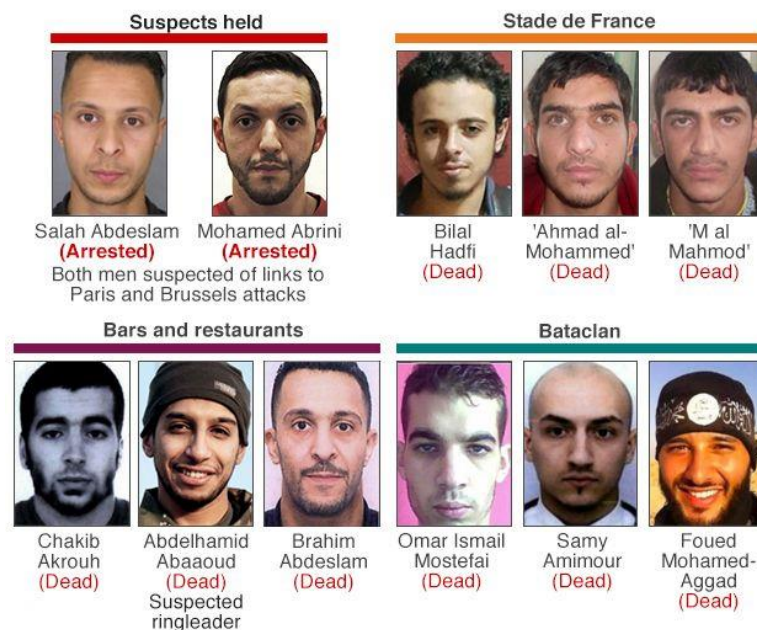


Image 1: Attackers of Paris 2015.

Source: BBC News (2016)

France is one of the countries with the toughest fight against terrorism (RTVE, 2015). IS also claimed in a statement on November 11, that a reason was the involvement of France in the international coalition against terrorism led by US, which is the author of some bombardments to IS in Syria and Iraq (El País, 2015). The stadium as a target was also related with this reason (RTVE, 2015). There was the President of France and the football match was against Germany, another country of the coalition. Moreover, Bataclan was elected because it was understood as a perverse party.

Seven of the members died that night and two died, 5 days later, during police's operation of Saint-Denis in Paris (RTVE, 2015). The unique survival of the attacks, Salah Abdeslam, was arrested in a counterterrorist operation in Molenbeek, Brussels.

This last one was sentenced to life imprisonment after pleading guilty to terrorism and murder in 2022 (BBC, 2022). Of the 20 men tried for their involvement in the attacks, all but one received guilty verdicts.

Another of the main defendants, Mohammed Abrini, also received a life sentence with a minimum term of 22 years. Although Abrini was part of the group that travelled from Brussels to Paris to carry out the attacks, he did not participate in them.

2. Brussels airport in 2016

On the morning of 22 March in 2016, a terrorist attack about which IS claimed later responsibility, took place in Brussels (Al-Hlou, et al., 2016). Three explosions started the attack, two of them were detonated in the airport and another one was exploded in a Brussels subway, once again, they targeted public transport and a location with high traffic of people. It resulted in more than 300 people injured and 35 fatalities (Kirby, 2023)

About 8 a.m., two explosions near simultaneously, one of them caused by a suicide attack, took place in Brussels airport (Al-Hlou, et al., 2016). After that, at 9:10 a.m., another explosion was done at the Maelbeek subway, next to the European Union's headquarters. The explosives were nail-packed homemade bombs with TATP (BBC, 2016).

The individuals who committed the attack were on the radar of the Belgian police but because of their scarcity of intelligence and officials resources, they were not able to monitor everyone (Frontline, 2023). In response, European leaders created the Counterterrorism Centre and approved the passenger name record in order to strengthen security across the continent.

Authorities established a connection between the network which committed the Paris attack only 4 months before and the network of Brussels (Buchanan & Park, 2016). It is suspected that at least two of the attackers played roles in both violent events. Nevertheless, although both attacks were carried out by groups and were simultaneous attacks, only in Paris, they introduced a supplementary weapon to the bombs (Nesser, et al., 2016). Besides, these attacks were similar to Madrid and London horror events in relation to the target, all of them go against random crowds of people.

Comparative Analysis of ISIS and Al Qaeda major terrorist attacks

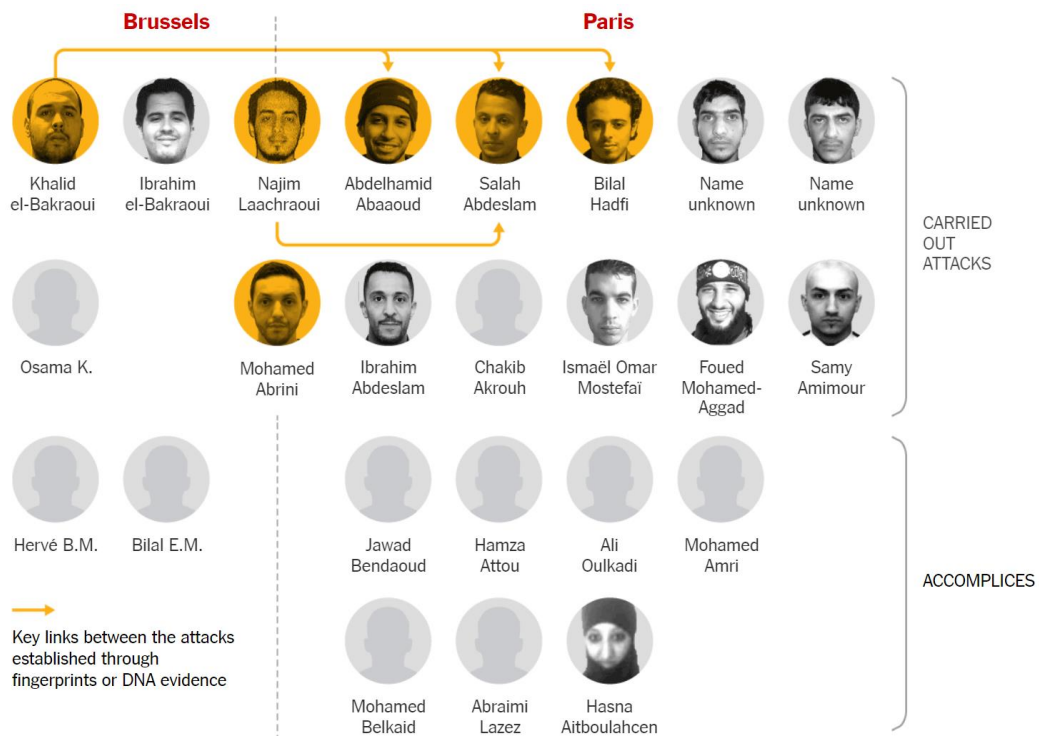


Image 2: Network components links between Paris and Brussels attacks.

Source: The New York Times (2016)

The actors behind the Brussels attack were: Khalid el-Bakraoui, his brother, Ibrahim el-Bakraoui, Najim Laachraoui and Mohamed Abrini. All of them lived in Brussels and all except one were of Moroccan descent whose parents emigrated from Morocco to Belgium. Besides, 3 out of 4 had criminal records.

As happens in the previous case, some of them had travelled to Syria (2 out of 4). It is an example of an attack in which it is shown the impact of foreign fighters returnees in Europe (Mora Tebas, 2016).

As happens in France, IS stated that the attacks were in response to Belgium's support of the international coalition that was fighting in Syria and Iraq (CBS, 2016). Regarding the election of the target, the subway station attacked was in the heart of the city is next to European Union institutions, making it a symbolic target for terrorists (CNN, 2016).

After the attacks, as it is mentioned before, Salah Abdeslam was arrested. After a long trial, on September 2023, Brussels court found six men guilty of terrorist murder (Kirby, 2023). Despite Salah was sentenced by the Paris Court, the Brussels Court also convicted him of attempt murder in Brussels and two other men were convicted of being involved in terrorist activities.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

In order to understand the distinctions and similarities between al Qaeda and IS in Europe, focus will be placed on three types of variables to observe the evolution of this threat on the continent. These variables serve to facilitate comparisons and draw conclusions regarding the evolving nature of the phenomenon.

I. Brief overview of the variables

The variables of the study are classified in three main groups: variables of characterization; variables of radicalisation; and variables of involvement.

The variables of characterization are focused on the profile of the actors. The variables of radicalisation refer to the process by which the authors adopt radical ideas (in that case, following jihadist views). Finally, the variables of involvement are related, on the one hand, with the actors and, on the other hand, they are related with the terrorist attack.

Variables of characterization: focused on the profile of the actors.

- **Age.** The figure used is the age that the actor had when the attacks took place.
- **Gender.** It is going to be distinguished between male and female.
- **Nationality.** Country in which they were born or nationality acquired later.
- **Immigration origin.** In this variable it is observed first-generation immigrant (those who were born foreign); second-generation immigrant (those who were born in the country of the attacks but at least one of their parents is foreign born) or national without migrant ancestors (those who were born in the country of the attack as well as his parents).
- **Residence.** The location in which the individual resides or, in case of the lack of data, the location in which the individual was living in the day of the attacks.
- **Criminal records.** Taking into account criminal records related to terrorism but also other crimes such drugs trafficking, robbery, etc.

Variables of radicalisation: focused on the process of radicalisation.

- **Training.** If the individual has received training in a conflict zone as a foreign fighter (FF).
- **Environment of radicalisation.** That means at which place or conditions the individual became radicalised, such as in prison, home, religious congregations, etc.
- **Contact with an agent of radicalisation.** In this investigation, the agent of radicalisation is understood as an individual who intervenes in the radicalisation of other individual. That is also related with the entry of an individual to a cell or to decide to participate in the terrorist attacks through the influence of other individual.

Variables of involvement: related to the actor and to the terrorist attack.

- **Related to the actors:**
 - **Organisations of reference.** If the individual belongs to another organisation before being involved in a cell or a terrorist group.

- **Function.** Role of the individual in the group. This variable is fixed in the next categories¹:
 - Logistical support
 - Radicalisation and recruitment
 - Propaganda dissemination
 - Financing
 - Direction and coordination
- **Size of the cell.** Number of the cell, network, or group’s members.
- **Structure of the cell.** Taking into account three different structures: cell (more internal cohesion as well as more hierarchical); group (more diffuse and less formalized structure); network (some members could belong to different cells or groups).
- **Related to the terrorist attack:**
 - **Motives.** Justification of the attack by the actors.
 - **Method.** Related with the weapons, explosives and other aspects related with the attacks.
 - **Sequence of the attack.** Coordinated attacks, simultaneous attacks, time lag between the attacks (hours, days, etc.), groups of terrorists or only individuals in different points, etc.
 - **Lethality:** casualties and wondered people.

II. Variables of characterization

1. Age

In this section, the results of the database will be presented. Firstly, as shown in the table below, it is evident that all individuals were under the age of 18 at the time of the attack. The youngest terrorist was 18 years old, while the oldest were 40.

On the one hand, there is a predominance of individuals in the age range between 25 and 29, followed by those aged between 30 and 34.

AGES	MADRID		LONDON		PARIS		BRUSSELS		TOTAL	
<20	0	0%	1	25%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2.22%
(20-24)	4	14.81%	1	25%	2	22.22%	2	40%	9	20%
(25-29)	10	37.04%	0	0%	6	66.67%	2	40%	18	40%
(30-34)	10	37.04%	2	50%	1	11.11%	1	20%	14	31.11%
(35-39)	2	7.41%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	4.44%
>39	1	3.70%	0	0%	0	9%	0	0%	1	2.22%
TOTAL	27		4		9		5		45	
Missing data	0		0		1		0		1	

Table 1: Jihadists involved in the attacks by age.
Source: own elaboration

Nevertheless, when considering each attack individually, it is observed that in the cases of the 11M and London attacks, the results are the same, whereas in the Brussels attacks, the

¹ These categories are selected from the article “Yihadismo y yihadistas en España quince años después del 11-M (2019)”.

age range that stands out is between 20 and 24 as well as the age between 25 and 29. It is important to highlight this fact because the number of individuals involved in the 11M attack is higher.

AGES	MADRID	LONDON	PARIS	BRUSSELS	GENERAL
Mean	29.48	25	23.89	27	26.34
Median	32	26	27	27	26.5
Mode	28 and 33	30	25 and 28	24	28
Standard deviation	4.39	6	3.33	3.08	4.23
TOTAL	27	4	9	5	45
Missing data	0	0	1	0	1

Table 2: Mean, median, mode and standard deviation of the attacks.

Source: own elaboration

Looking at the average age of each attack, it is found that the highest average age is in the 11M attack, followed by the individuals in the Brussels and London attacks, and finally, the youngest are those who carried out the attack in Paris. Additionally, the age that is most commonly repeated is 28. Once again, the overall mean falls within the age range of 25 to 29, reaffirming the results of the previous table. Moreover, upon examining the standard deviation, it is found that those belonging to the Paris and Brussels groups show a smaller dispersion with respect to their mean.

2. Gender

The 46 individuals are male (100%). There is a predominance in the jihadist threat during these years with regard to gender.

3. Nationality

In relation with the nationality of the individuals, each case presents different nationalities, with the exception of Paris and Brussels, where some individuals share Belgian nationality.

NATIONALITY	LONDON		PARIS		BRUSSELS		TOTAL	
British	3	75%	0	0%	0	0%	3	15.79%
Jamaican	1	25%	0	0%	0	0%	1	5.26%
Belgian	0	0%	1	10%	4	80%	5	26.32%
Belgian-Moroccan	0	0%	1	10%	0	0%	1	5.26%
French	0	0%	6	60%	0	0%	6	31.58%
Syrian/Iraqi	0	0%	2	20%	0	0%	2	10.53%
Sweden	0	0%	0	0%	1	20%	1	5.26%
TOTAL	4		10		5		19	
Missing data	0		0		0		0	

Table 3: Jihadists involved in the attacks by nationality.

Source: own elaboration

Once again, the case of the 11M is analysed separately due to the number of jihadists. In this table, it is observed that the vast majority of individuals had Moroccan nationality, accounting for 85.19%.

NATIONALITY	MADRID	
Tunisian	1	3.70%
Moroccan	23	85.19%
Algerian	2	7.41%
Egyptian	1	3.70%
TOTAL	27	
Missing data	0	

Table 4: Nationalities of the 11M jihadists.
Source: own elaboration

It is also noteworthy, in order to analyse the underlying causes later on, those who held the nationality of the country in which the attack occurred and those who held other nationalities. In the case of the 11M, which took place in Spain, none of the jihadists had Spanish nationality.

However, this demographic data changes in the subsequent attacks, as shown in the following table. In the London, Paris, and Brussels attacks, 68.42% of the individuals had the nationality of the country attacked.

NATIONALITY	LONDON		PARIS		BRUSSELS		TOTAL	
Nationality of the country attacked	3	75%	6	60%	4	80%	13	68.42%
Other nationalities	1	25%	4	40%	1	20%	6	31.58
TOTAL	4		10		5		19	
Missing data	0		0		0		0	

Table 5: Nationalities of the London, Paris and Brussels Jihadists.
Source: own elaboration

4. Origin

Regarding migratory origin, it is found that in the case of the Madrid attacks, all individuals were first-generation immigrants. However, in the case of the other attacks, 78.95% of the terrorists were second-generation immigrants. In Brussels, all members were second-generation immigrants.

Therefore, there is a clear trend over the years towards the involvement of second-generation immigrants in jihadist attacks.

ORIGIN	LONDON		PARIS		BRUSSELS		TOTAL	
1 st Generation Immigrant	0	0%	3	30%	0	0%	3	15.79%
2 ^o Generation Innmigrant	3	75%	7	70%	5	100%	15	78.95%
Convert	1	25%	0	0%	0	0%	1	5.26%
TOTAL	4		10		5		19	
Missing data	0		0		0		0	

Table 6: Migratory origin of those involved in the London, Paris and Brussels attacks.
Source: own elaboration

5. Residence

Again, there are disparate residences of the members, with only one coincidence in the case of Paris and Brussels. In the Brussels attack, all individuals lived in Belgium, with 2 out of 5 residing in the district of Laeken, one in Schaerbeek, and one in Molenbeek. The specific location of residence for the other individual is unknown.

RESIDENCE	MADRID		LONDON		PARIS		BRUSSELS		TOTAL	
Spain	26	96.30%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	26	59.09%
Italy	1	3.70%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2.27%
UK	0	0%	4	100%	0	0%	0	0%	4	9.09%
Belgium	0	0%	0	0%	5	62.5%	5	100%	10	22.73%
France	0	0%	0	0%	3	37.5%	0	0%	3	6.82%
TOTAL	27		4		8		5		44	
Missing data	0		0		2		0		2	

Table 7: Country of residence of the jihadists of Madrid, London, Paris and Brussels.

Source: own elaboration

In the case of Paris, those who lived in Belgium were in the district of Molenbeek, except for one who lived in Neder-over-Hembeek. Additionally, those who lived in France resided in different locations: Drancy, Chartres, and Strasbourg, with only one living in Paris.

The London jihadists were all located in the city of Leeds, which is 315 kilometres north of London in the UK. The residences of two of them are unclear because they used fake passports.

Finally, it is also remarkable that all except one of the individuals that formed the 11M cell lived in Spain, the place in which the attack happened. Nevertheless, they were in different parts: Catalonia, Lanzarote and Madrid.

6. Criminal records

In this variable, there are several individuals for whom it is not known whether they had a criminal record or not. However, in all cells, there are individuals who did have criminal records prior to committing the attack.

CRIMINAL RECORDS	MADRID		LONDON		PARIS		BRUSSELS		TOTAL	
Individuals with criminal records	8	29.63% (in relation with the whole network)	1	25% (in relation with the whole group)	6	60%	3	60%	18	75%
Individuals without criminal records	-	-	-	-	4	40%	2	40%	6	25%
TOTAL	8		1		10		5		24	
Missing data	19		3		0		0		22	

Table 8: Jihadists with criminal records before the Madrid, London, Paris and Brussels attacks.

Source: own elaboration

The data reveals that, in the case of IS, it harbours more individuals with criminal records compared to the al Qaeda groups, primarily due to the higher percentage of individuals

observed in Paris and Brussels. Nevertheless, those involved in Madrid attack possessed a higher percentage of criminality due to the larger extent of the network but in comparative terms in IS groups at least half have criminal records. However, the lack of information could affect this variable and its results.

III. Variables of radicalisation

These variables have relatively few results, and there is missing data regarding whether individuals have received training, their environment, and their agent of radicalisation.

1. Training

In the 11M cell, at least 3 individuals travelled to al Qaeda's training camp in Afghanistan. Regarding the London jihadists, all of them, except one for whom no information about any travel was found, travelled to Pakistan, and 2 of them also travelled to Afghanistan.

In Paris, there is evidence of a change in the main training camp or location. Here, 60% of the individuals spent time in Syria, and among those who did not receive training, one intended to travel to Syria but was deported by Turkish authorities. All of the Brussels jihadists received training in Syria, similar to the previous case.

TRAINING	MADRID		LONDON		PARIS		BRUSSELS		TOTAL	
Receive training in other country	3	10%	3	75%	6	60%	5	100%	17	77.27%
No receive training in other country	N/A	-	1	25%	4	40%	0	0%	5	22.73%
TOTAL	3		4		10		5		22	
Missing data	24		0		0		0		24	

Table 9: Jihadists of the Madrid, London, Paris and Brussels attacks that received training.
Source: own elaboration

In total, 77.27% of the jihadists for whom data is found received training in another country before the attack.

In the next table, it can be observed that during the years leading up to 2004, the main place for training was Afghanistan. In the subsequent years, individuals continued to train in Afghanistan, but there was a slight increase in training camps in Pakistan. However, in the period before the Paris and Brussels attacks, Syria gained importance, with 61.11% of the jihadists involved in the analysis trained in Syria.

PLACE TRAINING	MADRID		LONDON		PARIS		BRUSSELS		TOTAL	
Afghanistan	3	100%	2 (these are the same that also trained in Pakistan)	50%	0	0%	0	0%	5	27.78%
Pakistan	0	0%	3	75%	0	0%	0	0%	3	16.67%
Syria	0	0%	0	0%	6	60%	5	100%	11	61.11%
TOTAL	3		4		6		5		18	
Missing data	24		0		0		0		24	

Table 10: Place of training of those jihadists that received training.

Source: own elaboration

2. Environment of radicalisation

Among Madrid individuals, 9 were radicalised in a religious meeting, some of them in Islamic worships in Leganes, while others were radicalised in Tablighi Jamaat religious congregations. One could have been radicalised during his stay in prison in France.

In the London cell, all were radicalised in religious meetings, with three of them in a Mosque and Hamara Centre, while the other was influenced during the "Friday prayers". In two of these cases, a friend or group of friends conditioned them, making them more radicalised.

The Paris jihadists were radicalised in religious congregations, prisons, by family, or via the internet. Three of them spent time in prison with other radicalised individuals, but it is not clear where they were radicalised. Two of them were radicalised in different mosques. The last one experienced rapid radicalisation mainly through the internet.

A similar pattern is observed in Brussels, although there is no evidence that they were radicalised in religious meetings. One jihadist was influenced by a friendship environment, while another was radicalised by the context of Molenbeek (a high Muslim population). Another might have been radicalised in prison, and the last one was radicalised after traveling to Syria in 2013.

ENVIRONMENT	MADRID		LONDON		PARIS		BRUSSELS		TOTAL	
Religious meetings or congregations	8	88.89%	4	100%	2	33.33%	0	0%	14	60.87%
Prison	1	11.11%	0	0%	3	50%	1	25%	5	21.74%
Family or friends	0	0%	1 (also influenced by religious meetings)	25%	0	0%	2	50%	3	13.04%
Internet	0	0%	0	0%	1	16.67%	0	0%	1	4.35%
After travelled to Syria	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	25%	1	4.35%
TOTAL	9		4		6		4		23	
Missing data	18		0		4		1		23	

Table 11: Environment of radicalisation of the jihadists involved in Madrid, London, Paris and Brussels attacks.
Source: own elaboration

3. Agent of radicalisation

In the case of the 11M attacks, there are clear agents of radicalisation. Firstly, the principal agent of radicalisation for the gang of delinquents was a man with a long history of criminal records. He was a first-generation immigrant who married a Spanish woman and had a son. According to the director of a prison where he served a sentence, he was characterised by a forceful personality that attracted other members, thereby exercising a leadership role (Reinares, 2017).

Furthermore, the preceding agent of radicalisation was radicalised by another individual who also played a crucial role in the radicalisation of the FAKET network. This individual, also a first-generation immigrant, was considered the leader of the local cell in Madrid. He was one

of the individuals who evaded arrest during Operation Date and was among those who committed suicide in the Leganes apartment. Although he had received education, he could not continue his studies because the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI) did not renew his scholarship. It is believed that this fact contributed to his further radicalisation in a mosque in Madrid.

Additionally, those who evaded arrest in Operation Date were mainly radicalised by remnants of the Abu Dadah cell (who also evaded arrest). One of them, a first-generation immigrant, had a difficult childhood. He received training in Afghanistan and, due to his terrorist contributions, later ascended in the al Qaeda structure, reaching the central command.

On the other hand, a first-generation individual belonging to the Belgian MICG also helped radicalise those who ultimately became members of the network. Moreover, he is known as the connector between this cell and the 11M network. He was accused by the Public Prosecutor's Office of being one of the masterminds and was recognised as the spokesman for al Qaeda in Europe (El Mundo, 2017).

In the London attacks, the main agent of radicalisation who influenced all the members of the group was a second-generation immigrant who worked as a popular primary school teacher (El Mundo, 2015). The parents of the students respected him and stated that he had helped their children. He was married and was expecting a son. He had received training in Pakistan and Afghanistan and was radicalised by attending religious meetings.

Precise information about the agents of radicalisation of the Paris jihadists is not available. However, there is evidence of influence from a radical Islamist preacher who recruits individuals to send them to the Syria network, in at least two cases. The same applies to another individual who could be considered the agent of at least two other individuals. This individual, a second-generation immigrant with previous criminal records, was suspected of being a leader of an IS branch operating in Iraq, Syria, and Libya (The New York Times, 2016). He played a significant role in recruitment and also in organising the Paris attacks.

Finally, there is no information about the agent of radicalisation for those individuals belonging to the Brussels cell. Only one is stated to have been possibly radicalised by a friend of a member of the group.

IV. Variables of involvement

1. Related to the actors

Organisation of reference

When the 2004 attack took place, al Qaeda was the main organisation of reference. However, some of the members belonged previously to another jihadist terrorist organisation, the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (MICG), which was affiliated with al Qaeda. It is true that other individuals belonged to a gang of delinquents, but it is not considered an organisation of reference because it was not a terrorist one. In the London cell, the organisation of reference is also al Qaeda. On the other hand, in the subsequent attacks in Paris and Brussels, these individuals had the Islamic State (IS) as their organisation of reference.

On the other hand, in the subsequent attacks in Paris and Brussels, these individuals had the IS as their as organisation of reference.

Functions

In the case of the 11M cell as happens in London, those who had a directional function also had a logistical one. Moreover, in the 11M group, at least 3 members were dedicated exclusively to the recruitment and radicalisation of other individuals.

FUNCTIONS	MADRID		LONDON		PARIS		BRUSSELS		TOTAL	
Logistical and direction	4	25%	2	50%	0	0%	0	0%	6	23.08%
Logistical support	8	50%	1	25%	2	50%	2	40% (in relation with the whole group)	13	50%
Direction and coordination	1	6.25%	0	0%	1	25%	0	0%	2	7.69%
Financing	1 (also logistical support)	6.25%	1	25%	0	0%	0	0%	2	7.69%
Recruitment and radicalisation	3	18.75%	0	0%	1	25%	0	0%	4	15.38%
TOTAL	16		4		4		2		26	
Missing data	12		0		6		3		21	

Table 12: Functions of the jihadists of the Madrid, London, Paris and Brussels attacks.
Source: own elaboration

In this variable, it is shown that the function that is predominant among the individuals is logistical. Besides, some individuals in charge of the directing and coordinating of the attacks usually provides some logistical support.

FUNCTIONS	MADRID		LONDON		PARIS		BRUSSELS		TOTAL	
Individuals with 2 or more functions	5	31.25%	2	50%	0	0%	0	0%	7	26.92%
Individuals with one function	11	68.75%	2	50%	4	40% (in relation with the whole group)	2	40% (in relation with the whole group)	19	73.08%
TOTAL	16		4		4		2		26	
Missing data	12		0		6		3		21	

Table 13: Jihadist with one or more functions during the planning and execution of the Madrid, London, Paris and Brussels attacks.
Source: own elaboration

Individuals arrested, escaped or died in the attack

More than a half died as suicide bombers, and in the case of London, all of them did. 11M are different because they did not involve suicide bombing. All were arrested, but 7 died in another suicide in Leganes, during a siege, while 3 of them died as suicide terrorist in Iraq.

Furthermore, in Paris, 2 individuals were killed by the police in a siege in Seine Saint Denis.

	MADRID		LONDON		PARIS		BRUSSELS		TOTAL	
Arrested	17	62.96%	0	0%	1	10%	2	40%	20	43.48%
Escaped	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Suicide/died in the attack	0	0%	4	100%	7	70%	3	60%	14	30.43%
Other	10	37.04%	0	0%	2	20%	0	0%	12	26.09%
TOTAL	27		4		10		5		46	
Missing data	0		0		0		0		0	

Table 14: Jihadist arrested, those who committed suicide during the attacks or died from other causes in Madrid, London, Paris and Brussels attacks.

Source: own elaboration

Therefore, in the 11M the 62.96% were arrested and 37.04% committed suicide; in London attacks, all died during the attack as suicide bombers; in Paris, 70% committed suicide; and in Brussels, 60%. In that sense, after the 11M, jihadists who died as suicide bombers during the attacks represents 73.68%.

Size of the cell and structure

	MADRID	LONDON	PARIS	BRUSSELS
Size of the cell	27	4	10	5
Structure	Network	Group	Group	Group

Table 15: Size and structure of the 11M, London, Paris and Brussels cells.

Source: own elaboration

Regarding the size of the cell, the Madrid cell was the largest, consisting of 27 individuals. It could be considered a network because it was composed of three components that were underlined: the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (MICG), a gang of common delinquents, and remnants of Abu Dahdah’s cell.

The London group comprised only 4 jihadists. It is referred to as a group due to the lack of strong ties between the individuals that formed it.

In the case of Paris, it was a group with 10 core operatives, but it was demonstrated that they had linkages with other individuals of the Islamic State (IS) that supported the group, specifically with logistical functions.

Brussels’ group, like London and Paris, was characterized by not having strong ties between them. They consisted of 5 core operatives but had links with other suspects connected to the Paris attacks.

2. Related to the terrorist attack

Regarding the motives, all of them appear to be a response to actions taken by Western governments. The Madrid attacks were characterized by a desire for revenge. Although the network stated that another reason was the participation of Spanish troops in the Iraq invasion led by the US, this argument would be considered false, as explained in the next section. The motives behind the London, Paris, and Brussels attacks were again a reaction by these groups, responding to the harm being inflicted on Muslim lands and Muslims.

In the attacks led by al Qaeda, both utilized rucksack bombs and were coordinated explosions. They are differentiated, on one hand, by the type of explosive used: in Madrid, dynamite (Goma 2 Eco) was employed, while in London, HMTD was used. On the other hand, in the Madrid attacks, there were no suicide bombers, while in London, all of them died in the attack.

The attacks led by IS both involved suicide bombers with rucksack bombs of TATP, but in the case of Paris, they also included individuals who carried firearms and shot at the population.

In relation with the sequence of the attacks, 3 out of 4 were carried out in the morning, during hours with high pedestrian traffic. The only attack that took place at night was the case of Paris, but this was for a specific reason: the date coincided with a special event, a football match, and a Friday, when people are out on the streets.

Comparative Analysis of ISIS and Al Qaeda major terrorist attacks

	MADRID	LONDON	PARIS	BRUSSELES				
MOTIVES	Desire of revenge stemmed from perceived persecution by Spanish authorities and Spain's participation in the invasion of Iraq.	Injustices carried out by the West against Muslims. US invasion of Afghanistan.	Counterterrorism measures. France's participation in IS bombardment in Syria and Iraq led by the US	In response to Belgium's support of the international coalition that bombed IS in Syria and Iraq led by the US				
METHOD	13 rucksacks bombs (Goma 2 Eco). Coordinated explosions with the use of cell phones as detonators synchronized through alarms.	Suicide attacks with 4 rucksacks (HMTD ²). Coordinated explosions.	Combination of suicide bombers (TATP ³ and battery-operated manual detonators) and gunmen (Kalashnikov rifles with 7.62 calibre bullets)	4 suicide bombers with rucksacks (nail-packed homemade bombs with TATP)				
TARGET	Soft (trains)	Soft (bus and subway)	Soft (concert hall, street and stadium)	Soft (subway) and airport (not soft target)				
SEQUENCE	07:27 and 07:41	08:51 and 09:47	21:20 and 21:53	07:58h and 09:11h.				
LETHALITY	Dead	Injured	Dead	Injured	Dead	Injured	Dead	Injured
	191	1,800	56	700	127	352	36	300
ECONOMIC IMPACT	521 million €	N/A	2000 million €	760 million €				

Table 16: Variables of involvement related to the terrorist attacks.

Source: own elaboration

In terms of lethality, the most lethal attack was the Madrid train bombing, resulting in 191 fatalities, followed by the Paris attacks with 127 deaths, the London attacks with 56 fatalities, and finally, the Brussels attack with 36 deaths. However, the attack that resulted in the highest number of injuries after the 11M was the London bombings.

	TOTAL
Dead	417
Injured	3,152

Table 17: Total of victims in Madrid, London, Paris and Brussels attacks.

Source: own elaboration

As the attacks were coordinated and occurred in various locations, except for the Madrid attack, which took place in different trains, the number of casualties and injured people per explosion or place is also analysed.

² Hexamethylene triperoxide diamine

³ Triacetone triperoxide

LONDON	Dead	Injured
Bus Tavistock	13	100
Edgware	6	160
Aldgate	7	170
Rushell	26	340
PARIS	Dead	Injured
11th Arrondissement	34	N/A.
Stated de France	4 (3 terrorist)	N/A.
Bataclan Concert Hall	89	N/A.
BRUSSELS	Dead	Injured
Maelbeek Subway	16	N/A.
Zaventem Airport	20	N/A.

Table 18: Dead and injured people per attack and specific location.

Source: own elaboration

In relation with the economic impact, the different attacks caused significant economic losses. According to the Belgian finance minister, Kris Peeters, the repercussions are to endure for months and it may take years to assess the effects on the country's image. The sector hardest hit by the severe blow, meanwhile, is said to have been the restaurant, accommodation, and tourism sector – encompassing activities such as taxis, cinemas, and transportation – which have seen their revenues drop by around 359 million euros. Tax revenues are reported to have fallen by 760 million euros following the Brussels attack (Martínez, 2016).

Besides, the experts from the French Treasury estimate that the attacks will result in a cost of 2,000 million euros for the country, representing 0.1% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This economic impact is primarily due to decreased consumption and the impact on tourism caused by the attacks. It is worth noting that major attractions such as the Louvre Museum, Disneyland Paris, among others, were closed, and many tourists decided to cancel their trips to the country after the attack (Asenador, 2015).

However, there is not available information about the economic impact of the London bombings but it is stated that the country experienced an unexpected and fast economic recovery after the attacks.

Finally, the economic impact of the 11-M attacks in Madrid represented less than 1 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Madrid region. In comparison to Spain as a whole, that impact was even smaller. The total cost amounted to 521 million euros. (Buesa et.al., 2005).

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

I. All the individuals were men

There are several factors that could explain the predominance of men in jihadist terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, women are excluded from combat in the ideological literature of jihad. It is important to stress that this does not mean that women are excluded from jihad but they are given a different role, a non-military support. It is also remarkable that this fact usually remains in other types of terrorism that follows different doctrines and objectives (LaFree & Ackerman, 2009).

Other influential factor is the social and cultural environment of these individuals. Both first and second-generation immigrants that formed the different groups and network are conditioned by this fact (Lahour, 2014). Those who were born in Islamic countries are based on strong sexist beliefs but those who were born in a European country used to lived in districts or neighbourhoods in which Muslim population prevailed, having as a result a similar environment and stereotypes towards women and men.

Therefore, as it is claimed by García Calvo (2015), the prevalence of men in jihadist attacks is based on religious and ideological interpretations that uphold male's superiority over women in Islam. Both al Qaeda and IS have maintained a conservative view of women's roles in jihadism. However, IS presents an even more restrictive view, limiting them to the domestic sphere and to contribute to the expansion of the Caliphate's territory.

In addition, between those jihadist arrested in Spain since 2011 until 2018 there was not any woman. However, during this period there was evidence of some women involved (not in the execution of the attack) but not arrested (Reinares et al., 2019).

II. Predominance of young adult and relation with their place of residence

As demonstrated in the previous tables, there is a predominance among the memberships of the groups and network of individuals who are young adult, typically between the ages 20 and 34. However, there are some distinctions between the al Qaeda groups. In the case of the 3/11 network, the majority of the members were between 25 and 34 years old, whereas in the London group, although the majority were around 30, the other two members were under 22. Therefore, there are more young individuals in the London group compared to the 3/11 network. In the IS attacks, the distribution among ages is very similar.

The main difference lies in the age composition of the Madrid network, which consisted of individuals who were older than those in the other cells, with a mean age of 29.48.

In the IS groups, the younger ages could be related with the place of residence of the individuals. In the case of Brussels attack, all perpetrators lived there, being Brussels one of the European cities with a significant Muslim population. Furthermore, in both Brussels and Paris attacks, some members resided in the Molenbeek district, known as the country's second-poorest district with a large population of unemployed young people. Moreover, it is densely populated by immigrants, the vast majority of whom are Muslim, and experiences a high incidence of minor criminal activities (Frontline PBS, 2023). This social environment may contribute to radicalization at a younger age.

In addition, the London groups had also included some of the youngest individuals. After the 9/11, London was dubbed as “Londonistan”, referring to the capital as a transit point for those individuals travelling to Afghanistan to receive training (Nesser, 2016). The city also attracted radicals due to various radical environments such as mosques that were present (Ranstorp, 2005).

Overall, the place of residence of the members of the groups coincides with the country in which the terrorist attack took place, with the exception of Paris group, in which some members lived in Brussels. This place of residence is related to the age of the members involved in the attack, highlighting a relationship between the radicalisation of the youngest individuals and the place in which they lived, influenced by the social environment.

III. Focus on the nationality of the country attacked

Both terrorist organisations have recruited members of various nationalities to carry out their attacks in Europe. However, the vast majority of the individuals involved in attacks had the nationality of the country in which they perpetrated the attack. The Madrid train bombings present a notable exception, with a high presence of Moroccan individuals.

In the case of the London groups, all perpetrators were British except for one. This phenomenon, known as homegrown jihadism, became evident in 2004/2005 with the assassination of Theo Van Gogh and the London bombings (Precht, 2007).

In the Madrid network, the predominance of Moroccan individuals can be attributed to the composition of the different groups within the network. The gang of delinquents and the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (MICG) were both Moroccan. Additionally, this reality can be largely explained by demographic factors and is linked to migration patterns towards Spain from its closest Islamic nation, Morocco (Reinares & García-Calvo, 2018). Moreover, in Morocco, there was a certain level of social acceptance of global jihadism, particularly in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks. It is also important to note that Moroccan citizenship is permanent, and there is no dual nationality agreement between Morocco and Spain.

In IS threat is remarkable that 66.67% of the individuals involved in Paris and Brussels attacks had the nationality of the country attacked. Similar to London, these cases can be considered examples of homegrown jihadism. In addition, IS' individuals are also characterized by another significant factor: the return of foreign fighters.

In summary, it is appreciated a multilevel threat in the case of al Qaeda, with diversity in the nationalities involved indicating the extent to which jihadism has become a global movement. On the other hand, IS exhibits more consistent patterns in demographic factors, particularly regarding nationality, compared to the previous organisation.

IV. Evolution in migratory origin and its link with illegal activity

There is evident evolution in the threat posed by al Qaeda. In the case of the Madrid network, all members were first-generation immigrants, whereas one year later, in the London group, the vast majority were second-generation immigrants whose nationality was mainly that of the country attacked. Similarly, in IS groups, there is a significant percentage of second-generation immigrants. For instance, in the Brussels group, all members were second-generation immigrants, in contrast with the first case study, the Madrid train bombings, in which all members were first-generation immigrants.

In Spain, it is not surprising that all the individuals were first-generation immigrants. Exists a clear cause for the high percent of those who were Moroccans, who were the vast majority. This is related with the migratory flows in Spain where among the Muslim population, this category of immigrants prevails (Reinares, et al., 2019).

Notwithstanding, the next generations of those who came to a European country are more susceptible to violent radicalisation and jihadism. This could be one of the reasons why IS counts with more second-generation immigrants than al Qaeda, especially considering that the attacks of this organisation occurred more than 10 years after those led by al Qaeda, which may have experienced variations in migratory movements. In contrast, the individuals who perpetrated the London attacks, one year after 11M, were also second generation immigrants.

On the other hand, another statement related to a possible connection between migratory origin and the possession of criminal records could be made. Observing the collected data, there is a link between second-generation immigrants and criminal records. In the Paris group, of the 60% who have a criminal record, 83.33% are second-generation immigrants. Among all the London jihadists who had criminal records, only one was a first-generation immigrant. Likewise, in the Brussels group, which is composed of second-generation immigrants, 60% have criminal records.

Socioeconomic and cultural factors might be related with his tendency. Second-generation immigrant youth may face socioeconomic challenges, such as limited access to well-paid jobs or quality education. These challenges can potentially influence their involvement in criminal activities (Carrasco & Riesco, 2011).

Regarding cultural aspects, discrimination or the feeling of not belonging to a group can lead to the search for identity within marginalized groups, which could increase the likelihood of criminal behaviour. This is what is understood in several academic studies about radicalisation as diaspora (Waldmann, 2010).

To sum up, the relationship between criminal records and second-generation immigrants is multifaceted and influenced by a combination of social, cultural and economic, factors. Nevertheless, is crucial to consider the specific context of each country and communities and avoid making generalisations.

V. Training: Foreign fighters returnees, an exponential threat

Analysing the individuals who receive training in both organisations, they represent a 77.37%. Al Qaeda jihadist varied their training camps. In the 11M network, those members who travelled to other country to receive training attended to Al Qaeda's camp in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, the London group continued to travel to Afghanistan but Pakistan also gained force. This fact is linked to the invasion of Afghanistan by US in 2001, which ended with al Qaeda's sanctuary (Nesser, 2016). At that point, al Qaeda reconstituted itself by expanding in Pakistan.

However, during 2003, it was usual for the organisation to send recruits to training camps in Afghanistan (Mendelsohn, 2011). This is related to the US-led invasion of Iraq, which weakened their efforts in Afghanistan. Hence, some members of the London group received training in Pakistan as well as in Afghanistan.

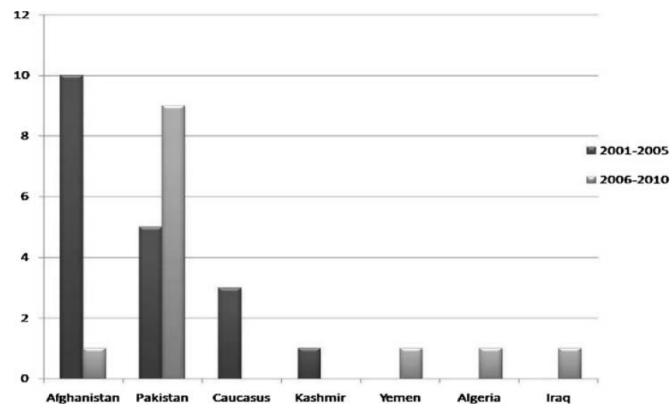


Figure 2: Countries in which jihadist terrorists have received training from 2001 until 2010.
Source: Jordán (2012)

Besides, with the onset of the Syrian war in 2011, IS (ISI at that time) took advantage of the Syrian civil war (Byman, 2016). European jihadist decided to travel to Syria and Iraq to fight. The main threat for Europe is those who came back to their host country with the intention of perpetuating an attack (Renard, 2017).

During their time in these territories, they learned new combat techniques, how to build weapons, and so on. The new skills they acquired in other countries pose a security threat in Europe. Additionally, they played an important role in recruitment efforts. Some of these members were radicalised in Syria, either in prisons or before traveling to Syria through the internet or through an agent of radicalisation, as well as by attending religious meetings.

Moreover, in the late 2014, IS initiated the establishment of an external operations unit with the aim of orchestrating a series of attacks against Europe. Simultaneously, numerous fighters returned to Europe without specific terrorist assignments, while many individuals within Europe became radicalised without traveling to Syria (Frontline PBS, 2023).

Therefore, in terms of radicalisation, is a matter of equal concern those foreign fighters returnees and the homegrown radicals who aid the radicalisation of these individuals and motives them to travelled to the warzone areas or, upon their return to their homeland, to continue their path of radicalization. Besides those foreign fighters returnees could be radicalised first in the country of origin belonging to the homegrown jihadism phenomenon. Once again, mosques and religious meetings are the main venues where they acquire extremist views.

Thus, it is evident that Al Qaeda is more committed to training its affiliates in training camps, while ISIS advocates training its members on the battlefield. It is found a predominance

of homegrown jihadism after 11M. Moreover, in the case of IS is also shown an increase of foreign fighter returnees.

VI. Agent of radicalisation and self-recruitment

In both organisations, we can see mosques as an environment of radicalisation. Nevertheless, al Qaeda is more characterised by charismatic leaders who guide other individuals to radicalise than IS in which members tends to be radicalise through Internet, as a self-recruitment method (Zimmerman & Vincent, 2023).

The charismatic leaders that starred the recruitment of individuals for al Qaeda primarily recruit through personal interactions, face-to-face meetings, some of them in mosques or religious congregations while others are in private houses (Reinares, 2017).

There is little information about the agents of radicalisation in IS individuals but academic researches coincides in one strong factor, social media, such as Twitter, - X nowadays- or Facebook and other jihadist blogs online. Individuals, often isolated or disillusioned, find resonance in ISIS's online content. They self-radicalise by consuming propaganda, connecting with like-minded individuals, and participating in virtual communities.

Nevertheless, one of the individuals of the Paris cell became the recruiter of the group. He was petty criminal with criminal records. His profile made easier to recruit a whole network that obeyed him, he was a ringleader (Frontline PBS, 2023).

Besides, in some cases, inside all the groups and network it is found a familiar or friendship relation between the individuals that constitutes them. This should me more analysed in depth in order to clarify if these interpersonal relations contributes to the radicalisation of individuals because jihadist mobilization may not occur regardless these ties to the jihadist movement because not all of those who have a social tie with a radicalised individual finally ended radicalised (Vicente, 2021).

In summary, while both Al Qaeda and ISIS share common ground in radicalisation environments, their divergent recruitment channels, charismatic leaders versus online platforms, shape their effectiveness.

VII. Logistical support as the main function of involvement and structure of the cells

Considering the difficulty in finding information on the roles that individuals played within their network or group, it appears that most of them play a logistical role in the attack.

In the Madrid and London attacks, individuals performed both logistical and managerial roles, whereas in Paris and Brussels, these roles may have been more hierarchical and separated. Besides, in IS attacks, the members with logistics functions were lower, suggesting a less elaborate structure or a more decentralised approach to logistics.

Regarding the direction and coordination role, Paris at least have one, while Brussels attack, the main leader is unidentified. This could be related with the arrested of one of the main members of the Paris group who confessed that he was preparing something in Brussels, following his arrest 4 days before the actual bombing (Carrión, 2016).

This is connected with the structure of the cells. . On one hand, the 11M was carried out by a network, while in the case of London, Paris, and Brussels, these were groups. The explanation for this, according to Reinares (2021), is that groups display a less formalised and more diffuse structure, whereas within networks, individuals may have affiliations with multiple cells or groups.

In relation with the structure of the groups and network, neither constitutes an independent cell known to be inspired by al Qaeda or IS but to carry out an attack without being connected to the direct command of one of these organisations. Nevertheless, in the jihadist threat in Europe there has been an increase in terms of independent cells or lone wolves since 2005 (Jordán, 2013). This more decentralised structure can be seen in the IS attacks that are carried out in the second decade of the 21th century but they are not independent cells.

VIII. Suicide bombing as a crucial component of the jihadist threat

Excluding the 11M network, the jihadists who committed suicide during the attack represent 73.68%. However, those who did not die during the attack in the Madrid Train bombings ultimately died as suicide bombers in Iraq, and seven died in Leganes during a police raid,

The main reason why the network of the 11M did not commit suicide was because they had future plans to attack other cities in Spain, such as the high-velocity train line between Madrid and Seville, focusing on Toledo as well as Segovia or Ávila (Reinares, 2017).

Thus, there is evidence indicating a prevalent willingness for martyrdom. As Moghadam (2009) argued, several factors determine why jihadists decide to engage in suicide bombing. One of the main reasons is ideology, specifically Salafi jihadism. This doctrine views suicide attacks against "infidels" and "apostates" as the highest form of commitment to God and the most effective method of conducting jihad, as well as the means to achieve paradise. Besides, martyrs sacrifice their lives for the broader benefit of the Muslim community.

Nevertheless, while ideology plays a role in providing justification and moral detachment for suicide attackers, the origins of suicide attacks are varied. They arise from a blend of individual motivations, the strategic goals of terrorist organisations, societal and structural influences, as well as internal dynamics within terrorist cells.

In that sense, this variable reveals a common ground in both organisations in terms of the fascination for martyrdom, devotion to religion, and ideology as the principal factors among their members to become suicide bombers.

IX. Rucksacks bombs as their favourite method

In all the analysed attacks, terrorists use explosives. Nevertheless, some differences are found among them. Three out four employed Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). These kind of explosives are homemade and are used with the end of avoid detection, as some of them are easily acquired (Mañas & Jordán, 2007).

Within this group, they can be classified depending on their composition. Some are used for military purposes, others with industrial aims, and finally, those manufactured with materials readily available in common markets or shops.

There is no presence of military explosives in the attacks studied, but in this category are the Hexamethylene Triperoxide Diamine (HMTD) used in London bombings, and the Triacetone Triperoxide (TATP), used in both cases by the IS.

HMTD is one of the main types of HME, derived from ammonium nitrates, primarily obtained from agricultural fertilizers mixed with other substances. TATP is a combination of hydrogen peroxide and acetone with sulphuric, nitric, or hydrochloric acids, essentially composed of chemicals accessible in local stores (Yeo, 2015). For instance, it can be made by using the common household ingredient hydrogen peroxide (Bergen et al., 2017).

However, TATP exhibits extreme instability and is highly sensitive to both heat and impact. It frequently detonates prematurely, rather than at the intended time. The sophisticated planning and coordination required for such attacks suggest the involvement of a skilled bomb maker, often implying training or guidance from a foreign terrorist organisation.

In the case of the 11M network, they opted to acquire industrial explosives produced in Asturias, Spain. They used Goma Eco 2, commonly known as dynamite, which was used in Conchita mine, in Asturias. Nonetheless, the network considered using of TATP (Reinares, 2017).

Another difference is found in the detonation mechanism. In Madrid attacks, the bombs were detonated by cell phones synchronized through timers, while in Paris attacks, the bombs were operated by battery manual detonators.

There is a trend in the jihadist threat towards the use of homemade bombs with easily accessible substances. This is evident given the probability that an attack will ultimately be executed rather than failed, as there is a risk of being discovered during the transaction of other types of explosives (Jordán, 2012).

On the other hand, only in Paris attack, terrorist include firearms such as Kalashnikov rifles. The apparent disfavour towards firearms in terrorist incidents across Europe likely stems from the higher lethality and increased media and psychological impact associated with bombings. In this attack, which employed bombs and firearms against defenceless victims, they reach a really aggressive method of attack. By combining both, they took advantage of the easier planning involved in attacks organized with firearms and the higher lethality associated with bombings.

X. Global jihadism against a common enemy: The United States

According to the motives and justifications given by the terrorist groups when claiming responsibility for the attacks, they all share one factor in common: their enmity towards the United States (US).

Therefore, this is the result of a deliberate effort by Al Qaeda and the global Jihad movement to undermine popular support for the United States by primarily concentrating on Western countries, aiming to create a gap between the US and its traditional allies (Moghadam, 2008).

Besides, the aim of the Islamic State (IS) is to establish a caliphate that encompasses various Western countries. Therefore, one of the reasons behind their attacks in these European nations would be part of their strategy to expand their transnational influence (Jordán, 2015).

Indeed, in the case of the Brussels attacks, in addition to these factors, it is worth noting that Brussels is a city with a prominent presence of institutions of the European Union and NATO.

Nevertheless, the reason for the attack stems from Al Qaeda's aim to position itself as the forefront of Islam in a defensive battle to safeguard the Umma, the community of believers. However, they could not achieve this by targeting Muslims, so they had to focus on distant objectives. The high-profile attacks in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005 were aligned with this rationale, albeit carried out by local groups or cells. (Fuente Cobo, 2015).

In the case of the Madrid bombings, although Al Qaeda aimed to influence the electoral outcomes in Spain, favouring the election of Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero due to his stated intentions to withdraw troops from Iraq, this motive was proven false (Reinares, 2017).

The date of the attack had already been decided long before its scheduling was established. The initial written mention of it occurs in a document dated October 19, 2003, before the elections were even announced. However, in one of Al Qaeda's statements shortly after the attack, they address this issue. They clarified that during the attack preparations, they took note of the election date and opted to proceed with it to potentially influence the electoral process. This decision was impromptu, yet they aimed to leverage it to their advantage. That is why they decided to claim authorship of their attack so early on.

The choice to launch an attack in Spain was made in 2001 following the dismantling of the Al Qaeda cell. By the spring of 2003, one of its members ascended to the position of deputy to the head of Al Qaeda's external operations. At this juncture, Al Qaeda embraced the plans, transitioning from being solely the retaliation of jihadists based in Madrid to also serving as the organisation's reprisal for Spain's military involvement in Iraq.

XI. Soft targets

They all targeted soft targets, and in the case of Paris, overcrowded public places. This characteristic appears to be common to both groups. Similarly, all attacks except the one in Paris took place in public transportation settings.

This type of target is defined as "locations that are easily accessible to large numbers of people and that have limited security or protective measures in place making them vulnerable to attack" (U.S Department of Homeland Security, 2009, p.3). In this sense, it presents the perfect scenario for jihadist threats, as they not only seek high media impact but also a large number of victims. Moreover, when there is greater lethality, there is increased media attention and panic among the population.

This latter point is also related to the economic impact. Attacks in these places not only reduce the tourism rate in these areas due to population fear but also generate a significant negative economic effect due to the damage inflicted on transportation infrastructures, used by many people in their daily lives.

It is true that the threat is not equal in all of them since buses and commuter trains provide greater access to emergency services and passengers can choose to leave quickly. In contrast, the metro and airplanes hinder assistance efforts. Additionally, airports have stricter controls than other means of transportation (Sánchez Gil, 2016). Perhaps this is why Al Qaeda

chose the metro in the London attack instead of other types of transport as they did in Madrid, and as they suggested attacking the Barcelona metro afterwards.

In the case of IS, they chose to attack overcrowded public places in Paris. Furthermore, these places were leisure and entertainment spots. This aspect is heavily criticized from the cultural and religious perspective affiliated with jihadists, so in addition to creating media impact and a high number of victims, this attack concealed the discourse against the lifestyle of the "infidels".

Furthermore, it can be observed that jihadists continue to have a fixation in other targets that are not soft, such as airports and civil aviation since 9/11. That is the case of IS in Brussels. According to Jordán (2012), this could be tied to the symbolism of 9/11 as well as widespread media coverage. Besides, it is noteworthy that the victims often represent multiple nationalities, and the resulting disruption to air traffic can inflict significant economic harm both domestically and internationally.

XII. The most lethal attacks

When designed by IS or Al Qaeda themselves, these are highly sophisticated attacks with a high number of victims.

In terms of lethality, there are several factors that condition the number of victims. These factors as previously mentioned are: receive training in a foreign country, targeting soft and crowded public places, methods employed, and previous planning of the attacks.

Regarding death tolls, the Madrid attack was the most devastating, followed by the Paris attack. Although the London and Brussels attacks had fewer fatalities, they still caused a significant number of deaths and serious injuries.

Several factors could explain why the Madrid attack perpetrated by Al Qaeda was more lethal than the one in Paris carried out by the Islamic State (IS). Firstly, the scale and coordination of the attack. The Madrid attack in 2004 involved a series of coordinated explosions on four commuter trains, resulting in a large number of victims. In contrast, the attacks in Paris in 2015 involved multiple simultaneous incidents in different parts of the city, but not on the same scale as the Madrid attack.

Secondly, it could be pointed the type of weapons used. In the Madrid attack, explosives were used on trains, causing a large number of deaths and injuries. In contrast, the Paris attacks primarily involved firearms and less powerful explosives, limiting the extent of the damage in comparison.

Thirdly, it is important to take into account the security and emergency response. The response capabilities of authorities and emergency services may have varied between the two attacks. It is possible that authorities in Madrid were not as prepared to face an attack of that magnitude as authorities in Paris were in 2015.

It is important to consider that lethality is not only measured by the number of deaths, but also by the impact the attack has on society, the economy, and public security. Each of these attacks had a significant impact on their respective cities and countries, regardless of the exact number of victims.

In the face of this lethality, there was also an international response. Not only in terms of solidarity and support for the victim country but also in relation to the fight against terrorism.

After the attacks in Madrid and London, the EU established for the first time a common anti-terrorism strategy, known as the European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism (Mcleish, 2017).

After the attacks in Paris and Brussels, in 2016, the EU finally approved a Passenger Name Record (PNR) Directive, which regulates the transfer and processing of personal data provided by air passengers to detect serious crimes and terrorism (European Council, n.d.). Additionally, during this year, a European Counter Terrorism Centre was set up at Europol to support the exchange of information between national police authorities.

On the other hand, terrorist attacks also inflict economic damage on the country in which they take place, as well as internationally. In the case of Brussels, according to a study elaborated by the Belgian Ministry of Economy, it resulted in the loss of 760 million of euros; Paris attacks caused a loss of 2,000 million of euros; and, the Madrid attack at least 521 million of euros.

To sum up, it is shown that the most lethal attack in terms of victims was the Madrid train bombings while taking into account the economic impact, the Brussels attacks were the hardest one, followed by the Paris attacks. Therefore, it could be said that al Qaeda's attacks were more lethal regarding the victims but IS' attacks were more economically lethal.

In relation with the international response, al Qaeda's attacks had a more immediately international response and were the origin of a European common strategy against terrorism. Nevertheless, after IS' attacks, the EU established a significant measure, the PNR. Therefore, it can be concluded that both organisations through their respective attacks, garnered the attention of the international community.

RESULTS

Taking into account the objectives set at the beginning of the study, various arguments have been developed through the presentation and discussion of the results, indicating the evolution of the jihadist threat in Europe from 2004 to 2016. This evolution includes variations in tactics, objectives, strategies, the characterization of the actors involved, as well as their radicalisation and other factors.

A continuity can be observed in the predominance of men in the active jihad struggle. This is primarily due to social and cultural factors, as well as ideological and religious interpretations of the movement.

Regarding the age of the attackers, the average age is 26.34 years. However, younger profiles have been observed post-11M. This suggests an earlier radicalisation among members of subsequent cells. Thus, it has been analysed that there could be a link between this early radicalisation and the place of residence. For example in this study, there are some individuals that have lived in districts of large cities characterized by poverty and a high volume of immigrant population, specifically of Arab origin. Nevertheless, the link between poverty and the involvement in jihadist terrorism is still in debate. Some authors have stated that economic conditions are not the root for radicalisation (Benmelech & Klor, 2020).

Continuing with the characterization of the group individuals, it has been analysed that their nationalities vary depending on the place that has been attacked. The presence of the homegrown jihadism phenomenon is especially notable in the London attacks but not in the Madrid attack where the majority were first generation immigrants. In contrast, in the case of ISIS, there is a greater impact of what is known as homegrown phenomenon. Indeed, there is a tendency of foreign fighters returnees, exacerbated by the conflict in Syria.

Regarding migratory origin, the prominence of first-generations in the Madrid network is connected to the migratory flow in Spain, where the majority of the Muslim population at that time was first-generation. In contrast, ISIS mainly consists of second-generation immigrant members, which is linked to a variation in migratory flows more than 10 years later. Nevertheless, those involved in the London attack, which happened only one year after 11M. Here it is found other transformation of jihadist threat in relation with the migratory origin.

Furthermore, this may be due to the fact that these subsequent generations are more susceptible to radicalisation due to the environment they live in, the propaganda they consume through the internet, and the relationship found between those who are second-generation immigrants and criminal backgrounds. Some of them are in difficult socioeconomic situations with no opportunity for study or work, which can attract them to get involved in criminal activities. However, it is not a general fact that can be proved in all cases.

As for training, a change in location is observed between Al Qaeda and ISIS. Most of the members of the 3/11 network who received training in another country did so in Afghanistan, while the London group received training in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. In contrast, ISIS fighters, influenced by the Syrian civil war, trained in Syria and Iraq. Al Qaeda trains its affiliates in training camps, while ISIS trains its members on the battlefield.

In both organisations, mosques are common environments for radicalisation, as well as prisons in some cases. However, there is a greater presence of traditional radicalisation agents

in Al Qaeda, such as charismatic leaders, compared to the platforms and online propaganda used by ISIS.

The structure of the analysed groups also presents differences. We find a more centralized and organized network in the case of Al Qaeda, while ISIS has a more decentralized structure, although neither of the groups constitute independent cells. Therefore, while al Qaeda focused more on large-scale coordinated attacks such as the 11-M in Madrid, ISIS adopted a more decentralized tactic with simultaneous attacks in multiple locations like the attacks in Paris and Brussels.

Considering the methods used, terrorists in Western Europe continue to show their willingness to carry out bomb attacks, such as TATP, using less sophisticated but equally effective formulas, in the case of ISIS, even reaching military-grade explosives. Likewise, in the case of ISIS in Paris, some innovation is perceived, introducing firearms alongside belts and backpacks of explosives. The common use of explosives leads to two clear conclusions: on one hand, the ease of building (or acquiring in the case of the Madrid network) explosives with common substances in markets, going unnoticed, and on the other hand, the common goal of both groups, to inflict maximum damage possible, obtaining a high number of victims and great media repercussion.

Furthermore, suicide bombing remains a crucial component of the jihadist threat, providing justification and moral detachment for suicide attackers as one of the principal causes by which they are fascinated with martyrdom.

On the other hand, regarding the justification and motives of the different attacks, the clear strategy against the US stands out. All of them aim to punish those countries that collaborate with the US in Muslim territory. Creating a division between the United States and its allies is part of a greater political sophistication in Al Qaeda's strategy followed by ISIS. In the case of ISIS, specifically, those who are part of the international coalition led by the US in the bombing of Syria and Iraq. In contrast, in the case of the Madrid network, the desire for revenge for having been persecuted by the Spanish authorities and the invasion of Iraq in which Spanish troops participated as a secondary motive prevail.

As for the targets, both Al Qaeda and ISIS attacked so-called soft targets, specifically public transportation and, in the case of ISIS in Paris also overcrowded public places. This responds to two central factors: the large influx of people in these spaces, the low levels of security, and the vulnerability compared to other targets. These two characteristics lead to an attack being carried out without being discovered beforehand and a great impact on the country both economically and in terms of the number of victims.

Therefore, the spaces chosen by both organisations present similar elements, although in the case of ISIS, we see again a certain predisposition to create attacks different from those of Al Qaeda, seeking a perfection of them since they target public spaces with many people, and once again, we see the fixation of jihadists on airports and airplanes.

This illustrates the difficulty of achieving a balance between security and effectiveness in public transportation, avoiding them being dangerous would imply a slowdown of them which is very difficult to assimilate in large cities so this remains a challenge to which a consistent answer has not been given.

Likewise, the lethality of the analysed attacks was due to the sophistication of the attacks themselves as well as the chosen target, among many other factors. The most lethal, in terms of victims and injuries, was the Madrid attack while the most economically lethal was the Brussels attack. Therefore, it could be said that Al Qaeda's attacks were more lethal regarding the victims but ISIS' attacks were more economically lethal. Finally, another aspect derived from the lethality of the attacks is the international response. Al Qaeda's attacks had a more immediate international response and were the origin of a European common strategy against terrorism. They were a turning point for the international community.

Taking all of the above into consideration, it can be concluded that there is an evolution of the jihadist threat from the demographic characteristics of the jihadists themselves to the structure and methods employed by the groups. The element that could remain more static is the motives for which these organisations attack, and the element of greatest change could be the organisation that has a greater role in jihadism in Europe, the rise of ISIS, although both this and Al Qaeda represent real and potentially dangerous threats.

Some of the limitations encountered in this analysis are, on the one hand, those related to statistical procedures since there is no specialized software tool for statistical data analysis. On the other hand, in certain variables analysed, not all the necessary information has been able to be collected to analyse and draw deeper conclusions. An example of this is the process of radicalisation of individuals or the roles and organisation of tasks within groups.

Likewise, some of the future lines of research that this study could entail are a current analysis of the jihadist threat, which is, how it has evolved since then and what future challenges the international community may face regarding the jihadist threat. Likewise, another interesting point to analyse would be the measures that have been taken at both the national level in these countries and at the international level since then, demonstrating their effectiveness or error. In this way, international security and collaboration could be consolidated and strengthened, key in this field.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Journalist information consulted for the database.

Date	Source	Title
No date	RTVE	Condenados, absueltos y suicidas de Leganés
12 th April 2006	CNN	Madrid train blasts: Terror suspects
13 th April 2009	El Mundo	La Policía dejó escapar al principal fugitivo del 11-M
2 nd August 2004	El País	Doce terroristas en los trenes de la muerte
17 th February 2007	ABC	Belhadj admite que estuvo en Madrid ocho días antes de la matanza
30 th April 2004	El Mundo	El juez deja en libertad al marroquí Mohamed Bouharrat, cuya foto apareció en el piso de Leganés
17 th May 2006	20 Minutos	El Harrak, en libertad tras un error judicial: "Cuando me dijeron que iba a salir, me quedé flipado"
15 th April 2005	El País	Contactos en la cárcel
11 th April 2011	El Observador	Prisión incondicional para otro sospechoso del 11-M
21 st February 2007	Libertad Digital	Declaración del imputado Mohamed Larbi Ben Sellam
9 th March 2014	Info Libre	¿Qué ha sido de los verdugos del 11-M?
9 th June 2004	El Mundo	'Mohamed el Egipcio' se atribuye la autoría intelectual del 11-M
5 th April 2004	BBC	Piecing together Madrid bombers' past
29 th May 2004	La Opinión de Murcia	Del Olmo dicta orden de busca y captura contra el argelino Ouhmane

19 th May 2005	The New York Times	13 Linked to Qaeda, Spain says
8 th June 2004	El País	Rabei Osman El Sayed Ahmed, 'El Egipcio'
No date	BBC	Madrid train attacks, the trial
15 th September 2017	ABC	Terror in UK: A timeline of recent attacks
15 th July 2005	El Mundo	Retrato del terrorista que murió en Aldgate
14 th July 2005	BBC	¿Qué motivó a los atacantes?
16 th July 2005	El País	“Mister K” era el menor de los suicidas
8 th July 2005	20 Minutos	Una cadena de atentados en los transportes de Londres deja más de 50 muertos y 700 heridos
2 nd March 2011	BBC	Profile: Mohammad Sidique Khan
14 th July 2005	El País	El cuarto terrorista era un jamaicano residente en Reino Unido
2 nd March 2011	BBC	Profile: Hasib Hussain
2 nd March 2011	BBC	Profile: Germaine Lindsay
27 th April 2016	BBC	Paris attacks: Who were the attackers?
18 th March 2016	The Guardian	The men who attacked Paris: profile of a terror cell
18 th March 2016	The New York Times	Unraveling the Connections Among the Paris Attackers

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13 th November 2015	Público	Resumen de todo lo ocurrido en París
10 th December 2015	La Vanguardia	El tercer yihadista de la sala Bataclan intentó entrar en el Ejército francés
14 th November 2015	El Mundo	Atentados en París: 130 muertos y 352 heridos
19 th November 2015	CNN	Who was Abdelhamid Abaaoud, suspected ringleader of Paris attack?
22 nd November 2015	BBC	Paris attacks: Abdeslam brothers 'were manipulated, not radicalised'
15 th November 2015	El Confidencial	Ismael Omar Mostefai, de delincuente de poca monta a yihadista suicida
8 th September 2021	Euronews	¿Quién es Salah Abdeslam, el único superviviente del comando de los atentados de 2015 en París?
15 th November 2015	RTVE	Atentado en París Francia, principal objetivo del yihadismo en Europa
14 th November 2015	El País	El ISIS reivindica la autoría de los atentados de París
24 th March 2016	The New York Times	Ibrahim and Khalid el-Bakraoui: From Bank Robbers to Brussels Bombers
28 th March 2016	La Vanguardia	La cifra de muertos en atentados en Bruselas se eleva a 35
21 st March 2017	El Periódico	La doble pesadilla de los atentados de Bruselas
9 th April 2016	BBC	Paris and Brussels bombers' links uncovered
22 nd March 2016	CBS	Deadly explosions rock Brussels airport, subway
25 th March 2016	CNN	Here's what we know about the Brussels terror attacks

2 nd June 2016	El País	Los hermanos Laachraoui: un medalla de oro y un terrorista
7 th August 2023	Daraj	Osama Krayem: Footballer Turned Terrorist
19 th March 2016	France 24	Salah Abdeslam: From petty crime to IS group terrorism
25 th November 2015	ABC	Man Spotted With Paris Attack Suspect Traveled to Syria, Belgian Authorities Say